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CIR's Corner

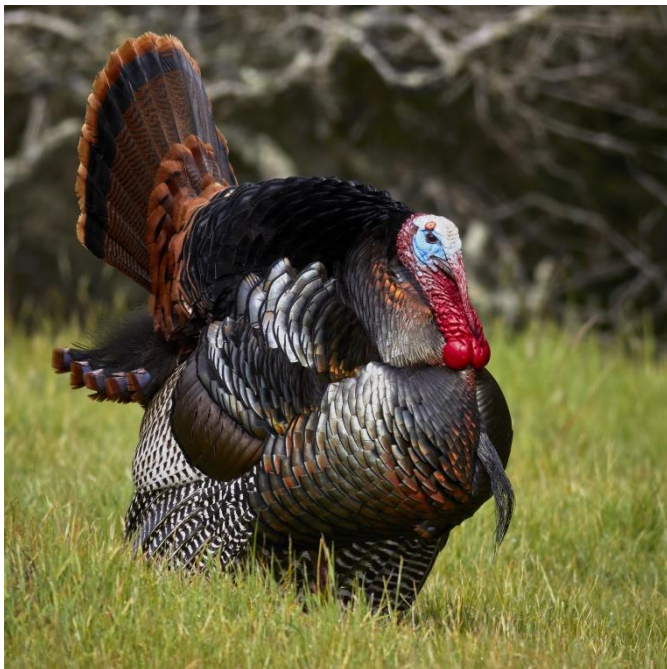
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Hello everyone! "CIR's Corner" is my monthly article about international exchange and cultures around the world. I will introduce a variety of interesting international topics.

This Month's Topic: Turkey

Every fall, Americans and Canadians celebrate Thanksgiving. Americans celebrate on the fourth Thursday of November, while Canadians celebrate on the second Monday of October. I wrote about the history and customs of Thanksgiving in my [November 2022 issue](#) of *CIR's Corner*, so this month, I want to focus on the star of the show: the turkey.



A male turkey

Turkey is not a familiar type of meat to Japanese people, but it is commonly eaten across North America. Wild turkeys are native to Mexico and the Southeastern part of the United States. They were first domesticated by the Mayans and Aztecs over 2000 years ago, and they were an important source of food for many Native American tribes.

When the Spanish colonized Mexico in the 16th century, they brought turkeys with them back to Europe, where the meat quickly became popular with aristocrats. Thanks to their large size, turkeys can feed more people than a roast duck or goose, so they became the standard dish for Christmas dinner and other special meals in the UK, Ireland, and other European countries.



Chalchiuhtotolin, "Jade Turkey," a god in Aztec mythology

Early settlers in the United States and Canada were able to eat turkey more regularly since it was so abundant. By the time Thanksgiving was declared a national holiday in America in 1863 and Canada in 1879, turkey was already a staple of the traditional Thanksgiving meal. It's so important to the celebration that Thanksgiving is often nicknamed "Turkey Day."

Supermarkets generally start their turkey sales about a month before Thanksgiving. Frozen turkeys are convenient because they can be purchased in advance and kept in the freezer. Americans usually have large freezers separate from their refrigerator, making it easy to store a turkey. However, turkeys take a long time to thaw, so they must be moved to the refrigerator a few days to a week before Thanksgiving. Some people prefer fresh turkeys, so they pre-order their turkey and pick it up closer to the holiday.

The most traditional way to prepare a Thanksgiving turkey is by roasting it. North American homes typically have large ovens that can fit a whole turkey. Since it is such a large bird, it takes several hours to cook thoroughly. A small, 3-kg turkey might take around two and a half hours to cook, while a large, 13-kg turkey could take up to six hours. A stuffed turkey, meaning the body cavity is filled with toasted cubes of bread, diced celery, diced onions, minced garlic, and herbs, takes longer to cook than an unstuffed turkey. Since turkeys require a long roasting time, the lean breast meat tends to dry out. This can be avoided by cooking the stuffing separately and filling the bird before serving, brining (soaking it in salt water before cooking), or even cooking the bird breast side down.



A turkey roasting in the oven

Alternatively, deep frying a turkey in a special outdoor turkey fryer cuts down the cooking time and keeps the meat moist. The turkey is placed in a large pot full of oil, which is heated on a propane burner. It's a popular way to cook a turkey in the South, but it can be dangerous. The hot oil can cause serious

burns or catch fire. And if the turkey is not completely thawed, it can explode. There are a few accidents every Thanksgiving.

In addition to Thanksgiving dinner, turkey is enjoyed in a variety of other ways all year round. It is often eaten as a "lunch meat," meaning it is sliced and used in sandwiches. Turkey is low in fat and high in protein, so it is a popular health food. Ground turkey can be used instead of ground beef to make lower-calorie versions of hamburgers (called turkey burgers), meatballs, and tacos. And turkey bacon is a low-fat alternative to pork bacon.

Finally, I'll close this article by telling you about a unique American Thanksgiving tradition: the National Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation. Every year, the National Turkey Federation presents a pair of turkeys to the president of the United States to be pardoned, meaning the turkeys will not be eaten. The pardoned turkeys are sent to a farm where they can live out the rest of their lives peacefully. Former President Ronald Reagan started this tradition, and the ceremony attracts significant media attention each year. I wonder which turkeys President Trump will pardon this year. ★



President Donald Trump pardoning a turkey named Butter in 2019

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