

Why We Celebrate Holidays

By Scott Faubion

Most of us celebrate holidays - Christmas, Halloween, Labor Day, Valentine's Day - but why?

Of course, we celebrate some holidays because of our religious beliefs. There are events and traditions that we recognize today that date back thousands of years... and may very well still be observed thousands of years from now. The details of these have usually been shaped by holy texts and longstanding traditions, although it's not uncommon that religious holidays are given "modern twists" (such as "Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer").

However, many days we celebrate simply because they are worth celebrating. The holidays we are familiar with today often revolve around an idea (such as Labor Day), or an event (such as July 4th), or a person or group (such as President's Day), or a theme (such as Halloween). It just so happens that these ideas, events, people, and themes have shaped our society and who we are. Does it not make sense to dedicate a day to their honor?

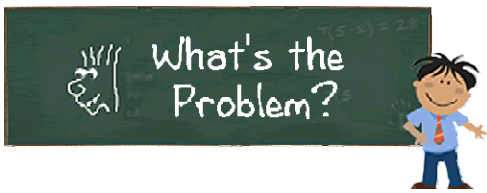
And there are other reasons why we cling to our joyous occasions. We celebrate holidays because we want to have fun. These holidays break up the flow of the year and bind us together as families and communities. We want a break from our regular schedules, jobs, etc. Without holidays, our weeks would run together into years of humdrum mediocrity. What is October without children ringing our doorbells asking for candy? What is November without turkey on the table and family around it? What is February with no heart-shaped boxes adorning the kitchen counter? The answer: boring months, I say.

We also celebrate holidays because they are reasons to reconnect with family and long lost friends. Although we can make the effort to see family and close friends anytime, many people do not. Many people make holidays the times they reach out to other people. And not only is it important to us to feel the warmth of family, we enjoy holidays because they bring out a sense of community. The bright red hearts decorating department stores in February, the blinking lights strung on lamp posts in December... these help us feel connected to something larger than ourselves.

In this world, get-togethers and barbecues do not happen as much as they used to in decades past. In a world where no one borrows sugar from his or her neighbor any longer or bakes a cake when someone moves on to the block, holidays tie us together.

Source: <http://ezinearticles.com/?Why-We-Celebrate-Holidays&id=3668141>

Scott Faubion is one of the owners of Halloween Hill, an online store that sells Halloween decorations, animated Halloween props, and handmade haunt items.



American Holidays (*official and not-so-official*)

Federal Holidays

<u>Date</u>	<u>Official Name</u>
January 1 (Fixed)	New Year's Day
Third Monday in January	Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.
Third Monday in February	Washington's Birthday (President's Day)
Last Monday in May	Memorial Day
July 4 (Fixed)	Independence Day
First Monday in September	Labor Day
Second Monday in October	Columbus Day
November 11 (Fixed)	Veterans Day
Fourth Thursday in November	Thanksgiving Day
December 25 (Fixed)	Christmas

Existing Holidays (popular holidays that are not "Federal Holidays")

<u>Official Name</u>	<u>Notes</u>
New Year's Eve	the last day of the calendar year, usually marked by a celebration and "staying up until midnight"
Valentine's Day	an informal celebration to highlight the importance of love and relationships
St. Patrick's Day	a tribute to Irish culture and its tremendous influence on America
Easter	a major Christian holiday, personified by the Easter Bunny and colored eggs
April Fools' Day	a day where people lovingly play tricks or jokes on family and friends
Mother's Day	a day to honor the role of mothers in the household
Father's Day	a day to honor the role of fathers in the household
Halloween	an informal holiday that centers around "scary" things and children go trick-or-treating
Hanukkah	a major Jewish holiday that lasts for 8 nights and takes place within weeks of Christmas
Kwanzaa	an African American holiday celebration that first began in 1966

Other holiday Ideas (lesser known holidays and others that have been proposed)

<u>Official Name</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Susan B. Anthony Day	a day to honor a woman who was pivotal in helping women gain the right to vote
Cesar Chavez Day	a day to honor a Mexican American who was a proponent of worker's rights, especially for Latino farmers in the mid-1900s
Flag Day	a day to commemorate the adoption of the United States flag (it occurred on June 14, 1777)
Native Americans' Day	a tribute to the cultures and contributions of Native Americans (people who lived in America prior to the arrival of Europeans)
Election Day	the day when important political elections are held, especially presidential elections (but also at the state and local levels)
Groundhog Day	a fund tradition when people watch a groundhog emerge from its burrow, and its behavior tells us if Spring is coming
Earth Day	a celebration of nature and a day to raise awareness about the environment
Arbor Day	a day for planting trees, and to spread a love of nature
Cinco de Mayo	primarily a celebration of Mexican culture by Mexican-Americans -- May 5th marks a Mexican military victory in 1862
Children's Day	a day to honor our youngest citizens (proclaimed by President George W. Bush in 2001)
Grandparent's Day	similar to Mother's/Father's Day, but the day honors Grandparents instead
Flag Day	commemorates the adoption of the flag of the United States, which took place in 1777.
Helen Keller Day	honors the achievements of Helen Keller, and brings attention to the struggles of the blind
Women's Equality Day	celebrates the fight for, and progress towards, equality for women
Patriot Day	commemorates the September 11th terrorist attacks that shook the nation in 2001
Constitution/Citizenship Day	honors the adoption of the Constitution of the United States, which took place in 1787
German-American Day	celebrates German contributions and culture in the U.S. (anniversary of an early German settlement founded in 1683)
Leif Erikson Day	honors Leif Erikson, Viking explorer, who led the first Europeans to discover the New World about 1,000 years ago
Black Friday	traditionally the beginning of the Christmas shopping season, and a major day for retail stores across the country
Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day	a day to remember the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese on December 7, 1941, marking the U.S. entry into World War II