



# | BEC NEWS

# November 2021 LETTER

## Explaining the Mythic Origin of The Cornucopia

It's nearing Thanksgiving and suddenly you start seeing pictures of tables decorated with turkeys, vegetables, sweet potato pies, and fall leaves. All that's fine, but then there's a thing that looks like a woven basket with fruit and nuts spilling out. How the heck did that make it onto the table? Where did it come from? Sure, it looks like a horn or some such but what is it?

It's called a cornucopia, but the thing is, its symbolism is much, much older than European settlers and Thanksgiving, in fact, it's quite ancient and pagan. The term cornucopia comes from the Latin of *cornu copiae* or "horn of plenty." When you see it on Thanksgiving tables or in illustrations you may see depictions of a woven funnel, often with at least one twist to the end and spiraling to a narrow point. This is meant to mimic a goat's horn.

So, how exactly did a goat's horn end up on our Thanksgiving tables stuffed with fruit and nuts? You have to admit, it's a little weird. For the answer to that you have to go back to Greek mythology, constellations, classical paintings, and a great imagination.

## A Time To Give Thanks



**"Gratitude is the inward feeling of kindness received. Thankfulness is that natural impulse to express that feeling. Thanksgiving is the following of that impulse."**

**-Henry Van Dyke**

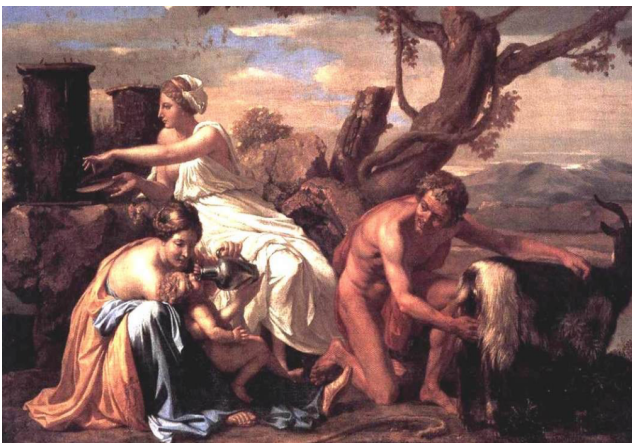


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First, let's look at Greek mythology and constellations. These stories date back to around the third century B.C. The story of the cornucopia can be traced to the earliest Greek gods, and in particular Zeus. Cronus (or Kronos) was the leader of the Titans, the descendants of Uranus and Gaia.

After Cronus defeated his father Ouranos (the sky) a prophecy came down. It said that he, Cronus, would be overthrown by his own son, much like he overthrew his father (the Greeks really liked payback stories). To prevent being overthrown Cronus swallowed all of his children when they were born to his wife Rhea. Now Rhea, being a smart lady, saved her youngest child (Zeus) by wrapping a stone in swaddling and giving it to Cronus to swallow instead of the infant (ever get that heavy feeling after a dinner?). Zeus was then hidden by Rhea and his grandmother Gaia on Mount Ida on the island of Crete. This is where the horn image comes in. Rhea couldn't be seen going off and nursing a baby, because Cronus would catch on. So, she gave Zeus into the care and keeping of the Kouretes. The Kouretes were armed dancers (or attendants) who bore Zeus away on their shields to the island. The Kouretes stood about the altar of Zeus and danced, beating their shields, bronze clappers, and symbols to prevent Cronus from hearing baby Zeus crying or making sounds. Dancing is good and all, but Zeus needed food, so the Kouretes were joined on the island by the nurse-maid-she-goat called Amaltheia (A-mal-thee-ah).



The origin and meaning of the name are given mixed attribution in ancient literature, being derived either from the verb *amaltheuein*, meaning to nourish/enrich or *amale* and *theia*, which relates to the "divine goat" or "tender goddess." Zeus suckled from the pap or teat of the goat, and she was a protectress for him.

There are different versions of the myth as to how the Amaltheia's horn was detached from her head. Some say she caught her horns in the branches of a tree, and other say the baby Zeus became a bit frisky with his new-found strength and broke off her horn.



Regardless, the horn then would provide bountiful food for anyone who possessed it from then on. Eventually the she-goat died and Zeus made a powerful shield from her hide, and called it a "thunder-shield" or *aegis* (nothing says love like making a shield out of your nanny). Amaltheia's image was placed in the sky, as the goat constellation of *Capra*. This appears as a cluster of stars in the constellation of *Auriga* the Charioteer.

