

A Cornucopia of Thanksgiving Activities

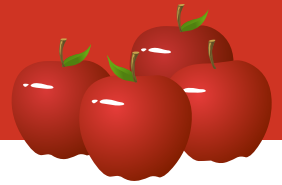




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Make An Apple Turkey



This is a great craft to keep kids engaged in the spirit of Thanksgiving. All you need are a few apples, some toothpicks, marshmallows and raisins and you're all set! When they're done, the kids will have made a fabulous table decoration everyone can enjoy.

What You Need:

- Large, red apple
- Large and mini-sized marshmallows (one large, at least 20 small)
- Toothpicks (seven per apple should be enough, but have extras on hand in case they break!)
- Raisins (15–30)
- Candy corn (one)
- Scissors

What You Do:

1. Place the apple on a flat surface and remove the stem as close to the apple as possible.
2. Carefully poke a toothpick into the apple on the outer rim behind where the stem was.
3. Keep placing the toothpicks in this fashion until you have six of them fanning out behind the stem to represent the tail feathers (three clustered on one side and three on the other).
4. Once the toothpicks are in place, slide a raisin onto the first one, then a mini marshmallow, then another raisin, in a pattern. Repeat on all six toothpicks. Be sure the pattern ends with the mini marshmallow at the top so the tip of the toothpick is no longer exposed. This is a great opportunity to practice patterns.
5. Now, on to the face of the turkey! Place another toothpick in front of the six toothpicks on the opposite side of the stem. Gently press the large marshmallow onto the toothpick.
6. Using scissors, snip tiny slits into the spots where the eyes will go. Press a raisin into each eye hole. (Parents may want to help the kids with the scissors, since you'll want to make a very small slit.)
7. Using the pointy end of the candy corn, poke it into where the nose goes and you've got your turkey!

Make a whole family of turkeys, or one for each guest to take home.

Edible, Personalized Cornucopia of Appreciation



A cornucopia is a traditional symbol of plenty, often overflowing with flowers, fruits, and husks of corn. Each of us, too, is also overflowing with our own “cornucopia” of gifts, strengths, and abilities.

In this extra-special Thanksgiving project, you will create personalized cornucopia place settings for your guests. These are just as delicious as they are heartwarming.

Note: these cornucopias use sugar cones, as well as fresh berries, nuts, and chocolate — but feel free to adapt them to your own preferences, or even personalize them for each guest. This project also adapts well to other holidays and celebrations.

What You Need:

Wrappers:

- List of guests
- DIY Sugar Cone Wrapper printable template (provided on the next page)
- Printer and paper
- Non-toxic pens
- Non-toxic adhesive

Ingredients:

- Sugar cones (one per guest; have extra on hand in case some break during assembly)
- Fruits, nuts (such as your favorite trail mix!), and other small food items for filling the cones. Note: Be sure to take into account any of your guests' allergies or dietary restrictions.
- Small plates

What You Do:

