With Thanksgiving upon us and mixed martial arts nipping at boxing's heels for mainstream popularity, it is time for the denizens of the sweet science to reflect on all that we have to be grateful for.

We have seen an abundance of good matchups in 2009, with several more scheduled before year's end. Not long ago scores of naysayers proclaimed that boxing was dead, but listed below are 20 boxing people
we should give thanks to when we sit down to dinner on Thursday.

Manny Pacquaio: The Pac Man's emergence as a giant killer is the best thing to happen to boxing since the glorious reigns of Oscar De La Hoya and Mike Tyson. Not only is Pacquiao unquestionably the bravest
and best fighter of this generation, he is a humanitarian of the highest order whose Mandela-like glow has made him a global presence well beyond the sporting world.

Freddie Roach: Many people believe that the fighter makes the trainer, but Roach's relationship with Pacquiao runs so deep and is built on immeasurable trust, knowledge, honesty, and a deep-rooted friendship
and kinship. You can't question that Roach has made Pacquiao the fighter that he is, nor can it be argued that Pacquaio has not brought out the best in Roach. Their pairing is a match made in boxing heaven
that will be talked about with reverence for decades to come.

Floyd Mayweather Jr: Besides being so immensely talented, you have to love Money's willingness to be the villain in every promotion he's involved with. Regardless of whether fans love him or hate him, they
can't get enough of him or his wildly dysfunctional family, which could easily become the basis of a popular reality television show.

Wladimir & Vitali Klitschko: These guys might not be the most exciting heavyweights in history, but they are damn good and comport themselves like true champions in and out of the ring. The charitable endeavors
of the sport's most educated and erudite titlists are unparalleled.

Chris Arreola: It is easy for cynics to discount Arreola as an out-of-shape brawler who will never cut the mustard as a top-tier heavyweight, but the effort he put forth in losing to Vitali Klitschko was Herculean. And the tears that streamed down his face after being stopped by the behemoth Ukrainian came from the eyes of a man with a champion's heart.

Brian Minto: The Pittsburgh heavyweight has been doing things his way for quite some time. Besides promoting his own fights, he is always on the phone trying to get himself a fight with a high-echelon

heavyweight. He finally hit pay dirt when HBO approved him as the comeback opponent for Arreola's return to the ring in December. Should Minto win impressively, he might finally become an overnight
sensation. It couldn't happen to a nicer or more determined guy.

Tomasz Adamek: The Polish cruiserweight champion is aiming for the stars after moving up to heavyweight and knocking out goliath Andrew Golota. He is convinced that he can win a heavyweight title, and he
has no shortage of fans on both sides of the Atlantic cheering him on.

Lucian Bute: Even though he was omitted from Showtime's Super Six World Boxing Classic, it is impossible not to get goose bumps from the fan response when Bute fights in his adopted homeland of Canada.
Regularly drawing more than 15,000 fans to his fights, he has created an atmosphere not unlike that which is found at Ultimate Fighting contests.

Mikkel Kessler: Although he lost his WBA super middleweight title to Andre Ward in Ward's hometown of Oakland, California, on November 21, Kessler will always personify a true world champion for his
willingness to defend his title in the backyards of his opponents. That rarefied practice often lends even more excitement to an already eagerly anticipated event.

Steve Farhood: In a sport where character assassination is an art form, you never hear a negative word about the commentator on Shobox: The New Generation. This is all for good reasons because Farhood is
honest, approachable, knowledgeable and forthcoming. Simply put, he is a breath of fresh air.

Shane Mosley: Another one of the sport's good guys, Mosley is ready, willing, able and eager to mix it up with boxing's best. I started covering Mosley when nobody knew who he was, and I still received
prompt callbacks from him or his father during his numerous title reigns.

Paul Malignaggi: Although not a big puncher, the Magic Man finds a way to make his fights exciting and always tells it like is. It was his mouth that got him the rematch with Juan Diaz, the same mouth that
might just scare the judges into scoring their December rematch for the right guy this time.

Juan Diaz: The Baby Bull is all-action, all the time. He is also a recent college graduate who is headed to law school and a true gentleman boxer who is hard to root against.

Nonito Donaire: The second best fighter from the Philippines is another true gentleman, who on a much smaller scale than Pacquiao brings immense pride and dignity to their impoverished and beleaguered
nation.

Jack Hirsch: The president of the Boxing Writers Association of America (BWAA) has been

around the game for nearly four decades. Few people love the sport as much as he does, but what makes him so
endearing is the fact that the respect he has for a four-round pug is not much different than what he accords to a world champion.

Bruce Silverglade: The owner of Gleason's Gym is perhaps the most gracious goodwill ambassador in the game. Because he is so helpful, gracious and accommodating, it is hard to fathom why he has never
received the BWAA's Good Guy Award.

Joe Dwyer: Even people that have nothing but disdain for ratings organizations have nothing but respect for the NABF president. Dwyer is a man's man who has brought much-needed respectability to ratings
organizations in general and the NABF in particular.

Jill Diamond: As the founder and chairwoman of WBCares, Diamond has involved herself and a slew of boxing figures in altruistic endeavors around the globe. No one works harder at getting results than she does
at spreading goodwill through her wonderful organization.

Teddy Atlas: The Dr. Theodore A. Atlas Foundation, which Atlas started to honor his father, is a charity that actually helps people, without sending out press releases every time they do so. You'll probably hear
about them giving away turkeys at Thanksgiving, but you won't hear about the hundreds of other beneficiaries of their benevolence throughout the year.