

Harvest Festival

Story By: Andrew Frinkle

South Korea has several major holidays, much like we do. However, lots of them are different from ours. Let's take a look at the similarities and differences between their holidays and America's, focusing especially on their version of Thanksgiving or a Harvest Festival.



They do celebrate Christmas, but it's a lot lower key. It's a time to hang out with friends and families and exchange small gifts – not the huge pile of stuff under the tree and food overload that it is with us! Easter and Halloween are pretty much unknown over there. They do celebrate New Year's Eve and Day, but it is often on a different calendar, so it might be in January or February. They have their own Independence Day, but it is not on July 4th obviously. They do a Buddha's Birthday instead of some of our President's Day or other religious holidays we might find familiar. Koreans were traditionally Buddhist, after all. They also have a sort of Thanksgiving, which I want to explain.

Korean Harvest Festival or ChuSeok, as it is called, is similar to our Thanksgiving, but also very different. It is at the beginning of fall, so usually September. It is earlier than ours, which is at the end of November. They give thanks for a big harvest, but they didn't have pilgrims and Indians in their history. Instead, they give thanks to their ancestors. We might go around the table and say what we are thankful for, but they take it one step further! They even prepare the favorite foods of their parents and grandparents who have passed on. The foods are put on a table and offered with prayers to those who came before them. It is a show of respect for one's elders and for one's ancestors.

They don't really eat Turkey for thanksgiving either. Rice is in every Korean meal, and several house favorite foods will be included. ChapChae, which is a type of stir-fried Korean noodle served with vegetables and meat, is usually served. There might be some sliced pork, fried dumplings, fresh fruit like apples and pears, and grilled fish, too. It really depends on what the family likes to eat. Very few families would be without SonPyeon, which is a rice cake often filled with sweet bean paste. It's a traditional dessert, along with other kinds of rice cakes, which are chewy and delicious.





ChuSeok is also a time to wear Korean traditional clothing, called HanBok. The men will wear colorful trousers and light-colored long-sleeved shirts. A vest usually goes over them. Women and girls will wear large skirts, often red in color, and striped vests with many colors. Not everyone still wears these traditional clothes, but they are very pretty to see, and people like to see people in traditional clothes. It is not weird or strange, as we might find it if people walked around dressed as pilgrims for the day.

Korean Thanksgiving sure is different from ours, isn't it! Would you like to participate in the festivities? Wouldn't it be neat to partake of this holiday and others like it from around the world? Talk about your favorite holidays with friends.

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Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What holiday in America is ChuSeok most like?
 - A. Christmas
 - B. Easter
 - C. Thansksgiving
 - D. New Year's

2. What is the name for the Korean Rice Cake Dessert?
 - A. SonPyeon
 - B. ChapChae
 - C. HanBok
 - D. ChuSeok

3. What is the name for Korean traditional clothing?
 - A. SonPyeon
 - B. ChapChae
 - C. HanBok
 - D. ChuSeok

4. TRUE OR FALSE: Koreans eat Turkey on the day of their Harvest Festival.
 - A. True
 - B. False

5. TRUE OR FALSE: Koreans have their Harvest Festival in December.
 - A. True
 - B. False

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