

Holidays in Korea

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Thanksgiving- Here comes the Holiday Season; my biggest fear is here, getting homesick during the Holidays. I am finding myself becoming nostalgic about Thanksgiving- visiting friends and family, the Macy's parade, eating a big dinner, and of course sleeping afterwards. In fact I've found myself longing not just for thanksgiving traditions, but the entire holiday season.

Today is thanksgiving, I'm at school, and when I say to someone "today is thanksgiving"- I don't know why I would expect anything besides the blank stare I get in return, call it what it is- ethnocentrism, but I am always a little disappointed with that response.

Tonight I'm making a small dinner with my a few close friends from my town, and have brought a pumpkin pie to share with my co -teachers. What makes holidays, and other dates, even more interesting is the time change. For example, its Thanksgiving here in Korea, where no one celebrates it, and still the 24th back home. Then tomorrow when "Thanksgiving" is over here, its thanksgiving at home! Maybe it lightens the blow a bit- on the actual date, no one back home is celebrating yet.

In contrast to home, where holiday decorations are up the day after Halloween, and I'm a bit disgusted with commercialism and consumerism, I find myself searching for signs or remnants, of the holiday season. I think the lack of access to Christmas decorations and holiday foods, has put me on Christmas/holiday overload. I think I am more festive this year, than I've ever been.

Yesterday I was downloading Christmas music for over an hour, not having any on my computer since I typically dislike Christmas music until December 24th. I've spent hours making homemade Christmas cards, since I couldn't find cards in Korea, and I've also spent countless hours on the internet, searching for the best turkey recipes for our make-shift thanksgiving dinner this Saturday.

In a way being away from home for the holidays is hard. However there is something very special about creating a hodge-podge holiday celebration with other foreigners, away from home. Even if this means going into a town 1 hour away to get an

over-priced turkey, that is too big to fit in Korean ovens, or buying a ten dollar box of stove top stuffing, online, only to find that it was the 1/3 the size of a cereal box. It's easy to get sad about what is missing during the holidays when far from home (just about everything), but it's when we think about what is unique that we realize this is a special experience. How many of you reading this are already recalling fond memories of a Christmas or other holiday, spent far from home? It means random food, lots of creativity, and people coming together bonded by tradition and a little bit of homesickness. Its people from all over America and the world coming together, each bringing our own holiday traditions, and making the holiday uniquely our own. Happy to have somewhere to go that feels a bit like home- and equally happy to spend time with people that understand that it isn't home, and are possibly are feeling the same twinge of homesickness that you are. But what I'm thinking is despite the lack of all the holiday paraphernalia- this next month away from home will be spent in the true spirit of the holidays: thinking and sending love to friends and family back home, spending time with friends (your new family) from all over the world, eating food, and being mindful of where we came from.

So now, I'm excited for the holidays. It has made me appreciate American tradition, friends and family back home, and new friends in Korea. It feels good to be able to share with Korean people, western holidays in the way that they have shared all their holidays and traditions with me. I realized it is a privilege to come here and experience Holidays in a new way. Now we I will always remember, "that Thanksgiving spent in Korea.

