



BURT WOLF

TASTE OF FREEDOM

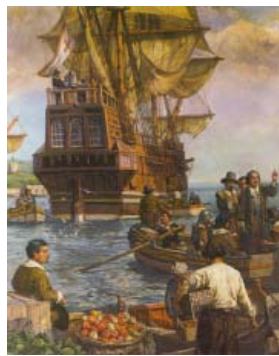
THE IMPORTANCE OF RITUAL



Our holidays have been celebrated in traditional ways for thousands of years. But when they came to the United States they got their first taste of freedom. Christmas got a Santa at the North Pole. St. Valentine got chocolate. Hanukkah got presents. And Kwanzaa got invented. This series looked at our holidays, what they were before they arrived in America, what they became, and why they are important to us.

THANKSGIVING

Our present Thanksgiving Day celebration is clearly a day for giving thanks, but it's also a harvest festival. During their first winter in Massachusetts, half the colonists that reached North America on the Mayflower died. When spring arrived the survivors planted corn, peas, and barley and in the fall of 1621, there was a harvest and a crop to live on. The fifty-two people who survived from the original hundred and sixteen decided to have a harvest feast. But the event was not of historical importance until the middle of the 1800s when millions of immigrants arrived in America.



ANDY SMITH

Culinary Historian:

Part of the problem was how do you explain America to the groups of people that would have had no American history and would have little understanding of what America was all about. So it was an origin myth that America began with the pilgrims in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Now of course the first English Colony that was successful was Jamestown. And it was founded in 1607, almost 14 years before Plymouth. But the problem with Jamestown as a place of origin was slavery. Slavery began in Jamestown in 1619. After the Civil War you couldn't trace the origin of a country back to where slavery

began. So Massachusetts and other New Englanders decided what we really needed to do was have Plymouth as the first real founding fathers of America and the Thanksgiving holiday was part of that. That's why the first Thanksgiving is supposedly in Plymouth. There were many days of Thanksgiving in Jamestown prior to that. But they're not looked on as the first Thanksgiving because we have our origin of our nation, and our origin of our nation goes back to the pilgrims.

CHRISTMAS

The unofficial beginning of Christmas is the unveiling of the holiday displays in the department store windows. Every year they try to outdo the windows of the past year. The tradition got started at Lord & Taylor in 1938. They were the first department store to devote prime retail space to the celebration of the Christmas season rather than to their merchandise. Manoel Renha is Lord & Taylor's creative director.

MANOEL RENHA

Creative Director, Lord & Taylor Visual Merchandising:

I'm an architect. That's my background. So, I have the technical background to develop the sketches. And I usually do a lot of set designing. So, when you see our windows, you can tell, they are nothing less than a Broadway production. Maybe in a smaller version, but, where the actors or the characters are little figurines. These Lord & Taylor windows interpret the story of the Nutcracker.



The first one is kind of creating the atmosphere of what to expect, it is Christmas Eve. The guests are arriving to the mansion, to celebrate the Christmas Eve party. Then one of the things we did, was to give a twist to the story, and treat it more like a story board. We are zooming in from the first scene to the next scene, where you see the inside of

the mansion. We create this split level, with this giant Christmas tree. The main characters are where Drosselmeier is presenting Clara with her Christmas gift, the Nutcracker. Right underneath, we have a second level, the mice world. The mouse king is taking a bath while the other little mouse are spying and seeing what's happening in the upper level. In each window we are very particular with the detailing. So make sure you analyze, and you really take the time to see every single window.



Well, the mouse king is taking a bath, in his copper pan, having a drink, holding with his tail and moving around, he's relaxing. You can see his stomach going up and down. And, before he decides to take his bath, he made sure he took his fake teeth, and put it off to the side.

People always ask me, what do you like the most about your job? I always say, when everything is done, when the windows are complete, and I finally have the chance to go upstairs and just kind of mingle with the crowd, and hear the comments, and then listen to the oohs, and aaahs. That's a great feeling, and that pays off all the long hours and the hard work.

