



Episode 10: Thanksgiving in the United States

Hi! If this is your first time listening to our podcast, this is an opportunity for upper level English learners to practice listening skills and learn new vocabulary by listening to authentic conversations. For more information about ways to use this podcast, download notes for [students](#) or [teachers](#).

In today's episode Donielle and Khrystyna discuss the Thanksgiving and some common traditions for celebrating this holiday in the United States.

Here are a few of the traditional [Thanksgiving foods](#) that you will hear discussed:



Turkey

Stuffing

Sweet Potatoes

Macaroni and Cheese

Cranberry Sauce

Sweet Potato Pie

Pumpkin Pie

See the following pages for vocabulary and language focus from this episode.



Vocabulary: Words and Phrases Used in the Conversation

gloomy	Not bright and sunny; dark in a way that can give a sad feeling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's a bit cloudy and <u>gloomy</u> today.
harvest	the amount of crops that are gathered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They had a particularly good <u>harvest</u> that year.
get into [a topic]	Ph. verb: to go deeply into the topic or talk about the details of something. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I won't <u>get into it</u> too much. (the complicated history with American settlers and indigenous people)
settlers	people who go to live in a new place where usually there are few or no people and establish a community.
indigenous	native to or existing naturally in a particular region or environment (indigenous people, plants, etc.)
pilgrims	the English settlers who came to North America on the Mayflower and established the Plymouth Colony
bring [something] up	mention a topic; raise a matter for discussion or consideration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's very interesting that you <u>bring that up</u> (that you mentioned the topic)
quasi-	in some way or sense but not in a true, direct, or complete way <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before it was made an official holiday, Thanksgiving was a <u>quasi</u>-traditional event.
sabbath	the weekly day of rest and worship for a particular religion
fast (v.)	to eat no food for a period of time, often for religious purposes
a head start	An earlier start time (for some task or activity) than is typical or necessary. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They wanted to push Thanksgiving to a week earlier to give people a <u>head start</u> on Christmas shopping.
procrastinator	a person who procrastinates: delay doing something until a later time because they don't want to do it, are lazy, etc.
chaos	(<u>Pronounced</u> : KAY-aahss) complete confusion and disorder <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The stores have limited items, and there are many people, so it's <u>chaos</u>.
noon	the common way to refer to 12:00 (during the day vs. midnight - at night) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Let's meet at <u>noon</u> for lunch.
a must have	Something that is essential or highly desirable. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Turkey, stuffing, sweet potatoes, cranberries, and pumpkin pie are <u>must haves</u> for any Thanksgiving dinner.
splatter	to make (something) wet or dirty with large drops of liquid <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deep frying a turkey can be dangerous because hot oil can <u>splatter</u> on you.
vat	a large container (such as a tub or barrel) used especially for holding liquids: (ex. a <u>vat</u> of oil)
stale	typically of food: no longer good or appealing; no longer fresh (ex. <u>stale</u> bread)

Vocabulary: Words and Phrases Used in the Conversation

casserole	food (such as meat, noodles, vegetables, etc.) baked together and served in a deep dish (ex. sweet potato or green bean casserole)
leftovers	food that has not been finished at a meal and is often served at another meal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We cook lots of food on Thanksgiving so we have <u>leftovers</u> for several days.
interchangeable	capable of being used in place of each other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In most cases, the words “someone” and “somebody” are <u>interchangeable</u>.
distinct	Recognizably different from something else that is similar. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The terms sweet potatoes and yams are often used <u>interchangeably</u>, but they are <u>distinct</u> vegetables.
come over	In everyday speech, used much more commonly than “come to my house” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you want to <u>come over</u> for dinner tonight?
plop [oneself]	to allow your body to drop heavily or carelessly onto a surface <ul style="list-style-type: none"> after a big meal, people often <u>plop</u> [themselves] on the couch to watch TV.
food coma	a state of sleep or extreme laziness caused by eating a large amount of food.
whatnot	any of the other things that might also be mentioned <ul style="list-style-type: none"> After dinner, you watch TV, take a nap and <u>whatnot</u>.
munch	eat something as a snack between meals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Later on you get a little hungry, so you start <u>munching</u> on the leftovers.
glance	take a quick look at something or someone <ul style="list-style-type: none"> While preparing the food, I occasionally <u>glance</u> at the TV to see the floats.
float (n.)	a vehicle with a platform used to carry an exhibit in a parade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We watched all the beautifully decorated <u>floats</u> proceed down the street.
food pantry	a distribution center where hungry families can receive food. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many people volunteer at a <u>food pantry</u> during the holidays.

