

NUTRITION

Thanksgiving Is All-American

Turkey, cranberries, sweet-potatoes, pumpkins, corn bread, and other Thanksgiving foods are American in origin. You can set an all-American holiday table.

By WATSON DAVIS

► THANKSGIVING DAY is a purely American feast, begun traditionally by the Pilgrims, and continued through the centuries as a national day of religious and gastronomic significance.

Even today when all the foods of the world are available to enrich our daily diet, the Thanksgiving menu of the average household is still predominantly American in origin and production.

A sumptuous feast can be spread with only the kinds of food that the pre-Columbian Indians knew and taught the white men how to raise and use. An all-American Thanksgiving menu is tempting to a gourmet's taste and satisfying to a hungry, growing boy.

Turkey, cranberries, both white and sweet-potatoes, numerous sorts of beans, squash, pumpkin, tapioca, corn, including sweet corn and popcorn, peppers, avocado, cocoa and chocolate, oysters, pineapple, chestnuts, peanuts, brazil nuts, cashew nuts, and while not strictly a food the tobacco of the after-dinner cigarette, cigar or pipe. All of these are of strictly American origin. Even without excluding non-American dishes, the usual Thanksgiving dinner, with roast turkey, cranberry sauce, string beans, corn bread, pumpkin pie on the menu, is American enough. Those who wish can easily build in their kitchens a strictly made-in-America Thanksgiving bill of fare.

Turkey Center of Feast

The turkey that is the center of the usual Thanksgiving feast has a dual claim to the 100% citizenship. It is as native to the American continent as the Indians. Yet the turkey also has a record of early immigration from Europe.

This paradox arises from the fact that our domestic turkeys are not descendants, but cousins, of the wild turkeys that the Pilgrims hunted and ate. The wild turkeys are somewhat smaller than the domesticated sort and they still survive in a few of our timbered regions. The domestic fowl is descended from the Mexican species which the Aztecs had tamed and which their Spanish conquerors carried back home with them. After being re-imported from Europe, it has become well established in the United States, well to the north of its original range.

If both Benjamin Franklin and John James Audubon, great early American

scientists, had had their way, the turkey would have been the national bird on our national emblems instead of the bald eagle. There was sentiment, backed by the characters of the two birds, that argued in favor of the turkey as a national symbol. On Thanksgiving the turkey is certainly the national bird.

Cranberry sauce is as American as the roast turkey that it accompanies to the relish of the feast. Cranberries are found only on the American continent. The cranberry bogs of New Jersey are famous the world over. The cranberry prefers the low, wet lands of northeastern United States. The cranberry thrives from Newfoundland to Lake Erie and grows wild occasionally as far south as Virginia and Arkansas. The one most often seen on the market is the larger of two species properly recognized as cranberries.

"Fixin's" are indispensable to the turkey, and sweet-potatoes are indispensable to the "fixin's." Sweet-potatoes, as well as the white potatoes, misnamed Irish, are Amer-



AMERICAN WILD TURKEY—In this famous painting by John James Audubon is shown a bird such as the one that was the original main course of the Pilgrims' first Thanksgiving. It is actually a cousin of the domesticated turkey raised for the market today.

ican in origin. The sweet-potatoes, "taters" south of the Mason and Dixon line, are probably of tropical origin. At any rate, they thrive best now in the warmer parts of the country. Don't call them yams, as this name really belongs to an African plant which plays much the same role in its own country but has never come into wide use in the United States. The sweet-potato is a vine very closely akin to the common ornamental morning glory, while the yam is a vine related to the lily family.

White Potato Is Peruvian

The white potato is not Irish but Peruvian in origin. It got its misnomer because it was so widely grown there and Irish immigrants in the early 1700s brought large quantities of them to the United States. Not long after Columbus, the potato was carried to Spain from Peru, where the natives had domesticated it and cultivated it for thousands of years. Thence it was taken to other parts of Europe, including Ireland. The British introduced the potato into Bermuda from where it traveled to Virginia Colony in its early years. The white potato thus has a right to a place on the all-American Thanksgiving table.

For the salad course, there may be avocados, also called alligator pears, for these are native to this hemisphere. If there is to be something before the soup course, oysters on the half shell are appropriate, for the kinds eaten in America are distinctly our own. The sauce for the oysters made of tomatoes and peppers is also American in origin.

The bread should be corn bread, of course.

Corn is the greatest of the agricultural gifts of America to the world. When the first settlers from England found this grain being cultivated by the Indians they called it Indian corn to distinguish it from the use of the word corn to mean in British usage all kinds of grain, wheat, barley, rye and all the rest. Our corn is still maize to Europeans. Our history books tell us how corn, cached by the Indians of the region, saved the Pilgrims of Plymouth Colony during the terrible first winter of 1621.

Corn probably originated in the South American highlands but by the time the white men came its cultivation had spread as far north on this continent as the climate permitted. From Columbus onward every European coming to America met it. Even in those days there were varieties, sweet corn and popcorn as well as the kind that the Indians ground into bread and other staple foods.

Just where corn originated is hidden in its ancient use and the changes that it has undergone through long centuries of cultivation. Even if its wild parent survives, it

would be difficult to recognize it. Some botanists conjecture that the ancestor of the corn was the Mexican grass teosinte.

In the fields of Indian corn found by the early colonists, there were orange-yellow pumpkins growing much as they are grown today. The white men learned this agricultural trick from the Indians. The fruit pie is a typically American dessert and the pumpkin is a typically American pie material.

