COPAKE MOHICAN ALLYSHIP COMMITTEE

Indigenous Foods Day

Setting the Thanksgiving table with gratitude and growth

A holiday that keeps changing

Thanksgiving has never stood still. Each generation has reshaped it. And it is still evolving....

- **Before 1621.** Indigenous nations across the Northeast gave thanks for the harvest in their own ceremonies, as many still do.
- **1621.** At Plymouth, in the homeland of the Wampanoag (today's southeastern Massachusetts and eastern Rhode Island), only 53 colonists were left; half had died the first winter, which they survived partly on stolen Wampanoag corn taken from storage pits and graves. Their first harvest was grown with the teaching of Tisquantum, whose Wampanoag village of Patuxet had stood where Plymouth was built. In the fall of 1621, Ousamequin, the Massasoit (great leader) of the Pokanoket Wampanoag, whose village of Sowams stood near present-day Warren, Rhode Island, about 35 miles west of Plymouth, arrived with about ninety men and five deer.[1] This was no meeting of equals: the colonists depended on Wampanoag food and knowledge, while the Wampanoag, devastated by epidemic, sought allies against rivals such as the Narragansett, whose homeland lies across Narragansett Bay. By 1675 the alliance had collapsed into war.
- **1600s–1700s.** Colonial "thanksgivings" were days of prayer which called for particular blessings, sometimes including victories over Native nations.
- **1789–1863.** Washington proclaimed a national day of thanks. After a long campaign by editor Sarah Josepha Hale, Lincoln made it annual in 1863, in the midst of the Civil War, asking for penitence as well as gratitude.[2]
- **Late 1800s.** The 1621 meal was first called "the first Thanksgiving" in 1841, and the Pilgrim pageant spread through schoolbooks.[3] This is when the myth of a peaceful founding feast took hold.
- **1900s.** Parades, football, and in 1941 a fixed date: the fourth Thursday of November.
- **1970.** Aquinnah Wampanoag leader Wamsutta Frank James, of Martha's Vineyard, was barred from giving an honest speech at Plymouth's 350th-anniversary celebration. Native people and allies have gathered each Thanksgiving since on Cole's Hill for a National Day of Mourning.[4] That observance deserves our respect, and nothing here is meant to replace it.

The newest chapter

In 2020, Chef Nephi Craig, who is White Mountain Apache and Navajo (peoples whose homelands lie in present-day Arizona and the Four Corners region) and founded the Native American Culinary Association, proposed the next change. Keep the day off and keep the feast, he suggested, but call it **Indigenous Foods Day**, and let the food tell the true story.[5] Nearly every "traditional" dish, from turkey and corn to squash and cranberries, is built from Indigenous foods. He encourages people to honor what is native where they live. Like every change before it, this one asks us to remember more, not to give anything up.

In Mohican homeland

Copake sits in Mohican homeland, which stretched along the upper Hudson River and east into the Berkshires. For generations the Muh-he-con-ne-ok, "the People of the Waters That Are Never Still," planted corn, beans, and squash in the river valleys, fished the Hudson's spring runs, hunted deer, tapped maples, and gathered nuts and berries in the Taconic hills. From the 1620s on, epidemics of smallpox, measles, influenza, and typhus arrived with Dutch and English traders. By the tribe's own count, a nation of 25,000 or more had shrunk so far that by 1749 just

[1]Edward Winslow, letter of December 1621, in Mourt's Relation (1622), the only eyewitness account; William Bradford, Of Plymouth Plantation; Pilgrim Hall Museum.
[2]Washington, Thanksgiving Proclamation, October 3, 1789; Lincoln, Proclamation of Thanksgiving, October 3, 1863.
[3]Alexander Young, Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers (1841), a footnote to Winslow's letter. Congress fixed the fourth Thursday in 1941.
[4]Pilgrim Hall Museum, "National Day of Mourning"; United American Indians of New England (uaine.org).
[5]Valerie Vande Panne, "It's Time to Rename Thanksgiving," Native News Online, November 25, 2020.