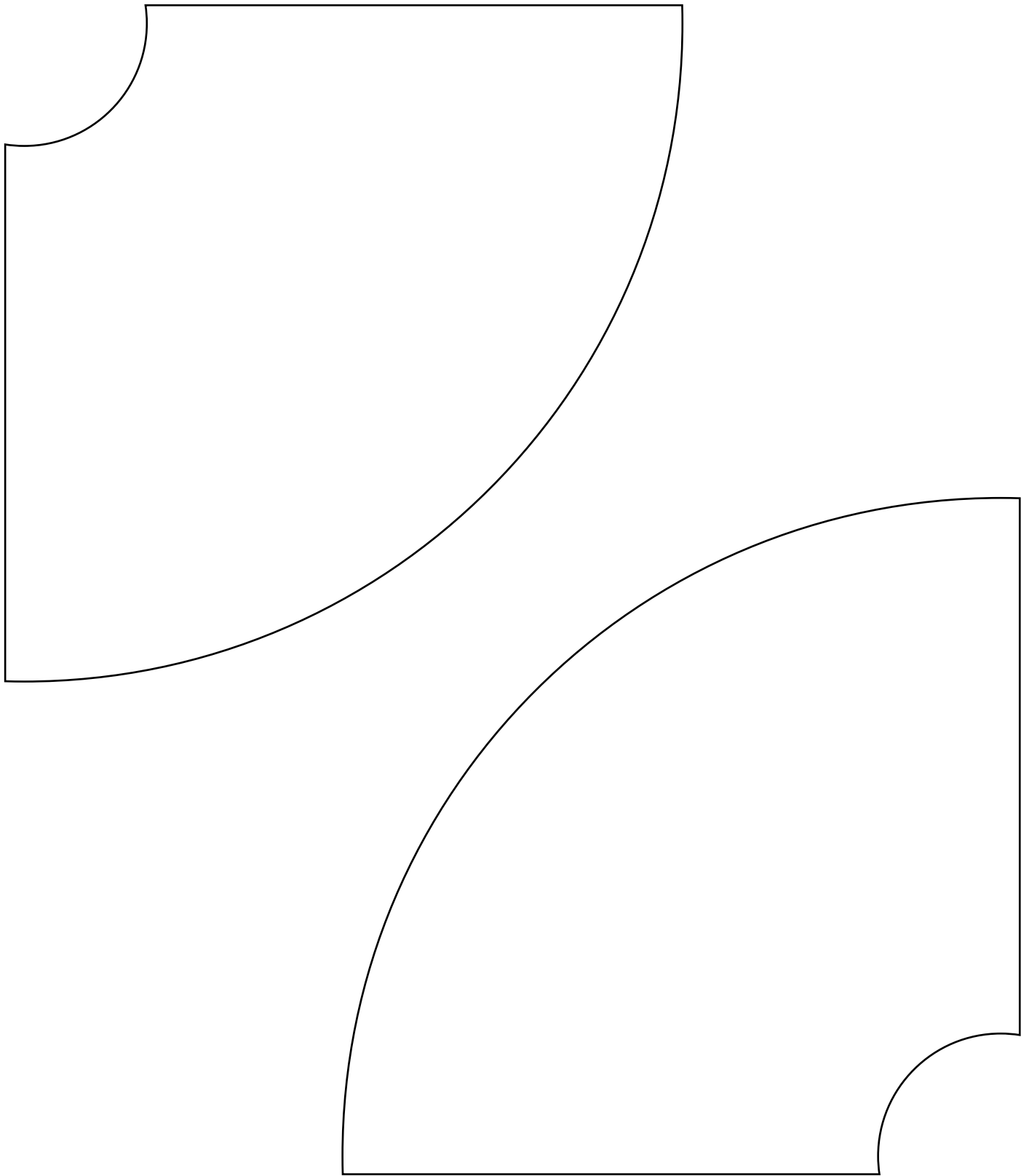
Wrappers:

1. Working from your guest list, think of a quality that each person has in abundance. Intelligence? Humor? Kindness? Cute cats? Jot down for each.
2. Cut out the DIY Sugar Cone Wrapper template provided on the next page.
3. Using non-toxic pens, write the name of each guest on one of the templates, surrounded by the “cornucopia” of traits unique to each guest. Feel free to embellish with stickers, ribbons, or other non-toxic decorations.
4. Carefully glue or tape the wrapper shut. Make sure the adhesive is fully dry before undertaking the next step.

Assembly:

1. Carefully place a sugar cone in each wrapper.
2. Position the cone on each plate. Arrange your chosen fillings (such as fruit and nuts) inside the cone, so that it looks like it is overflowing with nature's bounty.
3. Repeat until you have created a cornucopia for each guest.
4. Place one at each table setting.

DIY Sugar Cone Wrapper Template



Tissue Box Thanksgiving Turkey



Make this turkey craft with your child to get into the Thanksgiving spirit! Using a few household items, such as an old tissue box, a toilet tissue tube, and construction paper, your child will make an adorable turkey that can serve as a special Thanksgiving decoration or a cute centerpiece for the dinner table.

