

Make Mine Turkey

Objective

Students will read and discuss primary source accounts of the holiday we celebrate as Thanksgiving and compare the accounts to traditional views of the story of Thanksgiving. Students will identify foods eaten at the first Thanksgiving and compare them with foods traditionally eaten today. Students research harvest customs and traditional feast foods of North American tribes and/or those of other cultures.

Background

For most of us, a traditional Thanksgiving meal includes a turkey with breadcrumb stuffing or cornmeal dressing, cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, pumpkin pie, and other favorite family dishes. But our modern family feasts have little in common with the foods the Pilgrims ate during the three-day 1621 harvest celebration at Plymouth Colony, the event we know as the “First Thanksgiving.”

The typical menu of Thanksgiving dinner is actually more than 200 years younger than that 1621 celebration. Edward Winslow’s description of the 1621 event tells us they had seasonal wild fowl and venison brought by the Wampanoag. In another account, Winslow describes some of the other foods available to the Pilgrims, including lobsters and other fish, eel, mussels, oysters, “sallet herbs” (probably greens like dandelion, etc.), grapes, strawberries, gooseberries, raspberries, and plums.

TURKEY

The Wampanoag and Plymouth colonists often ate wild turkey; however, it was not specifically mentioned in connection with that 1621 harvest celebration. Edward Winslow said only that four men went hunting and brought back large amounts of “fowl.” Because of the season, this was more likely waterfowl, such as ducks and geese. The Wampanoag and English did occasionally stuff the birds and fish they ate, usually with herbs, onions or oats rather than the breadcrumb or cornmeal mixture with which we stuff our Thanksgiving turkeys.

CRANBERRIES

If cranberries were served at the harvest celebration, they appeared in Wampanoag dishes, or possibly to add tartness to an English sauce. The sugary sauce we know would not be developed for another 50 years. Sugar was not available to the Pilgrims.

Oklahoma Academic Standards

GRADE 2

Citizenship: 5

Speaking and Listening: R.1,2,3,4; W.1,2.
Critical Reading and Writing: R.5; W.1,2
Number & Operations: 3.1,2. Data & Probability: 1,2

GRADE 3

Citizenship: 4. Economics: 1

Speaking and Listening: R.1,2,3; W.1,2.
Critical Reading and Writing: W.1,2
Number & Operations: 2.1,2,3,5,7,8. 3.2.
Data & Probability: 1.1

GRADE 4

Regions: 2D,3. Native Americans: 1,4
Speaking and Listening: R.1,2,3; W.1,2.
Critical Reading and Writing: W.1,2
Number & Operations: 1.1,3,5; 2.1,4

GRADE 5

Jamestown and Plimoth: 3,5CD
Speaking and Listening: R.1,2,3; W.1,2.
Critical Reading and Writing: W.1,2
Number & Operations: 1.4; 2.1

Materials

grocery ads

sweet potatoes

toothpicks

cups

water

dice

Make Pumpkin Pie in a Bag. See “Food and Fun” on the website for instructions.

POTATOES, WHITE AND SWEET

Potatoes, which originated in South America, were not part of the Wampanoag in 1621 (though the Wampanoag did eat other local varieties of tubers). By 1621, potatoes, both sweet and white, had traveled across the Atlantic to Europe but they had not been generally adopted into the English diet. The sweet potato, originating in the Caribbean, was cultivated in Spain and imported into England. It was only available to the wealthy at that time. The white potato was virtually unknown by the average early 17th-century Englishman.

PUMPKINS AND SQUASHES

Pumpkins and squashes were native to New England. Certain varieties had been introduced from the Americas into Europe by 1500, where they gained widespread acceptance (as had turkey, another New World native). In Plymouth, the specific American varieties were new to the colonists, but not exotic. However, pumpkin pie as we know it would not be invented for several generations. The earliest written recipes for pumpkin pie came after 1621, and those treated the pumpkin more like apples, slicing it and sometimes frying the slices before placing them in a crust. (There were no apples in 1621 Plymouth, either. Apples are not native to North America.)

INDIAN CORN

The harvest being celebrated in 1621 was that of the colorful hard flint corn that the English often referred to as Indian corn. This corn was a staple for the Wampanoag and soon became a fixture in the cooking pots of New Plymouth. The English had acquired their first seed corn by helping themselves to a cache of corn from a native storage pit on one of their first explorations of Cape Cod. (They later paid the owners for this “borrowed” corn.) Traditional English dishes of porridge and pancakes (and later bread) were adapted to be used with native corn.

VEGETABLES

In September and October, a variety of both dried and fresh vegetables were available. The produce from the gardens of New Plymouth is likely to have included parsnips, collards, carrots, parsley, turnips, spinach, cabbages, sage, thyme, marjoram and onions. Dried cultivated beans and dried wild blueberries may have been available as well as native cranberries, pumpkins, grapes and nuts.

