

Canadian Thanksgiving

"Autumn leaves shower like gold, like rainbows, as the winds of change begin to blow." – Dan Millman

Thanksgiving! The time of roast turkey and ham has come, or at least that's how it is in the movies. No matter what, however, it's almost certain that the lot of us will be giving thanks for at least something – be it the golden leaves, whatever food we cook up - traditional or not – or just being able to enjoy the season in relative peace.

For those of us who live in the 'north' part of North America, however, things are a little different than below the border. Canadian Thanksgiving differs from its US counterpart in a few ways. First of all, it is not a universally recognised holiday, remaining unobserved in several states, including Atlantic Canada.

That doesn't stop those living North from treasuring the holiday, however. Canadian thanksgiving enjoys its own, rich, unique culture, and the date remains one of the most important weekends on the calendar, although at a different date – the second Monday of October, rather than the fourth Thursday of November. This is attributed to the fact that Canadian thanksgiving is closer to its origins as a harvest festival when compared to its southern counterpart, and is somewhat isolated from the religiously-orientated nature of the United States' date also.

European settlers brought over these harvest festivals that had been established since times immemorial in England and mainland Europe, and they soon took footing in the New World alongside the colonists themselves. The first celebration of 'Thanksgiving' is documented as being held by the Englishman Martin Frobisher in 1579, while it is speculated that French settlers held the first feast of thanks in Canada during the year 1604.

Eventually, it came to be federally regulated, with the Canadian Parliament declaring upon January 31, 1957 that it was 'A Day of general Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the bountiful harvest with which Canada has been blessed – to be observed on the 2nd Monday in October, and, today, Thanksgiving in Canada remains alive, well, and vibrant if not more so than its American counterpart.

Feasting isn't the only thing special happening in fall, however with many other exciting events such as the Markham Fair, pumpkin and wine festivals, and most importantly Halloween. Indeed, fall is certainly a time of much celebration and admiration for nature in beautiful Canada.

The leaves may turn orange, the summer may end, but not to worry – because we can feel safe that they will be green and plenty before long. So sit back and watch them fall, and enjoy the show of magical colors. Happy thanksgiving, everyone!