

Christmas Traditions

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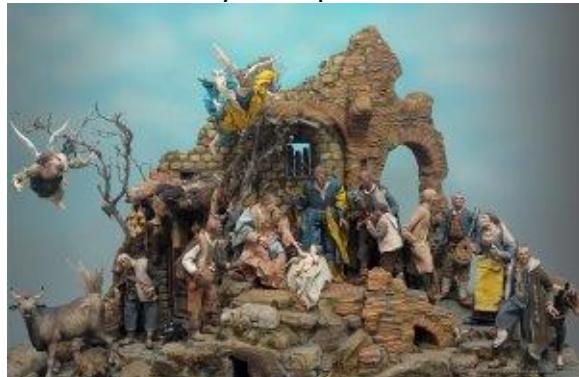
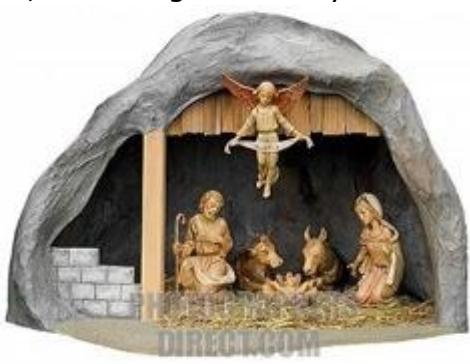
• The Christmas Crib:

One of the most famous way to celebrate Christmas in Italy is surely preparing the Nativity Crib scene.

It is usually prepared with little figures representing St. Joseph, St. Mary, and the little Jesus.

There are larger cribs representing also the Wise Men (called in Italy "I Tre Magi"), with shepherds, animals (an ox and a donkey usually keep the little Jesus warm with their breath into the manger) and angels.

Italian tradition wants the crib prepared on the 8th of December (Immaculate Conception), but without putting Jesus in it, as it would be put in on the 24th of December, at midnight. In Italy we think it's the best way to represent Jesus' birth.



• Christmas meals:

As for food in Italy we don't have a unique national tradition, but there is a strong regional or familiar tradition. For everybody it is the time to be spent with close relatives.

In Puglia, for example, Christmas Meals are very long as they can take five hours.

Every family cooks its own dinner with different courses, but some of the most diffused dishes in this region of southern Italy are panzerotti (a kind of fried, stuffed bread) "animelle" (a part of the lamb, which should be roasted with special spices) and a lot of grilled meat.



Panettone



Pandoro

Surely, two cakes dominate every Christmas Dinner table all along Italy:

Pandoro and Panettone are always eaten by every family... it's almost like a rite.

Lighting of the Christmas Tree :

One tradition that takes place during the Christmas season is the lighting of the Christmas tree in the city of Gubbio, Umbria. You might ask yourself what is so special about lighting a Christmas tree. This tradition is done in cities and towns all across the world. In Gubbio it is not your ordinary Christmas tree. In 1981 the eugubini (the name for the residents of Gubbio) wanted to pay homage to their patron Saint Ubaldo and they wanted to do something different to celebrate the Christmas season. What they came up with was later called "The World's Largest Christmas Tree" by The Guinness Book of World Records in 1991. The town is at the bottom of Mount Ingino and the Basilica di Sant'Ubaldo is located near the top of the mountain. The eugubini decided to construct a tree completely out of lights that spans up the mountainside. The tree has a height of over 650 meters and at the base it is 350 meters wide. The entire outline of the tree is decorated with 260 green lights while inside the tree you will find 270 multi-colored lights. No tree is complete without a star and this one is about 1000 square meters and consists of 200 lights. It takes about 3 months and countless volunteers to help construct the tree. The tree is lit every year on December 7th, which is on the eve of the Immaculate Conception and remains lit until after the Epiphany. During that time thousands flock to this small Medieval town to admire this tree. In keeping up with today's technology Pope Benedict XVI in 2011 turned on the tree by tapping his tablet from the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican.

• Christmas Presents:

Like many of our Christmas customs, gift giving has its historical origin in an ancient pre-Christian tradition. During the ancient Roman celebration of Saturnalia, the harvest festival, small candles and clay figures were given. At Calends, the Roman new-year, more elaborate gifts were exchanged. The Romans believed that sweet gifts would ensure a good year, so fruits, honey, and cakes were popular gifts. Evergreen branches, were given as symbols of continuous health and strength. Wealthy Romans gave each other gold coins for good luck. Everyone gave gifts, children gave to their teachers, slaves gave to their masters, and the people gave to their emperor. Even though the three kings and others gave presents to the baby Jesus, gift giving did not become an established part of the Christmas celebration until several centuries after the birth of Christ.

