

# **How Easter is celebrated in Countries Partner of Erasmus**

# Curiosities

After Christmas, Easter is one of the most important holidays of the year to share with own family.

Easter comes from the Hebrew name Pesah, passage. The etymology of the term is common in almost all of Europe.

Easter is not celebrated on a fixed date, it changes every year, but remains constant to celebrate it on Sunday. This depends on the date calculated based on the moon.

## Why is the Easter date “no fix”?

At the dawn of Christianity, the Resurrection was remembered every Sunday.

Subsequently, the Christian Church decided to celebrate it only once a year, but several religious currents debated with each other to establish the date of the event. The controversies ended with the Council of Nicea of 325 AD, which entrusted the Church of Alexandria in Egypt with the task of deciding the date each year.

## How to calculate Easter

Starting from the norms of the Council of Nicea, for which Easter had to fall on the Sunday following the first full moon of spring, today the date is calculated scientifically, based on the vernal equinox and the full moon, using the meridian of Jerusalem for the calculation, place of the death and resurrection of Christ.

The Christian Easter celebrates the Resurrection of Christ and is celebrated the Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox.

The celebration is also linked to the awakening of nature. The event has always had rural resonances and dates back to an ancient celebration in which the arrival of spring was celebrated through offers of thanks, including the first fruits of the fields, and lamb sacrifices, whose meat was consumed with a ritual meal . Today, as in the past, we find on the table the spikes of grain turned into bread, the herbs, the eggs, the lamb, characteristic foods of Easter.



# Why eggs are exchanged at Easter?

The use of giving eggs is very ancient. It is certainly linked to the fact that Easter coincides with the beginning of spring, originally celebrated with rituals for the fertility and renewal of nature. In fact, the egg symbolizes the life that is renewed. In the Middle Ages it was tradition to give eggs to servants; it seems that the first to make the egg the protagonist of a ceremonial (and auspicious) gesture were the Persians.

They celebrated the arrival of spring with the exchange of chicken eggs, real good luck against pestilence and famine. Here in the West, the custom of exchanging "eggs of rebirth" and good wishes (the function nowadays symbolized in the "sweet" ritual of Easter eggs) is more recent: it dates back to 1176, when King Louis VII returned to Paris after the II crusade. To celebrate this event, the head of the Abbey of St. Germain-des-Près gave him half of the products of his lands, including eggs in large quantities, then distributed to the people with full hands.

The custom of donating eggs decorated with precious elements goes far back in the time and already in the books of Edoardo I of England there is an expenditure for 450 gold-coated eggs decorated to donate as an Easter gift.





## What does the Easter rabbit symbolize?

The rabbit is a popular Easter symbol in the United States and northern European countries. The Easter Bunny originates from pre-Christian pagan fertility rites.

Since traditionally the rabbit and the hare are by far the most fertile animals, they became the symbol of the renewal of life and spring since ancient times.



The rabbit as a symbol of Easter seems to have originated in Germany in the fifteenth century. The first sweets and biscuits in the shape of a rabbit seem to have always spread in Germany in the early 19th century.

It was the German and Dutch immigrants who brought the tradition to America, according to which the Easter bunny brings a basket of colored eggs to the children who have behaved well.

But since he is a little spiteful, he hides them in the grass and the bushes of the garden.

## Why at Easter the eggs are coloured?

At Easter there is the tradition of colouring and decorating eggs. The explanation lies in this anecdote of the Gospel: Mary Magdalene was one of the women who had gone to the tomb of Jesus, but had found it empty. Then she ran to the house where the disciples were, she entered all out of breath and announced the extraordinary novelty.

Pietro, one of the disciples, looked at her in disbelief and then said: "I will believe what you say only if the eggs contained in that basket become red." And immediately the eggs turned a deep red!





In the world, the Easter traditions are many and different, very often linked to the religion and passion of Christ, but there are also customs that have nothing to do with faith, such as the Easter rabbit that brings presents to children. It must be said that, among the many traditions, that the egg (to eat or to paint) is found a little in all Countries, probably because the egg symbolizes fruitfulness and hope for the future. Despite this tradition has ancient origins, it was only starting from the XVI century that the custom of hiding a surprise in the egg was born.





# **Easter in the United Kingdom: celebrations, customs and traditions**



# Easter

In England and throughout the United Kingdom is undoubtedly one of the most meaningful and significant Christian holidays. From England to Ireland, from Wales to Scotland, Easter is honored with a myriad of rituals, customs, special and interesting folk events.



The Easter's celebration in Great Britain, according to many theologians, would its roots long before the advent of Christianity and derive the word "Easter", from Eostre, the name of the Anglo-Saxon goddess of sunrise and of spring. Indeed, Easter falls precisely in spring, a season of rebirth, renewal and therefore of quintessential fertility and prosperity.

The arrival of Easter in the United Kingdom marks the end of the long and harsh winter as well as the time of Lent, notoriously a period of penance and fasting in the Christian religion. This is why Easter is a moment of joy, fun and celebration after so many sacrifices and deprivations.



