Facts for Features

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September 26, 2005

Thanksgiving Day
Nov. 24, 2005

What many regard as the nation's first Thanksgiving took place in December 1621 as the religious separatist Pilgrims held a three-day feast to celebrate a bountiful harvest. The day did not become a national holiday until 1863 when President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday of November as a national day of thanksgiving. Later, President Franklin Roosevelt clarified that Thanksgiving should always be celebrated on the fourth Thursday of the month to encourage earlier holiday shopping, never on the occasional fifth Thursday.

256 million

The preliminary estimate of the number of turkeys raised in the United States in 2005. That's down 3 percent from 2004. The turkeys produced in 2004 weighed 7.3 billion pounds altogether and were valued at $3.1 billion. (Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service at <http://www.usda.gov/nass/>)

Weighing in With a Menu of Culinary Delights

44.5 million

The preliminary estimate of the number of turkeys Minnesota expects to raise in 2005. The Gopher State is tops in turkey production. It is followed by North Carolina (36.0 million), Arkansas (29.0 million), Virginia (21.0 million), Missouri (20.5 million) and California (15.1 million). These six states together will probably account for about 65 percent of U. S. turkeys produced in 2005. (Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service at <http://www.usda.gov/nass/>)

649 million pounds

The forecast for U.S. cranberry production in 2005, up 5 percent from 2004. Wisconsin is expected to lead all states in the production of cranberries, with 367 million pounds, followed by Massachusetts (170 million). Oregon, New Jersey and Washington are also expected to have substantial production, ranging from 18 million to 52 million pounds. (Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service at <http://www.usda.gov/nass/>)

1.6 billion pounds

The total weight of sweet potatoes — another popular Thanksgiving side dish — produced in the United States in 2004. North Carolina (688 million pounds) produced more sweet potatoes than

any other state. It was followed by California (339 million pounds). Mississippi and Louisiana also produced large amounts: at least 200 million pounds each. (Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service at <http://www.usda.gov/nass/>)

998 million pounds

Total pumpkin production of major pumpkin-producing states in 2004. Illinois, with a production of 457 million pounds, led the country. Pumpkin patches in California, Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania and New York also produced a lot of pumpkins: each state produced at least 70 million pounds worth. The value of all the pumpkins produced by these states was about $100 million. (Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service at <http://www.usda.gov/nass/>)

2.2 billion bushels

The total volume of wheat — the essential ingredient of bread, rolls and pies — produced in the United States in 2004. Kansas and North Dakota — combined — accounted for over 25 percent of the nation's wheat production. (Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service at <http://www.usda.gov/nass/>)

$5.2 million

The value of U.S. imports of live turkeys during the first half of 2005 — all from Canada. Our northern neighbors also accounted for all of the cranberries the United States imported ($2.2 million). When it comes to sweet potatoes, however, the Dominican Republic was the source of most ($2.3 million) of total imports ($2.6 million). The United States ran a $1.7 million trade deficit in live turkeys over the period, but surpluses of $3.5 million in cranberries and $10.6 million in sweet potatoes. <http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/www/>

13.7 pounds

The quantity of turkey consumed by the typical American in 2003 and, if tradition be true, a hearty helping of it was devoured at Thanksgiving time. On the other hand, per capita sweet potato consumption was 4.7 pounds. (From the upcoming *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2006*)

The Turkey Industry

$3.6 billion

The value of turkeys shipped by the nation's poultry processors in 2002. Those located in Arkansas led the way with $581.5 million in shipments, followed by processors in Virginia ($544.2 million) and North Carolina ($453.0 million). Businesses that primarily processed turkeys operated out of 35 establishments, employing about 17,000 people. <http://www.census.gov/prod/ec02/ec0231i311615.pdf>

The Price is Right

$1.00

Cost per pound of a frozen whole turkey in December 2004. (From the upcoming *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2006*)

Where to Feast

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Number of places in the United States named after the holiday's traditional main course. Turkey, Texas, was the most populous in 2004, with 496 residents; followed by Turkey Creek, La. (357); and Turkey, N.C. (267). There also are 16 townships around the country named "Turkey," three in Kansas.
<http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/005268.html>
<http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/BasicFactsServlet>

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Number of places and townships in the United States that are named "Cranberry" or some spelling variation of the name we call the red, acidic berry (e.g., Cranbury, N.J.), a popular side dish at Thanksgiving. <http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/BasicFactsServlet>

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Number of places in the United States named Plymouth, as in "Plymouth Rock," legendary location of the first Thanksgiving. Plymouth, Minn., is the most populous, with 69,797 residents in 2004; Plymouth, Mass., had 54,604. Speaking of Plymouth Rock, there is just one township in the United States named "Pilgrim." Located in Dade County, Mo., its population was 135.
<http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/005268.html>
<http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/BasicFactsServlet>

107 million

Number of occupied housing units across the nation — all potential gathering places for people to celebrate the holiday. <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/hvs/historic/histt15.html>

Following is a list of observances typically covered by the Census Bureau's *Facts for Features* series:

Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Jan. 17) &
African-American History Month (February)
Valentine's Day (Feb. 14)
Women's History Month (March)
St. Patrick's Day (March 17)
Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month (May)
Older Americans Month (May)
Mother's Day (May 8)
Father's Day (June 19)
Back to School (August)
Labor Day (Sept. 5)
Grandparents Day (Sept. 11)
Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept. 15-Oct. 15)
Halloween (Oct. 31)
American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month
(November)
Veterans Day (Nov. 11)
Thanksgiving Day (Nov. 24)

The Fourth of July (July 4)
Anniversary of Americans with Disabilities Act (July 26)
The Holiday Season (December)

Editor's note: The preceding data were collected from a variety of sources and may be subject to sampling variability and other sources of error. Questions or comments should be directed to the Census Bureau's Public Information Office: telephone: (301) 763-3030; fax: (301) 457-3670; or e-mail: <pio@census.gov>.