



# The Mini Page

Betty Debnam, Founding Editor and Editor at Large



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## Thanksgiving

# Native American Foods

What's on your family's menu for Thanksgiving? You may be eating the traditional turkey dinner, or your family may have created its own food traditions.

Will your meal include beans, corn or squash? These three foods were important to almost every tribe of Native Americans. They became known as the "three sisters."

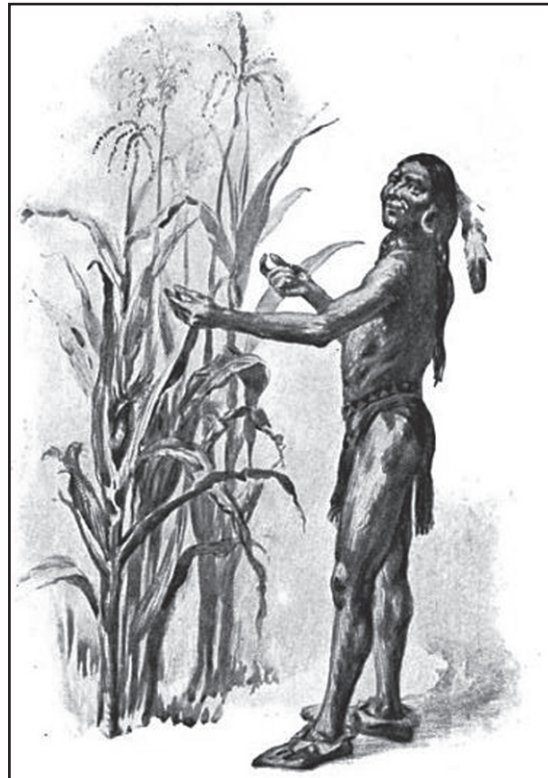
This week, as The Mini Page prepares for Thanksgiving, we get a taste of what early Native Americans ate, and a look at what the "first Thanksgiving" was really like.

### Polyculture

Unlike modern farmers, early Native Americans often planted different types of crops in the same field. (**Polyculture** means growing many types of plants.)

Rather than plowing in rows, they would plant seeds in mounds. Many times, they planted corn, beans and squash together. The tall corn acted as a pole for climbing bean plants; beans fertilized the corn, and the squash leaves cooled and shaded their roots.

The name "three sisters" was first used by the Haudenosaunee (ho-DEE-no-SHO-nee), or Iroquois, also known as the "people of the longhouse." They lived in what is now New York state.



The Wampanoag Indians lived in the area where the Mayflower landed in 1620. Tisquantum, or Squanto, pictured above, helped teach the Pilgrims how to grow corn using fish as fertilizer. Squanto had learned English while enslaved in Europe and during travels in England.

"Wampanoag" means "people of the first light" because they were first to see the sunrise.

The Wampanoag were hunters and fishermen. They also grew squash, beans, pumpkins, watermelon and sunflowers.

### Respect for food

Native Americans have a great respect for the plants and animals that support them. Some call plants the "hair of Mother Earth." Whether they grew the food themselves or hunted animals to eat, early native people were careful not to waste any part of the food.

For example, corn husks were used to make shoes, bags and dolls for children. Bison that were hunted for meat also provided skins for clothing, blankets and shelter, along with bones for tools and ceremonial objects.



photo courtesy Smithsonian Institution  
Museum of the American Indian

### Cultural uses

Food is also important to the culture in native communities. Before harvesting plants, people say prayers and make offerings to the Earth.

Among the Hidatsa people, for example, a young native man hoping to find a wife might have helped a neighboring family with corn husking so that he could spend some time getting to know the daughter. Items made from food were used in dances, songs and ceremonies.

# The Three Sisters

## Corn

Native Americans were the first people to **domesticate** corn, or grow it for food. This crop became so important because it has a very high **yield** — you get a lot out of each seed.

For instance, each ear of corn has 300 to 500 **kernels**, or seeds, and each corn plant has one or more ears.

However, Native Americans had to **adapt**, or change, the way they grew corn for different environments. In fact, in Illinois about 800 years ago, a community of native people near Cahokia successfully grew corn and harvested trees to build homes and other structures. But experts think **erosion**\* destroyed the crop, and the people may have hunted too much. The native people eventually left their community.