## Holy Thursday

Holy Thursday (Maundy Thursday), traditionally the day of the Last Supper and the washing of the feet, is a very important anniversary in the United Kingdom: the so-called Ceremony of the Royal Maundy is celebrated, which dates back to that time of Edward I and in which the queen also participates: during this event the Maundy Money (holy money) is distributed every year to two particularly deserving senior citizens, a man and a woman usually of the age of the sovereign, chosen from those who have distinguished themselves for rendering service in their community. They receive a white and a red purse as a gift, containing coins expressly minted for the occasion. In the white purse there is a number of coins equal to the years of reign of the current ruler; the red purse, on the other hand, has coins inside that replace gifts that were once given to the poor.



## Good Friday

Good Friday and Easter Monday are two national holidays in Britain, so two days of vacation for everyone.



Painted Easter eggs



A very typical folk element is the Morris Dancing, a dance that is performed not only in Great Britain, but also in other English-speaking countries such as Australia and the United States. This dance has ancient origins (probably dating back to the Middle Ages): men dance in the streets wearing traditional costumes, accompanied by hats, ribbons and bells around the ankles. One of these men is holding a stick, at the end of which is a pig's bladder with which he strikes the head of all the girls he meets. It is believed that this gesture brings good luck.

## Hot Cross Buns



**Another Anglo-Saxon tradition is the Hot Cross Buns, that are spicy sweet rolls and are prepared precisely during the Easter period, generally, are consumed on Good Friday with a cross of icing sugar on top, which recalls the passion of Christ .**



## Easter Sunday

It has always been a good luck tradition to buy new clothes, modernize old ones to wear on Easter days, but even stronger is to put handmade or purchased hats, decorated with bows, flowers, rosettes, feathers and even colored eggs. stuffed bunnies, chicks and cloth birds.



The Easter Bonnet Parade in Battersea, London, is famous...

## Rolling Easter Eggs





Inevitable at Easter are the chocolate eggs that have replaced, as in all other European countries, real eggs, boiled, coloured and decorated.

An ancient race, which still takes place in northern England (in Preston, Lancashire) is to roll the eggs down a hill. The winner (or the winner) is the owner of the egg who has remained intact on the descent from the hill.





**Happy Easter !**



# **Easter in Greece: celebrations, customs and traditions**



# Paskha

A purely Greek Easter tradition is to colour and decorate red eggs. The choice of colour refers to an ancient legend according to which Mary Magdalene, after having been to the Sepulcher of Jesus and having found it empty, went where the disciples were gathered and announced the extraordinary news to them. Pietro, however, incredulously said to her: "I will believe what you say only if the eggs you have in the basket will turn red". And immediately the eggs turned an intense red. Red is also the color of Christ's blood.



The red eggs are then decorated with melted wax: birds, flowers, abstract shapes. Very important is the so-called "Madonna's egg" or the first egg that is coloured in a house and that is placed in the iconostasis of the house (all the houses in Greece have a place with an icon of the Madonna and an altar for the purpose of prayer).



The celebrations of Easter are preceded by six Sundays of Lent, in which special prayers are recited, the liturgy has its own specificity and the faithful observe particular privations especially food - only natural foods can be eaten, no meat, dairy products, fish, or poultry.

## ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΤΩΝ ΒΑΪΩΝ

## PALM SUNDAY



The Sunday before Easter, Palm Sunday, is dedicated to Lazarus. On Friday, the kids work to decorate baskets with flowers and wild berries, on the Saturday before the party, wearing the typical local clothes, they go from house to house singing the traditional songs "kalanda" (songs typical of Greek holidays that are sung accompanied by tambourines by flutes and by accordions) for Lazarus receiving in exchange small offers in money, fruit or other simple things. The songs celebrate the Resurrection of Lazarus, as a preliminary episode for the Resurrection of Christ.



In various cities of Greece, very special processions take place on Palm Sunday, such as the one in Corfu that goes around the city, decorated with red cloths stretched out on the windows of all the houses, the Venerable remains of Agios Spyridion. It is a tradition that dates back to 1630 in memory of the plague that struck the city in 1629.



During the first three days of Holy Week (from Monday to Wednesday) in many parts of Greece nothing is eaten and only in the evening you drink water. On Wednesdays the house is usually cleaned from top to bottom, while in the afternoon they go to the Church for the "Sacred Anoint" ("efcheleon").

# Holy Thursday

Holy Thursday is the start of Easter celebrations.

Traditionally on Holy Thursday, people prepare Easter brioche, also known as tsoureki. This sweet bread is usually woven with three pieces of pasta, which represent the Holy Trinity, and seasoned with mahleb. It is served with a red boiled egg in the middle. Nowadays, people simply buy tsoureki at the bakery because its preparation takes a long time.





## Good Friday



This special day sees the conclusion of the Passion of Christ with Christ's burial. On this day, bells ring multiple times throughout the day, and people head to church early to decorate the Epitaphios with flowers, a canopy holding the holy icon depicting the burial of the Christ. The Good Friday mass takes place in the evening and is followed by a solemn procession around the block of the church in big cities or around the village in rural areas. People usually join the procession, with a brown candle in hand, and chant or listen to the chanters singing the hymns.



