

Italian Holidays

Celebrations and Traditions

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New Year's Day

Capodanno

By Maria Fassio Pignati

Past State President, Grand Lodge of California

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ENGLISH

New Year's Day

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ITALIAN

Capodanno

DATE IN ENGLISH

January 1st

DATE IN ITALIAN

1 gennaio / il primo gennaio

History

In Italy, New Year's Day is known as Capodanno, a day of celebration that is closely intertwined with New Year's Eve. It is celebrated on January 1, "*il primo gennaio*" of each year.

In 46 BC, Julius Caesar ordered this date to be placed on the Julian calendar. The new year was associated with celebrations for Janus, the god of beginnings and the month's namesake. Janus had two faces, one facing the old year and the other the new, and was the main divinity between December 31 and January 1.

Starting from 1582, with the introduction of the current calendar by Pope Gregory XIII, the New Year was set on January 1st as the first day of the year. Once the Gregorian calendar was adopted in the rest of the world, there was total uniformity.

National Holiday / Celebrations

Most New Year's Day traditions are widespread in Italy, with some regions and cities having their own particular type of celebration.

Special Customs

Some special customs from the past in the smaller towns of Central and Southern Italy had people throwing out old dishes, china, pots and pans, and old items ("*buttare le cose vecchie*"—"throw out old things") from their windows to celebrate getting rid of the old and past unhappiness while ushering in the new. People also kiss under the mistletoe (*vischio*) at midnight, which symbolizes fertility, vitality, protecting love, and is the antithesis of death.

Another lesser-known tradition is to light a candle shortly before midnight and let it burn out on New Year's Day since fire represents purification and renewal. A green candle signifies wealth, while white and red candles symbolize love. Even lesser known but still practiced is opening a window in a dark room shortly before midnight to get rid of evil spirits and negative energy for New Year's Day and beyond.

Special Foods

People often congregate in their piazzas after eating a big dinner (*cenone*) and party with friends, listen to open-air concerts, and, since the middle of the 17th century, watch fireworks, known as *botti*, which "scare the bad spirits away" all through the early hours of January 1.

It is a tradition throughout Italy to eat lentils (*lenticchie*) either before midnight, at midnight, or on New Year's Day. Lentils symbolize gold coins and are considered to bring good luck and prosperity. In Piemonte, rice, also representing coins, is also eaten on New Year's Day because a small amount of dry rice produces a bigger yield when cooked, symbolizing prosperity. Some regions eat pomegranates, which symbolize longevity, fertility, and wealth.

One tradition is to eat twelve grapes (wealth) or raisins (good luck) at midnight, one for each month, and eaten on each hour strike of the clock. An old adage says: “*Chi mangia l'uva per Capodanno conta i quattrini tutto l'anno*,” which translates to, “He who eats grapes for New Year's Day counts money all year round.”

On the first day of January, meat (pork or lamb) is served, along with vegetables such as chard and chicory. These foods promote financial wealth, health, and satisfaction. Fried vegetables and fish are other classics, as are potato pancakes in the North and crepes in the South.

The first course is often based on fish, such as seafood risotto or spaghetti alla marinara. In Piemonte, “*agnolotti al plin*,” pasta stuffed with meat and served in broth, or the South Tyrolean large bread dumplings with cheese and speck are served. Other great classics are stewed octopus with potatoes and fried cod, with the latter mostly served in the South.

In addition, meals almost always include a salad of radicchio and lettuce, dried fruit, nuts, peanuts, and almonds, and the desserts associated with Christmas—panettone, torrone, pandoro, and panforte, together with a bubbly prosecco.

Recipes

I found a recipe for Italian Lentil Soup on the website Cucina by Elena at www.cucinabyelena.com, which also has a variety of Italian recipes available.

Greetings & Vocabulary

Italians will wish each other *Buon Anno* (a good year), *Buon Inizio* (a good beginning), *Buon Capodanno* (a good new year), or any phrase with well wishes for the new year.

Personal Connection

My Italian immigrant family from Piemonte and Liguria in Northern Italy celebrated and continues to celebrate New Year's with Asti Spumante and Risotto alla Milanese with saffron and mushrooms.

Interesting Facts

An interesting note... One of the most ancient customs in Italy is to take note of the first person you meet on the street on Capodanno. If you see an old person—or, even better, a hunchback—the new year will be full of great surprises. If you meet a baby, a doctor, or a priest, there might be some bad luck around the corner, according to tradition. The reasons for this are not known.

Celebrating New Year's Day at Lodges

New Year's Day can be celebrated either on January 1 or a few days later at a lodge meeting or special function:

- Members can make traditional Capodanno recipes to share.

- Talk about customs, traditions, and superstitions from their hometown or family.
- Have younger members draw pictures of fireworks or people at table.
- Ask members to bring in pictures of Capodanno as it is celebrated in Italy.

Epiphany

Festa dell'Epifania

By Maria Fassio Pignati

Past State President, Grand Lodge of California

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ENGLISH

Feast of the Epiphany

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ITALIAN

Festa dell'Epifania

DATE IN ENGLISH

January 6th

DATE IN ITALIAN

6 gennaio /
il sei gennaio

History

In Italy, January 6 (*il sei gennaio*) is celebrated as the Feast of the Epiphany, *l'Epifania*, from the Greek word for manifestation, or revelation from above; the day when the Three Wise Men, thought to be astrologers, or *Re Magi* (Three Kings), came from foreign lands in the East and followed the star to bring gifts to the newborn baby Jesus. These gifts were gold, frankincense, and myrrh (*oro, incenso, e mirra*). It is a day when the Catholic church and other Christian churches celebrate the divinity of Jesus. Statues of the Re Magi are always displayed in a Nativity scene (*il presepe*).

National Holiday / Celebrations

This day is considered a *giorno festivo* (national holiday) throughout Italy and is celebrated twelve days after Christmas, better known as the 12th Day of Christmas. It is sometimes considered the end of the Christmas season,

and the Italian saying goes, "*L'epifania, tutte le feste porta via*" – "The Epiphany takes away all the holidays."

Special Customs

In days long gone, January 6 was the day to exchange Christmas gifts, as that was the day Baby Jesus received his gifts from the *Re Magi*. Catholics are encouraged to leave their Christmas tree, lights, and manger scene up for the Epiphany. This holiday is even older than the December 25 celebration of Christmas.

January 6 is also the celebration of *La Befana* (the good witch), whose Roman-born tradition, which has pagan roots, is closely linked to that of the Re Magi. This legend recounts the story of an old lady, often portrayed as hunched, hook-nosed, and with a pointed chin, who was approached by the Magi a few days before the birth of Jesus. The Wise Men had seen a star in the sky and wanted to follow it to the Baby Jesus. The old woman provided shelter for her visitors for a night, as she was known to be a spotless housekeeper. The Magi invited her to accompany them, but she declined because she was too busy with housework and told them she would join them later. Feeling guilty afterward, La Befana quickly tried to find the astrologers but, sadly, could not.

From that point on, the legend is that La Befana travels on her broom (*scopa*) with a black shawl (*sciallo*), a headkerchief (*il foulard*), and a sack (*sacco*) of treats on the night of January 5 and the early morning of January 6, trying to find the little Jesus. Her clothes and face are covered in soot because she enters houses through the chimney. During the night, she leaves *caramelle e cioccolattini* (hard candy and chocolates) for children who have been good and lumps of dark rock candy, made to resemble lumps of coal (*carbone*), for children who have misbehaved, in stockings hung by the fireplace, or left on tables or other locations in the house, always with the hope that one of the children she has visited is the infant Jesus. In poorer parts of Italy, especially in the Sicilian countryside, a stick was

placed in the stocking instead of coal. A more modern Befana leaves toys for the children in addition to sweets. La Befana is said to sweep the room before she leaves, which symbolizes sweeping away the problems of the year. A glass of wine and small amounts of local food are left for the Befana to enjoy.

It is said that if Befana spots someone who sees her, they will receive a little thump on the shoulder from her broomstick, as she doesn't want to be seen. This is perhaps an ingenious way for parents to keep children in their beds. The town of Urbino, in the Marche region, is considered the official home of La Befana and holds a Befana Festival from January 2–6, with thousands of participants.

Special Foods

Special foods associated with Epifania and La Befana feature lavish several-course meals, including lasagna and *pasta al forno* (baked pasta), meat (*carne*), chicken (*pollo*), and fish (*pesce*). Sweets such as Cavallucci di Siena (soft biscuits from Tuscany), Anicini biscuits from Liguria served with wine, Strufole (fried sweet treats from Campania), torrone, panettone, pandoro, caramelized apples, and leftover Christmas treats are offered. In Piemonte, Fugassa d'la Befana, a soft pizza-type dough shaped like a daisy, is baked with one hidden black fava bean and one hidden white fava bean. The person who finds the black bean pays for the wine for the group, and the one who finds the white bean pays for the Fugassa. Some towns put coins in the Fugassa to symbolize wealth. The Veneto region features *Pinza*, a pizza made of cornmeal with dried fruit, fennel seeds, and grappa.

Recipes

Each region of Italy has its own special Epiphany and Befana recipes, and recipes pertaining to a region may have subtle changes from town to town.

Greetings & Vocabulary

Below is one of several different versions of a poem to La Befana, which is often repeated on the eve and day of January 6:

<i>La Befana vien di notte</i>	The Befana comes by night
<i>Con le scarpe tutte rotte</i>	With her shoes all tattered and torn
<i>Col vestito alla romana</i>	She comes dressed in the Roman way
<i>Viva, Viva La Befana!</i>	Long live the Befana!

