



ESL Podcast 91 – Thanksgiving

GLOSSARY

grateful – thankful; happy and humble about having something

* Ian was grateful for the medicine his friend brought over when Ian was ill.

no exception – not different; the same way others are

* Everyone in Makeda's family enjoyed skiing, and Makeda was no exception since she loved it just as much as everyone else.

extended family – any family members other than parents and their children, including grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins

* Shane rarely saw his extended family, and there were aunts and uncles he had never even met.

motto – a phrase one lives or acts by; a phrase used to guide someone's actions

* Regina never thought about the past or the future, and her motto was "Live for today."

the more the merrier – the more people involved, the happier things will be; having more people involved is better than having few people involved

* Kyle did not expect so many people to come to his party, but he was happy about the crowd and said, "The more the merrier."

turkey – a type of bird that is bigger than a chicken but is cooked and eaten the same way a chicken is; a type of bird usually eaten at holiday dinners or other special dinners

* During Thanksgiving dinner, Mrs. Arviso prepared a huge turkey that was big enough to feed 15 people.

to carve – to cut into pieces so that people can eat it, usually meat

* Deandre carved the roast beef before serving it to his family.

fixings – side dishes; the foods that are served with the main dish or meat of a meal

* The dinner had all of Fran's favorite fixings, including green beans, rice, and broccoli.

mashed potatoes – potatoes that are boiled, crushed, and mixed with milk to make them soft and creamy

* Blake added plenty of milk and butter to the mashed potatoes to make them very smooth.



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stuffing – a mixture of foods, usually including bread, that is placed inside turkey, chicken, or another meat, cooked inside the meat, and served with the meat during a meal

* Chia only liked stuffing made with rye bread, and she did not like the taste of stuffing made with other types of bread.

to go wild – to act in a crazy or unusual way; to do something that is unwise or unneeded, usually because of excitement

* Kirk had extra money to spend so he went wild and bought a bunch of new movies and video games.

side – side dish; food that is eaten with the main part or meat of a meal

* At the restaurant, Bev ordered chicken with a side of rice.

dessert – sweet food that is eaten as a treat after the main meal ends

* After dinner, Alphonse had chocolate cake for dessert.

pumpkin pie – a pie filled with pumpkin (a large, round orange-colored fruit) that was cooked and crushed until smooth; a shell or base made of dough that is filled with a sweet mixture made from crushed, creamy pumpkin

* Miss Carranco grew pumpkins in her garden, which she used to bake pumpkin pie every autumn.

football – a game or sport with two teams, where each team tries to get a brown oval ball through the posts or bars that make up the other team's goal, either by carrying the ball, kicking it, or throwing it

* Keith and his friends enjoyed watching football, but each person supported a different team.

rowdy – crazy or wild; loud and excited

* The crowd was so loud and rowdy that Lesha was unable to hear her friends over the noise.

to root – to cheer; to hope for one team or person to be the winner of a game or competition

* Juan was upset when the team he had rooted for lost.

fistfight – a fight where the people involved hit each other with closed hands; a disagreement that causes people to physically hit each other

* Someone had to end the argument or the people involved might get into a fistfight.



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CULTURE NOTE

“Happy” and “Merry”

In the U.S., it is common to hear someone wish a friend “Happy Birthday” or “Merry Christmas.” What do “happy” and “merry” mean?

Both “merry” and “happy” are used in expressions to wish other people a good holiday or celebration. When we use it in this “context” (situation), both “merry” and “happy” mean the same thing. However, these two words actually have slightly different meanings.

“Happy” means feeling or showing pleasure and “contentment” (being satisfied with one’s life or one’s situation). If you get a “promotion” (better, higher-level job) at work, you may feel happy. If you wake up to a beautiful day with good weather, you may feel happy.

“Merry” means cheerful and “lively” (active; full of energy). While happy is used all the time these days, merry is considered an old-fashioned word that is most often found in older “literature” (books and other writings). If you read Charles Dickens or Louisa May Alcott, for example, you may come across sentences like these:

- “The streets were full of merry people celebrating the new year.”
- “Everyone at the party had a merry time.”