## Easter Saturday

The churches are usually packed, and people spilling onto the church's parvis with white candles, which will be lit later with the Holy Light. The Resurrection of Christ is celebrated at midnight sharp; the priest proclaims "Christos Anesti" (Christ has risen) with bells ringing and fireworks lighting up the sky outside. People greet each other with a "Christos Anesti" and its reply "Alithos Anesti" (He has truly risen), lighting their candles along the way. People usually return home with their candles lit or go to the nearby taverna for a Resurrection dinner.



## Magiritsa soup

Magiritsa is a lamb tripe soup served after the service. Some people may not like it, but this traditional dish is proof that Greeks traditionally do not waste anything, especially food, and eat the lamb's tripe the day before roasting the rest of it.



## Koulourakia

are a traditional Greek dessert, to be eaten after Holy Saturday.



## Easter Sunday

Officially, Easter Sunday is the end of the 40-day fasting period, and it is celebrated with whole lambs roasting on a spit. The Easter meal is a feast for the eyes and the senses.



### The roasted lamb

Throughout the nation, lambs are roasted on a spit or for smaller families, in the oven. The choice of the lamb is supposed to represent Christ, the Holy Lamb of God. Families spend the day together eating, drinking and celebrating this special occasion with a lot of singing and dancing.

# Tsougrisma

The tradition of tsougrisma, or the cracking eggs, takes place on Saturday evening or Easter Sunday, depending on each family's traditions. It is a fun game for children and adults alike and symbolizes the resurrection of the Lord. The rules are simple. Everyone chooses an egg and cracks it on top of another person's egg. The one that ends up with a cracked egg is the loser. The game keeps going until there is only one winner, who is said to have good luck for the whole year.



## Additional traditions and customs

While many opt for a white candle on Holy Saturday, children usually receive from their godparents a colored candle often decorated with small trinkets.

The Holy Fire, which is used to light the priest's candle, is brought all the way from Jerusalem, accompanied by high-ranking Orthodox priests and government officials. It arrives in Athens earlier on Saturday, before being distributed across the nation.




# Kalo Paska!





# **Easter in Spain: celebrations, customs and traditions**





**Religion is very rooted in Spain: this characteristic, although affected by the changing of the times, has crossed the centuries and has reached the present. The Holy Week is a very important moment for Spanish religious life and, for this reason, it is lived with active participation by a good part of the population.**

**The importance of religious recurrence is combined with the sense of celebration and joy that is typical of the Spanish lifestyle: solemn celebrations and readings of sacred scriptures are interspersed with lighter moments, songs and live music. The processions are also accompanied by music and the sound of drums.**

# Pascua

## Semana Santa (Easter Week)

The Passion of Christ, or Easter Week, known in Spain as Semana Santa. The festivities begin with the Domingo de Ramos (Palm Sunday) and end with Lunes de Pascua (Easter Monday).

The Catholic Church in Spain is passionate about Easter celebrations.

Almost every town and city in Spain have their own Easter celebrations and almost every resident be involved in some way.

In the major cities the processions are of huge proportions, often stretching for miles.







**The Easter customs in Spain are all linked to traditional religious events and processions of great emotional and artistic impact.**

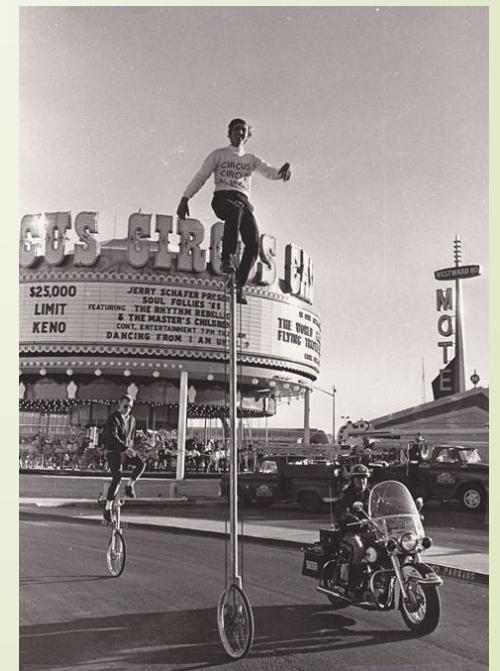




In particular, the region of Navarre sums up most of the Easter religious rites starting from Palm Sunday with the custom of weaving palm branches to hang on the windows and keep until the following Easter.



Pamplona and Corella are known for representations of the Via Crucis on Good Friday. In Tudela there are two ancient rites dating back to the 16th century: the Volantin, which recalls the desperate death of Judas, who is represented by a puppet with a firecracker in his mouth that is turned around the square until it is consumed and the ballad of the Angel: on Easter Sunday, a child dressed as an Angel is made to slide along a suspended rope to the statue of the Virgin Mary covered with a black veil, a sign of mourning. The child reveals the statue to indicate the Resurrection of Christ. A non-religious tradition is the Bolantes dance in Luzaide-Valcarlos (Pyrenees). The bolantes are acrobatic dancers who cross the streets on Easter Sunday performing jumps and acrobatic somersaults with colorful and spectacular clothes, to indicate the happiness of the Resurrection.