Personal Connection

My family and my husband's family have always celebrated Epiphany and La Befana. As someone whose birthday is January 6, my presents were usually placed under the Christmas tree, so there were three celebrations in one day...birthday, Epiphany, and La Befana. My husband's family, from the Marche region, would always celebrate. When he was a child, the local open-air markets (*mercati*) would have tables and tables of toys that parents would purchase to gift to their children on Epiphany. A local woman would dress like La Befana and visit children in their homes right before January 6. My husband's older brother was so frightened of her that he would hide under the bed and, to avoid even seeing her feet, would push his head up into the springs and woolen mattress so much that the shape of his head was visible in the mattress. Each child would receive a small gift from La Befana, which was left upon the kitchen table, since no gifts were exchanged on Christmas Day, only on January 6. Nowadays, some Italians

are also starting to exchange gifts on Christmas Eve or Day, but still keep the tradition of La Befana alive for the children.

Celebrating Epiphany and La Befana at Lodges

Epiphany and La Befana can be a great celebration for a lodge:

- Have a Befana dinner on or close to January 6, where people can bring traditional food and candy and exchange gifts with a monetary limit.
- It would be fun to have someone dress like La Befana and hand out small stockings with candy to any children present and explain the history and connection between Epiphany and La Befana.
- Members can tell how their towns in Italy celebrate La Befana and Epifania.
- Tomie dePaola, an award-winning Italian-American author and illustrator, wrote a beautiful book, “The Legend of Old Befana,” which tells one of the many stories about La Befana. This would be a great story to read at a lodge event for both children and adults.

Valentine's Day

Festa di San Valentino

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ENGLISH

Valentine's Day

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ITALIAN

Festa di San Valentino /
La Festa Degli Innamorati

DATE IN ENGLISH

February 14th

DATE IN ITALIAN

14 febbraio

History

Valentine's Day is a romantic holiday, celebrated by adult couples and lovers. In cities where Saint Valentine is the patron saint, it is also a religious holiday. In addition to Terni, Umbria which is his birthplace, Saint Valentine is the patron saint of Musile di Piave (near Venice), Bussolengo (near Verona), San Valentino Torio (near Salerno), Bessica (near Treviso), Limana (near Belluno), Pozzoleone (near Viterbo), and Vico del Gargano, Puglia, and others.

The holiday originated in Italy during the Roman Empire. San Valentino is believed to be the Christian martyr Valentino, a Bishop from Terni, Italy, who defied the emperor's orders and married Christian couples.

Then, in the 5th century, the Pope named February 14th as San Valentino's feast day. He selected this date because it marked the day of San Valentino's martyrdom. Also, he wanted this new Christian holiday to diminish the

importance of the celebration of the Roman holiday Lupercalia (dedicated to the Roman Goddess Juno), in which young unmarried couples participated in sexual game-playing from Feb. 13 to Feb. 15.

National Holiday

Valentine's Day is not a national public holiday in Italy, but it is celebrated all over Italy and is more prominent in certain regions.

Celebrations

Valentine's Day is considered a romantic holiday in Italy and is celebrated by lovers and adults in romantic relationships. Giving Valentines to your friends, like kids do in the US, is not a custom in Italy. Children don't celebrate the holiday at school.

There is a specific four-day festival in **Verona**, with heart lanterns lining the city streets, free concerts in the Piazza Dei Signori, a love letter writing contest, and many restaurant specials.

In **Terni**, Valentino's birthplace, they hold *[il Cioccolentino](#)*, a chocolate festival that lasts several days!

Vico del Gargano, in Puglia, also hosts a festival with religious and cultural events, but the festa's most famous feature is oranges, which lavishly decorate the streets.

Special Customs

In the past, it was believed the first man a single woman saw was the man she would marry.

Italians give flowers, or *flori*, to their sweethearts on Valentine's Day. Red roses, or *rose rosse*, are a favorite flower.

They may also give each other a romantic note.

Chocolates are another popular gift. There are heart-shaped chocolates and heart-shaped boxes filled with chocolates. The most romantic chocolates of all are, of course, *baci*, hazelnut kisses made by the Perugina chocolate company.

Italian lovers may choose to have a romantic dinner together, at home or at a restaurant.

A popular trend among young people is to fasten to a bridge, monument, or even a gate or fence *lucchetti dell'amore* (locks of love) with their names or initials and the date their relationship started engraved on them. Then they throw away the key, symbolizing that they are locked together and their love will never be broken.

Special Food

Some favorite foods associated with Valentine's Day include chocolate-covered hazelnuts, chocolates with a sweet cherry liquid filling, and Perugina *baci* candy with romantic poetry/message on the inside.

Greetings & Vocabulary

Buon San Valentino

Happy Saint Valentine's Day

Ti amo

I love you (*romantic love*)

Ti amo tanto

I love you very much (*romantic love*)

Sono innamorato di te

(*a man speaking*) I am in love with you

Sono innamorata di te

(*a woman speaking*) I am in love with you

Ti adoro

I adore you (*for someone you know well*)

*Oggi è la Festa di San Valentino
e non posso più stare zitto.*

Today is [Valentine's Day](#) and I can't stay silent anymore. I confess that I love you with all my heart!

Confesso che ti amo con tutto il cuore!

Ti voglio bene

I love you (*platonic love, for family members and friends*)

Ti voglio molto bene

I love you very much (*for family members and friends*)

(Tu) mi piaci

I like you / I'm attracted to you (*for someone you know well*)

Mi piaci moltissimo

I like you so much / I'm extremely attracted to you

Sto bene con te

I like being with you

Sto tanto bene con te

I like being with you very much

Caro, Cara

Dear

Caro mio, Cara mia

My dear

Carissimo, Carissima

Dearest

Amore / Amore mio, Amore mia

Love / My love

Amore della mia vita

Love of my life

Bello, Bella / Bellissimo, Bellissima

Beautiful / Very beautiful

<i>Gioia / Gioia mia</i>	Joy / My joy
<i>Tesoro / Tesoro mio</i>	Treasure / My treasure
<i>Principessa / Principessa mia</i>	Princess / My princess
<i>Cuore mio</i>	My heart
<i>Il mio ragazzo / La mia ragazza</i>	My boyfriend / My girlfriend
<i>Il mio amante / La mia amante</i>	My lover (masculine / feminine)
<i>Il mio fidanzato / La mia fidanzata</i>	My fiancé / My fiancée
<i>Mio marito / Mia moglie</i>	My husband / My wife

Personal Connection

My family appreciates the sentiment behind the celebration of Valentine’s Day especially because my last name, D’Amore, means “of Love.” I even have a cousin named Valentino, so Valentine’s Day is his *Onomastico*, name day. We do not, however, celebrate with specific Italian customs.

Celebrating Valentine’s Day at Lodges

Many fun events can be set up to celebrate Valentine’s Day:

- Hold events for singles so they can meet each other and encourage younger member participation within the lodge so they can connect to their Italian roots.
- Younger members could also connect via Zoom or go on organized trips (to Italy) to meet other young members in the US and Italy.
- Organize a dinner out at an Italian Restaurant.
- Hold a chocolate and wine-tasting event.
- Learn some Valentine’s Day vocabulary in Italian. Play vocabulary “bingo.”
- Make Italian Valentine’s Day cards.
- Surprise members with baci chocolates at the meeting held around Valentine’s Day.
- Have a cook-off featuring Valentine’s Day cakes, cookies, and pastries.
- Serve Italian espresso and a Valentine’s Day dessert.

International Women’s Day

Festa della Donna

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ENGLISH

International Women’s Day

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ITALIAN

Festa della Donna

DATE IN ENGLISH

March 8th

DATE IN ITALIAN

8 marzo

History

International Women’s Day (IWD)—*Festa Della Donna*—is celebrated on March 8 worldwide.

While it was first celebrated in 1922, it was not until the end of WWII that this holiday became important in Italy. IWD celebrated womanhood across Italy, where women could finally vote and pursue a political career. It was a critical period. Women began advocating for their rights, including suffrage, better working conditions, and gender equality. The first observance of this day was marked by rallies, demonstrations, and events across the country, where women were finally allowed a platform to speak for themselves.

In the United States, it was first celebrated on February 28, 1909. The day commemorates a strike in the garment district in 1908 in New York.

Women, primarily Jewish and Italian, protested the poor working conditions. The strike lasted for several weeks and was highly publicized, leading to improved working conditions and better pay.

Not too long after, Denmark and other countries also proposed the idea of IWD to advocate for Women’s Rights. This is not a religious holiday; rather, it is a national holiday for reflecting on the many contributions women have made to society.

National Holiday / Celebrations

International Women’s Day has become a significant day of recognition. It is celebrated with the following events and gatherings:

- Marches: Remembering accomplishments and those who came before by marching together
- Speaking engagements: Organizations bringing in various leaders to inspire audiences
- Social media campaigns: Blasted all over social media, creating awareness
- Workplace initiatives: Recognizing women in the workplace
- Recognizing gender equality
- Community outreach
- Parties and dances: Local establishments bringing in entertainment for dance parties
- Group dinners
- Special gatherings to support women-owned businesses

Special Customs

In Italy, a special custom used to celebrate this day is the giving of the Mimosa Flowers. The giving of these flowers represents solidarity and resistance. They were originally given by political activists Teresa Matei and Rita Montagnana back in 1946.

Special Foods

While no special meals are offered to celebrate this day, Prosecco and potluck dinners are usually the drink and food choices. This holiday has been celebrated all over Europe and in other countries for quite some time. Only in the past few years has it been recognized in the United States.

