

# What is Harvest Festival?

article from Wikipedia

A **Harvest Festival** is an annual celebration which occurs around the time of the main harvest of a given region. Given the differences in climate and crops around the world, harvest festivals can be found at various times throughout the world. Harvests festivals typically feature feasting, both family and public, with foods that are drawn from crops that come to maturity around the time of the festival. Ample food and freedom from the necessity to work in the fields are two central features of harvest festivals: eating, merriment, contests, music and romance are common features of harvest festivals around the world.



In North America, Canada and the US each have their own Thanksgiving celebrations in October and November. Certain religious holidays, such as Sukkot, have their roots in harvest festivals.

In Britain, thanks have been given for successful harvests since pagan times. Harvest festival is traditionally held on the Sunday near or of the Harvest Moon. This is the full Moon that occurs closest to the autumn equinox (about Sept. 23). In two years out of three, the Harvest Moon comes in September, but in some years it occurs in October. The celebrations on this day usually include singing hymns, praying, and decorating churches with baskets of fruit and food in the festival known as Harvest Festival, Harvest Home or Harvest Thanksgiving.

*Rockton World's Fair, an annual harvest festival in Southern Ontario, Canada Photo by M. Rehemtulla*

In British churches, chapels and schools and in Canadian churches, people bring in food from the garden, the allotment or farm. The food is often distributed among the poor and senior citizens of the local community, or used to raise funds for the church, or charity.

In the USA, many churches also bring in food from the garden or farm in order to celebrate the harvest. The festival is set for a specific day and has become a national holiday known as Thanksgiving which falls on the fourth Thursday in November. In both Canada and the USA it has also become a national secular holiday with religious origins, but in Britain it is both a Church festival giving thanks to God for the harvest, and a more secular festival remembered in schools.

*Offerings during a harvest festival at the Native Polish Church (2007)*

In Asia, the Chinese Moon Festival (中秋節) is one of the most widely-spread harvest festivals in the world. In India, Makara Sankranti, Thai Pongal, Uttarayana, Lohri, and Magh Bihu or Bhogali Bihu in January, Holi in February–March and Onam in August–September are a few famous harvest festivals.



At Holy Cross, we will be celebrating Harvest Festival on Sunday 2nd October and the gifts which are brought to church will be shared with the poorer people of our community thanks to the Salvation Army who will take our foods and distribute them in their usual community-spirited manner.