These days, the only time you’ll see or hear “merry” is in the phrase “Merry Christmas.” For most other holidays and celebrations, we use “happy,” such as in: “Happy New Year,” “Happy Halloween,” and “Happy Thanksgiving.”



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 91: Thanksgiving.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 91. I'm Dr. Jeff McQuillan, your host, from the Center for Educational Development in Los Angeles – in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Today's podcast is about Thanksgiving or Thanksgiving Day, a holiday celebration in the United States. Let's get started!

[start of story]

Thanksgiving reminds us to be grateful, but for a lot of people, the holiday also means a weekend of eating a lot and watching football, and my family is no exception.

My family likes to have a traditional Thanksgiving dinner each year. We invite people from our extended family. We also invite close friends, especially those who don't have family in town. When it comes to Thanksgiving dinner, our motto is "The more the merrier."

Our dinner, of course, starts with a big turkey, baked in the oven. I always carve it before it's served. Then we have the fixings. We always have mashed potatoes, stuffing, yams, cranberries, and corn on the cob. Some years, we go wild and have other vegetables and sides. And for dessert, we have pumpkin pie. My wife is not a big fan of pumpkin pie so for her, we also have ice cream.

After we have a really big meal, we usually watch football on TV. Things usually get pretty rowdy since there are always fans on both sides rooting for their own team to win. Last year, my uncle almost got into a fistfight with my nephew. Luckily, no one, and no furniture, was harmed. That was a relief!

[end of story]

We're talking about Thanksgiving in this podcast. "Thanksgiving Day" is a celebration in the United States. It's an "official holiday," which means all the government offices are closed. The post office and schools are closed. Most people have the day off; they don't have to work. It is a celebration that, according to the traditional story, celebrates "the pilgrims." "The pilgrims" (pilgrims) were some of the first settlers or colonists to come from Europe to the



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United States back in 1620 – 1620's, I should say. And the "Thanksgiving Day" celebrates the first, or one of the first "harvest festivals." A "harvest festival" is a celebration that you have in the fall. When the end of the growing season – so, you gather in all your food and you have a festival. Many cultures have a "harvest festival" and in the United States, it's Thanksgiving Day. It's always the fourth Thursday of November.

In other countries, there is also Thanksgiving Day. In Canada, there's a Thanksgiving Day on the second Monday in October. But here in the United States, it's in November. "Thanksgiving" means, of course, to give thanks, to be grateful, and to be "grateful" (grateful) means that you are thankful or that you are appreciative of all the good things that you have. In my family – in most families, it's a day to get together with your family in the afternoon or evening and to have a big meal and I said that my family is "no exception," meaning we are not an exception. We're not unlike other people. We are like other people. We also have a big meal and a celebration.

In my family, we have a traditional Thanksgiving dinner and I'll tell you what that is in a second. We invite people from our "extended family," and your "extended family" is your aunts, your uncles, your nephews, your nieces. Your "immediate family" is just you, your brothers and sisters, the children and so forth. "Extended family" includes grandma and grandpa and aunts and uncles and cousins and so forth. We always invite people who don't have "family in town" and to say I have "family in town" means I have members in my family who live here. We often use the expression "I have family back in Minnesota." Some of my family members are I Minnesota. Well, I say that. You wouldn't say that probably.

The Thanksgiving dinner, I said, we have a "motto." A "motto" (motto) – a "motto" is a slogan. It's a saying, usually an official expression. For example, in the United States, if you look on our coins, our money, you'll see the "motto" "In God We Trust." That's one of our official, if not our official, "motto." Our motto for Thanksgiving dinner in my family is "The more the merrier." The expression "the more the merrier" means the more people that come, the better it is, so we want as many people to come as possible. "The more the merrier." "To be merry" (merry) means to be happy, so the more people, the happier we are. I said our dinner is a "traditional Thanksgiving dinner" and that usually means, in the United States, a turkey, a big 10, 15, maybe 20 pound turkey, which, of course, is a bird, and you put the big turkey in an oven and you "bake" it. That is, you cook it in an oven. "To bake" is to cook in an oven. And after it's ready, you take it out and you "carve" it. "To carve a turkey" means to cut the meat off of the turkey. We use the verb "to carve." Normally, "to carve" means that you take a knife to wood, for



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example, and you put letters into the wood. That would be “carving into the wood” or “carving the wood.” This is a verb we use for cutting turkeys.