Greetings & Vocabulary

Special greetings and vocabulary heard on this day include:

<i>Buona Festa della Donna</i>	Happy Women's Day
<i>Felice 8 Marzo</i>	Happy March 8th
<i>Auguri a tutte le Donne</i>	Best wishes to all the Women
<i>Ricordiamoci sempre di celebrare le donne</i>	Let us always remember to celebrate women
<i>In questo giorno speciale, auguro le donne di realizzare i propri sogni di raggiungere ogni obiettivo</i>	On this special day, I wish women to realize their dreams of achieving every goal

Personal Connection

Only in the past few years have the women in our family begun to celebrate this holiday. We have organized a group family dinner on March 8.

Celebrating International Women's Day at Lodges

Various activities can be set up at a lodge to celebrate, such as the following:

- Panel discussions or workshops: Secure speakers to cover topics for women's rights, gender equality, and women in leadership
- Community Service Project: Organize volunteer activities that benefit women in the community, like fundraising for a women's shelter
- Watch movies about strong Italian women who are role models; for example, the Cabrini Movie.
- Read books about strong Italian women.
- Discuss the role of the Italian immigrant woman in America. What did some of our mothers, grandmothers, or great-grandmothers do that proved the strength, resiliency, and intelligence of women? Write down some of their stories.

Father's Day

Festa del Papà

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ENGLISH

Father's Day

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ITALIAN

Festa del Papà

DATE IN ENGLISH

3rd Sunday in June

DATE IN ITALIAN

19 marzo

History

Father's Day coincides with *la Festa Di San Giuseppe* and was officially recognized in Italy in 1977. However, its history dates back much further.

How did St. Joseph's Day become Father's Day in Italy? Celebrated with the Catholic tradition of St. Joseph, the Patron Saint of Fathers, workers, and families. It's a day to honor fathers, express appreciation for their love and support, and celebrate the role of fathers in families and society. In Italian culture, *papà* and *babbo* refer to fathers who hold a special place in their children's hearts. On Father's Day, children express their love, respect, and admiration for their fathers, something that is deeply ingrained in Italian society.

Although no specific individuals are associated with the holiday in the same way as they are with other aspects of Italian Culture, their influences as father figures contribute to the broader cultural significance of the observance.

Pope Francis, Leader of the Catholic Church, often emphasizes the importance of family and fatherhood in his teachings.

It is not a religious holiday, but it does have spiritual roots in that it is closely linked to the Feast of St. Joseph in Italy.

National Holiday

Father's Day—*La Festa del Papà*—is typically celebrated on the third Sunday in June in the United States. In Italy, it is celebrated on March 19.

Celebrations

Father's Day in Italy is celebrated with the following activities:

- Family gatherings
- Outdoor activities and sports such as playing soccer together, riding bikes, or enjoying other activities outdoors
- Gift giving (usually small tokens of appreciation, such as a book, a new watch, or a bottle of his favorite wine)
- Meals together enjoyed either at home or at their father's favorite restaurant
- Time spent together to strengthen family bonds and show love and appreciation for one another
- Children write poetry to their fathers and create homemade cards to present to them. I remember that when I was a child, the custom was to put the card under his dinner plate and expectantly wait for him to discover

the “surprise” card. My dad always reacted with utmost surprise, joy, and thankfulness to express his appreciation.

Special Customs

Traditions can differ from region to region. In Sicily, for example, it’s traditional to give gifts of small oranges or lemons, which are believed to bring good luck. In Tuscany, fathers are given gifts such as handmade wallets or belts. In Sardinia, they are given bread made with semolina and saffron.

Special Foods

The most well-known food associated with St. Joseph’s Day is *Zeppole di San Giuseppe*, a sweet pastry made from flour, eggs, and sugar, filled with custard cream, and topped with a cherry. It is also called *Bignè di San Giuseppe*. Many recipes are available for this typical St. Joseph’s Day pastry.

Families traditionally share cakes and sweets in honor of the holiday. How does the custom of eating sweets connect with St. Joseph’s Day and Father’s Day? There are two stories behind these traditions. The first comes from the story of Joseph selling pancakes to support his family after they fled to Egypt. Hence, eating and sharing sweets on March 19 came to symbolize Joseph’s paternal commitment to his family. The second story is based on Saint Joseph’s role as the patron saint of carpenters. Before Father’s Day became a national holiday, Italians celebrated Saint Joseph on March 19 by exchanging wooden toys and trinkets. When *Festa di San Giuseppe* became synonymous with *Festa del Papà*, the practices of eating sweets and giving gifts merged, turning March 19 into a celebration of both Saint Joseph and fathers.

Greetings & Vocabulary

Special greetings and vocabulary heard on this day are:

<i>Buona Festa Del Papà</i>	Happy Father’s Day
<i>Auguri, Papà</i>	Best wishes, Dad
<i>Caro babbo, grazie mille</i>	Dear Dad, a thousand thanks
<i>Grazie per tutto quello che fai, Papà</i>	Thanks for all you do, Dad
<i>Sei il migliore Papà del mondo</i>	You are the best dad in the world

Personal Connection

In my family, we celebrated and continue to celebrate this holiday. We honor the fathers in our family who have gone before us and pay tribute to their contributions to our family. Our special tradition is to make *Pasta alla Chittara* to honor our grandfather.

Celebrating Father’s Day at Lodges

Ideas for lodge activities:

- Activity for children: making greeting cards for their father or father figure in their family

- Gifting fathers a small token of appreciation (for example, oranges or lemons, as they do in Sicily)
- Learning Father's Day vocabulary in Italian
- Serving *Bignè di San Giuseppe* at a meeting
- Zeppole baking class
- Play the Andrea Bocelli song: "*A mio padre*" ("My Father")
- Learn the "*Padre Nostro*" ("Our Father") in Italian

April Fool's Day

Pesce d'Aprile

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ENGLISH

April Fool's Day

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ITALIAN

Pesce d'Aprile

DATE IN ENGLISH

April 1st

DATE IN ITALIAN

1 aprile / il primo d'aprile

History

Il Pesce d'Aprile literally means “April's Fish.” Like April Fools' Day, it is a day on which Italians customarily play practical jokes on friends and relatives.

The exact origin of the *Pesce d'Aprile* tradition is unknown, although several theories exist. It is supposed to have originated in the sixteenth century, but it only really became popular in Italy around 1860–1880. It is believed that it originated in Genoa and was particularly popular among the upper classes. *Pesce d'Aprile* is linked to the zodiac in Italy because every event on that day was connected to the Sun's exclusion from the Pisces constellation. From there comes the custom of celebrating the event in an unusual way on April 1st.

National Holiday

April Fool's Day or *Pesce d'Aprile* is celebrated on April 1st, *il primo d'aprile*.

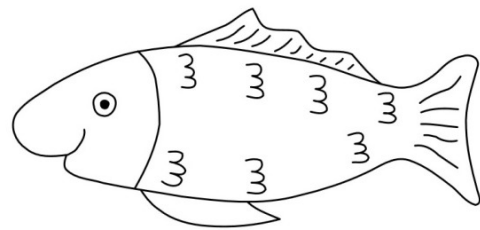
Celebrations

Although this holiday is not exclusively Italian, it is celebrated all over Italy with harmless pranks on friends and family. Italians do this in a very colorful way, and the longer it takes for a friend or family member to figure it out, the funnier the joke.

Special Customs

The most common prank involved in *Pesce d'Aprile* is to affix a paper drawing or cutout of a fish onto the back of an unsuspecting victim. Then, everyone else asks if anyone has seen “April's fish”—when, of course, the victim doesn't know he or she is the one they're talking about. Although this may be a bit old-fashioned today, taping a fish onto someone's back is still something Italian children do.

Along with pinning a fish on someone's back, some pranks are more elaborate and far-reaching, designed to fool larger segments of the population into believing something. It's always supposed to be done in the spirit of fun, not to harm anyone. There are many stories of historic *Pesce d'Aprile* hoaxes in Italy that drew in large crowds of gullible “fools.”



Greetings & Vocabulary

The phrase of the day:

Pesce d'aprile! You've been fooled!

Celebrating April Fool's Day at Lodges

- Have children make a creative ***pesce d'aprile*** out of construction paper or felt fabric. Give prizes for creative ones.
- Have children try to trick others by putting the ***pesce d'aprile*** on their backs with everyone playing along and saying "***pesce d'aprile***"—"You've been fooled."
- Play a ***Pesce d'Aprile*** joke on the members at a meeting (in fun, of course). Then yell out, "***Pesce d'aprile!***"

Mardi Gras / Carnival

Carnevale

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ENGLISH

Mardi Gras / Carnival

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ITALIAN

Carnevale

DATE IN ENGLISH

The day before Ash
Wednesday

DATE IN ITALIAN

Martedì Grasso

History

Although the origins of *Carnevale* trace back to the pagan festivities of the Greeks and Romans, it is linked to the Catholic world. It is celebrated on Shrove Tuesday, the last day before the rigors of Lent set in. Consequently, there is no specific date, but it depends on which day Easter will be. The name *Carnevale* comes from the Latin *carnem levare*, which literally means “remove the meat.” Specifically, Carnevale was the last occasion for meat consumption, as people abstained from it during the following forty days of Lent.

Carnevale in Italy is a time for people to set aside their everyday lives and simply have fun. During Carnevale, the streets are filled with cheerful masks, engaging music, and irresistible culinary delights. It's a time of carefree fun, where people are carried away by the magic of unique events and celebrations.

People of all ages wear elaborate costumes and masks, throw confetti and streamers at each other, and participate in parades, street parties, and other entertainment. Moreover, in almost every Italian city, an important Carnival tradition is the creation of huge floats. Italians compete for the best *carro* (float) every year.

National Holiday / Celebrations

Italy has many Carnevale celebrations. Here are some of the most famous or unique.

One of the most famous celebrations of the Carnevale season takes place in [Venice](#) and starts about two weeks before the actual date of Fat Tuesday. Events and entertainment are [held nightly throughout Venice](#), with people in costumes wandering around the city and reveling.