Because the early Christians did not want their religion to be associated with pagan festivals, they shunned gift giving as a pagan practice. It was in the Middle Ages that gift giving began to be part of the Christmas tradition. The kings of England, like the emperors of Rome, demanded gifts from their subjects. The common people also exchanged gifts, but only among the wealthy were elaborate gifts given. The poor exchanged trinkets and entertained each other with songs and parties and plays.

Nowadays, the knitted pattern jumper is considered to be the worst present you could find under the tree, followed by a dustpan and brush and the dreaded socks.

"LOM A MERZ": THE MAGIC FIRES

An ancient and fascinating tradition full of culture and popular agricultural wisdom



Romagna is a land historically consecrated to agriculture and this is prone to meteorological adversity. Thus the agricultural tradition of the past wanted that to repel the misfortune some propitiatory rite must be made, as the magic fires or, as we say, "Lòm a Merz" (lights of March)

The lighting of the bonfire was made to celebrate the arrival of spring and to evocate a positive year for the harvest on the fields. Its meaning was to support and welcome the new season, burning dry branches. For this occasion people got together on farmyards, singing and dancing, eating and drinking, and especially having fun.

In fields, when it gets dark, around the bonfires, life comes up with meetings about our agricultural tradition and culture, dances, shows and the memories of jobs of the past. Of course it's possible to taste wine and food of the great local gastronomy.

"The lights of March" that were seen on farmlands and in small Romagna's little villages represented an important typical rite of the farmer's magic world. This tradition lasted since the 1930s, losing then its character of party soon after the war.

Anyway, nowadays at the beginning of March bonfires are lit to keep memory of the old rural tradition.

Source: http://www.taccuinodiviaggio.it/home/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=267

THE SAINT WEEK IN TARANTO

The rites of the Saint week in Taranto are events which take place in the city starting from Palm Sunday.

The rites go back to the period of the Spanish domination in southern Italy. They had been spread there by the patrician don Diego Calò, who in 1603, in Naples had the statues of the dead Jesus and the Grieve built.

On the Palm Sunday, the two main confraternities of Taranto do some challenges to win the honor to take part at the two processions, the pilgrimage to the grieve Virgin and the procession of the Holy mysteries. At the beginning of the meeting, the secretary declare the auction which continues until the highest offer isn't exceeded by others. At this point the symbol is given to the member who did it.

The challenges' proceeds is allocated through the year, in favor of charity efforts.

The "Predoni" are couples of Carmine's brothers who in the afternoon of the Holy Thursday go out to the Holy Mary's Church to make a pilgrimage to the principal churches where there are the "sepulchers". The couple who go out the sacristy's front door is called of "countryside" whereas the couple who go out the principal front door is called of "city". The Predoni are barefoot and they wear the rite' traditional clothing which is made of: a white smock, a black rosary and a crucified Christ, lean on the right of the clothing; a belt of leather which represents the whip that hit Jesus; a white hood with two small holes for the eyes; a black hat, where on sides hang down two blues ribbons. The Predoni bring a mallet, called "bordone", which symbolize the ancient mallet of pilgrims: indeed these people are called in this way to remember the pilgrims who went to Rome to get absolution from sins.



The coming out of the Predoni is the first act of the Taranto's Saint Week that involves the entire community.

Source: http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Settimana_santa_di_Taranto

THE CARNIVAL OF VENICE

The carnival of Venice is one of the most famous all over the world, and it has ancient origins, in fact there are several news about it that derive from the end of eleventh century. The first testimony dates back to a document of Doge Vitale Falier of 1094, which is about public entertainment and in which the word Carnival is mentioned for the first time. At the age of Serenissima, the carnival started on 26th of December and ended on Shrove Tuesday but, in some particular occasions it lasted also for 180 days. Since ever the place in which the carnival takes place is Piazza San Marco. It hosted

many different kinds of shows, often prepared by the "Compagnie della Calza", which were the original private committee that organized the carnival's events. During the carnival, citizens can wear masks, costumes so that it's possible to hide the own identity. One of the most common costume in the ancient carnival, above all especially from 18th century, worn also during the modern carnival is certainly the "BAUTA". This figure, typically venetian, worn by men and women, is formed by a particular white mask called "larva" under a black cocked hat and completed by an enveloping dark cape called "tabarro".

