

Grateful for the harvest

Religious and secular harvest celebrations

In pre-industrial times, the harvest and prosperity of a rural community were inextricably linked. This was reflected in a variety of secular and religious celebrations held after the crops had been brought in. Secular harvest festivals were particularly important and played a significant role in village life until the mid-19th century.

These customs not only emphasised the important role of the harvest in feeding the community, but also the prosperity of the landowner. With the presentation of the harvest crown or harvest wreath to the landowner, he was asked to cover the costs of the festivities. Even today, such customs are still part of harvest parades, which are usually organised by village associations. Ritual objects now only have symbolic meaning.

Since the Middle Ages, Christian harvest festivals with blessings of the crops have also been part of religious harvest customs. Even today, altars are decorated with harvest symbols or grain, fruit and vegetables. In addition, appeals for donations for people in poorer regions of the world are now often part of harvest festivals.

Fun fact:

Thanksgiving is a national holiday in the United States and the most important family celebration of the year. The celebration commemorates the first harvest festival of the Pilgrim Fathers in 1621. Due to the settlers' treatment of the indigenous population of America, the festival is now also viewed critically.