Venice's main Carnevale events are centered around the *Piazza San Marco*, but events are held in every *sestiere*, or quarter, of Venice. There are gondola and boat parades along the Grand Canal, a mask parade in Piazza San Marco, and a special Carnevale for Children event in the Cannaregio district. The fireworks show in Piazza San Marco can be seen all over Venice and marks the event's climax. Most high-end hotels hold masked balls during Carnevale.

Viareggio on the Tuscan coast has one of the biggest Carnevale celebrations in Italy. Festivals, cultural events, concerts, and masked balls take place throughout the Carnevale season in Viareggio and its surrounding areas. The city is known for its giant, allegorical paper-mâché floats, which are often satirical and reflect current events and politics. The final parade is held on a Saturday night and is followed by a huge fireworks show.

The town of **Ivrea** in the northern [Piedmont region](#) has a unique carnival celebration with medieval roots. The carnival includes a colorful parade followed by orange-throwing battles in the center of town. The origins of the orange battle are murky, but local folklore cites the story of a young peasant girl named Violetta who rebuffed the

advances of a ruling tyrant in the 12th or 13th century. She decapitated him, and chaos ensued, with other villagers eventually burning the castle where he lived. During the present-day reenactment, one girl is chosen to play the role of Violetta, and dozens of *aranceri* (orange-throwers) representing both the tyrant and the peasants throw oranges at each other. Oranges are meant to represent stones and other ancient weapons.

On the **island of Sardinia** in the Barbagia villages outside of Nuoro, locals still live a rustic way of life, herding sheep and wearing traditional clothing. During Carnevale, ancient folklore is on display in the ghostly masks worn by the locals. Each small town has distinct mask designs that differ from neighbors. In the west coast Sardinian town of Oristano, Carnevale is celebrated with a costumed parade, horse races, and a reenactment of a medieval jousting tournament in a festival called *La Sartiglia*.

Acireale, Sicily, holds one of the most beautiful Carnevale celebrations, with flower and paper-mâché allegorical floats that are still very similar to the originals made as far back as 1601. Several parades during Carnevale travel through the town center, as well as music, a chess tournament, children's events, and a fireworks finale.

Pont-Saint-Martin in the [Val d'Aosta region](#) of northwestern Italy celebrates Carnevale in Roman style with people dressed as nymphs and in togas. Sometimes, there's even a chariot race! On Fat Tuesday evening, festivities culminate with the hanging and burning of an effigy of the devil on the 2,000-year-old bridge.

Cento, in the [Emilia-Romagna region](#), is linked to the most famous Carnival celebration in the world: that of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Floats are very high quality and often include items from Brazil. The winning float in the Cento parade earns a trip to Brazil for Carnival festivities there. Participants arrive from all over Italy to march in the parade or ride along on their motorcycles, and some 30,000 pounds of candy are thrown to spectators along the parade route.

Verona has one of the oldest Carnevale celebrations in Italy, dating back to 1531. On Fat Tuesday, Verona has a massive parade with more than 500 floats, but the most delicious tradition occurs on the Friday before: *venerdì gnoccolaro*, or Gnocchi Friday. Honoring the potato-based dumpling, a member of the community is elected as *Papà de' Gnocco*, or the Father of Gnocchi. The potato patriarch earns his spot a month earlier, and everyone in attendance is welcome to the free gnocchi. On Gnocchi Friday, this is the dish of choice in every bar and restaurant.

The Alpine resort town of **Livigno** near the Swiss border celebrates Carnevale in the snow. Every year, a procession of downhill skiers takes to the slopes, and some participate in an obstacle race on the mountain. Meanwhile, in town, there's a ball and a traditional parade. The festivals here are very family-friendly and have lots of entertainment for children.

In the southern Italian region of **Calabria**, which has Albanian settlements, Lungro holds a Carnevale parade with people dressed in traditional Albanian costumes. The Carnevale of Pollino in Castrovillari includes women dressed in intricate local costumes and celebrates the Pollino wine of the region, *Lacrime di Castrovillari*. In northern Calabria, Montalto Uffugo holds a fascinating wedding parade of men wearing women's dresses. They hand out sweets and tastes of Pollino wine. Following the parade, the kings and queens arrive for a night of dancing while wearing costumes that include giant heads.

In **Abruzzo**, in particular, traditional sweets and dishes are enjoyed during Carnival, such as *cicerchiata* and *ravioli di ricotta con lo zucchero*, particularly renowned in **Vasto**.

Special Foods

Cicerchiata is a wreath of little fried balls of sweet dough stuck together with honey and almonds. It's a traditional Abruzzo Carnival dessert.

In the past, this dessert was made with special beans similar to sweet beans called *cicerchi*, which is similar to chickpeas. The name of this dessert derives from the fact that the little fried balls resemble the small beans.

Some recipes contain candied fruit, some contain liqueur, some contain sugar in the syrup, and some contain colored sprinkles or chocolate on top. There are MANY varieties!



Recipes

Cicerchiata

Ingredients:

- 800 g Flour
- 7 eggs
- 7 tablespoons of sugar
- 7 tablespoons of Extra virgin olive oil
(for each egg, one tablespoon of oil and one of sugar)
- Almonds
- 500 g Abruzzo's acacia honey
- Colored sprinkles for decoration
- Vanilla powder

Cooking time: about 45 minutes

Preparation:

1. Put flour on your working surface and make a well in the center. After, break the eggs in the center and add a tablespoon of sugar for each egg and some vanilla powder.
2. Mix all the ingredients until an elastic dough forms. Add more flour if the dough is not compact.
3. Divide the dough into smaller parts. Take each piece and roll it out slightly until you form long, round strips. Then, cut each strip into equal pieces about 1 centimeter long.
4. Sprinkle them with some flour to avoid them sticking together.
5. Heat the oil in a large pot or deep fryer and fry the small dough pieces until golden.
6. Lay the dough bits on an absorbent paper towel to remove excess oil, then place them in a bowl.
7. Heat the honey in a very large pot and add one spoonful of sugar. Simmer for about 5 minutes on low heat until it turns red. Then, add the almonds.
8. Add the dough balls to the honey and stir for 10 more minutes.
9. Quickly turn the mixture onto your working surface (board or table), using a spoon to try to shape the mixture into a round wreath or the shape you like.
10. If you want to add a touch of color, sprinkle the wreath with some colored sprinkles.

Ravioli with Sugar

This is an **alternative Abruzzo recipe** to the classic Ravioli with spinach and ricotta cheese.

The **Ravioli with Sugar** is a traditional favorite of Abruzzo cuisine during **Carnevale time**, but there's no harm in trying it all year round!

Adding sugar to the filling gives this classic dish a touch of originality for those who like rich, strong tastes.

Ingredients for the ravioli dough:

- 600 gr Durum wheat
- 4 eggs

Ingredients for the filling:

- 400 gr spinach
- Grated Parmesan cheese
- 700 gr Ricotta cheese (from Abruzzo farms)
- 2 tablespoons of sugar

Ingredients for the sauce:

- 4 pork ribs
- 2 pork rolls
- 2 sausages
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Nutmeg
- 500 gr. tomato sauce (possibly homemade)

Preparation:

Start with **the meat sauce**.

1. In a large saucepan, heat the olive oil and add the pork ribs, pork rolls, sausages, a pinch of salt, and some spices if you like them. Cook for about 10 minutes until the meat is golden brown.
2. When the meat is browned, add the homemade tomato sauce. Cook on very low heat for about two hours. Stir occasionally and add some hot stock if it looks like it is drying out.

Meanwhile, make **the ravioli pasta dough**.

3. Put the flour on your working surface and make a well in the center. Break the eggs in the center and beat them inside. Add a pinch of salt. Mix all together and knead to form a dough. At times, wet your hands with water to help you knead the dough. Let the dough rest for a while.



Now, prepare **the ravioli filling**.

4. Cook the spinach in a pot of boiling water until tender. Squeeze out the water from the spinach and chop it roughly. In a bowl, mix together the spinach, ricotta, two eggs, Parmesan cheese, and grated nutmeg. At the end, add **two tablespoons of sugar**.
5. Cut the dough into small pieces and roll out the pasta dough into thin sheets.
6. To assemble the ravioli, drop the filling mixture on the dough sheets by teaspoonfuls about one inch apart. Fold the dough and press firmly around the filling to seal. Cut into individual ravioli with a knife or pizza cutter.
7. Cook the ravioli in a large pot of lightly salted boiling water.
8. Take the pieces of meat out from the red sauce. Pour some red sauce into a serving plate and add the ravioli. Add some more sauce on top, and, finally, sprinkle with grated Parmesan cheese.

Celebrating Mardi Gras / Carnevale at Lodges

- Make Venetian Carnevale masks.
- Have a Carnevale costume party/dance/dinner. Select the best costumes/masks and give prizes.
- Learn the Carnevale customs of different regions in Italy.
- Ask members if they celebrate Carnevale in any special “Italian” way.
- Watch videos about the Venice Carnevale.
- Watch movies set in Venice.
- Prepare typical Carnevale regional dishes and share with each other.
- Read about the events of the current Venice Carnevale celebration.

Holy Week/Easter Sunday/Easter Monday

La Settimana Santa/Pasqua/La Pasquetta

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ENGLISH

Holy Week / Easter Sunday /
Easter Monday

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ITALIAN

La Settimana Santa / Pasqua /
La Pasquetta

DATE VARIES

History

The word **Pasqua** comes from the Hebrew word **Pesach**, which means “Passover.” Easter is a Christian holiday that celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, three days after his crucifixion. It is the most important Christian holiday and is celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the vernal equinox. Easter week in Italy includes Palm Sunday (**Domenica dei Palmi**), Holy Thursday, Good Friday (**Giovedì Santo**), Good Friday (**Venerdì Santo**), Easter Day (**Pascua**), and Easter Monday (**Pasquetta**). (Wikipedia)

In AD 325, during the Council of Nicaea, it was decided that Easter would be celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the Spring Equinox. Therefore, Easter can fall on any Sunday between March 22 and April 25. However, fixing the date or celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus was not completely resolved until the 8th century.

