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 unmistakedly 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.

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