Pumpkin Called Turkish Cucumber

Pumpkin pie is as Thanksgiving as turkey, yet just 50 years after Columbus the American pumpkin had been so adopted in Europe that it was being called the Turkish cucumber. A learned herbal, published in Basel (Switzerland) in 1545 described the pumpkin unmistakably and observed that it was called Turkish cucumber because it arrived in middle Europe from Turkey. Watermelons, squashes, melons and cucumbers were all lumped together. Strangely enough, corn also got a Turkish label in this description, because it had been brought recently from Turkey, Asia and Greece. Plants rapidly became internationalists of forgotten origin in those early days. Pumpkins have relatives all over the world and the modern varieties have become much mixed with foreign stocks from Asia and Africa, which give us our amazing assortment of squashes, melons and gourds. But the yellow pumpkin that makes our pies is still of straight American ancestry.

Beans of many varieties deserve a place in the all-American Thanksgiving table, for they were extensively cultivated by all the native populations of the New World. They were placed in the graves along with corn and other plants as food offerings to the dead. So navy bean soup and string beans appropriately belong on the menu.

Nuts give Thanksgiving a double dessert, and they can be peanuts, pecans, brazil nuts, cashews or possibly even chestnuts and still be American. The chestnuts in the turkey stuffing will be of eastern Asiatic origin, strictly speaking, since the native American chestnut has been virtually wiped out by the blight that swept the country about two decades ago, killing every chestnut tree in its path. Resistant species from abroad have been introduced.

Peanuts were an important food crop in pre-Columbian times in Peru and Brazil. So, too, manioc was a basic food plant to the Indians of the Caribbean and Amazon basin. Since tapioca is made from manioc, this common dessert can be served at our Thanksgiving. So may another tropical plant, the pineapple. While it is now usually imported in cans from Hawaii, it is of tropical American origin.

Chocolate or cocoa is the fitting Thanksgiving beverage since the cacao tree, source of chocolate, is native to the tropical forest regions of the western hemisphere.

Columbus discovered tobacco for the European world and the Indians smoked it in pipes and cigars, chewed it and used it as snuff. Cigarettes at Thanksgiving therefore carry out the American tradition.

Today many of these all-American foods are delivered to our kitchens in cans or frozen. The pioneers were limited to more primitive methods of food preservation. That is one of the prime reasons for the fall harvest festival of Thanksgiving in its American form. There was reason for a big feast before they were limited by the foods of winter.

America is a land of rich and varied food supplies, capable of sharing its bounty with other areas of the world and willing to aid other countries to raise larger crops of food, often of western hemisphere origin. We are thankful for this at this Thanksgiving as it may help to bring peace to the future of a less hungry world.

Science News Letter, November 17, 1951

PUBLIC HEALTH

New Blood Test For Tuberculosis

➤ A NEW blood test for tuberculosis was reported by Dr. Edgar R. Maillard of the Nassau County, N. Y., Department of Health at the meeting of the American Public Health Association in San Francisco.

The test is a complement fixation test, of which the most familiar is the Wassermann test once widely used for detection of syphilis.

Antibodies to tuberculosis germs were detected by this new test in the blood serum of about 93% of tuberculosis patients.

Dr. Maillard believes, from preliminary studies, that a pattern of response to the test may evolve which will help doctors determine whether the disease is progressing or becoming arrested under treatment.

Science News Letter, November 17, 1951

THE CHEMICAL ELEMENTS
Compiled By
PHILIP S. CHEN, Ph. D.
PROFESSOR OF CHEMISTRY, ATLANTIC UNION COLLEGE

WALL CHART
(Actual Size 38 x 50 inches)
LATEST EDITION IS COMPLETE WITH 98 ELEMENTS
INCLUDING:
Francium, Promethium, Berkelium, Astatine, Technetium, Neptunium, Plutonium, Americium, Curium, Californium

CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING UNBELIEVABLY VAST AMOUNT OF INFORMATION CONCERNING EACH ELEMENT

- Periodic table (based on atomic numbers)
- Periodic table (based on atomic weights)
- Group and family
- Name in English, German, and French
- Derivation
- Discovery Date, discoverer, nationality
- Symbol and atomic number
- Arrangement of electrons in orbits
- Atomic weight
- Logarithm of atomic weight
- Isotopes and valence
- Crystalline form and color
- Specific gravity and density
- Melting and boiling points
- Heats of vaporization and fusion
- Heat conductivity
- Electrical resistivity
- Coefficient of thermal expansion
- Occurrence, preparation, and uses
- The radioactive elements
- The Uranium Series (4n+2)
- The Actinium Series (4n+3)
- The Thorium Series (4n)
- The Neptunium Series (4n+1)
- Synthesis of Transuranium Elements
- Map showing production in U. S. A.
- Distribution in earth crust, in ocean, in atmosphere, and in human body
- The Electrochemical Series
- Critical constants for gaseous elements
- Alchemical symbols
- Index to the elements

USED BY MORE THAN 1500 UNIVERSITIES, COLLEGES, HIGH SCHOOLS, AND INDUSTRIAL LABORATORIES

PRICES, prepaid
Single copies: \$1.50 Unmounted, 2 or more \$1.00 each.
10 or more for students 60¢ each plus desk copy.
Mounted on muslin with rollers \$7.00.

Order your copies today from
THE CHEMICAL ELEMENTS • BOX 315, S. LANCASTER, MASS.

This chart is guaranteed to be entirely legible and satisfactory.