I also said that at our traditional dinner we have “fixings.” “Fixings” is all of the other things besides the turkey, besides the main course. All the – what we would call “the sides” – that is the “side dishes,” the dishes in addition to the main dish, which is the turkey. Some “sides” that are common for Thanksgiving are “mashed potatoes.” “Mashed potatoes” – “potato,” of course, is a round white, usually, inside, and you “peel” the potato. You take the skin off. “To peel” (peel) is to take the skin off of the potato. And you usually bake it or you boil it in water and then you mash it up with a fork, put a little milk and butter. Hmm, I’m getting hungry just talking about it. “Stuffing” – “stuffing” is bread crumbs, usually with some other spices, onions. Everyone has a different recipe for “stuffing.” It’s what you put inside the turkey. It bakes inside the turkey. It’s like a bread side dish. You can also make stuffing or what we would probably call “dressing.” That’s the same thing but you cook it outside the turkey. “Yams” are also common. “Yams” (yams) – I don’t like yams myself but many people do and it’s – another name for a “yam” is a “sweet potato.” It’s a type of – think of it as a type of potato. “Cranberries” are traditional for Thanksgiving. “Cranberries” are small red berries. “Corn on the cob” is – some families have “corn on the cob.” The “cob” of corn is what the corn grows on. It’s the middle that you don’t eat but you take the corn off of the cob or you can cook it on the cob and then eat it. Put butter and salt or something and then you can eat the corn right from the cob.

Sometimes, I said, we “go wild” and have other vegetables and dishes. “To go wild” can mean a lot of things but normally it means you’re going beyond what you normally do. It could also mean getting very excited. “Don’t go wild.” Don’t get too excited. But here it means – it’s used somewhat comically, somewhat as a joke, to mean that we do more than what we normally would do. For dessert, or the least meal – part of your meal, the sweet part of your meal, the traditional pie is a “pumpkin pie.” A “pumpkin pie” – “pumpkins,” of course, become ripe or ready to eat in the fall – a big round orange “pumpkin” – and people make “pumpkin pie.” My wife is not a “big fan” of pumpkin pie. To say you’re a “big fan of” means you really like it. Well, my wife is not a “big fan” and so, for her we have ice cream.

Normally on Thanksgiving, there are “football” games and here, we mean American football and it’s traditional to – for some families, to sit around and watch football games on Thanksgiving Day. I said that my family can get a little “rowdy.” “Rowdy” (rowdy) means noisy and loud and making a lot of noise because there are people who are rooting for their own team to win while they’re watching it on TV. “To root” (root) – “to root for” someone or some team means



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that you are hoping that they will win. So, I graduated, for example, from the University of Southern California and I'm "rooting" for them to win the national football championship.

My uncle, I said, almost got into a "fistfight" with my nephew. A "fistfight" – well, first of all, a "fight," you know, of course, is – two people have an argument and they start hitting each other. Your "fist" is your hand, but your hand when you put it in a position like a ball to hit someone. That's your fist. So, a "fistfight" is when two people are hitting each other with their "fists" (fist). Finally, I said, "No one was hurt," and, "That was a relief." When we say, "That was a relief," we mean that something bad could've happened but it didn't. For example, "My sister almost missed her flight from San Jose," means she almost didn't make it to the plane but she made it and "that's a relief," something that could've happened but it didn't.

Now let's listen to the story this time at a native rate of speech.

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[end of story]

From Los Angeles, I'm Jeff McQuillan. We'll see you next time on ESL Podcast



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