

LEVELED BOOK • N

Celebrating Food and Family



Written by Vera Ogden Bakker

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A farmer gathers his corn crop.

Introduction

People around the world celebrate the harvest season, a time when the crops are ready to be gathered and eaten or stored for the year ahead.

In the United States, people celebrate the harvest in November. This celebration is called *Thanksgiving*.

Evan's family goes to Grandma's house. They feast on food such as turkey and pumpkin pie. Family members tell what they are thankful for, and Grandpa tells the story of the First Thanksgiving. After dinner, Evan plays with his cousins.



A family eats Thanksgiving dinner.

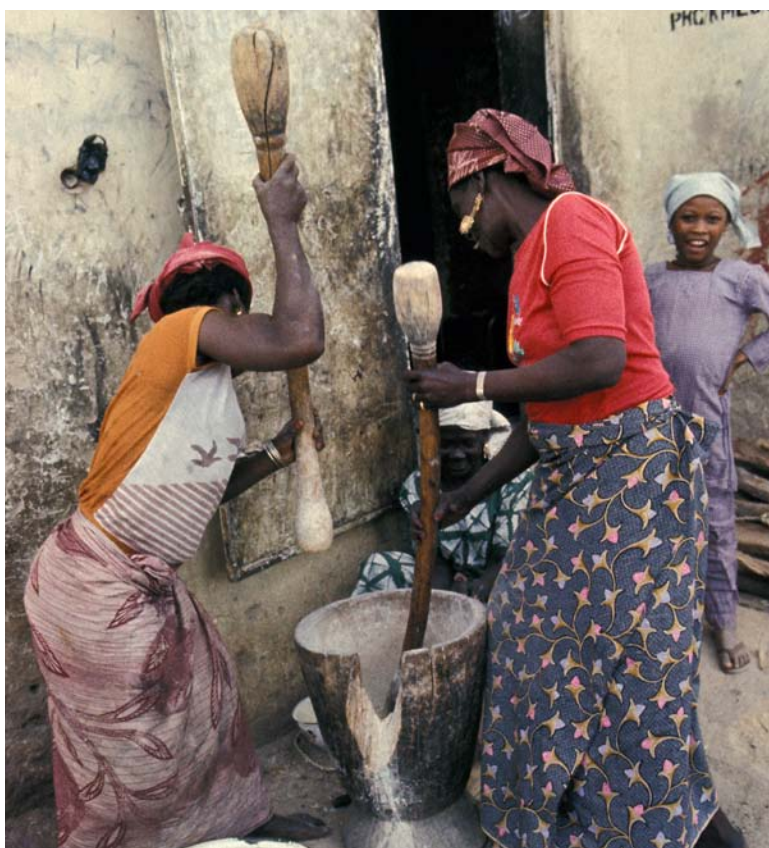


Yams are gathered during the Yam festival in Papua New Guinea.

Yam Festival

People in West Africa and the South Pacific Islands celebrate the Yam Festival. In early August, Bem and Sade and their parents gather **yams** from a Nigerian field. It is the end of the rainy season there. Yams are the most common food in these regions, and the first crop to be harvested in Nigeria.

The night before the festival begins, the children help throw out any yams left over from last year. They scrub all the pots, especially the wooden bowls in which cooked yams are mashed.



A Nigerian family mashes yams.

The next morning, they offer the freshly harvested yams to the gods and their **ancestors** in special ceremonies. This is the way they thank the spirits for a good crop. No one eats any new yams until this is done.



After the ceremonies, yams are divided among the villagers. Everyone cooks dishes made with yams and other vegetables. The festival lasts many days in Bem and Sade's village.



At the harvest in West Africa, people dance to celebrate the yam crop.



A mother sits with her daughters, who wear traditional costumes.

Chuseok

Like Bem and Sade, Shin honors her ancestors. The Harvest Moon Festival in Korea is called **Chuseok**. Like the Yam Festival, it is celebrated in August.

Shin travels with her family to the village of her ancestors. When they arrive, Shin helps the women prepare food. The night before the festival begins, Shin's mother dresses in costume and joins other women in a circle dance.

The next morning everyone dresses in their best clothes. They visit the graves of their ancestors.

Shin carries rice cakes stuffed with sesame seeds. She bows and places her offering on the grave. She says, "Good fortune, ancestor."

Her father bows and asks if the

ancestors are pleased with him.

Her mother bows and tells the ancestors they are happy as a family.



An offering of food is placed at the grave of a family's ancestor.



A family celebrates with a meal at the grave of an ancestor.

Then there is a feast of fresh rice cakes, **persimmons**, mushrooms, and chestnuts. They give thanks for the harvest. Shin likes the stories Mother tells of her ancestors.

Later, Shin plays tug-of-war with friends. She laughs at the men who dress as **tortoises**. They dance around the village and sing for food and drink.

Sukkoth

In Israel, Abel and Ilana have a different way of celebrating the harvest and honoring their ancestors. The celebration is called **Sukkoth**, and it's held in September or October. Abel helps his father build a three-sided hut in their



Some families build huts on their balconies.

garden. They make the roof from corn stalks. They leave holes where they can see the sky.

The family will eat their meals in the hut for the next week. Abel hopes he can sleep in it at night. Ilana comes to help decorate the hut with squash and corn.



Enjoying a Sukkoth meal in a hut

Father explains why they build a hut. “It’s to remember our ancestors. They built huts in the fields at harvest time. They slept there so they wouldn’t have to walk so far each day.” The hut reminds them of how far their ancestors had to walk on their journey to the promised land.

There are seven days of feasting and religious services. Abel and



A boy carries a lulav and etrog.

Ilana prepare lulavs (loo-LAWVs) by cutting a palm branch, two willow branches, and three myrtle branches. Then they tie them together. The family joins other families to walk to the **synagogue.**

They wave the lulav in their right hands and carry an etrog (es-ROG), a citrus fruit, in their left.



Conclusion

When people around the world leave their homes to find new ones, they often take their celebrations with them. Sometimes they find ways to mix old traditions with new ones.



But no matter where they are, families give thanks for food and each other.

Glossary

ancestors	people who came before your generation (p. 8)
Chuseok	Korean harvest festival (p. 9)
etrog	a large, lemon-like fruit (p. 14)
persimmons	orange-red tropical fruits (p. 11)
Sukkoth	Jewish harvest festival (p. 12)
synagogue	a Jewish place of worship (p. 14)
tortoises	land turtles (p. 11)
yams	root plants similar to sweet potatoes (p. 6)

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