America celebrates July 4 with hot dogs, banners and barbecues

Americans marched in star-spangled parades, ran relay races, gathered for fireworks shows and crowned a new world hot dog eating champion as they celebrated Independence Day in traditional style on Saturday.

A woman waves an American flag as she rides in an antique pickup truck through Barnstable Village on Cape Cod, during the annual Fourth of July Parade celebrating the country's Independence Day, in Barnstable, Massachusetts, July 4, 2015. REUTERS/Mike Segar

Possible security threats, wildfires in the West and rainy weather on the East Coast apparently did little to dampen the spirits of celebrants decked out in red, white and blue from their headbands to their shoelaces.

Crowds at Boston's Old State House erupted in applause and cannons shot out tri-color confetti after the annual July Fourth reading of the Declaration of Independence.

Meskie Hyman, 11, exuded patriot pride in a star-spangled shirt and a hairband with two American flags that fluttered under cloudy skies in Maplewood, New Jersey.

"I love that it's a free country and we have the right to speak. It lets us see everyone's potential and find our heroes," she said.

The crowd in Washington, D.C. watched a parade of brass bands, law enforcement motorcycle units, high school drum majorettes, antique cars and police and military detachments.

The National Mall, an open area west of the Capitol and site of a fireworks display expected to draw hundreds of thousands, was soggy from steady rain that had stopped by the time the parade started. Among them was Kearston Andrews, 26, who had travelled with her family from near Gainesville, Florida, and said security concerns had not affected them.

Even after promising an increased presence at weekend events, Massachusetts State Police maintained a holiday spirit, tweeting with a colloquial Boston phrase early Saturday "Have a wicked safe 4th of July!"

In a stunning upset on Coney Island, 23-year-old newcomer Matt Stonie grabbed the famed mustard-colored champion's belt after gobbling 62 hot dogs in 10 minutes in the annual Nathan's International Hot Dog Eating Contest.

Stonie, of San Jose, California, ousted long-time champion Joey "Jaws" Chestnut, who still holds a world record of 69 franks eaten in 2013. Miki Sudo hung onto the women's title, downing 38 hotdogs in 10 minutes.

A celebration in Austin, Texas featured country music legend Willie Nelson at an all-day picnic replete with music and drinking. And in Oklahoma, the record to beat at the "Watermelon Seed Spittin' World Championship" in Pauls Valley, about 60 miles (100 km) southeast of Oklahoma City, was 66 feet, 11 inches (20.41 meters), set in 1989 by Jack Dietz of Chicago, organizers said.