\* **Erosion** is the process of wind or water wearing away the layers of soil.



USDA photo by Bob Nichols

## Corn colors

Different types of corn are known by their colors. Native communities might grow seven or more varieties of corn for different uses. Some kinds are used to make bread or other foods for special ceremonies.

## Beans

Are there beans on your dinner table? Beans have a lot of protein.

Corn has a lot of calories. Together they were part of a balanced diet for early native people.

Native Americans allowed the beans to dry on the vine, then stored them and ate them later.

It was important to early people to grow crops that could keep for times when food was scarce. This type of farming is called **subsistence farming**. Communities were organized so that every person had a job in growing and storing food.



USDA photo by Lance Cheung

## Squash

Do you eat squash? There are many different types of this vegetable. Summer squash such as zucchini have thin skins and were eaten as they ripened.

Winter squash has a tougher outer skin and can be stored for long periods of time.

Squash provides a lot of vitamins and minerals that corn and beans do not have.

## Other foods

Along with the three sisters, native people might have grown other crops. They also hunted wild birds and bison; those who lived near water fished; and they gathered wild fruits, vegetables, and nuts and berries. These foods rounded out their diets.



USDA photo by Lance Cheung

## Ready Resources



The Mini Page provides ideas for websites, books or other resources that will help you learn more about this week's topics.

### On the Web:

- [nmai.si.edu/explore/foreducatorsstudents](http://nmai.si.edu/explore/foreducatorsstudents)
- [bit.ly/19aFcdq](http://bit.ly/19aFcdq)
- [iroquoismuseum.org/three\\_sisters.htm](http://iroquoismuseum.org/three_sisters.htm)

### At the library:

- "Food, Farming, and Hunting" by Emory Dean Keoke and Kay Marie Porterfield
- "What Was the First Thanksgiving?" by Joan Holub



## Thanksgiving TRY 'N' FIND

Words that remind us of Native American foods are hidden in the block below. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find: AMERICAN, BEANS, CORN, DOMESTICATE, EROSION, FISH, FOOD, HARVEST, HUNT, NATIVE, PILGRIMS, POLY CULTURE, RESPECT, SQUASH, SUBSISTENCE, THANKSGIVING, WAMPANOAG, YIELD.

WHAT'S ON YOUR FAMILY'S TABLE?



W	N	E	R	U	T	L	U	C	Y	L	O	P	K	A
J	A	A	E	T	A	C	I	T	S	E	M	O	D	M
N	N	M	T	X	M	R	E	S	P	E	C	T	C	E
O	F	R	P	I	L	G	R	I	M	S	G	V	F	R
I	O	C	O	A	V	Z	N	S	N	A	E	B	I	I
S	O	W	E	C	N	E	T	S	I	S	B	U	S	C
O	D	L	E	I	Y	O	T	S	E	V	R	A	H	A
R	H	U	N	T	H	S	A	U	Q	S	H	Y	P	N
E	Q	V	G	N	I	V	I	G	S	K	N	A	H	T

# Mini Spy . . .



Mini Spy and her friends are cooking Thanksgiving dinner together. See if you can find:

- sailboat
- bell
- ring
- arrow
- number 2
- balloon
- ear of corn
- carrot
- muffin
- pencil
- question mark
- ruler
- bird
- book
- lips
- kite
- letter E
- heart
- number 7



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## Rookie Cookie's Recipe A (Avocado) B (Bean) C (Corn) Salad

*You can eat this colorful salad alone or with tortilla chips.*

### You'll need:

- 1 ripe avocado, diced
- 2 (15-ounce) cans black beans, rinsed and drained
- 2 (15¼-ounce) cans corn, drained
- 1 medium bell pepper (any color), diced
- ¼ cup fresh cilantro
- juice from one small lime
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- sprinkle of salt to taste

### What to do:

1. Combine all vegetables and beans in large bowl.
2. Stir in lime juice and seasonings to blend.
3. Chill for 1 hour. Serves 10 to 12.

*You will need an adult's help with this recipe.*



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## Meet Woody Harrelson



photo courtesy Real FX and Relativity Media. © 2013 Turkey's Films, LLC. All Rights Reserved

Woody Harrelson is the voice of Jake in the movie "Free Birds." He has starred in many TV shows, including "Cheers," and in many movies, including "Doc Hollywood" and "The Hunger Games."