## Easter in Gran Canaria

The origin of the Easter celebrations in the city of Las Palmas began in the district of Vegueta, where the most important brotherhoods were founded. This is why this part of the island has the best atmosphere at this time of the year.



### The Outstanding Easter Days and Processions:

**Palm Sunday – Domingo de Ramos - :** Sunday morning's celebration is the procession of the Lord riding a donkey (better known as The Procession of the Donkey), which starts at the chapel of San Telmo and runs through different streets of the city. In the afternoon, the Nazarenes Brotherhood' Procession of Penance takes place from the parish of Santo Domingo de Guzman (in Vegueta) to Las Palmas Cathedral.



## Easter in Gran Canaria



**Spy Wednesday:** The popularly known Procession of the Holy Encounter or "Procesión del Paso" starts from the parish of Santo Domingo de Guzmán in Vegueta, and the meetings between the different Pasos—floats- happen along the streets of the historic district. The main meeting is between the floats which carry Jesus Christ and the Virgin in Plaza Mayor of Santa Ana, stopping at Las Palmas Cathedral .

**Maundy Thursday:** In Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, this day is traditionally known as the day to visit The Seven Monuments of the different parishes of Vegueta and Triana. Before dawn in the chapel of the Espíritu Santo -Holy Spirit- a traditional singing takes place honoring El Santísimo Cristo del Buen Fin - the Holy Christ of the Good End.

**Good Friday:** At midnight, and ever since 1941, is the beginning of the Stations of the Cross -Via Crucis- of El Santísimo Cristo del Buen Fin -the Holy Christ of the Good End-. One of the processions is called La Procesión del Arte –the procession of the art- or La Procesión de las Mantillas, which takes place in the Basilica de Canarias; and it is called the Procession of the art because the sculptures they carry are the most important ones in Canary Islands. It is the procession of El Santísimo Cristo de la Sala Capitular and Nuestra Señora de los Dolores -the Blessed Christ of the Chapter House and Our Lady of Sorrows-, here known as La Dolorosa by Luján Pérez.

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**It also called La Procesión de las Mantillas because all the ladies accompanying the saint are dressed with the canary Mantilla covering their head. Once the images arrive at the Cathedral, the Sermon on the Seven Words is delivered.**

**After the greatest procession of the city, there are two other processions which take place: La Procesion del Retiro and the oldest and most important one Nuestra Señora de la Soledad de la Portería Coronada - Our Lady of Solitude of the Crowned Lodge – Celebrated in Vegueta since 1999.**





## Delicious dishes for Easter in Spain

Easter in Spain means lots of sweet and savory treats often prepared just for Holy Week, Semana Santa. Feast your eyes on some of the delicious dishes you can look forward to throughout the week.



**Torrijas.** This scrumptious treat is very traditional for Easter, with recipes dating back to the 1600s. Thick pieces of bread are soaked in a mixture of milk and egg, then fried with olive oil and served with honey and sugar.





## **Pestiños.**

Pestiños are commonly made in southern Spain by deep-frying a piece of dough - often flavoured with sesame - in olive oil and then glazing it with honey or sugar.

## **Hornazo.**

This meat pie that hails from Salamanca and Ávila is often filled with pork loin, chorizo and hard-boiled eggs. There is also a sweet version with almonds, sugar and eggs.





## **Mona de Pascua.**

**Especially popular in Catalonia and Valencia, this cake is traditionally given to children as a gift. Cakes are topped with either boiled eggs, or chocolate ones, as well as colourful decorations.**





**Flores de Semana Santa.**  
Also known as *flores manchegas*, these sweet and fried pastries come in delightful shapes.

### **Potaje de Vigilia.**

Traditionally served on Good Friday before Easter Sunday, this 'vigil stew' is made of cod, chickpeas, spinach and garlic.







## **Buñuelos.**

Basically a fried doughnut, this treat is made with simple ingredients of water, milk, egg or yeast and can be sweet or savoury.

## **Leche Frita.**

Literally "fried milk", this sweet is typical in northern Spain, made by cooking flour with milk and sugar until it becomes firm. It is then topped off with cinnamon and a sugar glaze.





## Bartolillos.

Traditionally served in Madrid, *bartolillos* are dumplings of thin dough, fried with a custard filling.

## Sopa de Ajo.

This soup, often made of garlic, chicken broth, egg and sherry, is a traditional dish to serve during Semana Santa.








**Feliz Pascua!**







# **Easter in Lithuania: celebrations, customs and traditions**

## Velykos



Easter egg statue in Vilnius





## SAKOTIS coloured egg cake

Lithuanian tree cake, known as raguolis (which means "spiked") or sakotis (which means "branched") is a treat that appears at every traditional Lithuanian wedding, and for special occasions as Easter.

## Velykos Pyragas Lithuanian Easter Bread



## Celebrating Easter in Lithuania



### Traditional Lithuanian Margučiai

For Lithuanian Christians, Easter (**Velykos**) is the most sacred of holidays. It follows 40 somber days of Lenten moderation and marks the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Each spring, Lithuanians commemorate the Passion of Christ by attending church services throughout Holy Week on Palm Sunday, Holy Wednesday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday.