National Holiday

Easter is celebrated in Italy due to the historical and cultural importance of the Catholic church since most Italians identify as Roman Catholic. The religious meaning is that Easter is Christ’s passion, death, and resurrection. Easter is one of the most important holidays in Italy, celebrated through regional traditions and rituals that reflect local food, wine, processions, games, fairs, reenactments, local customs, and other types of festivities.

Although Easter is associated with spring, fertility, and re-birth, for Christians in Italy, Easter commemorates mostly the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The varied regional traditions reflect both components.

Celebrations

Palm Sunday (**Domenica dei Palmi**) is celebrated the Sunday before Easter and is an important religious observance. It commemorates the entrance of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem. The faithful flock go to church where mass and a procession are held. During the procession, people sing hymns and chant prayers to honor Jesus. Baskets of olive branches and palms are blessed by the priest and are handed out to the congregation. These blessed branches are then taken home and placed at the entrance of their homes until next year’s Palm Sunday, when they are replaced.

Holy Thursday (**Giovedì Santo**) commemorates the Last Supper and reflects Italians' religious beliefs. They attend church services and participate in religious processions or the Stations of the Cross (**Via Crucis**), praying in front of a series of images representing the events leading up to Jesus’ crucifixion and death.

Good Friday (**Venerdì Santo**) is a reenactment of Jesus’ journey to the cross. In many towns, the faithful participate either in a solemn procession that features a statue of the crucified Christ on the cross or the Via Crucis, all while praying, chanting, and carrying candles and often dressed in traditional ancient costumes. Some towns hold live passion plays. On Good Friday into Holy Saturday, many Italians fast from eating meat or eating between meals.

Holy Saturday (*Sabato Santo*) continues the traditions of praying and fasting, especially in some Southern Italian regions. The tradition of eating egg-based dishes is also common. My family has the custom of eating an asparagus frittata for lunch on Holy Saturday.

Easter Sunday (*Pasqua*) is a day of celebration all over Italy. People attend mass, have dinner with family, participate in processions, parades, games, re-enactments, and fireworks, etc., which vary from region to region and city to city. Some of these special Easter events are listed below.

Easter Monday (*la Pasquetta*) is celebrated with picnics featuring egg dishes like frittata, hard-boiled eggs, and cheeses. Some towns offer free concerts, hold dances, or sponsor unusual games. There's an Italian saying, "*Natale con i suoi; Pasqua con chi vuoi*," which means "Christmas with your relatives; Easter with who you want." Easter Sunday is still typically spent with family, but Easter Monday is when Italians—especially younger Italians—hang out with their friends.

Special Customs

Children and loved ones receive oversized hollow chocolate eggs (*uova di Pasqua*) with a surprise inside. These come in all sizes, shapes, and colors and are displayed in store windows throughout the city.

Florence: *La festa del carro* tradition started in 1096, commemorating the return of a Florentine knight who raised the Holy Cross banner in Jerusalem during the Crusades. For his bravery, he received pieces of flint from the Holy Sepulcher of Christ. Upon his return to Florence, these stones were used to light the Easter Vigil sacred fire and then ported around the streets of Florence. Today, Florentines commemorate this event on Easter Sunday with a procession during which a team of white oxen pulls a 30-foot-tall antique cart during a parade of 150 soldiers, musicians, and others dressed in 15th-century costumes. Once the parade reaches Piazza del Duomo, a dove-shaped rocket (*La Colombina*) holding an olive branch is shot towards a cart loaded with fireworks, setting off the boom (*scoppio*). This yearly event is supposed to guarantee a good harvest, a stable civic life, and a thriving business.

Rome: On Good Friday, thousands of people gather in Saint Peter's Basilica to listen to the Pope's mass at 5 p.m. After that, the Pope starts his walk, followed by thousands of people carrying torches to remember Christ's *Via Crucis*. The procession starts at the Palatine Hill, makes 14 stops along the way to remember the walk of Christ, prays at each stop, and ends at the Colosseum.

Treviso: On Easter Monday, the *Palio dell'Uovo* is a competition where eggs are the stars of the games.

Enna: Religious rites dating back to the Spanish domination (fifteenth through seventeenth century) take place in this Sicilian town. On Good Friday, the different religious confraternities gather around the main church, and over 2,000 friars wearing ancient costumes silently parade through the streets of the city. On Easter Sunday, the Paci ceremony takes place: the statue of the Virgin and that of Jesus Christ are first brought to the main square and then into the church, where they stay for a week.

Merano: The *Corse Rusticane* are fascinating races conducted with a special breed of horses famous for their blonde manes ridden by youths wearing the local costumes of their towns. Before the race, the participants parade through the streets of the town, followed by a band and folk-dance groups.

Barano d'Ischia: On Easter Monday the *'Ndrezzata* takes place—a dance which revives the fights against the Saracens.

Carovigno: On the Saturday before Easter is a procession dedicated to the Madonna del Belvedere, during which the *Nzeghe* contest takes place: banners must be hurled as far as possible.

Province of Ascoli Piceno: The *Cavallo di fuoco* (Fiery Horse) is a historical reenactment in the city of Ripatransone. It is a fireworks show that traditionally occurs eight days after [Easter](#).

Trapani, Sicily: The *Processione dei Misteri di Trapani*, or the Procession of the Mysteries of Trapani, is a day-long passion procession featuring twenty floats of lifelike sculptures made of wood, canvas, and glue. These sculptures are of individual scenes of the events of the Passion, which are reenacted on the town square. They are amongst the oldest continuously running religious events in Europe since Easter of 1612. The plays run for at least 16 continuous hours, but sometimes well beyond 24 hours.

Courmayeur, Val d'Aosta: on Easter Monday the *Foire de la Paquerette* is celebrated. The streets are overflowing with stalls displaying works of sculpture and carvings of Aosta Valley craftsmanship, lace, handmade garments, and traditional products.

Bormio, Valtellina: The *Pasquali* parade takes place on Easter Sunday. Dressed in traditional costumes, the inhabitants carry palanquin-style floats on their shoulders through the streets of the town center.

Prizzi, Palermo province, Sicily: The *Ballo dei Diavoli*, the devils' dance, takes place on Easter morning. Devils dressed in red, escorted by death, wearing yellow costumes, harass passers-by and do their best to prevent the statue of the risen Christ and the statue of the Madonna, which are being paraded through the streets, from meeting. A group of "angels" intervenes to drive them away with the sound of bells ringing throughout the town. During the festival, *cannatedde*, the typical dessert made of short-crust pastry and hard-boiled egg, is distributed.

Adrano, Catania province, Sicily: On Easter Sunday, a satanic delegation invades the town with the *Diavulazzi 'i Pasqua*, a tradition that has been ongoing since the eighteenth century and celebrates the triumph of good over evil.

San Fratello, Messina province, Sicily: The devils of the Feast of the Jews, *Festa dei Giudei*, are also dressed in red and yellow. They are intent on disturbing the procession commemorating Christ. The faithful intervene to prevent them from succeeding by engaging in a duel with the devils.

Chieti in the province of Abruzzo: The procession in this town is believed to be the oldest Good Friday procession in Italy. It is very moving with Secchi's "Miserere" played by 100 violins.

Montefalco and Gualdo Tadino in Umbria: These and other towns hold live passion plays on Good Friday. Others put on plays acting out the stations of the Cross.

Hill towns in Umbria, such as Orvieto and Assisi: They hold beautiful torchlight processions.

Sulmona in the province of Abruzzo: This town celebrates Easter Sunday with *Madonna che scappa in Piazza* (Madonna running in the square). People dress in green and white—colors of peace, hope, and resurrection—and gather in the main piazza. The woman playing the Virgin Mary is dressed in black. As she moves to the fountain, doves are released, and the woman is suddenly dressed in green. Music and feasting follow.

Special Foods

- *Abbacchio* – Lamb prepared in Roman cuisine style. Eating lamb at Easter has a religious meaning commemorating the [Death and Resurrection of Jesus](#).

- *Capretto* – Goat
- *Arciofe alla romana* – Artichokes Roman style
- *Cappello del prete* – A variety of salume, typical of Parma and Piacenza
- *Casatiello* – Neapolitan savory bread containing cheese, sausage, salami, hard-boiled eggs
- *Colomba di Pasqua* – Traditional Easter sweet bread in the shape of a dove
- *Pastiera* – Neapolitan grain and ricotta pie flavored with orange flower water
- *Penia* – A sweet bread with rural origins
- *Pizza di Pasqua* – A leavened savory cake with cheese, wheat flour, pecorino and parmesan cheeses
- *Pinza Pasquale* – From Trieste, a sweet bread with a three-point cross on top
- *Pizzelle* – Waffle-like cookies
- *Uova di cioccolato* – Chocolate eggs, usually hollow in the center and contains a “surprise”
- *Marzipan lamb-shaped sweets* – In Sicily

Greetings & Vocabulary

Greetings

<i>Auguro a tutti voi una buona Pasqua</i>	I wish you all a Happy Easter
<i>Buona Pasqua, amico mio! (to a man)</i>	Happy Easter, my friend!
<i>Buona Pasqua, amica mia! (to a woman)</i>	Happy Easter, my friend!
<i>Buona Pasqua a tutti!</i>	Happy Easter, everyone!
<i>Buona Pasqua a te e famiglia! (informal)</i>	Happy Easter to you and your family!
<i>Buona Pasqua a Lei e alla Sua famiglia! (formal)</i>	Happy Easter to you and your family!
<i>Buona Pasqua a voi e alla vostra famiglia! (plural)</i>	Happy Easter to you and your family!
<i>Ti auguro una serena e buona Pasqua! (informal)</i>	I wish you a peaceful and happy Easter!
<i>Le auguro una serena e buona Pasqua! (formal)</i>	I wish you a peaceful and happy Easter!