Woodrow, or "Woody," 52, was born in Midland, Texas, and spent much of his childhood in Lebanon, Ohio. He appeared in several plays at his high school there and studied theater arts and English in college.

Woody supports several charities, including UNICEF and groups working for environmental causes.

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## Gus Goodsport's Report

### Supersport: Ryan Kesler



**Height:** 6-2    **Birthdate:** 8-31-84  
**Weight:** 202    **Hometown:** Livonia, Mich.

You might say Ryan Kesler grew up on ice. He started playing hockey about the time he was knee-high to a stick.

It became his sport, his passion, his profession. Kesler is in his 10th season with the Vancouver Canucks; he was their first-round pick in the 2003 NHL draft.

Listed as a center, Kesler is all over the ice. He pushes the puck and stops it, too. In 2011, he won the Selke Trophy for stellar defense while also netting 73 points and helping his team to the Stanley Cup Finals.

Away from the arena, Kesler, a former Ohio State star, enjoys his family, golf and some Tweeting. But now it's "game on" again in the NHL, time for more spills, chills and thrills on ice.

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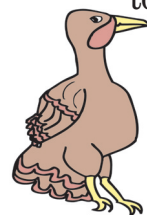
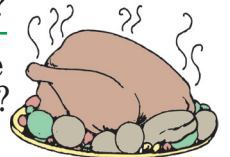


MIGHTY FUNNY'S

## Mini Jokes

All the following jokes have something in common. Can you guess the common theme or category?

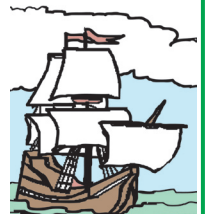
**Terri:** In which country would it make sense to celebrate Thanksgiving year-round?  
**Tim:** Turkey!



**Thomas:** When is it fun to serve a rubber turkey?

**Tammy:** At Pranksgiving!

**Tori:** If April showers bring May flowers, then what do May flowers bring?  
**Todd:** Pilgrims!



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# Thanksgiving Origins

Native Americans show their thanks to the Earth for providing food. They



recognize a reciprocal (re-SIP-ro-cal) relationship: The Earth provides, and the people give back to the Earth.

## Native challenges

In the region that includes what is now Rhode Island and Massachusetts, thousands of Wampanoag people lived in the early 1600s.

But between 1616 and 1620, about three-fourths of the Wampanoag people died from diseases brought to the area by European explorers. The smaller community faced danger from an unfriendly neighboring tribe.

## New arrivals

When the Mayflower arrived and Pilgrims founded Plimoth Plantation in December 1620, they didn't have enough supplies to survive the winter. It was too late to plant crops, and they didn't have the tools needed to do so.

## Helping each other

The Wampanoag saw an opportunity to make a trade. They would help the Pilgrims survive, and the Pilgrims would help the natives in case of an attack. One man who knew how to speak English, Tisquantum, taught the Pilgrims to hunt and fish and to plant and raise native crops.



This painting, titled "The First Thanksgiving 1621," is by artist J.L.G. Ferris. Although today we think of this celebration as one meal, the festival lasted three days and included many meals. People sat inside and outside.

image courtesy Library of Congress

## The Harvest Home

By the following fall, 1621, the Pilgrims had a successful harvest. They decided to celebrate with a festival they may have participated in as children in Europe.

The Harvest Home lasted for three days. It included feasts of food and drink, competitive sporting events and shooting of **muskets**, or guns.

A letter from Edward Winslow tells: "Amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms (firearms) ... with some 90 (Indians), whom for three days we entertained and feasted."

## What did they eat?

The Europeans killed wild duck, goose and turkey for the feast. The Native Americans provided five deer, which were roasted.

## Giving thanks

Part of Native American culture is giving thanks each time the Earth provides for humans' needs. In fact, the Haudenosaunee start each day with a Thanksgiving Address. It expresses thanks for other people, the Earth, the moon, animals, the sun, water, air and more.

Experts believe the Harvest Home festival was more of a celebration than a time of giving thanks. The festival may have been combined later with a European religious custom of giving thanks.

The Mini Page thanks Suzanne Davis, education specialist, National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, for help with this issue.

Next week, The Mini Page is all about national parks during the wintertime.

## The Mini Page Staff

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