

Thai Pongal

Thai pongal is celebrated on the 1st day of the month of **Thai**. On this day, the sun God is honoured as the “giver of all good fortunes”. The **pongal** (sweet rice) is offered to the Sun at the times of sunrise. Thai Pongal is also celebrated as the festival of Farmers.



People get up early in the morning, take a bath, draw decorative **kolam**, keep a **niraikudam**, betel leaves (**vettrilai**) and areca nuts (**paakku**), fruits, coconuts, flowers and a **Pillaiyaar** model (ball made out of turmeric powder paste and decorated with **aruku** grass) at the entrance.

The **chakkarai pongal** is then cooked in a pot at the entrance and offered to the Sun, and then **Thevaaram songs** are recited. If cooking at the entrance is not possible, then it can be cooked in the kitchen and offered to the sun.



The pot is decorated by tying turmeric leaves/ plants around it. The **pongal** pot is filled with milk and water and placed over the fire by the eldest member of the family. The overflow of the boiling milk is considered auspicious for the coming year.

The newly harvested rice and moong dhal mixture are taken by both hands and rotated over the pot three times, and then dropped into the pot. This process is repeated three times. Afterwards the remaining mixture is added. When the **pongal** is cooked it is served on banana leaves and offered to Sun God first. Then it is shared and ate with family and friends.

Each family has a slightly unique way of making Pongal influenced by family and regional traditions. So, they share their Pongal with neighbours and friends even though everyone is making Pongal on that day.

Mattu Pongal : People show their gratitude towards the cattle, especially the cow, by celebrating ‘**Mattu Pongal**’ on the next day. Cattle enjoy a good bath or shower on this day and are decorated with pieces of colourful cloths, turmeric, **kumkumam**, **chanthanam** and garlands. The **pongal** is cooked in the cowshed and then offered to the cows.

Jallikattu: An adventurous and dangerous sport of bull fighting called **Jallikattu** is celebrated in many parts of Tamil Nadu, India. Bullock Cart races are observed in Jaffna.



TRY IT YOURSELF:

1. TRY MAKING KOLAM BY YOURSELF
2. TRY TO MAKE PONGAL AS A GROUP IN THE CLASS