Although the foods we eat today for Thanksgiving are not exactly the same as those eaten by the Pilgrims, most are symbolic of fall harvest and most are foods native to the New World—corn, pumpkin, squash, potatoes, pecans and sweet potatoes. Even the chocolate in your chocolate pie is a New World food.

Most traditional Thanksgiving foods are foods our farmers produce

in Oklahoma. Sweet potatoes and pumpkin are successful field crops in many parts of our state. Pecans are a native crop, and Oklahoma generally ranks in the top 10 nationally for production of pecans. The wild turkey is Oklahoma's official game bird. Wild turkeys roam in many parts of the state, especially in the western part. Small flocks of turkeys are also raised on some Oklahoma farms. Potatoes and squash are grown in home gardens or in small vegetable operations for farmer's markets. Dried corn for cornmeal and wheat for breadcrumbs are major Oklahoma crops used to make dressing (from cornbread) or stuffing (from bread crumbs).

English Language Arts/Social Studies

1. Read and discuss background and vocabulary.
2. Hand out copies of the Reading Page: "Two Accounts of Thanksgiving."
—Read the two accounts as a class.
—Students will follow along on the Reading Page and underline the foods listed.
3. Hand out copies of the list of "Foods Available to Pilgrims for Thanksgiving Feast" and the "Thanksgiving Foods" chart.
—Students will use the "Foods Available to Pilgrims for Thanksgiving Feast" list to complete the "Thanksgiving Foods" chart.
4. Students will write essays entitled "How to Cook a Turkey."
5. Students will collect favorite Thanksgiving recipes from home for a classroom Thanksgiving cookbook.
6. Each student will write an account of his or her best Thanksgiving memory.

Math

1. Hand out the "Make Mine Turkey" chart. Students may complete the activity as a group project or on an individual basis.
—Starting a few weeks ahead, students will bring grocery ads to class.
—Students will "shop" through the ads, making lists of the items they will need to prepare a turkey dinner with all their favorite trimmings.
—Students will decide how many people they want to invite to dinner and shop for the best buys.
—Each student will write out the cost of each item on his or her list and compute the total cost of the meal.
2. Make copies of the Indian and Pilgrim faces on the "Thanksgiving Table" worksheet and cut them out.
—Provide each student with a Thanksgiving Table chart, several copies of the Indian and Pilgrim faces, one die and one copy of the chart for recording fractions. Follow directions on the worksheet.
3. Students will use cardboard pumpkin pies to practice fractions based on $\frac{1}{12}$.
—On the pumpkin pie, students will show fractions equal to $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{1}{6}$, $\frac{1}{3}$, $\frac{2}{3}$, $\frac{5}{6}$, $\frac{1}{3}$, $\frac{1}{4}$.

Vocabulary

celebration—to observe in some special way harvest—the gathering of a crop
native—grown, produced, or having its beginning in a particular region

porridge—a soft food made by boiling meal or a vegetable in milk or water until it thickens

seasonal—of, relating to, or restricted to a particular season
tradition—the handing down of information, beliefs, or customs from one generation to another

venison—the flesh of a deer used as food

4. Conduct a poll to find out which kind of dressing (cornbread or bread crumb) is traditionally served for students' families' Thanksgiving dinners. Graph the results.

Extra Reading

Bruchac, Joseph, and Greg Shed, *Squanto's Journey: the Story of the First Thanksgiving*, Sandpiper, 2007.

de las Casas, Dianne, and Marita Gentry, *The Gigantic Sweet Potato*, Pelican, 2010.

Farmer, Jacqueline, *Pumpkins*, Charlesbridge, 2004.

George, Jean Craighead, and Thomas Locker, *The First Thanksgiving*, Puffin, 2001.

Gibbons, Gail, *The Pumpkin Book*, Live Oak, 2004.

Gibbons, Gail, *Thanksgiving Is...*, Holiday House, 2005.

Goia, Robyn, *America's Real First Thanksgiving*, Pineapple, 2007.

Johnston, Tony, and Richard F. Deas, *10 Fat Turkeys*, Cartwheel, 2004.

Kamma, Anne, and Bert Dodson, *If You Were at the First Thanksgiving*, Scholastic, 2001.

Robbins, Ken, *Food for Thought: The Stories Behind the Things We Eat*, Flash Point, 2009.

Wing, Natasha, and Tammie Lyon, *The Night Before Thanksgiving*, Grosset & Dunlap, 2001.

Many Thanksgivings

The Pilgrim's Thanksgiving is the traditional model for the holiday we know as Thanksgiving, but there were other Thanksgiving feasts throughout our nation's history.

