

OCTOBER – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. National Pizza Month

October is National Pizza Month and was first observed in the United States in 1984. The holiday originated with Gerry Durnell, the founder of Pizza Today Magazine. He chose October because that is the month in which the first issue of his magazine was debuted in 1984. At the time, Durnell owned a pizzeria in the small town of Santa Claus, Indiana. When he realized there were no tradeshow publications to support the pizza industry, he developed his magazine and introduced National Pizza Month. These proved to be just the marketing tools his growing business needed. Pizza continues to be very popular in the United States, where there are an estimated 63,000 pizzerias. Approximately 94% of Americans eat pizza at least once a month, which amounts to about 45 slices per person per year. Across the nation, there are nearly 100 acres of pizza consumed daily or roughly 350 slices per second.

2. National Clock Month

October is recognized throughout the United States as National Clock Month. The origin and history of this observance are uncertain. At this time each year, the Smithsonian Libraries presents a selection of books and trade catalogs on American clocks and watches. Schools and other organizations plan activities that highlight the history of clocks and clock makers and emphasize the importance of good time management.

3. Christopher Columbus Day

Christopher Columbus Day has been a national holiday in the United States since 1937, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt made the official proclamation. It commemorates the Italian-born explorer's arrival in the New World on October 12, 1492. His original plan was to chart a western sea route to China, India, and the fabled Spice Islands of Asia. On August 2, 1492, Columbus and his 90 member crew set sail aboard three ships: the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria. Just over two months later, on October 12th, they landed in the Bahamas instead, becoming the first Europeans to explore the Americas since the Vikings set up colonies in Greenland and Newfoundland during the 10th century. Columbus Day was originally observed annually on October 12th. In 1971, however, Congress declared it a federal public holiday on the second Monday of every October.