Vocabulary

<i>Natale con i tuoi; a Pasqua con chi vuoi.</i>	Christmas with your parents; Easter with whoever you want.
<i>Il coniglietto</i>	Bunny rabbit
<i>La crocifissione</i>	Crucifixion
<i>La pace</i>	Peace
<i>La Pasquetta</i>	Easter Monday
<i>La primavera</i>	Spring
<i>La resurrezione</i>	Resurrection
<i>La settimana santa</i>	Holy Week

L'Ultima Cena

Last Supper

Le uova

Eggs

Venerdì Santo

Holy Friday

Personal Connection

My family celebrates this holiday but maybe not in the traditional Italian way although I am sure that many Italian American families still enjoy Easter the way their Italian ancestors did in some fashion. Most probably they prepare some of the traditional Italian Easter dishes.

Celebrating Easter at Lodges

It would be very easy to incorporate some of these Italian Easter traditions in our lodges to foster interest in Italian culture, heritage, and language. These could be activities that appeal to different age levels (children, young adults, other members, families, specific interest groups).

Some ideas:

- Easter prayers in Italian
- Stations of the cross in Italian
- Preparing traditional pastries
- Exchanging chocolate Easter eggs with a surprise inside (sold at Italian food stores)
- Learning Italian words for the days of Holy Week
- Learning names of spring flowers
- Sponsoring a Pasquetta Picnic on the Monday after Easter
- Children's Easter egg hunt with Italian clues

Liberation Day

Festa della Liberazione

Submitted by Patrick Donadio

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ENGLISH

Liberation Day

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ITALIAN

Festa della Liberazione

DATE IN ENGLISH

April 25th

DATE IN ITALIAN

25 aprile

History

Liberation Day (*Festa della Liberazione*) commemorates the end of Nazi occupation and Fascist rule in Italy in 1945. On April 25th, the National Liberation Committee of Upper Italy called for a general uprising against Nazi forces. The liberation symbolically represents the beginning of the historical journey that led to the referendum of 2 June 1946, when Italians opted for the end of the monarchy and the creation of the Italian Republic.

It honors the Italian resistance movement (*Resistenza*) that fought against fascism and the sacrifices made to achieve liberation.

Alcide De Gasperi (the Prime Minister who established the holiday) and Sandro Pertini (the Resistance leader) are prominent figures associated with Liberation Day.

National Holiday

Liberation Day is a national holiday celebrated throughout Italy.

Celebrations

Parades: Organized by ANPI (National Association of Italian Partisans), featuring veterans, music, and displays.

Wreath Laying: Ceremonies honoring those who died in the resistance. Most cities and smaller towns still ring bells to honor the Day of Liberation for Italy, and wreaths are placed on war monuments.

Singing: “*Bella Ciao*,” the anthem of the Resistance, is sung widely.

Speeches: Reflect on the importance of freedom and democracy.

Regional Variations: Local events may include concerts, film screenings, and historical re-enactments.

Special Customs

Flags: Italian flags are displayed prominently on houses and public buildings.

Flowers: Red carnations, symbolizing socialism and resistance, are worn or laid at memorials.

Special Foods

There are no specific dishes tied to Liberation Day. However, picnics and social gatherings might feature traditional Italian fare, such as grilled meats, vegetables, and delicious platters of cold cuts and cheeses.

Recipes

While not specific to Liberation Day, consider classic Italian dishes like pasta dishes, pizzas, or regional specialties for gatherings.

Greetings & Vocabulary

Greeting

Buona Festa della Liberazione! Happy Liberation Day!

Vocabulary

Resistenza Resistance

Liberazione Liberation

Antifascismo Anti-fascism

Personal Connection

This response cannot provide personal details, but many Italian families with immigrant ancestors might celebrate Liberation Day to honor their heritage.

Interesting Facts

Liberation Day is a reminder of the importance of fighting for freedom and democracy.

The Italian Constitution was adopted on the first anniversary of Liberation Day in 1946.

Celebrating Liberation Day at Lodges

- Organize a “*Festa della Liberazione*” themed event with Italian music, food, and decorations.
- Educational events: Lectures/Presentations on the Italian Resistance movement and WWII in Italy.
- Film screenings: Screen Italian films or documentaries related to World War II, the Italian resistance movement, and/or films depicting the Resistance or the period.
- Food events: Italian cooking classes or themed dinners. Organize Italian language workshops or classes focusing on vocabulary and phrases related to Liberation Day.
- Cultural activities: Learn to sing “*Bella Ciao*” or traditional Italian folk songs.
- Family activities: Craft workshops creating Italian flags or resistance symbols.
 - For children, organize storytelling sessions or craft activities related to the holiday.
 - For young adults and other members, consider discussion groups or book clubs focusing on literature related to this period in Italian history.

By incorporating these ideas, your lodges can foster interest in Italian culture, heritage, and language for all ages.

**NOTE: This was with the help of Google AI: Gemini*

Easter Monday

Pasquetta

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ENGLISH

Easter Monday

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ITALIAN

Pasquetta

DATE IN ENGLISH

Monday after Easter

DATE IN ITALIAN

Lunedì dopo Pasqua

History

Easter Monday, also known as *Pasquetta* (Little Easter) in Italy, is a public holiday celebrated the day after Easter Sunday.

The exact origins of Pasquetta celebrations remain unclear. Some believe they are related to ancient fertility rites and springtime celebrations.

It's a day for families and friends to gather, enjoy a picnic outdoors, and continue the Easter festivities in a more relaxed setting.

It doesn't commemorate any specific person but rather the continuation of Easter joy and the renewal of spring.

National Holiday

Pasquetta is a national holiday celebrated throughout Italy.

Celebrations

Focuses on spending time outdoors with family and friends.

Large picnics are common, often featuring leftovers from the Easter Sunday feast or traditional dishes like cheese, cured meats, bread, and seasonal vegetables.

Depending on the region, there might be folk music, dancing, or traditional games.

Special Customs

Visita ai Sepolcri (Visiting the Sepulchres) – On Easter Monday, people in some southern regions visit elaborately decorated church altars representing Christ's tomb.

Flying kites – A tradition in some areas, particularly southern Italy.

Easter egg hunts – Though less common than in North America, egg hunts are gaining popularity for children.

Special Foods

Casatiello – A savory bread pie filled with cheese, meats, and eggs.

Pizza di Pasqua – Sweet Easter bread with a regional flair (variations include ricotta cheese and candied fruit fillings).

Frittata – Italian omelet, often filled with leftover vegetables and meats.

Colomba Pasquale – Dove-shaped sweet bread.

Agnello *Lamb dishes* – Roasted lamb or lamb sausage may be featured in some regions.

Greetings & Vocabulary

Greeting

“Buona Pasquetta!” Happy Easter Monday!
The name "Pasquetta" comes from the Latin "Pascha," meaning Easter.

Vocabulary

Pasquetta Easter Monday

Gita fuori porta Outing to the countryside
A common term for Pasquetta picnics. Many Italians escape the city for day trips to scenic locations.

Scampagnata Picnic
A large festive meal enjoyed outdoors is central to the celebration.

Personal Connection

This is a public holiday, so many Italian families likely celebrate it in some way. Whether immigrant families carry over traditions depends on individual practices.

Interesting Information

The tradition of picnics is linked to the spring weather and the desire to be outdoors after Easter Sunday celebrations.

Celebrating Easter Monday at Lodges

- Organize a Pasquetta picnic with Italian-themed food and drinks. (can be potluck style).
- Host a cooking class featuring traditional Pasquetta dishes.
- Play Italian folk music and have a dance lesson featuring traditional dances from specific regions.
- Organize an Easter egg decorating competition. Then, hold an Easter egg hunt with a twist—use decorated plastic eggs filled with Italian candy or small Italian trinkets.
- Offer an Italian language lesson focused on vocabulary related to Easter and Pasquetta traditions.
- Screen an Italian movie set during the Easter season with subtitles.
- Create a display showcasing traditional Pasquetta foods and decorations from different regions of Italy.
- Have a kite-flying activity (weather permitting).

These are just a few ideas to get you started. Tailor the activities to the interests and age groups of your lodge members!

**Information enhanced with the use of Google's AI program, Gemini*

International Workers' Day

Primo Maggio

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ENGLISH

International Workers' Day

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ITALIAN

Primo Maggio /
Festa dei Lavoratori

DATE IN ENGLISH

May 1st

DATE IN ITALIAN

1 maggio / primo maggio

History

Primo Maggio, or *Festa dei Lavoratori*, was preceded many years ago by “*Il Calendimaggio*,” an agricultural celebration marking the start of the growing season. Many regions in Italy still celebrate *Il Calendimaggio*—“*calendi*” means day, and “*maggio*” is May—May Day. In Assisi, residents plan all year for the celebration, which lasts several days.

The origins of *Primo Maggio* can be traced back to the late 19th century. Labor movements worldwide began to organize protests and demonstrations to demand better working conditions and higher wages. In 1886, the Haymarket affair in Chicago led to the deaths of several protesters who were advocating for an eight-hour workday. This event inspired workers across Europe to organize similar protests, and eventually, May 1st became recognized as International Workers' Day.

