



## Thanksgiving Traditions and Myths

As with many holidays, Thanksgiving in America has evolved over time. The first recorded Thanksgiving meal may have been in the mid-1500s in Texas or Florida. Other [countries celebrate](#) their own version of Thanksgiving, complete with their own traditions, at different times of the year.

Here are a few myths, traditions, and myths about traditions surrounding Thanksgiving in America.

### Presidential Pardon

Each Thanksgiving Day since 1947, the President of the United States has been presented with three turkeys by the National Turkey Federation. One live turkey is pardoned and gets to live the rest of its life on a quiet farm; the other two are dressed for the Thanksgiving meal. The practice is said to have informally begun with Abraham Lincoln, who granted a pardon to his son Tad's pet turkey.



### Can Turkeys Fly?

Those who remember this [famous scene](#) from *WKRP* know that domesticated turkeys cannot fly. Wild turkeys, on the other hand, are smaller and more agile. They can reach speeds of up to 20-25 miles per hour on the ground and fly for short distances at speeds approaching 55 miles per hour. They also have better eyesight and hearing than their domestic counterparts.

### Watching Football

- The newly formed American Intercollegiate Football Association held its first championship game on Thanksgiving Day in 1876. At the time, the sport resembled something between rugby and what we think of as football today. By the 1890s, more than 5,000 club, college and high school football games were taking place on Thanksgiving, and championship match-ups between schools like Princeton and Yale could draw up to 40,000 fans.
- The Detroit Lions of the American National Football League have hosted a game every Thanksgiving Day since 1934 (except 1939-1944, during World War II).
- The Dallas Cowboys have hosted a game every Thanksgiving Day since 1966 (except 1975 and 1977).

### Cranberries

According to the [Cape Cod Cranberry Growers' Association](#), Native Americans used cranberries in a variety of foods, as a medicine to treat arrow punctures and other wounds, and as a dye for fabric. The Pilgrims adopted these uses for the fruit and gave it the name "cranberry" as its springtime drooping pink blossoms resemble a crane.

### Feeling Sleepy?

Turkey does contain the essential amino acid tryptophan, which is a natural sedative, but so do a lot of other foods, including chicken, beef, pork, beans and cheese. Though many people believe turkey's tryptophan content is what makes many people feel sleepy after a big Thanksgiving meal, it is more likely the combination of fats and carbohydrates most people eat with the turkey, as well as the large amount of food (not to mention alcohol, in some cases) consumed, that makes most people feel like following their meal up with a nap.

### Turkey Trot

The [Turkey Trot](#), modeled on that bird's characteristic short, jerky steps, was one of a number of popular dance styles that emerged during the late 19th and early 20th century in the United States. A simple dance that required little to no instruction along with the one-step, the two step, the fox trot and the bunny hug, which could all be performed to the

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ragtime and jazz music popular at the time.

**Benjamin Franklin wanted the turkey as the national bird?**

False, although he didn't like the bald eagle. His [comments to his daughter](#) regarding how the eagle design on the Great Seal looked more like a turkey have been exaggerated over time.

Here are some statistics to chew on.

Total number of Turkeys that are consumed on Thanksgiving Day	51,650,000
Total U.S. spending on Thanksgiving dinner food	\$2,983,000,000
Average household spending on Thanksgiving dinner (2017 Estimate)	\$64.03
Average household spending on Thanksgiving dinner in 2016	\$59.18
Average household spending on Thanksgiving weekend in 2016	\$342
Number of families that will travel for Thanksgiving	39,000,000
Number of places in the U.S. named Plymouth	37
Average cost per pound of Turkey	\$1.20

We hope you all have a wonderful, safe, and happy Thanksgiving.

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