

ITALIAN TRADITIONS

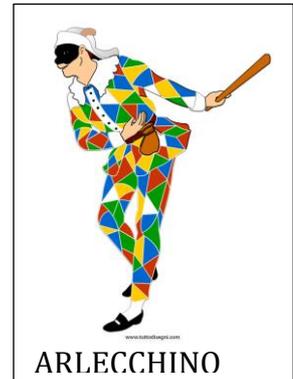
CARNIVAL: The Italian carnival is in February. All along the peninsula every city and town is invaded with masks, confetti, colours and lights that make a very exciting and unique atmosphere. It is a celebration with ancient roots, and today has become a folkloristic rite in which traditions and fun work together to bring enormous life to this unique celebration. According to the Roman Catholic Liturgical Calendar, Carnival is set between Epiphany



(January 6th) and the start of Lent. This year the Carnival is between 12th and the 28th February, Lent begins with 1st March.

One of the most famous carnivals is in Venice "Carnevale di Venezia", a two-week party. It is marked by parties, parades, live performances of music

and, most famously, masquerade balls. Masks are changed throughout the time, starting from simple half-face masks to elaborate full-face masks called "bauta". You have to wear fun dresses or special costumes which represent one of the famous Italian "maschere": Arlecchini,



Pulcinella, Dottor Balanzone etc.... Even though family-friendly events are part of the celebration, the masks and the party atmosphere give "Carnevale" a reputation as a place where "anything goes." Typical desserts are "castagnole" or "frappe".



EASTER ("SCOPPIO DEL CARRO" IN FLORENCE):

The Italian way to celebrate Easter is not very different from the way it is celebrated by other Christians. Italians typically enjoy chocolate eggs and the "colomba", an Easter cake like "panettone". It is usual to put a surprise, such as a small toy, in the chocolate egg, much to the delight of the children who receive the eggs.



"Scoppio del carro" is an Easter festival held in Florence that marks the triumph of the First Crusade. Mimicking the supposed events of the Crusade, celebrants build a magnificent cart called "Brindellone" in the shape of a tower. Then oxen pull it through the city until the square of the cathedral. Here someone light fireworks which explode and create a shower of colored sparks.

FERRAGOSTO: it is an Italian summer holiday. Traditionally August is the month of holiday. The Catholic Church added the celebration of the Virgin Mary on 15th. Families enjoy the beach or the countryside, cooking food together and taking part in other recreational activities.



"PALIO DI SIENA": The *Palio di Siena* is without doubt one of the most exciting festivals of the Italian tradition. Its origin dates back to the Medieval Times. It normally takes place twice a year: on July 2nd in honor of the Provenzano Virgin Mary and on August 16th consecrated to the Assunta Virgin Mary, the city's patron. In "Piazza del Campo", in the city centre, a breath-taking race of horses, one for

each of the ten city quarters called 'contrade' takes place. The competition is preceded by the blessing of the horses and the jockeys in their patronal church and with a sumptuous historic parade in medieval costumes. The emblems and the colours of the city quarters flutter around the city.



CHRISTMAS:

Today, speaking of Christmas, we refer to a period of time running from December 24th to January 6th. It includes Christmas Eve (December 24th), Christmas Day (December 25th), Saint Stephen's Day (December 26th), New Year's Eve (night of December 31st - January 1st) and the Epiphany (January 6th). This last festivity is embodied by a likeable old lady who, in the night between January 5th and 6th, flies around on a broomstick, bringing presents and filling stockings with candies for the kids who behaved well, or coal for those who were naughty.



The Christmas Tree and the *presepe* (the crib) are usually prepared on the 8th of December, the day of the Immaculate Conception, and taken down on the evening of January 6th.

The *presepe* is the exact reproduction of the scene of Jesus' birth, made with beautiful statuettes. In Italy we also have real people who organize a living presepe. San Francesco d'Assisi was the first to set up a living presepe on December 24th 1223, it was near Greccio (Rieti) to remember Jesus' birth. This idea was matured after a trip to Bethlehem that had meant a lot to him. Indeed, today the most famous presepe is that of Greccio where the characters are a hundred!!!



For many families all around the world, Christmas is also an occasion to get together, eat and exchange presents. Even if the menu, on this day, varies from region to region, *panettone*, *pandoro* and *torrone* are always present on the Italian Christmas table.

NEW YEAR'S:

New Year's celebrations begin on December 31st with the standard 10 second countdown to midnight, and typical fireworks. Italians have a tradition of eating **lentils** on New Year's Eve, as it is believed they will bring money and good fortune in the new year.



Italians like to wear **red underwear** to start the year with good humor and fortune. In some regions, there is also the tradition of throwing away something old to symbolize the will of getting rid of all negativity and get a fresh start!

LÒM A MERZ: (bonfire to coming March)



For the man but above all for the farmer, the spring is all along seen as a propitiating moment. In this context, the fire has got the meaning of a necessary presence for the dialogue between the vital and creative strengths of nature. In particular, these strengths, after the strictness



of the winter, are believed to bring the crops to life. The fires of march that were seen till the 30s in the countryside and in the small villages of *Romagna* represented an important ritual typical of the farmers.

SOURCES:

lifeinitaly, Christmas in Italy - <http://www.lifeinitaly.com/christmas>

lifeinitaly, Holiday celebrations, costumes and traditions -

<http://www.lifeinitaly.com/holidays/celebrations-customs-traditions>

How Italian Traditions Work, Italian Costumes and Traditions -

<http://people.howstuffworks.com/culture-traditions/national-traditions/italian-tradition6.htm>

Lòm a Merz: i fuochi magici nelle campagne romagnole - <http://www.racine.ra.it/Cosa-succede-nel-territorio-tutte-le-notizie/Lom-a-Merz-i-fuochi-magici-nelle-campagne-romagnole>

Libro "Feste e tradizioni del mondo" – Touring Club Italiano

Exercises:

1) Connect every name to the corresponding tradition.

Contrada	Lòm a Merz
"The farmers' job"	Easter
Greccio	Ferragosto
"Brindellone"	Palio di Siena
Lentils	Carnival
August 15	New Year
Frappe	Christmas

2) Read the sentences and choose the best word for each space.

- 1) To start the year with good humor and fortune Italians like to wear _____.
- 2) The competition is preceded by the _____ of the horses and the jockeys.
- 3) Is usual to put a surprise in the chocolate egg much to the _____ of the children.
- 4) Traditionally, Ferragosto was just a period of _____.
- 5) The vital and creative _____ brought the crops to the life.
- 6) A likeable old lady brings presents and fills stockings with candies for the kids behaved well, or _____ for those who behaved like _____.
- 7) Today the elaborate full-face masks are called "_____".

(delight – coal – red underwear – strengths – rascals – blessing – relaxation – bauta)

3) Read the sentences and choose A, B or C.

- 1) For Easter Italians typically enjoy:
 - a. panettone
 - b. colomba
 - c. torrone
- 2) The Christmas Tree and the "presepe" are taken down on the evening of:
 - a. December 26th
 - b. January 5th
 - c. January 6th
- 3) Who decided to set up a living presepe near Greccio?
 - a. San Francesco d'Assisi
 - b. San Petronio
 - c. San Nicola
- 4) The fires of march take place:
 - a. in the towns
 - b. in the countries
 - c. in big centers