While the rites of these services are comparable to those in other parts of the world, many Easter traditions observed outside of church liturgy are uniquely Lithuanian.





## Verbos For Palm Sunday



One of these unique Lithuanian traditions is seen on Palm Sunday. In many parts of the world, churches provide their parishioners with palms. In Lithuania, churchgoers bring homemade palms with them to the church to be blessed. Since the climate is too cold for palm trees, Lithuanians weave branches of indigenous plants into decorative palms (verbos) for Palm Sunday. More like bouquets than common palm branches, typical verbos include sprigs from juniper, mistletoe, weeping willows and osier decorated with colorful dried flowers.

**On Holy Thursday**, Lithuanians clean their homes vigorously to ensure an upcoming year of abundance and good health. They wash and scrub floors, windows, pantries, stoves, and laundry in preparation for Good Friday. Beyond bringing good health and abundant harvests to the household, this ritualistic spring cleaning is thought to ward off fleas and evil spirits.



**Easter Eggs**

**Holy Saturday** is dedicated to painting Easter eggs (margučiai) and preparing the Easter Sunday feast. Traditional Lithuanian Easter eggs are stained with natural dyes extracted from bark, leaves, fruit, and vegetables. Stained margučiai appear in solid colors or patterns created when leaves or other materials are pressed onto the eggs during the staining process.



The Knights of Lithuania Anthracite Council #144 is a member of the National Knights of Lithuania organization adhering to their ideals and principals.

She makes Margučiai



Lithuanians are known for their ornate margučiai, which are either hand-painted or hand-carved into magnificent works of art. With the hand-painted method, they use the tips of needles and other sharp objects to paint intricate patterns with hot wax. Then, after the wax hardens, they dip the eggs into colourful dye. After the eggs dry, they are heated and then pressed gently with towels or paper to remove the wax and reveal the pattern. With the hand-carved method, eggs are dipped in dye first. After they dry, designs are etched into the shells with a finely tipped . Both methods require artistic talent and patience and both result in extraordinary, heirloom quality margučiai.





In Lithuania, the **Easter Granny (Velykų Senelė)** delivers Easter eggs and treats to children. Children often prepare for the Easter Granny by leaving empty homemade egg nests outside their homes in gardens and shrubs. On Easter morning, they wake to search for their hidden margučiai treasures.

## kugelis



## Homemade cheeses



## Creamed mushrooms



## Poppy seed rolls,



Lamb Created With Butter

The Lithuanian Easter buffet is a lavish contrast to the meatless Lenten fast. Opulent displays of roasted pork, baked ham, lamb, veal, sausages, roasted duck, and roasted chicken abound. If lamb is not served, then butter or cheese is molded into the shape of a lamb and served to symbolize Easter. Accompaniments include homemade cheeses, hard-boiled eggs, sautéed or creamed mushrooms, kugelis, rye bread, assorted salads, and horseradish. Wine flows and an equally impressive dessert selection of poppy seed rolls, nut rolls, honey cakes, and raisin and/or dried fruit “boba” breads follows the meal.

We should mention two final uniquely Lithuanian Easter traditions. Before everyone indulges in the Velykos feast, the dinner host slices a hard-boiled egg into as many pieces as there are guests and passes the plate around the table to share this one egg with everyone. This sharing of the egg is believed to bring harmony and unity to the household.



Another tradition is egg rolling. Players propose end of a rounded chute fashioned from bark or wood (or cardboard in modern times) at an angle from the ground. They take turns rolling an egg down the chute attempting to tap another's egg. If they succeed in tapping another egg, they claim both eggs. The player with the most eggs at the end of the game wins.







**Laimingas Velykas!**



# **Easter in Ireland: celebrations, customs and traditions**

# Pancake Tuesday

The day before Ash Wednesday – for us is Martedi Grasso - in Ireland is Pancake Tuesday.

As we know, Shrove Tuesday is observed by many Christians (including Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists and Catholics) and coincides with the last day of the liturgical season before Lent.

In Ireland, pancakes were a way to consume foods as rich as eggs, milk and sugar before the 40-day fasting season.





**On Ash Wednesday, (the Wednesday before the first Sunday of Lent), the Irish take part in the blessing and go to work with the Ash Cross traced on the forehead. Observance requires that the ash slides off naturally.**



# Cásca

Belfast, Easter cakes cups with yellow chicks on the top





**The traditions of Easter in Ireland include decorated and coloured eggs by hand and the festive menu, is rich and based on typical dishes of the period.**





The week from Palm Sunday to Easter is the most heartfelt. In all houses there are the inevitable spring cleaning, which serves to purify the house in view of the blessing from the local priest. It happens, at least in the rural areas of the country, as a religious ceremony dating back hundreds of years. On Good Friday, it is traditional to avoid do any kind of work outside the home, but go to church for religious services. Even in Ireland, as in the rest of Northern Europe, eggs are painted with motifs inspired by spring and rebirth: those of chocolate are sometimes also brought to church and blessed. On Easter morning, the most practicing believers go to the top of a hill to be as close as possible to the sky: from here it is possible to watch the "Easter sun dance".