Recipes for Indigenous Foods Day

One gift, and several family tables

RECIPE 1

Harvest Crisp

Shared by Pitāēpanuhkiw Lucy Grignon (Menominee/Mohican, Stockbridge-Munsee Community)

Lucy is an enrolled member of the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Nation and a direct descendant of the Menominee Nation—Muh-he-con-ne-ok being of the People of the Waters that are never still, and Menominee being of the Ancient Movers. Her family owns an Indigenous Homestead called Ancient Roots in Bowler, Wisconsin. They are working to reconnect to their cultural inheritance through the land, plants, medicines, and wildlife.

Lucy encourages us to use her recipe as a guide and be creative in the kitchen by using our favorite local and seasonal ingredients. She also asks us to be aware of any memories that pop up while cooking and enjoying her dish.

INGREDIENTS

Topping:

¼ cup flour
2 Tablespoons Maple Sugar
1 pinch of salt
4 Tablespoons cold butter, cubed
¼ cup rolled oats

Filling:

1 Winter Squash, peeled and cubed
2 Apples, peeled and cubed ¼ cup cranberries, dried or fresh
½ cup maple syrup
3 teaspoons flour
2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
1 pinch of salt

METHOD

Heat oven to 400°F. Mix toppings in a small bowl. Mix filling in a large bowl. Use an 8-inch square baking pan. Coat the pan with nonstick cooking spray. Pour in the filling and sprinkle the topping on. Top should be golden brown. In total the crisp should be in the oven for 50–55 minutes.

Note: Cube apples and winter squash to be roughly the same size, so they cook evenly and produce an equal bite. I love to top ours with a drizzle of caramel.

FROM EUROPE: Oats arrived with European colonists. One of the earliest records is Bartholomew Gosnold planting them on the Elizabeth Islands off Massachusetts in 1602. The "wild oats" now growing across California and the West are escaped Mediterranean species.

Salt & Pepper to taste

METHOD

Boil the potatoes and turnips in separate pans until tender. Drain well and turn both vegetables into one pan. Remove from the heat and mash thoroughly until smooth. Place back over a low heat, add the butter or cream and beat until smooth and fluffy. Stir in the chives and seasoning. Sprinkle a few chives on top of the mixture. Serve immediately whilst piping hot.

FROM THE AMERICAS: potatoes, first domesticated in the Andes.

RECIPE 4

Lüchow's Sauerbraten

Shared by Dan Haas (German)
From *Lüchow's German Cookbook* (1952)

Here is one I chose because my great grandfather cooked at Luchows --- a landmark German restaurant for years. Closed in the 80s. This has always seemed to me the classic German food.

Note: Start four days ahead. The meat needs to marinate in the refrigerator before cooking. The original recipe sears the beef in kidney fat; vegetable oil is used here.

INGREDIENTS

3 lbs Round Steak (beef)
1 Tablespoon Salt
½ teaspoon Pepper
2 Onions, sliced
1 Carrot, sliced
1 Celery Stalk, chopped
4 Whole Cloves
4 Peppercorns
1 cup Red Wine Vinegar
2 Bay Leaves
About 5 cups Water (enough to cover the meat)
2 Tablespoons Vegetable Oil
6 Tablespoons Butter, divided (1 for searing, 5 for the roux)
3 Tablespoons Flour
1 Tablespoon Sugar
5 Gingersnaps, crushed

METHOD

Wipe the meat with a damp cloth and season with salt and pepper. Put it in a deep bowl. Combine the onions, carrot, celery, cloves, peppercorns, vinegar, bay leaves and water, and pour over the meat. Cover and refrigerate for four days. On the fifth day, drain the meat, reserving the marinade. Sear the meat on all sides in the oil and 1 tablespoon of butter. Strain the marinade into the pot, bring to a boil, then lower the heat and simmer for about 3 hours. In a separate pan, melt the remaining butter, stir in the flour and sugar, and cook until dark brown. Stir this roux into the pot, cover, and simmer about 1 hour more, until the meat is tender. Move the meat to a warm platter. Stir the crushed gingersnaps into the pan juices and cook until thickened, then pour the gravy over the meat. Serve with potato dumplings and red cabbage.

FROM THE AMERICAS: potatoes (in the dumplings), first domesticated in the Andes.