These include Juan Ponce De Leon's landing in Florida in 1513, Francisco Vásquez de Coronado's service of Thanksgiving in the Texas Panhandle in 1541, as well as two claims for Thanksgiving observances in Jamestown, Virginia — in 1607 and 1610. Presidents George Washington and Abraham Lincoln both proclaimed one-time days of Thanksgiving during their administrations, but it was President Franklin D. Roosevelt who proclaimed Thanksgiving Day an official holiday in 1941.

Two Accounts of Thanksgiving

The following are two accounts of the first Thanksgiving at Plymouth Colony. As you read, underline the foods.

By William Bradford:

They began now to gather in the small harvest they had, and to fit up their house and dwelling against winter, being all well recovered in health and strength and had all things in good plenty. For as some were thus employed in affairs abroad, others were exercised in fishing, about cod and bass and other fish, of which they took good store, of which every family had their portion. All the summer there was no want; and now began to come in store of fowl, as winter approached, of which this place did abound when they came first (but afterward decreased by degrees). And besides waterfowl there was great store of wild turkeys, of which they took many, besides venison, etc. Besides, they had about a peck of meal a week to a person, or now since harvest, Indian corn to that proportion. Which made many afterwards write so largely of their plenty here to their friends in England, which were not feigned by true reports.

By Edward Winslow:

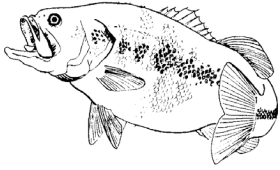
Our corn [i.e. wheat] did prove well, and god be praised, we had a good increase of Indian corn, and our barley indifferent good, but our peas not worth the gathering, for we feared they were too late sown. They came up very well, and blossomed, but the sun parched them in the blossom. Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together after we had gathered the fruit of our labors.

They four in one day killed as much fowl as, with a little help beside, served the company almost a week. At which time, amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest king Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation and bestowed on our governor, and upon the captain and others. And although it be not always so plentiful as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of god, we are so far from want that we often wish you partakers of our plenty.

Foods Available to Pilgrims for Thanksgiving

Fish

cod, bass, herring, shad, bluefish, eel.



Seafood

clams, lobsters, mussels, oysters

Birds

wild turkey, goose, duck, crane, swan, partridge, and other waterfowl



Other Meat

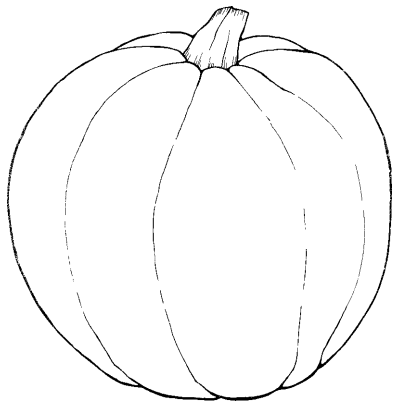
venison (deer meat)

Grain

wheat flour, Indian corn and corn meal; barley

Fruits

dried raspberries, strawberries, grapes, plums, cherries, blueberries, gooseberries



Vegetables

peas, squash pumpkins, beans, parsnips, collards, carrots, turnips, spinach, cabbages, onions.

Nuts

walnuts, chestnuts, acorns, hickory nuts, ground nuts

Other

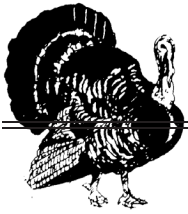
maple syrup, honey; butter, Holland cheese, eggs.

Name _____

Thanksgiving Foods

In the chart below, list all your favorite Thanksgiving foods. Then use the list of foods available to the Pilgrims to mark the column showing whether the foods you listed would have been available for the first Plymouth Thanksgiving.

My Favorite Thanksgiving Foods	Available at Plymouth Colony	Not Available



Name _____

Make Mine Turkey

Item (List below what you want to include in your turkey dinner.)	Cost (From food ads)	Number of People invited	TOTAL
Main Course: Turkey (1 lb turkey per person)			
Salad			
Side Dishes			
Desserts			
Beverage			

Name _____

Thanksgiving Table, Part One

Roll one number cube to see how many Indians are coming to Thanksgiving dinner. Place the correct number of pictures on the table. (See Part Two.) Write the fraction of the table that number represents on the chart below. Roll again to see how many Pilgrims are coming to Thanksgiving dinner. Place that number on the table, and write the correct fraction. Keep rolling until your table is full.

	How many Indians?	How many Pilgrims?	Fraction of Table
Roll # 1			
Roll # 2			
Roll # 3			
Roll # 4			
Roll # 5			
Roll # 6			
Roll # 7			
Roll # 8			
Roll # 9			
Roll # 10			

Total Number of Indians _____ Fraction of the Table _____ Written as Decimal _____

Total Number of Pilgrims _____ Fraction of the Table _____ Written as Decimal _____

Name _____

Thanksgiving Table, Part Two