KWANZAA

Kwanzaa is a holiday that runs from December 26th to January 1st. It's not a religious holiday. It's a holiday of reflection—an opportunity for African-Americans to celebrate their African roots. Kwanzaa is a Swahili word and it means "first fruits of the harvest". It was created in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga, a leader of the Black Cultural Movement and chairman of the black studies department at California State University in Long Beach.



The festival revolves around the number seven. It lasts seven days and there are seven principles and seven symbols that must be observed. You can celebrate the holiday along the lines Dr. Karenga laid out in his book or you can create your own traditions. Every year Marie Booker and her daughter Kathleen invite their family and friends to celebrate Kwanzaa — an evening of drumming, eating and ceremony.

KATHLEEN BOOKER:

It's a bonding time for my mother and I. First and foremost, because this is a tradition that she and I have

started. Even though we work very hard, it really is a time that it just shows our love for one another, and especially I hope it shows my love for my mother. We're both very giving, nurturing people and community minded. It's a way to share what we have with each other with others, and to invite the community at large to open up their hearts, their souls, their minds, and go out and touch someone else. I come, I touch you. You go, you touch someone else. It's a ripple effect.

MARIE BOOKER:

What we do to celebrate. We have friends over, and we have the drumming. I find the drumming is the thing that sort of gets you prepared for the following year. There's something very spiritual about drumming. And we have our Indian friend to come over, and do a ceremony. So for me, it's a renewal and a preparation for the coming year. We started Kwanzaa because the children were all grown, out of the house, and you get sort of tired of the mundane shopping and spending money. This was about community efforts and coming together, and all of the principles of Kwanzaa that go into when you're older, make you a better human being.



NEW YEAR'S

Some historians believe that our very first ritual was the one we designed to celebrate the start of a new year. It usually makes sense to start at the beginning. But how do you decide when the beginning begins?



ANTHONY AVENI

Author, *The Book of the Year: A Brief History of Our Seasonal Holidays*:

New Year's is about beginnings. And every beginning has to start somewhere. I know that every time I go on a diet, I always have to wonder when I'm going to begin it. Am I going to begin it, the next Monday, after the weekend? Am I going to begin it in two weeks when I know I'm not going on some cruise or a lecture tour. When do we start? When do we open up the cycle? Our opening of the cycle stems from the Roman Empire, which used to be the first day of spring. Rather an appropriate time to start a beginning because in Ancient Rome, that's about the start of the planting season. And, so our original New Year, in which the year was only 120 days long, by the way, only



the four months during which we planted, was March the 21st, the equinox. It was a Roman Emperor around the third century A.D. who actually back shifted the first day of the year from March the 21st back to January 1st. Now this is a Christian transformation, because we want to start our year when Christ brings new light into the world. And that happens right after the 12 days of Christmas. So January the 1st is indeed a late addition to the year. And the calendar that we developed is fairly unique, because people all over the world have different starting dates.

These days, an effort is made to make the New Year's celebration distinctly different from Christmas. Christmas is for families and particularly for children. New Year's on the other hand is for adults. The parties are public and held late at night after the children are in bed.

CHINESE NEW YEAR

Almost every major celebration has its origin in something that is happening in nature either on earth or in the heavens. In China, the most important celebration of the year is the one that takes place on the first day of the first lunar month—it's Chinese New Year, and it usually starts at about the same time as the western month of February.



One place where Chinese traditions in America are still very strong is the kitchen. Michael Tong was born in mainland China in 1944, went to high school in Hong Kong and then on to the United States where he graduated with a degree in civil engineering. Today he's the owner of three of the most important Chinese restaurants in New York City, Shun Lee West, Shun Lee Café and Shun Lee Palace.