As for the festive menu, the week before the party is strictly based on fish during Lent, it is common practice small sacrifice, giving up alcohol, sweets or meat as a sign of penance. Among the typical dishes of the period, there is an abundance of fish soups, especially on Good Friday. While for Easter day there is the Guinness stew!

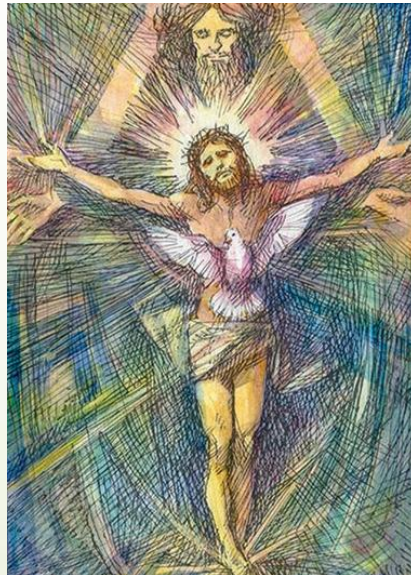




## Good Friday

According to Irish traditions, some devotees practice fasting until noon, then eat a piece of bread and three sips of water, in honor of the Holy Trinity. Some cut their hair and fingernails and toenails. Not everyone does it, but many take off their shoes when they enter the church.

They remain silent from 12 to 15, they visit the cemeteries and sacred wells where the water, on Good Friday, seems to have healing properties. Someone plants a small quantity of seeds as a blessing on the future harvest. A child born on Good Friday and baptized on Easter Sunday will have the gift of healing. Those who die on Good Friday have the right to go to heaven. The chicken eggs collected on this day are marked with a cross.





## Holy Saturday

is a day dedicated to reflection, to participate in some ceremony and take holy water, but above all one dedicating oneself to the Easter Eve, which usually begins at 10 pm.



**On Easter Sunday** they attend Mass, the whole family wears new clothes and goes to church. Girls can wear green hair ribbons, a yellow dress and white shoes. These colours indicate purity and a new beginning of life, just like in the Resurrection. After the Easter celebrations, they return home and celebrate with lamb and ham, portions of potatoes, vegetables, meats, stuffed bread, and everything that is a good Irish feast. After lunch, children can unwrap chocolate eggs.

## Competitions and Festivals

In some areas of the country, especially in Northern Ireland, real competitions are organized according to Easter traditions. Easter eggs are the protagonists. One of the funniest challenges is to roll with the eggs resting on a spoon between teeth. Be careful not to make an omelette. On Easter day they can take part in different festivals such as the

Fairyhouse



one of the most prestigious horse races,

the Food Galway Festival



and Racing Home Easter Festival





**Cásca sona!**





# **Easter in Italy: celebrations, customs and traditions**

## What are the main symbols of Easter in Italy?

The Christian tradition is rich in Easter symbols that recall the Resurrection of Jesus.

The symbols of Easter are: the olive tree, the dove, the egg or the chick, the lamb, the bells, the bunny, the light.

### Egg or chick

Both symbols represent the birth of a new life. In fact Easter is the feast of a new life, a rebirth.

### Dove

This symbol represents Peace. Jesus, with his sacrifice on the Cross, helps us to build a kingdom of peace and love.

### Bells

On Easter Sunday the bells of all the churches play to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus with their festive chimes.

### Olive

In addition to being a symbol of peace, he recalls Jesus' entry into Jerusalem when he was welcomed as a crowd by the crowd.

### Lamb

This symbol is associated with Jesus, who has always been compared to a mild lamb: he gave his life for us.

### Light

The Paschal candle symbolizes the Resurrection. The light of the candle illuminates the darkness; for this reason, the candle is a symbol of Jesus who is the light of the world: with his death and his Resurrection he defeated the darkness present in the hearts of men.

### Bunny

The bunny refers to the hare that since the early times of Christianity was taken as a symbol of Christ.

Moreover, the hare, with the characteristic of its mantle that changes color according to the season, was indicated by Saint Ambrose as a symbol of the Resurrection.

## Holy Week religious observances in Italy



Easter in Italy is a huge holiday, second only to Christmas in its importance for Italians. While the days leading up to Easter in Italy include solemn processions and masses, *Pasqua*, as it's called in Italian, is a joyous celebration marked with rituals and traditions. *La Pasquetta*, the Monday after Easter Sunday, is also a public holiday throughout Italy.



## Easter with the Pope in Rome at Saint Peter's



On Good Friday, the Pope celebrates the *Via Crucis* or Stations of the Cross in Rome near the Colosseum. A huge cross with burning torches lights the sky as the stations of the cross are described in several languages. At the end, the Pope gives a blessing. Easter mass is held in every church in Italy, with the biggest and most popular celebrated by the Pope at Saint Peter's Basilica. The Papal Prefecture, the entity responsible for organizing Papal audiences, recommends ordering tickets, which are free, at least 2-6 months in advance.



## Good Friday and Easter Week Processions

Solemn religious processions are held in Italian cities and towns on the Friday or Saturday before Easter and sometimes on Easter Sunday. Many churches have special statues of the Virgin Mary and Jesus that may be paraded through the city or displayed in the main square.