In Italy, the first official celebration of *Primo Maggio* took place in the late 1800s. This event marked the beginning of a long tradition of labor activism in Italy, which continues to this day. It was declared a public holiday in 1891.

National Holiday

Primo Maggio / *Festa dei Lavoratori* is a significant public holiday in Italy. It is also called International Workers' Day and is celebrated in 80 countries. This holiday commemorates the struggle and sacrifices of the working class in Italy and around the world. It is a day of reflection and appreciation for workers' contributions to society. Just like Labor Day in the US, *Festa dei Lavoratori* celebrates the economic and social gains that Italian workers have achieved.

Celebrations / Special Customs

Primo Maggio is a national holiday in Italy, and many businesses and government offices are closed for the day. Italians typically spend the day with family and friends, enjoying picnics, concerts, parades, and other outdoor activities. It is also common for people to attend political rallies and demonstrations, where they can voice their opinions on issues affecting the working class.

One of *Primo Maggio*'s most popular events is the annual concert (*Il Concerto del Primo Maggio*) in Rome's *Piazza San Giovanni*. Organized by Italy's largest trade union, the CGIL, this concert attracts hundreds of thousands of people each year. It features performances by some of Italy's most famous musicians and celebrates the labor movement's achievements.

This holiday occurs at the beginning of May when the weather is usually quite warm, so Italians take the opportunity to take some days off and go on a short holiday, enjoying time with friends and family, going on a picnic, and relaxing.

Special Foods

Foods for Primo Maggio often include “*fava e pecorino*,” featuring fava beans (broad beans) which are in season. Their nutty flavor pairs well with Italian pecorino cheese made from sheep’s milk. Add a loaf of Italian bread, dried sausage or ham, and some wine, and it’s a perfect Italian picnic.

Celebrating International Workers’ Day at Lodges

To commemorate this Italian holiday at our lodges:

- Prepare Italian picnic baskets and have a picnic enjoying some simple Italian foods and Italian wine.
- Have a “fave and pecorino tasting” enjoyed with some crusty Italian bread and Italian wine.

Mother's Day

Festa della Mamma

Mary Jane Cambria

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ENGLISH

Mother's Day

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ITALIAN

Festa della Mamma

DATE IN ENGLISH

2nd Sunday in May

DATE IN ITALIAN

2a domenica di maggio

History

Many say that Italian Mother's Day originated with the ancient Greeks and Romans.

According to [Ciao Italia](#), this tradition was originally a spring fertility ritual to honor the goddess Rhea, mother of all the gods. According to ancient legend, Rhea was the mother of Romulus and Remus, who were the founders of Rome.

Over time, *Festa della Mamma* has evolved into a day to celebrate the mothers of Italy with flowers, cards, and, of course, her favorite dishes!

National Holiday

Just like Mother's Day in the United States, Festa Della Mamma is celebrated on the second Sunday in May with great enthusiasm and warmth, reflecting the country's deep-rooted family values and traditions. However, Festa della Mamma is not an official holiday in Italy.

Celebrations

Families come together to celebrate and honor their mothers (*mamme*), grandmothers (*nonne*) and other maternal figures (*figure materne*).

The first Italian Mother's Day was celebrated in 1957, 50 years after the tradition began in the United States. However, Italians say that a parish priest in the hillside town of Assisi, in Central Italy's Umbria region, started this wonderful day.

The celebration was such a success that Festa della Mamma was adopted across Italy's 20 regions one year later—a well-deserved tribute to the hard-working mothers of Italy!

Special Customs

Gifts, flowers, homemade cards, and poetry are a big part of Festa della Mamma. Moms all over the world love creative gifts from their kids, and Italian mamas are no different.

Like in many other cultures, Italians show their love and appreciation for their mothers by presenting them with gifts (*regali*) and flowers (*fiori*). To express your love and gratitude to your mother or other special women in your life, it's customary to give a bouquet of flowers (*bouquet di fiori or mazzo di fiori*).

Popular Mother's Day presents in Italy include chocolates (*cioccolatini*), perfumes (*profumi*), jewelry (*gioielli*), and spa treatments (*trattamenti di bellezza*).

On Festa della Mamma, Mom is not allowed to do any housework or cooking on her special day! The occasion begins with fresh pastries and coffee, coupled with flowers and poems the children created at school.

Special Foods

Festa della Mamma usually starts with a simple breakfast and ends with a sweet treat. It has become the most popular day of the year to eat out!

A typical Italian Mother's Day celebration includes a festive meal with traditional Italian dishes, either at home (*a casa*) or at a favorite restaurant (*al ristorante*). Many Italians take the opportunity to cook their mother's favorite dishes or bake a special dessert, like a heart-shaped cake (*torta a forma di cuore*) or a traditional Italian dessert like *tiramisu*.

Greetings & Vocabulary

Auguri! Buona Festa della Mamma!

Congratulations! Happy Mother's Day!

Republic Day

Festa della Repubblica

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ENGLISH

Republic Day

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ITALIAN

Festa della Repubblica

DATE IN ENGLISH

June 2nd

DATE IN ITALIAN

2 giugno / il due giugno

History

On June 2nd, 1946, in the form of a popular referendum, Italians were asked to choose the type of government they wanted for the country. Voters were given the choice between a monarchy or a republic. Also, it was the first time in their history that Italian women were allowed to vote. The vote revealed that 54.3% of voters chose to abolish the monarchy and establish a republic. The new republic was officially inaugurated on June 2, 1946, and this date has been recognized as an Italian holiday ever since to commemorate the birth of the Italian Republic.

National Holiday

Republic Day is considered a national and public holiday. The general population has the day off. Schools and businesses are closed, and the

holiday is celebrated with parades, fireworks, concerts, and picnics. Republic Day is like Independence Day in the United States.

Celebrations

The main celebration is held in Rome with several military ceremonies. The Republic Day celebration in Rome features a solemn flag-raising ceremony at the Altare della Patria as well as a tribute to the Italian Unknown Soldier (*Milite Ignoto*) with the placing of a laurel wreath by the president of the Italian republic in the presence of many important officials. After the playing of the National Anthem, *Il Canto degli Italiani*, the *Frecce Tricolori* (like the US Air Force Thunderbirds) cross the skies of Rome, and a large patriotic military parade marches down Via dei Fori Imperiali, a large road that cuts through the ancient forums and connects the Colosseum with Piazza Venezia. Here, the Head of State meets other dignitaries, all of whom are wearing the Italian tricolor cockade (*Coccarda italiana tricolore*), one of the national ornaments of Italy worn during military parades. It is a red, white, and green ribbon folded into a plisse' (folds, pleats). In the afternoon, musical performances and the Changing of the Guard take place at the Quirinal Palace, the official residence of the President of the Italian Republic.

Other Italian cities also celebrate this holiday with parades. For example, Florence celebrates Republic Day by having a procession in the Piazza Della Signoria. During the celebration, the National Anthem is played, and those who have served their country are honored. This event symbolizes and exemplifies Italian patriotism and cultivates a strong relationship between Italians and their country's culture. This form of celebration is repeated in other Italian cities, as well as in Italian embassies and consulates all over the world.

The Republic Day celebrations, specifically the Parades, have different themes each year. A few examples include:

- 2003 Theme – 57th Anniversary: The Armed Forces in the international security system for the advancement of peace and democratization of peoples

- 2004 Theme – 58th Anniversary: The Armed Forces for the Homeland.
- 2010 Theme – 64th Anniversary: The Republic and its Armed Forces committed to peace missions
- 2011 Theme – 65th Anniversary: 150th anniversary of the unification of Italy

Special Customs

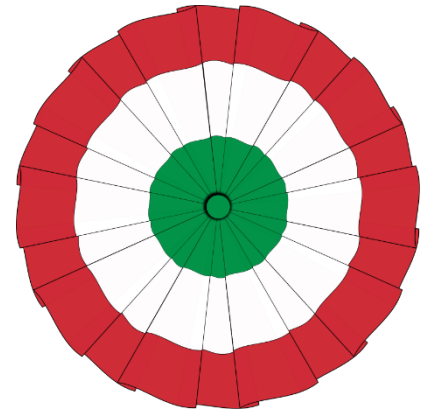
This significant holiday celebrating Italy’s unification is always a joyous occasion. Many Italians gather with family and friends to enjoy a celebratory meal at home, in the park, or at the beach. Since most museums and public buildings are open and free to the public on that day, many Italians also enjoy visiting them.

Special Foods

Several foods/meals are connected to Republic Day. They often feature the three colors (tricolore) of Italy’s flag—red, white, and green.

Some of the tri-color dishes include:

- Insalata Caprese
- Lasagne alla Bolognese con Sfoglia Verde
- Pasta Tricolore
- Pizza Tricolore
- ***Tajarin al ragu***: a pasta dish from Piedmont featuring red tomatoes, mozzarella, and basil
- Grilled tomato, basil, and goat cheese sandwiches
- Roman pizza
- ***Bicchierini salati con pomodori, ricotta e pesto***: simple finger foods or appetizers featuring the tri-colors of the Italian flag
- ***Bucatini con le sarde***: a pasta dish traditionally prepared with a finely chopped mixture of local sardines and anchovies



In the US, some Italian families might also prepare sweets, such as pizzelle, cool summer treats, Italian flag cake, and rainbow cookies.

Greetings & Vocabulary

Italians greet one another on this holiday by saying:

Festa della Repubblica Republic Day

Buona Festa della Repubblica Happy Republic Day

Personal Connection

Most of our immigrant ancestors probably did not celebrate this holiday after arriving in the US.

Celebrating Republic Day at Lodges

Celebrating this holiday in our lodges or Italian communities would educate us about Italian history and inspire pride in our Italian heritage.

