



Hello, everyone! This is Jeff. A while back, I ran into a fellow American in a local supermarket. While talking about our experiences in Japan, we realized we agreed upon one thing: the American holiday we most missed was Thanksgiving. Does that surprise you? I feel that Japanese people have the impression that Americans go all-out for Christmas, and that's not wrong. Americans love Christmas, gathering with family, exchanging presents, and all the other Christmas traditions. The problem is that while living in Japan, Thanksgiving is very hard to celebrate.

While both Christmas and Thanksgiving put a heavy emphasis on family, where Christmas is focused mostly on immediate family, parents and children, Thanksgiving is a time when the whole extended family gather together. Aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins, people who you might not see much of for most of the year, everyone comes together, and then, we feast. And feast. And feast. We feast on turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, candied yams, cranberry sauce, veggies, bread, meat, and more!

Yes, traditional Thanksgiving celebration can be summed up in a single word: EAT!

So, you may be wondering, how did a holiday centered around nothing but eating come to be? Let's go over a little bit of America's history to find out why.



In 1620 AD, a group of 130 Christians fleeing religious persecution in Britain set off for America, the "New World." After spending two months on a small, 100-foot vessel called the Mayflower, they finally came ashore in what is modern-day Massachusetts. However, their trials had only just begun. They had arrived in early-mid November, and the harsh Northern American winter awaited them. The men went ashore first to begin building homes, while the women, children, elderly and sick stayed on the boat. By the time spring came, 45 pilgrims had passed away.

In March of the next year, the pilgrims were surprised when sole male Indian walked boldly into their camp and declared, "Welcome, Englishmen!" This man had learned some English from British merchants that had come before them, and served as their translator. They signed a peace treaty with local leaders, and the Indians taught the pilgrims very important things for survival in America; for example, to use uneaten fish as fertilizer and how to grow corn. That next October, close to the one-year anniversary of arriving in America, the 53 surviving pilgrims invited 90 Indians to a 3-day long feast to celebrate their first harvest.



In remembrance of this event, Americans celebrate Thanksgiving each year. Many families will go around the table and have each person say what they are thankful for, be it for their families, their work, their health, or any other number of things. If you take a moment to think about it, I'm sure you'll find yourself surrounded by things you should be thankful for. The pilgrims underwent a series of great trials in America. However, diseases that were fatal at the time today can be healed over a few days with cheap, over-the-counter medicine. The pilgrims worked all year, farming and hunting, in order to survive the winter, but we, today, can easily preserve fresh food in our own refrigerators. So, what are you thankful for? Be it your loving family, your work, your health, your hobbies, why not take a little time today to think about all the blessings around you.

Until next time,

- Jeff

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