Parade participants are often dressed in traditional ancient costumes, and olive branches are often used along with palm fronds in the processions and to decorate churches.



Enna, in Sicily, has a large procession on Good Friday, with more than 2,000 friars dressed in ancient costumes walking through the streets of the city. Trapani, also in Sicily, is a good place to see processions, held several days during Holy Week. Their Good Friday procession, *Misteri di Trapani*, is 24 hours long. These processions are very elaborate and quite dramatic.



What's believed to be the oldest Good Friday procession in Italy is in Chieti in the Abruzzo region. The procession, with Secchi's Miserere played by 100 violins, is very moving.

<https://youtu.be/dgZ7EyO9jGc>





Some towns, such as Montefalco and Gualdo Tadino in Umbria, hold live passion plays during the night of Good Friday. Others put on plays enacting the stations of the Cross, or *Via Crucis*. Beautiful torchlight processions are held in Umbria in hill towns such as Orvieto and Assisi.



### Easter in Florence and the *Scoppio del Carro*

In Florence, Easter is celebrated with the *Scoppio del Carro* (Explosion of the cart). A huge, decorated wagon is dragged through Florence by white oxen until it reaches the Basilica di Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence's historic center.



After mass, the Archbishop sends a dove-shaped rocket into the fireworks-filled cart, creating a spectacular display. A parade of performers in medieval costumes follows.

## La Madonna Che Scappa in Piazza (The Dashing Madonna) Abruzzo Region

The town of Sulmona in the Peligna Valley marks Good Friday with a procession that starts in the evening at the Baroque Church of Santissima Annunziata and ends late at night at the Church of Santissima Trinità. On Easter Sunday, a procession sets out at 11am from the medieval Church of Santa Maria della Tomba bearing the statues of the Risen Christ, Saint John and Saint Peter. Bearers carry the statues to the Church of San Filippo Neri to announce the news of the Resurrection to the mourning Madonna of Loreto. Then, the church door opens and a black-clad Madonna moves out. A flock of 12 doves is released and tradition dictates that if they fly high, it is a sign of a good harvest to come. Suddenly, the Madonna breaks into a dash as she rushes to meet her son, accompanied by the sound of firecrackers. Music and feasting follow.



## Holy Week on the Island of Sardinia

The island of Sardinia is a part of Italy steeped in tradition and a good place to experience festivals. Because of its long association with Spain, some Easter traditions are strongly linked to the Spanish Semana Santa.



La Madonna che Scappa is a narrative re-enactment of the encounter between the Mother of Jesus and the risen Christ.



## Abballu Di Li Diavuli (Dance Of The Devils)



On Easter Sunday morning, in the small Sicilian town of Prizzi near Palermo, locals don gruesome red, metal masks and red robes to disguise themselves as devils, joined by another masked local dressed in yellow representing Death in a ritual that dates to medieval times. They walk through the town offering money and sweets in an attempt to tempt as many people as possible and transport their souls to hell. However, their plans are thwarted in the early afternoon when they encounter statues of the Virgin Mary and the Risen Christ in a procession escorted by two angels holding swords. The meeting between good and evil is known as the 'Dance Of The Devils' because the devils dance around to avoid meeting the Christ and the Virgin. Good triumphs over evil when the statues of the Virgin and Christ meet, and the angels defeat the devils.



## Vasa Vasa (Kiss, Kiss/Cheek To Cheek)



On Easter Sunday morning in the town of Modica in southeast Sicily, there are two processions. One set of bearers carries a statue of the Risen Christ and the other carries the Virgin Mary clad in black. They are carried around the town's main street, until they meet. The Virgin is so enthusiastic to see her son that she throws off her black robes to reveal a celestial blue cloak and red dress. Her arms move from her side to open in embrace, as she leans forward she plants two kisses, – in Sicilian dialect the 'Vasa Vasa' – to the sound of a brass band, church bells and fireworks. The Virgin is overcome with joy and confetti bursts forth from her golden crown. Doves are released in the air as a symbol of peace.

## Easter Food in Italy

Since Easter is the end of the Lenten season, which requires sacrifice and reserve, food plays a big part in the celebrations. Traditional Easter foods across Italy may include lamb or goat, artichokes and special Easter breads that vary from region to region. *Colomba* (dove shaped) bread are often given as gifts, as are hollow chocolate eggs that usually come with a surprise inside. On Easter Sunday, when families enjoy a lunch based on roast lamb and specially-prepared cakes.



### Easter Monday in Italy: *La Pasquetta*

On Easter Monday, some cities hold dances, free concerts, or unusual games, often involving eggs. In the Umbrian hill town of Panicale, cheese is the star. *Ruzzolone* is played by rolling huge wheels of cheese, weighing about 4 kilos, around the village walls. The object is to get your cheese around the course using the fewest number of strokes. Following the cheese contest, there is a band in the *piazza* and of course, wine. *Pasquetta*

(Easter Monday) is traditionally the first chance for a spring outing in the year, when Italians head for parks, woods and nature reserves to have a picnic.



## EASTER: DISHES IN ITALIAN TRADITION

Different foods are consumed almost exclusively during that period of the year.