Now back to the horn. Often it is associated with the Greek goddess *Demeter*, the goddess of corn, grain, fertility, agriculture, and the harvest. She was also the daughter of Cronus and Rhea, and Zeus' sister. By the way, Zeus did defeat Cronus and made him vomit alive all his grown children, including *Demeter*. Nothing says "I love you sis" like a rescue and regurgitation.

The Romans really liked using the imagery of the cornucopia or the "horn of plenty" too.

Roman deities associated with harvest and peace were often shown with a cornucopia. Like North America is now, Rome was a very prosperous country, filled to excess with good foods, so they wanted to show the rest of the world that not only were they politically and

militarily mighty, they were able to feed themselves lavishly.

Many classic artworks depict the cornucopia, ranging from the walls of Pompeii to the painting of the Roman goddess Abundantia by Rubens or the artwork entitled, The Origin of the Cornucopia by Abraham Janssens, a Flemish artist (c. 1575-1632).

Aside from the myth of Zeus, some Greek artworks feature the alternative myth of Heracles wrestling the river god Achelous and ripping the god's horn off. Regardless, you always see a horn involved somewhere. In modern times you're likely to find the cornucopia on Thanksgiving tables as a woven basket. It still represents harvest, abundance, and plenty.

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## Giving thanks can make you happier

Each holiday season comes with high expectations for a cozy and festive time of year. However, for many this time of year is tinged with sadness, anxiety, or depression. Certainly, major depression or a severe anxiety disorder benefits most from professional help. But what about those who just feel lost or overwhelmed or down at this time of year? Research (and common sense) suggests that one aspect of the Thanksgiving season can actually lift the spirits, and it's built right into the holiday — being grateful.

The word gratitude is derived from the Latin word *gratia*, which means grace, graciousness, or gratefulness (depending on the context). In some ways, gratitude encompasses all of these meanings. Gratitude is a thankful appreciation for what an individual receives, whether tangible or intangible. With gratitude, people acknowledge the goodness in their lives. In the process, people usually recognize that the source of that goodness lies at least partially outside themselves. As a result, being grateful also helps people connect to something larger than themselves as individuals — whether to other people, nature, or a higher power.

In positive psychology research, gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness. Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good

experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships.

People feel and express gratitude in multiple ways.

They can apply it to the past (retrieving positive memories and being thankful for elements of

childhood or past blessings), the present (not taking good fortune for granted as it comes), and the future (maintaining a hopeful and optimistic attitude). Regardless of the inherent or current level of someone's gratitude, it's a quality that individuals can successfully cultivate further.

## Research on gratitude

Two psychologists, Dr. Robert A. Emmons of the University of California, Davis, and Dr. Michael E. McCullough of the University of Miami, have done much of the research on gratitude. In one study, they asked all participants to write a few sentences each week, focusing on particular topics.

One group wrote about things they were grateful for that had occurred during the week. A second group wrote about daily irritations or things that had displeased them, and the third wrote about events that had affected them (with no emphasis on them being positive or negative). After 10 weeks, those who wrote about gratitude were more optimistic and felt better about their lives. Surprisingly, they also exercised more and had fewer visits to physicians than those who focused on sources of aggravation.

Another leading researcher in this field, Dr. Martin E. P. Seligman, a psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania, tested the impact of various positive psychology interventions on 411 people, each compared with a control assignment of writing about early memories. When their week's assignment was to write and personally deliver a letter of gratitude to someone who had never been properly thanked for his or her kindness, participants immediately exhibited a huge increase in happiness scores. This impact was greater than that from any other intervention, with benefits lasting for a month.

Of course, studies such as this one cannot prove cause and effect. But most of the studies published on this topic support an association between gratitude and an individual's well-being. Other studies have looked at how being grateful can improve relationships. For example, a study of couples found that individuals who took time to express gratitude for their partner not only felt more positive toward the other person but also felt more comfortable expressing concerns about their relationship.



Managers who remember to say "thank you" to people who work for them may find that those employees feel motivated to work harder. Researchers at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania randomly divided university fund-raisers into two groups. One group made phone calls to solicit alumni donations in the same way they always had. The second group — assigned to work on a different day — received a pep talk from the director of annual giving, who told the fund-raisers she was grateful for their efforts. During the following week, the university employees who heard her message of gratitude made 50% more fund-raising calls than those who did not. There are some notable exceptions to the generally positive results in research on gratitude. One study found that middle-aged divorced women who kept gratitude journals were no more satisfied with their lives than those who did not. Another study found that children and adolescents who wrote and delivered a thank-you letter to someone who made a difference in their lives may have made the other person happier — but did not improve their own well-being. This finding suggests that gratitude is an attainment associated with emotional maturity.