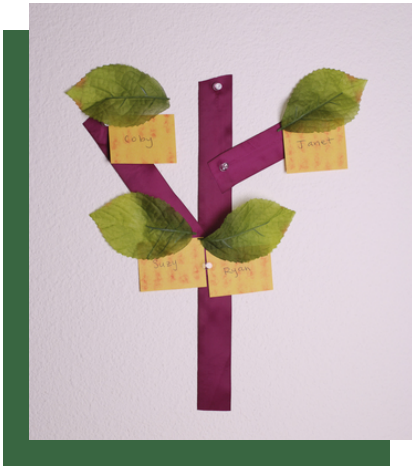
What You Need:

- Cube-shaped tissue box
- Toilet tissue tube
- Construction paper
- Small square of felt
- Tape
- Glue
- Scissors
- Craft knife (adults only!)
- Craft sticks
- Craft feathers

What You Do:

1. Cover a tissue box and a toilet tissue tube with brown construction paper and tape or glue into place.
2. Cut out the hole in the tissue box where tissues normally pop out.
3. Turn the box, so the opening is on top. Tape the tube onto one side of the box with the tube extending above the top edge of the box for the turkey's neck and head.
4. Cut out the eyes, and a wattle from construction paper. Fold the square of felt in half for the beak. Glue all the features into place.
5. Cut out tail feathers from colored construction paper and tape each feather onto a craft stick.
6. Away from your child, use a craft knife to cut slits into the side of the box, opposite the head. Then, with your child's help, place the craft stick feathers into the slits to form a colorful tail.
7. Glue some craft feathers onto the body of the tissue box. Put your creation on the table and you've got a great centerpiece for Thanksgiving!

Family Tree Nametags



What You Need:

- Cardstock, in any color(s) you like
- Fine-point marker
- Pin backs
- Silk autumn leaves
- Glue or rubber cement
- Long ribbons for hanging
- Double-sided tape

If Thanksgiving in your family involves lots of relatives your kids may only see a few times a year, this fun and easy project is a great way to help your child learn who's who, practice their handwriting and get a little Thanksgiving crafting done. Leafy name tags are simple to make, and displaying them in a festive family tree is a guaranteed crowd pleaser.

What You Do:

1. Start by making a list of your holiday attendees, including yourself and your child! Help your child cut out a piece of cardstock for each family member that will be at your Thanksgiving celebration. The name tags should be about 3"x4" in size.
2. Let your child copy the name of each guest onto one of the cardstock name tags. Help your child place a small amount of glue onto the back of each name tag, then press the pin back firmly in place. Let the name tags dry.
3. Meanwhile, you and your child can go through the silk leaves and choose the ones you want to use. Depending on the size of the leaves and your name tag, you may want to put one leaf or a few leaves on each tag. Arrange the leaves on the tag until you and your child achieve a look you like—just be sure the person's name stays visible—and glue the leaves in place on the name tag. Set the name tags aside again to dry.
4. While your name tags are drying, choose a patch of wall to create your tree. Use your ribbons to create the shape of a tree with branches. Tape the ribbons to the wall with your child's help. Once your tree is done, pin the name tags to the ribbons, putting your immediate family's names on the trunk of the tree and filling in the branches with the rest of the family members' names. You can even organize the names by maternal and paternal sides. Make a game of it by asking your child where she thinks each name tag should go. If you have friends coming to dinner, you can create a special Friends branch. Make your tree bigger if need be.

When your guests arrive, they'll be very impressed. Make sure to thank your young decorator too. It is Thanksgiving, after all!

Write a Thanksgiving Proclamation



George Washington declared November 26, 1789 as a day of public thanksgiving and prayer with his National Thanksgiving Proclamation, but he was not the first to issue one. In fact, Thanksgiving proclamations date all the way back to 1723!

Now it is your child's turn to write a Thanksgiving Proclamation of their own. It may be the newest in a long line of proclamation—but with a little tea or coffee magic, it will look like just like one of the early originals. Not only is this project a meaningful way to embrace the spirit of the holiday, it's also a chance to practice gratitude and thankfulness for the things we experience throughout the year.

