



AS AMERICAN AS APPLE PIE

Thanksgiving is the original American holiday. Celebrated since Mayflower days and a national holiday by President Lincoln's declaration, Thanksgiving celebrations are surprisingly similar across the entire nation. Traditional menus include turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy, stuffing or dressing, cranberry sauce and assorted vegetable side dishes containing sweet potatoes, green beans, or corn. We debated the stuffing v. dressing issue last year. This year's great debate takes on Thanksgiving dessert. Given the expression "as American as apple pie," wouldn't you expect it to appear as THE *de facto* Thanksgiving classic? As a scholar of American foodways, I needed to know.

I travel frequently for work and most especially around the Thanksgiving holiday. Several of my dearest friends traditionally invite me to join their families to celebrate. I always offer to bring something, but the offer is mostly rebuffed. One year, a friend did ask me to bring THE red velvet cake. Now this particular friend majored in home economics and grew up in Alabama. She has at least 10 different recipes for this confection. I come from Boston and had no idea what red velvet cake was, never mind how to make one. I brought what I knew how to bake-- a pumpkin pie.

This event led me to study the holiday and ask what is THE Thanksgiving dessert? Much like the stuffing/dressing debate, there are different camps. There appear to be three: pie, cake and other. Pie, whether baked or not, is categorized by a pastry or crumb crust surrounding some sort of filling. Cake is a sweet food made by baking a mixture of flour, eggs, sugar, fat and flavorings. These are often frosted, glazed, iced and sometimes decorated. This category also includes cupcakes. Other is a catchall classification for puddings, ice cream, cookies and breads.

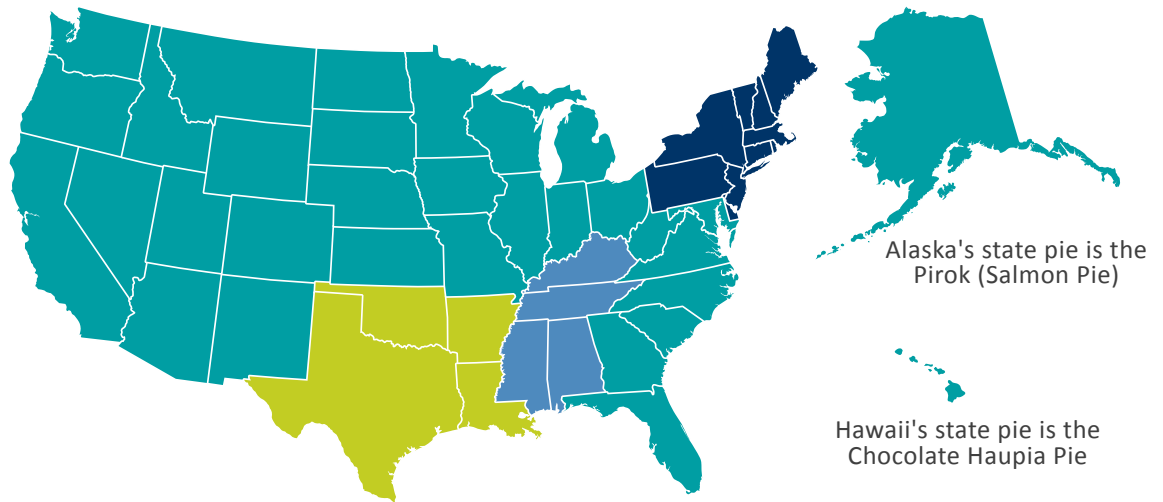
My internet search for Thanksgiving desserts led me to several foodie websites which provided the data I needed. Of the thousands of requests for Thanksgiving dessert recipes at *chowhound.com*, 46% were for pies. Cakes and Other followed with 28% and 26%, respectively. If pie is the most popular Thanksgiving Day dessert, what types of pie are we talking about?

General Electric provided the data. In a 2018 survey of 1,550 Americans across the country, it appears that the preference for Thanksgiving pies is regional and falls into three categories: apple, pecan, and pumpkin. Pumpkin pie is by far the nation's most popular. Apple is favored in the Northeast and pecan dominates Texas and its neighbors. The rest however are strongly in the pumpkin camp. In looking back over the *chowhound.com* recipes, many of the cakes and other confections were pumpkin inspired. But to be fair to my Alabamian friend, there was one recipe for red velvet cake. And red velvet cake is delicious when made perfectly. Pumpkin pie is pretty good regardless of the baker's skill.

When it comes to dessert, Thanksgiving or otherwise, my advice is to fully enjoy the very best possible version of it. Savor it. Eat it slowly. And give thanks to the skilled hands that created it.

AMERICA'S FAVORITE HOLIDAY PIES

- PUMPKIN
- PECAN
- APPLE/PECAN (TIE)
- APPLE



Happy Thanksgiving everyone!

So, what do I make of the expression “as American as apple pie?” It may have more to do with Independence Day than Thanksgiving, but it’s legacy is dyed-in-the-wool American. Apples hold an important place in our history, a history that begins with the birth of Johnny “Appleseed” Chapman in 1774. The son of a farmer, he spent 40 years clearing land and planting apple trees throughout the Midwest. His legacy persists in the many American expressions that include the word apple. Though my personal favorite is “an apple a day keeps the doctor away,” I can think of a few others. Can you add to my list?

1. **The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.**
2. **One bad apple can spoil the whole bunch.**
3. **He is rotten to the core.**
4. **She is the apple of my eye.**
5. **How do you like them apples?**
6. **Ever visited the Big Apple?**
7. **It’s like comparing apples and oranges.**



PATRICIA M. FULLER, PHD
Director, Wellness Engineering

Patricia M. Fuller has dedicated the last 20 years to designing and delivering wellness programs. Her events earn consistently excellent ratings for her holistic approach and her real world application.

Prior to concentrating in wellness, Pat taught accounting and auditing as an adjunct professor at the University of Tampa. She earned her CPA designation in 1992 as a senior associate for Coopers & Lybrand. She has a Masters in Business Administration from the University of Utah.

Pat has a PhD in holistic nutrition. In 2010, she was board certified by the Holistic Nutrition Credentialing Board. Her areas of research include stress management and eating habits. She is a Certified Wellcoach and a member of the Institute of Coaching. She is an annual attendee to The Harvard Medical School Conference, Coaching In Leadership & Healthcare.

Have a Question? Email it to Dr. Pat: pfuller@bks-partners.com

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