



# Freedom's Feast INDEPENDENCE DAY

On-line resources to get the most out of your AMERICAN holiday Celebrations.

*You may say I'm a dreamer, but  
I'm not the only one.*

*I hope someday you'll join us,  
and the world will be as one.*

**JOHN LENNON**  
MUSICIAN, 1940-1980

*Ours is the only country  
deliberately founded on an ideal.*

**JOHN GUNTHER**  
JOURNALIST, 1901-1970

*For what avail the plough or sail,  
or land or life, if  
freedom fail?*

**RALPH WALDON EMERSON** AUTHOR,  
1803-1882

*Yes, we did produce a near  
perfect Republic. But will  
they keep it? Or will they, in their  
enjoyment of plenty lose the  
memory of freedom? Material  
abundance without character is  
the path of destruction.*

**THOMAS JEFFERSON**  
THIRD U.S. PRESIDENT,  
1743-1826

*You have to love a nation that  
celebrates its independence every  
July 4, not with a parade of guns,  
tanks, and soldiers who file by  
the White House in a show of  
strength and muscle, but with  
family picnics where kids throw  
Frisbees, the potato salad gets  
iffy, and the flies die from  
happiness. You may think you  
have overeaten, but it is  
patriotism.*

**ERMA BOMBECK**  
HUMORIST, 1927-1996



## INDEPENDENCE DAY

*Celebrating Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness*

### A Quick History Lesson

On Independence Day, July 4, we celebrate the day when the Declaration of Independence was approved by the Continental Congress - it's really the birthday of America.

The United States Declaration of Independence is a statement adopted by the Second Continental Congress on July 4, 1776. It announced that the thirteen American colonies, then at war with Great Britain, were now independent states and no longer part of the British Empire. Written primarily by Thomas Jefferson, the Declaration is a formal explanation of why Congress voted on July 2 to declare independence from Great Britain, more than a year after the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War.

Although the Declaration had no effect of law, it identified the ideals that serve as our nation's core beliefs. They set a high aspirational bar for what it means to be a U.S. citizen. The statement set us apart from all other nations at the time and charted the path for our independence and our form of government. Most significantly, the Declaration declares that all men are created equal, and asserts certain natural rights -- including those of *life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness*.

When the Declaration was signed, however, the confederation of thirteen colonies - the original United States of America - did *not* include the rights of all people. At that time, Native Americans, African American slaves, and women were not granted these same rights. We have made great progress to make good on the promise of full rights and equal representation for all in the U.S. Just as Americans during the colonial period and centuries after struggled to fulfill the aspirations of the Declaration, today we must continue to take responsibility for securing, understanding, respecting, and protecting these rights for all.