THIS IS AN IMAGE OF "LARVA", mask of the costume "Bauta"



The first Saturday of Venice Carnival is celebrated the ancient "Festa delle Marie". This ancient Venetian feast whose origin is controversial, was introduced presumably during the 963 and continued then inside the carnival period, when it was instituted. During the day of the Maria's purification, on 2nd February, in Venice it was costume to celebrate the day of brides' blessing, during which the weddings of twelve brides, were blessed collectively at the Basilica of San Pietro di Catello. During the weeks that precede the carnival a sort of selection among the local beauties to choose the twelve Marie intended to parade as the protagonists of the parade during the celebration. The feast usually takes place on the afternoon of the first Saturday of Carnival, when the twelve Marie, accompanied by a long procession formed by many people begin their slow walk starting from the church of San Pietro di Casello and handing towards Piazza San Marco.

Another fascinating show during the carnival of Venice is the flight of the angel. It evokes the ancient acrobatic tribute to the doge the head of state of Venice. This happened during the ancient carnival but, on the contrary in the modern carnival there is the flight of the lark bunting.



OTHER IMAGES ABOUT THE CARNIVAL OF VENICE

Source: Wikipedia and carnevale di Venezia - Inn Venice

TRADITION IN THE ITALIAN THEATER

In the Italian theater wearing something that has the color purple brings bad luck for the play and the actors, this superstition comes from the middle ages, when it was forbidden to perform any kind of public representation during the season of Lent. The priest used to wear purple tunic for the lent celebrations, for this reason actor used to see *this* color as a loss of money and work.

Also in the Italian theater when a script falls on the ground its bad luck for the company. The actors that dropped the script has to shake it to the ground 3 times.

Another peculiarity of the Italian theater is the "commedia dell'arte" (the clother translation is "comedy of craft"). This was a form of theatre by maskered types which began in Italy in the 16th century.

The characters of the commedia were always the same such as



"pantalone", "arlecchino", and "pulcinella"; the play was based on the improvisation.



Other TRADITIONS IN ITALY

There are lots of traditions in Italy. Some of them are made for kids, but most of them are for everybody.

One of the favourite celebrations is "**Epifania**", in which an old woman on a flying broom leaves to good children little presents inside a sock, such as sweets and small toys; but to bad children she gives coal (that can also be sweet and eatable).



"**Pesce d'aprile**" (April fool) is a day in which every kind of trick can be done. This trick is done on April the 1st; it's very appreciated by Italian children, who usually wake up earlier for prepare a joke to their family members or friends.

The most famous trick is, without doubt, the one done by Orson Welles. On April the 1st 1938 this famous American director organized a special on a radio program. But for a technical problem, it wasn't possible transmit it. So Welles decided to broadcast the program some months later, on October the 30th, and the radio transmitted "the War of the Worlds": a running commentary about the landing of Martians on Earth. The population was in panic. Police stations had thousands of phone calls, and the churches became full.

By the way, in Italy are done easier and easier jokes, such as for example pasting on your brother's back a big paper with the written "pesce d'aprile".



CARNIVAL

Carnival is the holiday period between Epiphany and the Lenten fast in countries with a Catholic tradition. For a long time it was believed that the origin of the word "carnival" was derived from "meat leave", that is prepare for the Lenten fast. And the fact that for 40 days you had to fast, became more than a little difficult for people.

So spend a certain period before Lent carelessly, must represent necessarily a vent to prevent the people already living in extreme poverty could find an outlet in real riots.

The true days when Carnival is happening are usually the Tuesdays and Thursdays. There are very important Carnivals in Italy, as those of Venice or of Viareggio.
But what do you do at CARNIVAL?

Carnival is a very happy event, people have fun. You can dress as you like, but a little time ago, there were the typical masks like those of Harlequin, "Colombina", "Pulcinella" etc ... In this period there is a lot of euphoria and people go to the streets and squares amusing themselves. In some towns parades are organized with wagons carrying big representations of famous people and children. From wagons, throw confetti and streamers are thrown to people in the streets.



Saint Sylvester's Night

In Italy, it's a tradition to celebrate New Year's Eve, and of course friends and/or relatives sit at the table for a huge meal. Some dishes are similar to the Christmas ones, but the only traditional for New Year Eve and the first day of the year is lentil and sausage stew.

From midnight it's used to greet the New Year with fireworks, but also pyrotechnic shows in big cities.

The night of the 31st the President of the Republic reads the traditional televised message, in which he wishes a Happy Year and talks about the government and parliament activity of the "passed" year. Generally it starts at 20:30 and ends about 30 minutes later.

