

U.S. Census Bureau News

U.S. Department of Commerce • Washington, D.C. 20233

Facts for
Features

CB09-FF.22
Sept. 30, 2009 (*REVISED*)

Thanksgiving Day Nov. 26, 2009

In the fall of 1621, the Pilgrims, early settlers of Plymouth Colony, held a three-day feast to celebrate a bountiful harvest, an event many regard as the nation's first Thanksgiving. Historians have also recorded ceremonies of thanks among other groups of European settlers in North America, including British colonists in Virginia in 1619. The legacy of thanks and the feast have survived the centuries, as the event became a national holiday in 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.

250 million

The preliminary estimate of turkeys raised in the United States in 2009. That's down 8 percent from the number raised during 2008. The turkeys produced in 2008 together weighed 7.9 billion pounds and were valued at \$4.5 billion.

Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service <<http://www.nass.usda.gov/>>

Weighing in With a Menu of Culinary Delights

45.5 million

The preliminary estimate of turkeys Minnesota expected to raise in 2009. The Gopher State was tops in turkey production, followed by North Carolina (37.5 million), Arkansas (28 million), Missouri (21 million), Virginia (16.4 million) and California (15 million). These six states together would probably account for about two-thirds of U.S. turkeys produced in 2009.

709 million pounds

The forecast for U.S. cranberry production in 2009. Wisconsin is expected to lead all states in the production of cranberries, with 400 million pounds, followed by Massachusetts (190 million). New Jersey, Oregon and Washington are also expected to have substantial production, ranging from 16 million to 54 million pounds.

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1.8 billion pounds

The total weight of sweet potatoes — another popular Thanksgiving side dish — produced by major sweet potato producing states in 2008. North Carolina (874 million pounds) produced more sweet potatoes than any other state. It was followed by California (437 million pounds) and Mississippi (335 million pounds).

1.1 billion pounds

Total production of pumpkins produced in the major pumpkin-producing states in 2008. Illinois led the country by producing 496 million pounds of the vined orange gourd. Pumpkin patches in California, Pennsylvania and New York also provided lots of pumpkins: Each state produced at least 100 million pounds. The value of all pumpkins produced by major pumpkin-producing states was \$141 million.

If you prefer cherry pie, you will be pleased to learn that the nation's forecasted tart cherry production for 2009 totals 284 million pounds. Of this total, the overwhelming majority (220 million) will be produced in Michigan.

2.2 billion bushels

The total volume of wheat — the essential ingredient of bread, rolls and pie crust — produced in the United States in 2009. North Dakota and Kansas accounted for 34 percent of the nation's wheat production.

794,777 tons

The 2008 contracted production of snap (green) beans in major snap (green) bean-producing states. Of this total, Wisconsin led all states (320,200 tons). Many Americans consider green bean casserole a traditional Thanksgiving dish.

Source: The previous data came from the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service <<http://www.nass.usda.gov/>>.

\$9.2 million

The value of U.S. imports of live turkeys from January through July of 2009 — 99.3 percent from Canada. When it comes to sweet potatoes, however, the Dominican Republic was the source of 60.7 percent (\$2.8 million) of total imports (\$4.7 million). The United States ran a \$5.8 million trade deficit in live turkeys during the period but had a surplus of \$23.1 million in sweet potatoes.

Source: Foreign Trade Statistics <<http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/www>>

13.8 pounds

The quantity of turkey consumed by the typical American in 2007, with a hearty helping devoured at Thanksgiving time. Per capita sweet potato consumption was 5.2 pounds.

Source: *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2010*, Tables 212-213

<<http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/>>

The Turkey Industry

\$3.6 billion

The value of turkeys shipped in 2002. Arkansas led the way in turkey shipments, with \$581.5 million, followed by Virginia (\$544.2 million) and North Carolina (\$453 million). In 2002, poultry businesses whose primary product was turkey totaled 35 establishments, employing about 17,000 people.

Source: Poultry Processing: 2002 <<http://www.census.gov/prod/ec02/ec0231i311615.pdf>>

\$3.8 billion

Forecast 2009 receipts to farmers from turkey sales. This exceeds the total receipts from sales of products such as barley, oats and sorghum (combined) and peanuts.

Source: USDA Economic Research Service

<<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/farmincome/finfidmu.htm>>

The Price is Right

\$1.33

Retail cost per pound of a frozen whole turkey in December 2008.

Source: *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2010*, Table 717

<<http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/>>

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 2008, with 456 residents, followed by Turkey Creek, La. (361) and Turkey, N.C. (272). There are also nine townships around the country named Turkey, three in Kansas.

Source: Population estimates <<http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/013960.html>>

<<http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/BasicFactsServlet>>

<<http://www.census.gov/popest/cities/cities.html>>

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Number of places and townships in the United States that are named Cranberry or some spelling variation of the red, acidic berry (e.g., Cranbury, N.J.), a popular side dish at Thanksgiving. Cranberry township (Butler County), Pa., was the most populous of these places in 2008, with 27,194 residents. Cranberry township (Venango County), Pa., was next (6,795).

Source: Population estimates <<http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/BasicFactsServlet>>, <<http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/013960.html>> <<http://www.census.gov/popest/cities/cities.html>>

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Number of places in the United States named Plymouth, as in Plymouth Rock, the landing site of the first Pilgrims. Plymouth, Minn., is the most populous, with 71,486 residents in 2008; Plymouth, Mass., had 55,705. There is just one township in the United States named “Pilgrim.” Located in Dade County, Mo., its population was 128 in 2008. And then there is Mayflower, Ark., whose population was 2,231 in 2008.

Source: Population estimates <<http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/013960.html>> <<http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/BasicFactsServlet>> <<http://www.census.gov/popest/cities/cities.html>>

117 million

Number of households across the nation — all potential gathering places for people to celebrate the holiday.

Source: Families and Living Arrangements: 2008 <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/families_households/013378.html>

Observances typically covered by the Census Bureau’s *Facts for Features* series include:

African-American History Month (February)	Back to School (August)
Super Bowl	Labor Day
Valentine’s Day (Feb. 14)	Grandparents Day
Women’s History Month (March)	Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept. 15-Oct. 15)
Irish-American Heritage Month (March)/ St. Patrick’s Day (March 17)	Unmarried and Single Americans Week
Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month (May)	Halloween (Oct. 31)
Older Americans Month (May)	American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month (November)
Cinco de Mayo (May 5)	Veterans Day (Nov. 11)
Mother’s Day	Thanksgiving Day
Hurricane Season Begins (June 1)	The Holiday Season (December)
Father’s Day	
The Fourth of July	
Anniversary of Americans with Disabilities Act (July 26)	

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. Facts for Features are customarily released about two months before an observance in order to accommodate magazine production timelines. Questions or comments should be directed to the Census Bureau's Public Information Office: telephone: 301-763-3030; fax: 301-763-3762; or e-mail: <pio@census.gov>.