MAEBASHI CITY HALL
CULTURAL AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS DIVISION
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MAEBASHI FOCUS

Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) Newsletter

Howdy y'all!

As we've finally reached November, I, along with many people in Maebashi, have finally begun pulling out our coats and sweaters as the temperature has started to cool. I, for one, am very glad to be done with the heat (and especially the rain) and am looking forward to the chilly days ahead.



First Thanksgiving

Well, weather aside, for this issue of Maebashi Focus, I'd like to discuss one of the biggest November holidays in America: Thanksgiving! For those in Japan, this holiday may not be very familiar, but in America, it is one of the most widely celebrated holidays of the year.

Thanksgiving in the United States has a long and complicated history. While many Americans associate the holiday with the famous 1621 harvest celebration at Plymouth, Massachusetts, Thanksgiving traditions actually existed among European colonists before then. The 1621 celebration is often referred to as the "First Thanksgiving," and it was a three-day harvest celebration attended by the English colonists and members of the Wampanoag people.

Over the following centuries, days of thanksgiving continued to be celebrated in different parts of America. However, Thanksgiving did not become an annual national holiday until much later. In 1863, during the American Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national day of Thanksgiving to be observed on the last Thursday of November. Since then, Thanksgiving has become one of America's most important annual holidays.



Thanksgiving turkey

Although Thanksgiving has religious roots, today it is celebrated by Americans of many different religions and backgrounds. For many families, the holiday begins with a large Thanksgiving feast, and some families say a prayer or take turns sharing what they are thankful for before eating.

In my family, Thanksgiving has always been a time for extended family to get together and eat amazing food. Thanksgiving meals are typically made up of a variety of dishes such as stuffing, cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes, and vegetables, along with a large turkey that is shared among everyone. That being said, Texas families such as mine will often add a Texas flair to the feast with foods such as tamales, honey-baked ham, cornbread, and pecan pie.

This year, I will be in Japan for Thanksgiving. Of course, given that I am away from home, I will not be able to celebrate Thanksgiving the way I typically do. Nonetheless, I plan on celebrating it with some other American JETs in Gunma. I'm not sure I can cook a whole turkey, but hopefully we can still have a fun time together while we're away from our families in America!

When I was young, I always felt a bit awkward talking with distant aunts, uncles, cousins, and the like, whom I hadn't seen since the previous year. Nowadays, however, I cherish those memories of good food, fun conversations, and spending time with family. It's interesting how, as you get older, you sometimes come to appreciate things that you once took for granted.

Living abroad has made me appreciate those family traditions even more. For many people who move to a foreign country, it can be difficult to adjust to the reality that the holidays and celebrations they grew up with can no longer be celebrated in quite the same way. Although I won't be able to spend Thanksgiving with my family this year, I know I'll still have a great time celebrating with friends here in Gunma. I'm thankful for the opportunity to live and work here, for the great relationships I've made, and for all the fun days ahead!

No matter where you're from or what you believe, if you're feeling a bit festive on November 26th, take some time to think about what you're thankful for this year and celebrate with your family, friends, and loved ones.

Happy Thanksgiving, and see you next time!



Texas-style Thanksgiving food