Halloween in the world - The Origins

The custom of Halloween is related to the famous legend of the Irish Jack, a blacksmith cunning, avaricious and drunkard, that one day at the bar met the devil. Because of his state of drunkenness, his soul was almost in the hands of the devil, but, cunningly, he managed to transform the devil in a coin and promised his soul in exchange for one last drink. Jack put the devil in his purse, next to a silver cross, so that he couldn't change back. Then the devil promised him that he wouldn't take his soul in the next ten years and Jack released him. Ten years later, the devil showed up again and Jack asked him to pick an apple from a tree before take his soul. In order to prevent the devil

descended, the crafty Jack carved a cross on the trunk. Only after a long spat the two came to a compromise: in exchange for freedom, the devil would have to save the eternal damnation to Jack. During his life he committed many sins that, when he died, and presented himself refused from heaven to hell, was "cordially" cast out the demon that reminded him of the deal and was happy to let him wander as tormented soul. The observation that it was cold and dark, the demon threw a firebrand (eternal as coming from Hell), which Jack placed it inside a turnip he had with him. He began from that moment to turn without truce in search of a place on which to rest. Halloween is therefore the day when Jack goes in search of a refuge. The inhabitants of each country are required to hang a lantern outside the door to indicate the unhappy soul that their house is no place for him but did not give respite to seek a place of eternal rest. Since when this tradition reached America there was a famine instead of using the turnip used the pumpkin because more present and also linked to the afterlife.

In Italy we have been celebrating for some time

Here in Imola, the land of the Gauls, customs persist, especially in the countryside, linked to antiquity, when it was believed that on Halloween night the world of the living to touch for a moment the dead world and it was possible to see their loved ones walking between us. They also used to put carved pumpkins with candles inside on the night of October 31 on the walls of the cemeteries to strike fear in those who passed by bicycle. Some teens also had fun hiding behind hedges (that were once along the country roads) and exit with pumpkin lit as soon as one "unfortunate" was passing by them. The kids, nowadays, on the evening of October 31, go around the houses knocking on doors dressed up as monsters, ghosts and other scary creatures saying "trick or treat". We, as teenagers, often use the Halloween night as a night to make horror theme parties or going to the disco with friends.

EASTER

Easter celebrates Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead, his ascension to heaven and our future rising with him at his Second Coming for final judgment; it is Christianity's most important celebration. It is the culmination of the Passion of Christ preceded by Lent, a forty-day period of fasting, prayer, and penance, it represents the 40 days that Jesus spent alone in the wilderness before starting his ministry, a time in which Christians believe he survived various temptations by the devil. The day before Lent, known as Mardi gras or Fat Tuesday, is a last hurrah of food and fun before the fasting begins (the fasting is actually on Ash Wednesday and Holy Friday, and on the Friday people should not eat any meat). The week preceding Easter is called Holy Week and includes Maundy Thursday, which commemorates Jesus' last supper with his disciples; Good Friday, which honors the day of his crucifixion; and Holy Saturday, which focuses on the transition between the crucifixion and resurrection. The 50-day period following Easter Sunday is called Eastertide and includes a celebration of Jesus' ascension into heaven. Easter and the holidays that are related to it change in dates, they do not fall on a fixed date in the Gregorian or Julian calendars (both of which follow the cycle of the sun and the seasons). The First Council of Nicea (325) established the date of Easter as the first Sunday after the full moon following the March equinox. In Western Christianity, using the Gregorian calendar, Easter always falls on a Sunday between 22 March and 25 April inclusive, within about seven days after the astronomical full moon. Eastern Christianity bases its calculations on the Julian calendar. Because of the 13-day difference between the calendars between 1900 and 2099, 21 March

corresponds, during the 21st century, to 3 April in the Gregorian calendar. Easter therefore varies between 4 April and 8 May on the Gregorian calendar.

EASTER IN ITALY

While you probably won't see the Easter bunny if you're in Italy for Easter, you will find some interesting Italian Easter celebrations. Like all holidays in Italy, Easter, has lots of rituals and traditions. The Monday following Easter, *Pasquetta* or *Lunedì dell'Angelo* is also a holiday throughout Italy.

Easter (Pasqua in Italian) in Italy is one of the most important holidays; it is a national holiday and it is every Sunday after the first spring's full moon; for example this year Easter is on 5th April.

Food plays a big part in the celebrations. Traditional Easter food in many places include lamb or goat, artichokes, and special Easter breads that vary from region to region. But there are two main sweet food: chocolate eggs (usually with a surprise inside), and colomba, an Italian Easter cake in the shape of a dove.



Chocolate eggs



Colomba

Italian Easter takes place in three days, on Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Pasquetta. Olive branches are often used instead of or along with palm fronds in the processions and to decorate churches. Around Italy on Good Friday there are numerous processions in which the statues of the crucified Jesus and Mary are carried on the shoulders or exposed on the main squares. As a symbol of peace during these events, in churches and houses exhibited olive branches or palm are collected. Parade participants are often dressed in traditional ancient costumes.

by Class 2 D 204 - 2015