



By Krystal Sato

# 国際交流員コーナー

## CIR's Corner

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Hello everyone! "CIR's Corner" is my monthly article about international exchange and cultures around the world. I will introduce a variety of interesting international topics.

### This Month's Topic: America's Independence Day



US Independence Day celebrates the ratification of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.

The United States of America was originally made up of 13 colonies ruled by Great Britain. Even though the colonists had to pay taxes, they were not allowed to send a representative to parliament, so dissatisfaction with the government and desire for independence grew. The Revolutionary War started in 1775, and the Declaration of Independence was adopted about a year later. However, Great Britain finally acknowledged US independence in 1783 by signing the Treaty of Paris.

Independence Day is the biggest summer event for Americans. Most people have the day off work, and spend the holiday with family and friends. There are numerous events held from morning until night. Everything is red, white and blue, and there are parades, concerts, picnics, and barbeques. Typical

food varies by region, but where I'm from in Seattle, we grill hamburgers, hot dogs, spare ribs, chicken, and salmon. For dessert, cake decorated with strawberries, blueberries, and whipped cream to resemble the American flag is popular.

At night, we watch fireworks. During Japanese summer, you can see a fireworks show somewhere almost every weekend, but in America, you can only watch fireworks on Independence Day or New Year's Eve. You can watch them on TV, visit a fair with food stalls lined up like a Japanese festival, or buy your own fireworks and light them yourself. (Personal fireworks are banned in some cities.)

My plans were the same every year. I always went to my best friend's house for a barbeque. She lived on a lake, so we lit our fireworks from her dock. Seeing all of the neighbors' beautiful fireworks over the lake is one of my fondest summer memories.





Here's some Independence Day trivia. The holiday has two names, "Independence Day" and "the 4<sup>th</sup> of July," but the latter is more common in everyday language. When Americans say dates, we typically say the month first and then the day, but the British say dates in the reverse order. So, why do we say "the 4<sup>th</sup> of July" like the British would? To me, "July 4<sup>th</sup>" sounds like just a regular day. British English tends to sound more formal, so for very special days, the British way is preferable even for Americans. What day could be more special for a country than its Independence Day? ★



## Independence Days around the World

The vast majority of the world's 196 countries were formed after 1800. Furthermore, by 1900, only 49 of today's countries were independent. That means around 75% of countries gained independence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Below are four examples of independence days around the world.





Country	Date of Independence	Independence from	About Independence Day
 Haiti	January 1, 1804	France	The only country formed by a successful slave revolt and the first in the world to abolish slavery. Soup Joumou, a winter squash and beef soup added to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List, is eaten every year.
 Mexico	September 16, 1810	The Spanish Empire	In a small town called Dolores, a Catholic priest rang his church bell and gave a riveting speech which started the Mexican Revolution. Every year, the president rings the same bell and reenacts the "Cry of Dolores" speech.
 Finland	December 6, 1917	The Russian Empire	Part of Sweden until the 19 <sup>th</sup> century, but was lost to the Russian Empire. Used the chaos caused by the Russian Revolution to its advantage in order to negotiate independence. Yearly traditions include windows decorated with white and blue candles and the televised "Castle Ball."
 South Sudan	July 9, 2011	Sudan	The most recent country to gain independence in the world. Since Sudan gained independence from the UK and Egypt in 1956, the northern and southern regions have fought two civil wars totaling nearly 40 years. 98.83% of voters supported independence in a 2011 referendum.

Photo credits: *Declaration of Independence* by John Trumbull,

*Barbeque* from Wikimedia Commons, *July 4<sup>th</sup> Fireworks, Washington D.C.* by Carol M. Highsmith,

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**Contact Information**

Ebetsu City Board of Education  
 Takasago 24-6, Ebetsu, Hokkaido 〒067-0074  
 Tel:011-381-1049 Fax:011-382-3434