MICHAEL TONG

Owner, Shun Lee Restaurants:

The chef is making boiled dumpling with a filling of chive and meat and roll over the dough. He makes the shape like a treasury shape of the ancient Chinese dollar. Now the chef is making a different shaped dumpling. This is what we usually call a panfried dumpling. The boiled dumpling and the panfried dumpling come into different shapes. At Chinese New Year the meaning is the same for both, for prosperity. In Chinese New Year we

serve whole duck. A whole chicken referred to as a Phoenix. Phoenix in Chinese means wealth and I mean prosperity and this is why we serve duck in the Chinese New Year. Chinese do have greens for New Year's Eve dinner or New Year's dinner. Greens mean health. Greens means forever young so bok choy is one of our very light vegetables.



Here we have the chef cook for you sautéed bok choy with ginger. Fish is one of the most important ingredients for Chinese New Year dinner. Fish means abundance, plentiful so for surplus business I mean saving, fish is the most important that we wish for the coming year. Here we have a steamed fish with ginger, scallion, and Chinese pickle.

VALENTINE'S DAY

February 14th is designated as St. Valentine's Day and on that day Americans turn to thoughts of love—thoughts that are expressed by giving heart shaped boxes of chocolate, red roses, and greeting cards with messages of love.

Chocolate is especially important on St. Valentine's Day because it contains a chemical that has been called "the love molecule." The physical changes in a body's chemistry that are associated with being in love are caused by the release of this chemical into the brain.



DIANE ACKERMAN

Author, *A Natural History of Love*:

Throughout the ages, people have believed in aphrodisiacs of all sorts. But of course, the truth is that whatever you think is going to be an aphrodisiac will be one. Most of the time, people have chosen foods that have certain kinds of chemicals and nutrition that were missing from their everyday life, and so, the healthier they felt, well the sexier they felt too. A key exception to this, of course, is chocolate. Chocolate is a serious mind-altering drug. It contains over 300 different chemical compounds, all sorts of nervous system stimulants, caffeine, phenylethylamine, which is a chemical that we feel when we fall in love and it's been used as a prelude to lovemaking and also something to soothe us if we've been jilted. Also a kind of bribe that a suitor arrives with. Throughout the ages, chocolate has been part of the love exchange.



PASSOVER

The holiday that was and still is observed by more American Jews than any other is Passover. The celebration commemorates the liberation of the Jews from slavery in Egypt. It's an opportunity for families to pass on the story of the Exodus from Egypt and to embrace their freedom.

At the moment the Hebrews got word that it was time to begin their escape from Egypt they were in the process of baking bread but they didn't have time to let the dough rise so they took their unleavened bread and raced into the desert.



The food that replaces the bread is matzos. The people who have the most traditional approach to the making of matzos are in the Hasidic community of Crown Heights in Brooklyn, New York. Beryl Epstein is a rabbi who takes visitors on a tour of the Shmurah bakery.

RABBI BERYL EPSTEIN

Director, The Hassidic Discovery Welcome Center



Crown Heights, Brooklyn:
Shmurah means "guarded." And it's guarded from the time the wheat is harvested from moisture. That which a Jewish person is forbidden to eat on Passover is flour and water mixed together with no other

ingredients will become bread in after eighteen minutes.

The process of making matzos at the matzos bakery is that first flour is poured into the mixing bowl, then the well water is poured into the mixing bowl. They are mixed as fast as possible. Once he's finished mixing it thoroughly, it is now taken to a table where it's handed out to women all around a table who are eagerly awaiting that matzos to roll it out as thin as they can similar to a pancake. It will come out to about twelve or fourteen inches round. It's then hung on a long rod about eight feet long. And then taken into the matzos oven, where it is laid flat and cooked on both sides at one time, at about thirty seconds, and then taken out of the oven.

They're very strict about every aspect of the matzos bakery. Every tablecloth (which is brown paper) every mixing bowl is changed. Every eighteen minutes it's a new matzos bakery, because anything from the previous eighteen-minute matzos would contaminate the next eighteen-minute matzos.

