



WORDS AND THEIR STORIES

Cornucopia: So Much of a Good Thing!

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And now, *Words and Their Stories*, from VOA Learning English.

On this program, we explore words and expressions in the English language. We give examples and notes on usage.

Today we talk about a word connected to Thanksgiving.

One of the traditional images of Thanksgiving is something called a cornucopia. This is a container shaped like a goat's horn. And it is overflowing with many kinds of fruits and vegetables, such as gourds, ears of corn, apples, and grapes. So, sometimes we call it a "horn of plenty."

Plenty means to have a large amount of something. For example, if you live in the land of plenty, you live in an area with lots of resources -- natural as well as social and financial.

But let's get back to the word cornucopia. This word describes a large amount or supply of something.

For example, the holiday table held a cornucopia of food and drink. Anything you could possibly want for dinner was available.

While the image of a cornucopia involves food, we use it for an **abundance** of good things. If something is abundant, there is plenty of it.

Here is another example.

A recent gathering offered a cornucopia of jobs from many industries. Representatives from more than 200 companies were there offering jobs. There was something for everyone!

Sometimes the word cornucopia means there is an **inexhaustible** supply of something. If you exhaust something you use it all up. So, if something is inexhaustible it seems limitless -- like a bottomless **pit**.

For example, a library is a cornucopia of knowledge. I could go into a library every day for the rest of my life and learn something new!

These examples have an abundance of good things: food, jobs, and knowledge. We do not use the word cornucopia to describe an abundance of bad things.

Also note, we often add a prepositional phrase to explain what type of cornucopia it is: a cornucopia of food, a cornucopia of jobs, or a cornucopia of knowledge.

Now, let's say that – for whatever reason – you are not a fan of the word cornucopia. In the examples with jobs and knowledge, you could easily replace cornucopia with **wealth**. In the food example, however, I would replace it with abundance or even **bounty**.

And that's the end of this *Words and Their Stories!*

Don't forget to check out other programs at VOA Learning English. Our website is a cornucopia of English learning materials.

Until next time ... I'm Anna Matteo.

Anna Matteo wrote this lesson for VOA Learning English.

Words in This Story

plenty – *n.* a full supply; a large number or amount

abundance – *n.* a large quantity

inexhaustible – *adj.* incapable of being used up

wealth – *n.* abundant supply : a great amount of money or possessions

bounty – *n.* something given generously