What You Need:

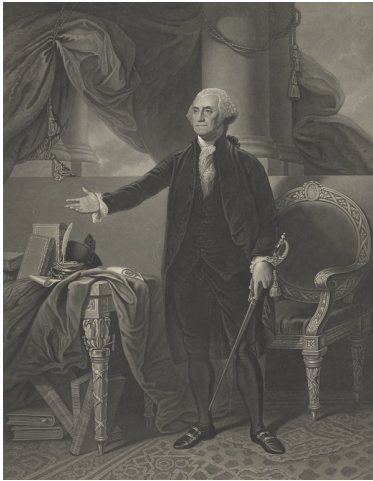
- Regular white paper
- Weakly brewed tea or coffee
- Shallow pan for soaking the paper
- Calligraphy pen or special marker
- Matches or a lighter (optional)
- Candle (optional)

What You Do:

“Age” the Paper: (1 to 2 days in advance)

1. Prepare for the process by putting on some old clothes and finding a workspace that can get messy. Remember that tea and coffee stain fabric and other materials!
2. Pour your brewed tea or coffee into the shallow pan. Crumple the paper well, then carefully immerse it so that it is soaked through. Keep in mind that the longer you soak it, the darker it will be—but if you soak it too long it will fall apart!
3. Remove the paper from the liquid and lay it flat or hang it with clothespins to dry. This may take a day or two, or longer in more humid climates.
4. When the paper is dry, you can also create a “burned-edge” look by carefully singeing the edges with the tip of a flame. (*Note: this should be done only by an adult in an area free from flammables.*) Continued on next page.

Write a Thanksgiving Proclamation



George Washington.
Source: Library of Congress

What You Do (Continued):

Write Your List:

1. Help your child make a detailed list of what they are thankful for. Encourage them to consider things big and small, such as a warm and cozy house to live in, parents, siblings, friends, books, plenty to eat, snow (or rain, or sun) to play in, toys, and so on.
2. Review this list together.
3. Have your child write down what they are thankful for using a calligraphy pen (in keeping with the historic theme) or any marker they choose.
4. Have your child sign the proclamation to make it official, noting the location and date underneath.
5. You can also add an official seal to your child's proclamation under the signature by melting a bit of candle wax and letting it drip onto the paper, then etching your child's initials into it as it cools and hardens. (*Note: this should only be done by an adult, away from flammable materials.*)



Abraham Lincoln.
Source: Library of Congress

Did You Know?

A Brief History of Thanksgiving Proclamations

The first national Thanksgiving proclamations were issued by the Continental Congress between 1777 and 1784, and were official religious statements of gratitude for blessings received. In the midst of the Revolutionary War, Congress released a proclamation calling for a special day reserved for giving thanks.

The first presidential Thanksgiving proclamation was made by George Washington in 1789. During the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln focused his 1863 proclamation on giving thanks for victorious battles and the overall preservation of order and harmony. Lincoln's proclamation set the official day of Thanksgiving as the last Thursday in November, which we still observe today.

The Meaning of Thanksgiving: A Hat Full of Thankful



The meaning of Thanksgiving can sometimes get lost among the fun of food and family! Here's a fun way to include thanks in your Thanksgiving. Even the youngest children can participate with this easy project, which we've dubbed "A Hat Full of Thankful!"

What You Do:

1. Think of the hat as a thought-collector of sorts.
2. Place it upside-down on a table in the entryway of your home and surround it with a stack of index cards and a cluster of pens or pencils
3. Ask each guest to write down at least one thing for which they're thankful. At some point during dinner, pass it around the table and have each person reach in for a card and read it aloud.

For the hat:

1. Set aside the 8" x 20" piece of felt, and ask your child to trace the paper plate onto the smaller piece of felt. Have your child cut out the circle he's traced.
2. Have your child fold the circle in half and carefully cut out the inside of the circle by cutting a smaller circle out of the larger one, leaving a 2-inch "frame" of black felt all the way around.
3. Trace the shape of the felt "doughnut" onto the plate, and cut the traced circle out of the plate.
4. Glue the black felt piece onto the paper plate's brim.
5. Glue the 8" x 20" piece of felt to the inside of the opening in the felt brim, standing vertically so it looks like a top hat.
6. Use the smaller black circle cut out of the brim to make the top of the hat. Glue the small circle on top of the hat to cover the opening. Let the glue dry.
7. Have your child apply the white strip of felt to the crown of the hat with glue.
8. Cut out a buckle from the yellow felt—a large square with a smaller square cut out of it—and ask your child to glue it securely to the front of the hat on the white strip. Now you've got a pilgrim hat!

