



Animated Thanksgiving™

Thanksgiving Dinner: What was On The Menu?

What did the Pilgrims eat at the very first Thanksgiving in the year 1621?
Was it pumpkin pie and stuffed turkey? No, it wasn't!

Things we know the Pilgrims definitely ate at Thanksgiving

We do know certain Thanksgiving dinner items from a letter that a Pilgrim man named Edward Winslow wrote in 1621.

Wheat, corn, and barley – but no peas

“Our corn did prove well, and God be praised, we had a good increase of Indian corn, and our barley indifferent good, but our peas not worth the gathering”

*Note: to the Pilgrims, “corn” is what we call “wheat”.

To the Pilgrims, “Indian corn” is what we call “corn”

Waterfowl (ducks and geese)

“ Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling”

Deer meat

“...king Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation and bestowed on our governor”

Things we think the Pilgrims probably ate at Thanksgiving

We know from records of Mayflower Pilgrims certain things that were native to Plymouth or that they grew in their colony.

Seafood (fish, lobster, eels, clams, mussels)

Nuts (walnuts, chestnuts, acorns)





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Wild Fruit (strawberries, raspberries, cranberries)
(the fruit may have been dried from the summer)

Native American Vegetables (pumpkin, squash, beans)

English Vegetables that were brought with the Pilgrims and planted
(onions, leeks, lettuce, carrots, radishes)

Things the Pilgrims maybe ate at Thanksgiving

Cranberry sauce (made from mashed wild cranberries)

Chicken and eggs (there might have been a few chickens aboard the Mayflower)

Things the Pilgrims did NOT eat at Thanksgiving

There were no cows, goats, pigs brought to America on the Mayflower. The first cattle did not arrive until 1623 – so the first Thanksgiving was dairy-free!

- No milk
- No butter
- No cheese

Most flour did not survive the trip, or last the following year, so there would probably have been no baked goods or pie, except cornbread.

- No pumpkin pie
- No apple pie
- No bread
- No buns





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Activities

1) Write down your Thanksgiving Menu:

What is for dinner at your home this Thanksgiving?

What is definitely NOT on the menu?

2) Create your Fantasy Menu:

Write a menu of what your most fantastic dream Thanksgiving dinner would have.

What would it definitely NOT have?

3) Creative Menu Planning:

Pick one of the following guests, and write a Thanksgiving dinner menu for them. Include the appetizers, drink, main meal, and dessert!

a. A vegan (a person who eats no meat, eggs, or anything that comes from an animal)

b. A person with no teeth who must gum their food

c. A raccoon

d. A dinosaur

e. A robot

f. A pirate

