

## Harvest Festival Around the World

The harvest season will soon be upon us in the UK, but naturally it falls at different times of the year depending upon region, climate and crop, so for some people it's still six months away! In some countries harvest is a first-fruits festival that recognises the start of the season, while in others it's a celebration of thanks for the blessing of a bountiful harvest and to mark or ensure the recurrence of the process. In some parts of the world, harvest festivals have become largely secularised into a more general holiday. For example, the autumn festival of Thanksgiving, which is observed in Canada (second Monday in October) and in the United States (fourth Thursday in November), is largely a national day of rest. Other festivals, such as the first-fruits festival Lammas and celebrated by Neo-Pagans and Wiccans, are no longer major popular celebrations but are observed by smaller groups. Still others remain major cultural events or religious holidays. Here are some of the more interesting examples from around the world.

### **Cornwall: Guldize (September)**

Cornish traditions of Guldize (sometimes referred to as Dicklydize or Nickly Thize) go back as far as 1602 and take place after the last sheaf of corn in a local area has been cut. The sheaf is presented to the north, south, east and west in a process known as '*crying the neck*', so-called because the corn sometimes bends in the middle like the neck of a hen.

The corn is turned into a '*corn dolly*', a kind of symbolic figure of the harvest that would then be paraded at the head of a procession as instruments and traditional songs were played.

One of the more antiquated traditions associated with Guldize involves one of the men attempting to sneak into the house of the main feast to steal the corn dolly. If caught, water is poured down his neck. But if he is successful, he earns a kiss from the female '*guard*' tasked with looking after the dolly.

### **Indonesia: Rice Harvest Festival (May-June)**

The Rice Harvest Festival that is held in Bali, Indonesia, is a feature of the island's Hindu culture. The harvest time follows the New Year—when ceremonies are held to purge evil spirits from the land—by about one month. The harvest festival is dedicated to the rice goddess and is a time of joyous celebration. Effigies of the goddess are placed in the fields in thanks, towns are decorated with coloured flags, and special bull races are held.

## **China: Mid-Autumn Festival (September–October)**

The celebration of the harvest is one of the most-important traditional holidays in China, Taiwan, and Vietnam. It is also known as the Moon Festival because it coincides with the full moon on the 15th day of the eighth lunar month; special delicacies called mooncakes are prepared during this time. Ceremonies are held both to give thanks for the harvest and to encourage the harvest-giving light to return again in the coming year. It is a time of family gatherings, matchmaking, and public celebrations.

## **Ghana: Yam Festival (August or September)**



*Men and boys carrying yams at a harvest festival in the Trobriand Islands, Papua New Guinea. Caroline Penn/Alamy*

The Ewe people of Ghana celebrate the end of the rainy season and the first appearance of yams, a staple crop. The duration and exact days of the celebration vary according to place, but, regardless of the manifestation, the festival is held in hopes of averting famine in the coming year. Huge feasts and activities such as dances and parades are held. Similar festivals are held in Papua New Guinea and Nigeria.

## **Israel: Sukkoth (September–October)**

Sukkoth, the “Feast of Booths,” is held on the 15th day of Tishri in the Jewish lunisolar calendar. Following shortly after the High Holy Days of the New Year celebration, the eight-day festival gives thanks to God for the harvest. Special booths, or huts, are constructed to recall the period of the Exodus, recounted in the Hebrew Scriptures, when the Israelites lived in huts in the desert before entering the Promised Land.

## **South-east Asia: Pongal (January)**

The four-day festival of Pongal is a celebration of the rice harvest period. Held after the winter solstice, it celebrates the return of longer days of life-giving sunlight. It is similar to other festivals held in South and Southeast Asia, but Pongal (also called Thai Pongal, Thai being the name for January in the Tamil calendar) is celebrated mainly by Tamil-speaking people. Its name comes from a Tamil word meaning “to boil” and is also the name given to a rice dish that is prepared during this time.

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## **Harvest Festival will be celebrated in the circuit on the following dates:**

22<sup>nd</sup> September: Ealing Green

29<sup>th</sup> September: Circuit Service at Greenford

6<sup>th</sup> October: Northolt

13<sup>th</sup> October: Hanwell