Lamb -Traditionally the main dish of the Easter meal consists of lamb. A traditional Easter dish in Rome and the Lazio region are, for example, crispy lamb ribs, known as *abbacchio a scottadito* (literally meaning “burnt finger”) with fresh artichokes, which are the seasonal vegetables. In Rome, another traditional Easter dish is *abbacchio alla romana*, baby lamb cooked in wine, anchovies, rosemary and garlic.

Another typical dish is *cosciotto al forno con le patate* (roast leg of lamb with potatoes), popular in Piemonte, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Veneto, Campania and other regions of Italy.

*Cutturidd*, a typical Easter dish from Puglia and Basilicata, originally prepared in a terracotta pan in the fireplace, is a stew made from lamb with various vegetables and spices.

In Trentino there are also the *polpettine pasquali* (Easter meat balls) made with ground lamb meat, parsley, shallots and rosemary.

In Molise and Abruzzo the typical Easter dish is *agnello cacio e uova*, lamb with *cacio* (a semi-soft cheese) and eggs, uniting two of the most symbolic ingredients of Easter.





## Salami with boiled eggs

A plain dish served for easter as an appetizer are **salame e uova sode** (salami and boiled eggs) known as **fellata di pasqua**.



**Pastiera napoletana** is a typical Easter cake made of a shortcrust pastry with a filling of **ricotta** cheese, eggs, and **cooked wheat berries**, flavored with orange flower water.



It is traditionally prepared on Holy Thursday or Good Friday to ensure that the ingredients have enough time to infuse and rest before it is consumed on Easter Sunday.

**Almond paste Easter lambs** The origins of almond paste can be traced through the centuries as far back as the Etruscans and the Ancient Romans.

During the Easter festivities it takes the shape of lambs. The use of the lamb as a paschal symbol is particularly widespread in the In Puglia,





## Casatiello napoletano

Popular in Lazio and Campania the casatiello is a rustic cake stuffed with cheese, pancetta, salami and whole eggs.

It is traditionally eaten on the evening of Holy Saturday, but remains soft for several days thanks to the presence of suet in the mixture.

## Pizza di Pasqua

Also known as *crescia di Pasqua* or *torta al formaggio*, *Pizza di Pasqua* is a salt cake typical of central Italy served for breakfast on Easter or as antipasto during the Easter meal. It is made with flour, eggs, pecorino, parmigiano.



## Torta Pasqualina

A salt pie made of 33 layers of phyllo sheets (the number of years of life of Christ) following an ancient recipe believed to date back to 15th century Genoa. It is stuffed with chard or artichokes, eggs and seasoned with marjoram or other herbs. The cheese used in the traditional recipe was *Prescinsêua* (a soft curd cheese with a slightly sour taste, halfway between ricotta and kefir), but it is now often replaced with ricotta, as Prescinsêua is becoming increasingly rare.



## Scarcella

The most typical Easter sweet in Puglia is “scarcella”, made of flour, eggs and sugar and shaped into typical forms such as eggs or doves, or simple doughnuts, then topped with colourful sprinkles.



**Mustaccioli or Mustazzoli** are typical sweets from southern Italy, they are rhombus-shaped biscuits covered in chocolate icing.

**Mustazzoli** are typical sweets of Puglia and Sicily, and are food products recognized by the Ministry of Agricultural Resources.

The term "mustaccioli" comes from the Latin "mustaceum" since in ancient times the must was added to the dough. The origins are Arabic and it was a typical habit to prepare these sweets during sacred festivals,





## Easter Traditions in Puglia

The South of Italy is particularly well-known for its celebrations and traditional Easter sweets, Puglia often remains in the shadow of Naples and Sicily

The most famous rites take place in Taranto, starting on Palm Sunday when local fraternal orders bid in an auction for the honour of carrying the statues of Christ in the Holy Friday procession. Beginning at midnight on the Holy Friday, members of the fraternities dress in white robes, covering their faces with hoods with only two slits for their eyes, which render them unrecognizable. Following an ancient route through the town, the fraternities walk barefoot, carrying the heavy statues representing the Stations of the Cross until dawn.



**On Holy Friday in San Marco in Lamis (province of Foggia)** take place “le fracchie”, the massive wooden torches created by splitting a cone-shaped tree trunk in two and filling it with sticks, which light the way for the procession of the Madonna Addolorata.





The seaside city of **Molfetta** also offers numerous ceremonies. After dark on Holy Tuesday, a theatrical representation of the Passion of Christ is acted out in the streets of the old town, which dates back over 1,000 years. It is a traveling show, with each scene being performed in a different corner of the historical center which is shaped like a fish's spine and surrounded by ancient town walls. Equal attention is paid to the dramatization of the last supper, Christ's trial and crucifixion and the audience travels as a group from set to set accompanied by a live band playing the city's renowned funeral marches from the 1800s.



Two days later, the town congregates to visit the “sepolcri” (The Sepulchres), temporary structures set up around one of the altars in the church to simulate the place of Christ's burial and decorated with artistic offerings of bread, wheat, eggs, flowers, candles and lights.





**Buona Pasqua!**