

SPJST Cross Training (November Vestnik Project) - Thanksgiving Safety Tips

This project earns a maximum 40 points in the SPJST Youth Clubs Merit Points System. Mail completed project no later than December 10, 2008 to:

SPJST Youth Program c/o SPJST Home Office • P.O. Box 100 • Temple, Texas 76503

Name _____ Age _____ Lodge _____

“Giving Thanks” for Harvest: One of the World’s Oldest Customs

Celebrating and giving thanks for a bountiful harvest is one of the world’s oldest holiday customs. Here in the United States, we will observe Thanksgiving on November 27. People in countries throughout the world also set aside certain times of year to give thanks. Some countries hold elaborate harvest festivals that include rituals and ceremonies that are centuries old.



Harvest Festivals

The Czech Republic has two harvest festivals which can be compared with our observance of Thanksgiving. The first is a church festival called the *Posviceni*, a religious harvest festival that gives thanks to God for a good harvest and also for asking God to bless the grain. The second one is called *Obzinky*. After the harvest has been completed, farm workers make wreaths of rye, wild flowers, straw or ears of wheat. These wreaths are placed on the heads of the girls. Then they go to the owner of the land and place a wreath on his head. Afterwards, they join in a dance and feast and the wreath of the owner is placed in an honorable place until the next harvest. The meal typically includes sauerkraut and kolaches.

Harvest Folklore

There is much folklore associated with the harvest. Harvesters would sometimes roll on the ground before harvesting their grain fields. Two reasons: First, they believed the direct contact with the soil it was believed gave them the strength to work long hours; and second, the more they rolled, the more bundles of harvested grain that they could

expect to put into the barn when the work was completed.

It was believed that the last bundle of grain that was gathered had the power to both heal and to bring fertility to households and the farm. Parts of the grain stems from the bundle were to be woven into the wreaths and given to a new bride and groom or then be placed in a new mother’s bed to make sure that the child came into the world safely. They were also hidden in hen houses to make then hens lay more eggs. Grains from the last bundle harvested were saved and planted with the first seeds sewn for the next spring as a guarantee of a bountiful harvest.

One Czech harvester’s tradition was to leave a single shock of wheat standing in the field once the harvest is complete. This last shock was adorned with a ribbon or straw cord and is called the *boroda*, which means “beard.” This was done as way to provide food to the field mice so as they had food and would not go into the barn for grain during the winter.

Source: <http://www.harvestfestivals.net>

The Good Things in Your Life

Think about the good things in your life — the people, places and things that you know and appreciate. What are five things for which you give thanks at Thanksgiving?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____