



# Upfront

If you are reading this close to the time you received it, it's Independence Day weekend. Because July 4 falls on Thursday, it's effectively a four-day affair.

Independence Day has been a federal holiday since 1941, but the tradition goes back to the 18th Century. On July 2, 1776, the Continental Congress voted in favor of independence and, two days later, delegates from the 13 colonies adopted the Declaration of Independence. From 1776 to the present day, July 4th has been celebrated as the birth of American independence, because of the roughly-48 hours the Continental Congress required to properly process and print the documents that memorialized modern world history's (arguably) most influential decision.

Spookily, John Adams (a signer of the Declaration of Independence and leader of the American independence movement) and Thomas Jefferson (the credited primary author of the document and signer, himself) both died on July 4, 1826, the 50th anniversary of the first Independence Day.

The July 4th holiday should be precious to every American, as it represents the ideal of the shared sum of our best selves. Unofficially and less aspirational, it is the apex of grill season. Cooking outside. Live – fire food prep. Dining al fresco. The stuff of summertime dreams.

This page features photos from our own (grassless) "backyard" and one of many amazing open-air feasts in Greece. Such food is simple and sublime, but the cleanup (there isn't much of one) might be the most appealing aspect of a cookout. That, and the usual presence of family and friends when coals are burning.

Happy birthday, America, and enjoy the feasts.

*Scott A. Laurotti*

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