### Ways to cultivate gratitude

Gratitude is a way for people to appreciate what they have instead of always reaching for something new in the hopes it will make

them happier or thinking they can't feel satisfied until every physical and material need is met. Gratitude helps people refocus on what they have instead of what they lack. And, although it may feel contrived at first, this mental state grows stronger with use and practice.

Here are some ways to cultivate gratitude on a regular basis.

Write a thank-you note. You can make yourself happier and nurture your relationship with another person by writing a thank-you letter or email expressing your enjoyment and appreciation of that person's impact on your life. Send it, or better yet, deliver and read it in person if possible. Make a habit of sending at least one gratitude letter a month. Once in a while, write one to yourself.

Thank someone mentally. No time to write? It may help just to think about someone who has done something nice for you, and mentally thank the individual.



Keep a gratitude journal. Make it a habit to write down or share with a loved one thoughts about the gifts you've received each day.

Count your blessings. Pick a time every week to sit down and write about your blessings — reflecting on what went right or what you are grateful for. Sometimes it helps to pick a number — such as three to five things — that you will identify each week. As you write, be specific and think about the sensations you felt when something good happened to you.

Pray. People who are religious can use prayer to cultivate gratitude.

Meditate. Mindfulness meditation involves focusing on the present moment without judgment. Although people often focus on a word or phrase (such as "peace"), it is also possible to focus on what you're grateful for (the warmth of the sun, a pleasant sound, etc.).

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier>

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*Exchange, America's Service Club, is a group of men and women working together to make our communities better places to live through programs of service in Americanism, Community Service, Youth Activities and its national project, the Prevention of Child Abuse.*



# EXCHANGE

BREAKFAST EXCHANGE CLUB OF BILLINGS, MT

## Committee Happenings

BECON Committee November - Bill Kennedy  
Invocation Committee - No one signed up for this month.

## Volunteer Opportunities for November 2021

November 6th - Chili Cook off for Veterans  
November 13th - Dream Chaser Supercross  
November 19th - Mannheim Steamroller

**\*\*Don't forget to mark yourself either 'request to work' or 'unavailable' so we can schedule those members first who need to get their events for the year**

## We want to see you!

If you are able, come weekly at 7:00 a.m. on Friday to the Metra Cafe and get to know your fellow Exchangites!



## Yellowstone County Exchange Clubs partnering with American Legion Post 4

**PRESENT**



Join the Yellowstone County Exchange Clubs and the American Legion Post 4 in our food drive for the Veterans of our community. Food items can be dropped off November 15-19.

Your contributions will be added to Thanksgiving food baskets for Veterans and distributed on November 22.

Please keep donations to canned and dry goods.

### Sponsor Opportunities

#### COLLECTION SITES

#### FOOD DONATION (LESS TURKEY)

#### Donation Levels

|         |                           |
|---------|---------------------------|
| \$100   | CANNED VEGGIES            |
| \$250   | MASHED POTATO & CASSEROLE |
| \$500   | PUMPKIN PIE               |
| \$1,000 | TURKEY & STUFFING         |





# EXCHANGE

BREAKFAST EXCHANGE CLUB OF BILLINGS, MT

## New Members

This month we are welcoming six new members! If you see one of our new members at breakfast, please introduce yourself and give them a warm welcome.



Mike Albertson



Kim Lewis



Jesse McKee



Carla Morgan (returning member)



Maria Rivera



John Bennett

Welcome to the Breakfast Exchange Club!





# EXCHANGE

BREAKFAST EXCHANGE CLUB OF BILLINGS, MT

## RECOGNITION

It's time to celebrate YOU!! We have so many valuable members in the club and it's high-time that you were recognized for your years of service. So this section of the newsletter has been added this year to do just that!

The following members have been part of the Breakfast Exchange club for 5 years or greater. Please take the time to send an email, give a pat on the back, or give a fist-bump to these loyal members.

|              |          |                   |
|--------------|----------|-------------------|
| Mark Haynes  | 07 years | Joined 11/21/2014 |
| Troy Wilson  | 05 years | Joined 11/09/2016 |
| Adam Harris  | 05 years | Joined 11/06/2016 |
| Bill Kennedy | 05 years | Joined 11/15/2016 |
| Tim Crowley  | 05 years | Joined 11/15/2016 |

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE!**

