

# Americans eat 13 pounds of turkey a year

In fall 1621, early settlers of Plymouth Colony had 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.

The number of turkeys expected to be raised in the United States in 2011 is 248 million. That's up 2 percent from the number raised during 2010. The turkeys produced in 2010 together weighed 7.11 billion pounds and were valued at \$4.37 billion, according to the USDA.

Minnesota raises the largest number of turkeys – 46.5 million expect this year. Other high-volume turkey production states are North Carolina (30 million), Arkansas (30 million), Missouri (18 million), Virginia (17.5 million) and Indiana (16 million). These six states together account for about two-thirds of U.S. turkeys produced in 2011.

In 2009, Americans on average consumed 13.3 pounds of turkey plus 5.3 pounds of sweet potatoes – that's per person.