

American Feast

Thanksgiving is **the American Feast**.

Holidays like President's Day and Martin Luther King Day, are just ours, but they have no particular ritual attached. July 4th has fireworks, but those should be done on a large scale. On Thanksgiving, most US residents perform the same activity on the same day, and eat a similar meal.

While planning Thanksgiving dinner, I thought about making a meal where the whole menu evolved in this part of the world. Most comes from Central and South America, but nonetheless, America.



The turkey is a North American. Benjamin Franklin wanted it to be our National Bird – that would be interesting on the great seal of the United States!

The turkey must have stuffing; cornbread stuffing. Corn is another American, domesticated for 8000 years.

Sweet corn is a good vegetable. It is a recent development; only started being produced shortly before the Revolutionary War.

Instead of corn, we could have winter squash.

A brightly colored turban would work, or a blue-skinned Hubbard for a big crowd. Most

winter squash come from South America or Mexico.

What other vegetable? String beans are popular and easy. Some guests might prefer dry beans in chili. Whichever, they are all Americans.

Would it be Thanksgiving without sweet potatoes? They are neither yams, which come from Africa, nor potatoes. Sweet potatoes are close cousins of morning glory. How sweet potatoes came to be eaten in the South Pacific since prehistoric times, when scientists are pretty certain that they originated in South America, remains a question.

We must have mashed potatoes and gravy. More potatoes are grown around the world than any other vegetable: great source of nutrients, high in minerals and believe it or not, low in calories (until the butter and gravy). Potatoes, the western hemisphere's great horticultural gift, kept my Irish ancestors alive, so they are definitely important to me.

Tomatoes moved from the Andes in South America to our table. Sliced, salted, ripe tomatoes laid out on a plate are gorgeous, but if they did not ripen before nighttime temperatures dropped, they are tasty sliced and fried.

Salad vegetables are not major American crops, but there are interesting choices, like roasted sweet red peppers with a little oil and vinegar. Those who wanted their beans in the form of chili might prefer hot peppers. Peppers can have different colors, shapes and temperatures, but all are the same species that evolved in Mexico and Central America. We might some tomatillos into the chili. They originated in the same area.



Nobody **needs** dessert, but that hardly matters. What would better complete a Thanksgiving dinner than Indian pudding, made with corn meal, or pumpkin pie (cheat on the crust and spices)?

This is fun, but most of us are not only immigrants to Nevada, but also the **children** of immigrants from other parts of the globe. Serve tomatoes with lettuce (from Europe). Put onions from west Asia into your stuffing. Add spices from Africa to squash and to the pumpkin pie. Eat whatever you like.

And most important, give thanks.

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