Cultural Notes: Thanksgiving Facts and Traditions

- The origins of the holiday are a bit unclear and often controversial, and the traditions have changed over the years. However, in modern days, Americans typically cook a big meal and spend the day with their family or a group of friends and give thanks for the things they feel fortunate to have in their lives. You can read more about the origins and traditions of Thanksgiving at [History.com](https://www.history.com)
- Thanksgiving is a Federal holiday in the United States and is always on the 4th Thursday of November.
- It's estimated that between 85-91% of Americans eat turkey on Thanksgiving.
- Another tradition involving turkey is [making a wish from the wishbone](#). The wishbone is attached to the breast meat of the turkey. After the meat has been removed, the wishbone is taken out and left to dry. When it is completely dry and brittle, two people each take one end of the bone, make a wish, and pull. Whoever ends up with the larger part of the bone supposedly will have their wish come true. You can read more about other Thanksgiving traditions [HERE](#).
- A strange Thanksgiving tradition involves the President of the United States. The president receives a gift of two live turkeys. At a White House ceremony, the president "pardons" the National Thanksgiving Turkeys so they can live on a farm (and not be eaten for Thanksgiving).
- A recent tradition is "[Friendsgiving](#)" where friends gather together for a meal, either on Thanksgiving day instead of having dinner with family or as a separate, additional event. It's not completely clear where this tradition and name originated, but it is often attributed to the show "Friends" which famously featured yearly Thanksgiving meals with the group of friends rather than the characters having dinner with their own families.
- Butterball, a popular turkey company, opens a [turkey hotline](#) each November and December to answer any turkey-related questions people may have.

Join the Conversation

- In your country, is there a similar holiday to celebrate the harvest and/or give thanks for the things people are grateful for? Discuss the meaning and traditions of the holiday. Are there special foods that are eaten specifically for this holiday?
- Take a look at the list of the most popular foods for Thanksgiving (images and link on first page). How many of these dishes have you tried? Do you like them? Which would you like to try? Which ones would you be least likely to try?
- Discuss the Thanksgiving traditions mentioned in the episode as well as others found in the link above or through an online search. Which of these sound most interesting to you? Which seem unusual or strange to you?
- Because Thanksgiving is about being grateful for the things we have in our lives, people often like to find ways during this time to give back to the community or to help others who are less fortunate. What are some ways that we can do this?
- Imagine you were going to create your own holiday and traditions modeled after Thanksgiving. Think about the perfect huge meal and relaxing activities for the **food coma** that comes afterward. What would be your **must haves** for the menu? What post-meal activities would you like to make a tradition?

Thanks for checking out our podcast!

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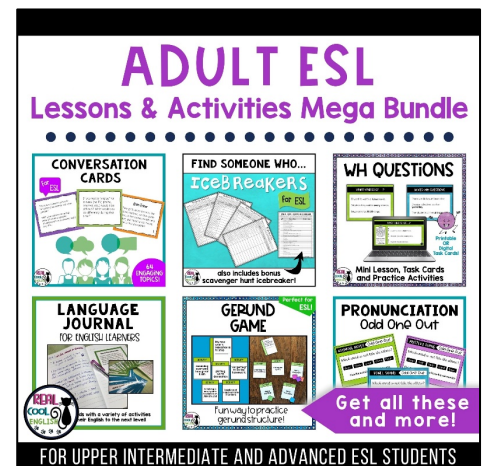
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