

Thanksgiving

Holley Hewitt Ulbrich

Senior Scholar, Strom Thurmond Institute

This article is the sixth in a year-long series about economics and holidays.

Thanksgiving is a blend of religious and secular customs that is celebrated in different times in different places. It's supposed to be a harvest festival, a celebration of the bounty of nature, but since harvests cover a long period of time and vary by latitude, there is no perfect date. In the United States, it's past harvest in the north, perpetual harvest in a few areas, and the last of the garden bounty in much of the south. That's probably why Canada celebrates Thanksgiving six weeks earlier!

As we turn from the season of peaches, blueberries and watermelon to the season of apples, winter squash, and collards, we gather not only the food but also the family to huddle together against the coming darkness, cold, naked trees and dormant gardens. For one day we eat a sumptuous meal, watch parades and football games on television, maybe rake the last of the fall leaves—and turn our attention to the second phase of the two-day holiday, Christmas shopping.

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