EASTER

The Easter festival runs for four days. Thursday marks the evening of the Last Supper. Good Friday is the day of the Crucifixion. Holy Saturday was the day Christ lay in his tomb and Easter Sunday recalls his resurrection.



Christians saw life breaking out of an egg as the perfect symbol for Christ breaking out of his tomb and eggs became a central element in the celebration of Easter. The decorating of Easter eggs is part of the culture of Northern and Eastern Europe and dates back for thousands of years.

The ultimate Easter Eggs are probably those that were created by Peter Carl Faberge, a master jeweler who lived in Russia during the second half of the 1800s. In 1965, Malcolm Forbes, who at the time was the owner and editor of Forbes Magazine, purchased one of the eggs and soon after became a serious collector of the works of Faberge. His collection is on display to the public in the Forbes Building in New York City. Malcolm's son Kip took me on a tour.

KIP FORBES

Vice Chairman, Forbes:

Eggs as you know are part of the traditional symbolism of Easter and my father was a great believer if you're going to have eggs, you might as well have the ultimate eggs. So he decided to go to Mr. Peter Karl Faberge, who every Easter made incredible eggs for the last two czars of Russia.

The ultimate prize was this egg here, the so-called coronation Egg which was a gift from Nicholas to Alexandra on the Easter after their coronation. You open the egg, which is decorated with the traditional motifs of the Romanoff Eagle and the same gold sort of almost fabric that the coronation robes are made of. You open it up and inside is a perfectly detailed replica of the coronation coach, the coach that Alexandra rode to the cathedral for her coronation in. In fact the detail is so



good on this that when the actual coach was restored with the help from Ford Motor Company by the Hermitage Museum, they used this as a points of reference because some of the detailing is on this was missing on the actual coach. So the little door knob actually works. You open the door, the little step folds out. I mean everything was absolutely perfect. This fits inside the egg and it was a perfect surprise for the Czarina, her first Easter as Czarina.

INDEPENDENCE DAY

Every year on the Fourth of July the United States of America celebrates Independence Day. Communities from coast to coast commemorate the day in 1776 when the Continental Congress proclaimed America's freedom from British rule.



These days, Boston's Fourth of July celebration is probably the top Independence Day extravaganza in the nation. And the man primarily responsible for it is David Mugar.

DAVID MUGAR

Founder & Executive Producer
Boston's Fourth of July Inc.:

The Fourth of July in Boston started by Arthur Fiedler in 1929. They were the first free outdoor symphony concerts in the history of the world. They were of moderate popularity, and sort of declining in popularity, to where Fiedler was conducting only the July Fourth concert every year, and maybe three or four thousand people would show up. I said "Look, if you'll play the 1812 Overture at the next July Fourth concert when you're conducting, I'll try to find some howitzers, some live church bells and fireworks, but I don't know how to conduct music, so you're going to have to help me," and he said "Don't worry about it, just let all hell break loose at the end of the piece." And so that's what we did the first year, not knowing what would happen. Fifty thousand people showed up.



I funded the event personally for the first 27 years. The number got to be an astronomical number, into the millions of dollars, because of all the logistics required to care for the public safety of the people. So I sought out corporate funding, which has become so popular in society now. We approached Fidelity Investments, and God love them, they stepped right up to the plate.

The event's free. I've never allowed a V.I.P. section down front. The poorest little family from anywhere in this country can travel to Boston, and if they're first in line, they are in the front row down front.

Most of our holidays and celebrations were developed to mark the cycles of nature and they have taken place in traditional forms for centuries. They bind the past to the present and predict the future. They are a basic part of every society that has ever existed.



But when these ceremonies arrived in America, they started to change. No longer controlled by convention these ancient celebrations began to evolve. They had gotten their first *Taste of Freedom* and they would never be the same.

TO LEARN MORE . . .

THE BOOK OF THE YEAR: A BRIEF HISTORY OF OUR SEASONAL HOLIDAYS

BY DR. ANTHONY F. AVENI
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