

## Thanksgiving Menus, Then and Now

**The menu in 1621:** The exact menu for the meal the Pilgrims and Wampanoag shared during the first Thanksgiving celebration in 1621 is unknown. Fortunately there are historical documents - letters from the governor of the American colony, William Bradford, and journal entries from a Pilgrim named Edward Winslow – that provide general descriptions of the hunting and fishing that occurred before the feast. Based on these descriptions and records of the foods grown at Plimoth Plantation, culinary historians can make a reasonable guess that the menu included the following meat, fish, fowl and plant-based foods:

### Meat, Fish and Fowl

Venison (deer meat)  
Wild Turkey  
Duck  
Goose  
Swan  
Quail  
Passenger Pigeon  
Mussels, clams, oysters & lobster (shellfish)  
Bass (fish)

### Plant-based Foods

Onions  
Dried Beans  
Lettuce  
Spinach  
Cabbage  
Carrots  
Dried Peas  
Corn (served as a corn mush or porridge, possibly sweetened with molasses)  
Plant roots such as Indian turnips and groundnuts  
Squash or pumpkins  
Turnips  
Beets  
Radishes  
Grapes  
Cranberries

**A Modern-day Thanksgiving menu:** Although families across the United States have many different Thanksgiving meal traditions, a 'typical' menu might include:

Meat, Fish and Fowl

Turkey (usually purchased in a grocery store, then roasted in an oven)

Plant-based Foods

Stuffing for the turkey (made with bread or cornmeal and seasoned with such food items as herbs, onion, celery, mushrooms, nuts and fruit)

Gravy (for the mashed potatoes, stuffing and turkey, made of drippings from the roasted turkey)

Cranberry Sauce (boiled cranberries and sugar)

Mashed Potatoes

Sweet Potatoes or yams or baked squash

Vegetables (such as green beans or carrots or Brussels Sprouts)

Bread rolls/biscuits

Pumpkin Pie (served as dessert)

Other pies (sometimes apple, mincemeat, sweet potato, cranberry or pecan pies are also sometimes served)