What You Need:

- A structured hat, one that holds its shape (or follow the steps below to make your own!)
- Index cards or note paper
- Pens or pencils

For the hat:

- Paper plate (dinner sized)
- Two pieces of black felt (one that is about 8" x 20", and another that is at least as large as the paper plate)
- 2½" x 2" strip of yellow felt
- Scissors
- Glue or rubber cement

Corn Kernel Necklace



Looking for a fun seasonal activity to do with your child? Make corn kernel necklaces and help build your child's hand-eye coordination as well as her fine motor skills. This easy-to-make fall craft is the perfect project to do indoors with your child on any brisk autumn day, but it's especially fitting on Thanksgiving!

What You Need:

- Indian corn kernels (soaked in water overnight)
- Embroidery floss, 24" double thread
- Heavy duty sewing needles
- Thimble
- Towel

What You Do:

1. Show your child how to hold the sewing needle properly to avoid accidents.
2. Have her pick out particular colors of kernels that she'd like to use in her necklace.
3. Demonstrate how to thread a kernel by placing a soaked kernel of corn flat on the surface of a table and poking the threaded needle straight through.
4. Encourage her to thread as many kernels as she'd like, making sure to leave at least an inch of thread on each end of the necklace.
5. When she finishes threading her kernels, help her tie the end of the necklace in a knot.
6. She's now ready to celebrate the fall season with her colorful kernel necklace.

Note: Some of the corn may begin to sprout, and this can be the perfect opportunity to grow some corn indoors, which could eventually be transplanted to your garden in the spring. Then, you and your child can harvest your own Indian corn next fall!

Do Some Cranberry Sauce Science



It's food. It's tradition. And guess what: cranberry sauce is also science! This year on Thanksgiving, we invite you and your child to try the simple recipe below. You'll explore the effects of pectin, a complex carbohydrate that is found in the skins and cores of many kinds of fruit. Take just a few cups of cranberries, add sugar, water, and heat, and watch what happens. When you're all done, make sure you eat some, too. We think it's truly delicious!

What You Do:

1. First, wash and pick over your cranberries.
2. Mix the sugar and water in your saucepan, and bring the mixture to a boil. Cook over medium heat until the sugar has completely melted, and the solution is clear. (Psst: this is an example of crystalline sugar dissolving into water to form a solution).
3. Now add the cranberries all at once, and turn your burner heat up to high. Invite your child to look at the mix and stir with you, while taking care that his face isn't too close to the mixture, which can spatter. At first, the cranberries will float and bob. Within a few minutes, however, you'll watch them start to pop open and turn the whole mixture bright red.
4. Keep stirring as the mixture cooks. Quite quickly—within 5-10 minutes on most stovetops—you'll feel the whole batch thicken substantially. Take it off the heat, stir a little more, and then pour it into glass jars or a pyrex storage container which have either been run through a very hot dishwasher or sterilized in boiling water. Let it cool...and watch it thicken some more. Store in the fridge for up to two weeks before serving, or just enjoy right away!

What You Need:

- 4 cups of cranberries (approximately one 16-ounce bag)
- 2 cups sugar
- 1-1/2 cups water
- Deep saucepan
- Long handled spoon

What's Going On?

When they first made cranberry sauce, our colonial ancestors were actually taking advantage of a natural substance called pectin, which is found in the cell walls of fruit, especially their rinds. When high-pectin fruits (this also includes some grapes and apples, as well as cranberries) are cooked with sugar and water and sometimes a bit of citric acid, the pectin molecules separate from the fruit cells and reconfigure to form a stiff network of complex carbohydrates. This is the jell that we feel when we stick a spoon into a jam pot...or a dish of cranberry jam.

Note: it is possible to “goof” with this experiment. First, make sure you follow the recipe and add the amounts of sugar and water that are required. If the balance isn't right, the network made by pectin molecules may not come together properly. You can still have a tasty sauce, but it won't be firmly jelled!