Activities and ideas for lodges that would appeal to different age levels (children, young adults, other members, families, specific interest groups) to commemorate and educate about this day:

- Post on social media on June 2nd to recognize the holiday.
- Dedicate a section of the June edition of Questo Mese to highlight Republic Day.
- Incorporate this holiday into meetings/events by hosting a picnic.
- Sing the Italian National Anthem (*Il Canto degli Italiani*). See lyrics below.
- Have a presentation/moment to honor Republic Day and show videos of how Italy celebrates the holiday.
- Incorporate Italian flag activities: Display the Italian flag. Children color Italian flags.
- Make the *coccarda italiana* with red, white, and green ribbon.
- Play Republic Day trivia/jeopardy and offer prizes for winners!
- Reflect on our roots, Italy's history, and the role it plays in our lives today as a moment of reflection.
- Host a Republic Day Birthday Party to celebrate Italy's "birthday."
- Prepare a lodge meeting dinner or luncheon with a Republic Day Theme.
- Plan a themed potluck where members bring dishes like those prepared for a Republic Day holiday celebration in Italy. Some are listed above.



Il Canto degli Italiani

1. Fratelli d'Italia,
L'Italia s'è desta;
Dell'elmo di Scipio
S'è cinta la testa.
Dov'è la Vittoria?
Le porga la chioma;
Ché schiava di Roma
Iddio la creò.

Chorus:

*Stringiamci a coorte!
Siam pronti alla morte, (Repeat)
L'Italia chiamò.*

2. Noi fummo da secoli
Calpesti, derisi,
Perché non siam popolo,
Perché siam divisi.
Raccogliaci un'unica
Bandiera, una speme;
Di fonderci insieme
Già l'ora suonò.

3. Uniamoci, amiamoci;
L'unione e l'amore
Rivelano ai popoli
Le vie del Signore.
Giuriamo far libero
Il suolo natio:
Uniti, per Dio,
Chi vincer ci può?

4. Dall'Alpi a Sicilia,
Dovunque è Legnano;
Ogn'uom di Ferruccio
Ha il core e la mano;
I bimbi d'Italia
Si chiaman Balilla;
Il suon d'ogni squilla
I Vespri suonò.

5. Son giunchi che piegano
Le spade vendute;
Già l'Aquila d'Austria
Le penne ha perdute.
Il sangue d'Italia
E il sangue Polacco Bevé, col Cosacco,
Ma il cor le bruciò.

English translation

1. Brothers of Italy,
Italy has awakened;
Scipio's helmet
she has put on her head.
Where is the Victory?
Offer her the hair;
because slave of Rome
God created her.

Chorus:

*Let us unite!
We are ready to die;
Italy called.*

2. We have been for centuries
stamped on, and laughed at,
because we are not one people,
because we are divided.
Let's unite under
one flag, one dream;
To melt together
Already the time has come.

3. Let's unite, let's love;
The union and the love
Reveal to the people
God's ways.
We swear to liberate
the native soil:
United, for God,
Who can beat us?

4. From the Alps to Sicily,
Everywhere is Legnano;
Every man of Ferruccio
has the heart and the hand;
the children of Italy
are called Balilla;
The sound of every church bell
calling for evening prayers.

5. They are branches that bend
the sold swords;
Already the eagle of Austria
has lost its feathers.
the blood of Italy
and the Polish blood Drank with Cossacks
But its heart was burnt

Feast of the Assumption

Ferragosto

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ENGLISH

Feast of the Assumption

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ITALIAN

Ferragosto

DATE IN ENGLISH

August 15th

DATE IN ITALIAN

15 agosto

History

Ferragosto originates from *Feriae Augusti*, which is the festival of Emperor Augustus. Initially, it was considered a day of rest after weeks of hard work in the agricultural sector. At that time, it became a custom for the workers to wish their employers “*buon ferragosto*” and receive a monetary bonus in return. Furthermore, during that time, the date of ancient Ferragosto was August 1st. However, the Catholic Church moved the date to August 15th. In fact, during the 7th century, the Catholic Church assimilated Ferragosto, and this date change was made to make Ferragosto coincide with the religious celebration for the Assumption of Mary, who died and was reborn and received into heaven on this day.

National Holiday

Ferragosto is considered a public holiday and a religious (Catholic) holiday.

Celebrations

This holiday is celebrated with street festivals, beach parties, fireworks, musical concerts, dances, and feasting. Around Ferragosto (August 15th), many Italians travel to the following popular vacation destinations: the Emerald Coast in Sardinia, the Amalfi Coast, and the Adriatic Coast. They also travel north to Lakes Como and Garda or the Italian Alps, the Apennines, or the Dolomites for hiking and trekking options.

Special Customs

Some special customs connected to Ferragosto are horse racing and draft animal parades. Often, many Italians will recognize this holiday by attending church for Mass and continuing the celebration with family and friends. During these celebrations with loved ones, they often feast and enjoy traditional dishes, while watching fireworks or taking part in processions.

Special Foods

The foods eaten on Ferragosto vary from region to region in Italy. For example, in Tuscany, roast pigeon and *panzanella* is popular on this holiday. In Lazio, a popular dish includes chicken with peppers, while in Liguria, people are known to eat fish. In Puglia, they eat *orecchiette alle cime di rapa*, whereas in Basilicata, they eat lamb on this holiday. Another popular dish includes tomatoes stuffed with rice. However, watermelon is one of the most consistent foods eaten around Italy on this holiday.

Some traditional Ferragosto foods:

- Panzanella
- Pomodori al Riso,
- Roast Squab
- Pollo ai Peperoni
- Galluccio
- Biscotti,
- Watermelon
- Gelu di Muluna (Gelo di Languria = Watermelon Jelly)
- Ricotta Salata
- Mint Salad (Insalata di Anguria, Ricotta Salata e Menta).

Greetings & Vocabulary

The greeting on this day:

Buon Ferragosto a tutti Happy Ferragosto, everyone

Buon Ferragosto Happy Ferragosto

Personal Connection

Most immigrant families do not celebrate this holiday with Italian traditions. Still, Ferragosto presents an excellent opportunity to gain insight into Italian culture and comprehend its deep historical, religious, culinary, and artistic roots.

Celebrating the Feast of the Assumption at Lodges

How to incorporate this holiday celebration at our lodges:

- National social media campaign/messaging on August 15th to recognize the holiday
- Dedicate a section of the Questo Mese to highlight Republic Day (in August)
- Host a lodge event dedicated to celebrating Ferragosto (e.g., potluck/luncheon/dinner)
- Plan a field trip to the beach/ocean (if a lodge is located near one) and host a lodge beach party to honor the holiday
- Research street festivals and participate in one (around Ferragosto) and utilize your lodge booth to recognize the holiday and serve one of the popular dishes (e.g., watermelon or the Gelu di Muluna)
- Bring in entertainment/Italian singers or bands and host your own musical concert
- Be sure to incorporate dancing into the fun!

- Bring a history lesson of Ferragosto into your August lodge meeting to learn about the holiday (e.g., guest speaker, PowerPoint Presentation, video, etc.)
- Host a Ferragosto Food Competition and choose one dish to signify the holiday and have various lodge members sign up to make it... then “judges” can vote to determine which recipe they liked the best
- Host a Ferragosto recipe day with lodge members and make one of the Holiday recipes together while learning and having fun together

Feast of St. Francis

Festa di San Francesco D'Assisi Patrono D'Italia

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ENGLISH

Feast of Saint Francis

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ITALIAN

Festa di San Francesco
D'Assisi Patrono D'Italia

DATE IN ENGLISH

October 4th

DATE IN ITALIAN

3 e 4 ottobre

History

Saint Francis of Assisi was born in Umbria in AD 1118 and is the patron saint of animals, nature, and birds. Saint Francis is largely celebrated as the saint who married “Lady Poverty,” as he renounced wealth and fortune in life. He dedicated his life to living as Christ had, helping others, and without worldly possessions. Saint Francis based his lifestyle on Matthew 10:7, 9–11, which states, “Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.” He is regarded as one of the most important saints, as he influenced the church in many aspects, such as building covenants, schools, hospitals, houses for the homeless, and orphanages. He also restored the church of San Damiano and is considered the first Italian poet by some critics. The Feast of St Francis celebrates his transition to heaven and reflects on his legacy.

St. Francis is also credited for creating the live Christmas nativity scene in the hopes of leaving an impact on those in attendance. He wanted to showcase the contrast of the material of his day to the humble beginnings of Jesus Christ. Saint Francis’s passionate words and incredible nativity instantly fascinated and enthralled the onlookers. The live nativity scene is a continued tradition in most facets of Christianity today and is seen all over the world today.

National Holiday

This is a national holiday; however, the center of the celebration in Italy is Assisi, the place of Saint Francis’s birth. Beginning on October 3rd, Assisi is illuminated by oil lamps brought from a different Italian town each year. Religious services are held in the Basilica of St Francis and the Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli.

Celebrations

While Italy celebrates this solemn holiday publicly, it is celebrated/observed privately in most other countries.

Special Customs

Some people bring their pets to be blessed during the Feast of Saint Francis, as he often expressed his love for animals.

Special Foods

It is thought that Saint Francis’s favorite food was mostaccioli, traditionally dry biscuits with almonds and honey.

Recipes

This is a Catholic religious holiday, and my family is protestant, so unfortunately, I did not celebrate. However, here is a link to a recipe for mostaccioli:

<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/recipes/view.cfm?id=2>

Greetings & Vocabulary

There are no special phrases, but we do wish *Buon Onomastico* (Happy Name Day) to all who are named Francesco, Francesca, Francine, and Franco.

Interesting Facts

The Tau Cross is a symbol of Saint Francis. It represented turning away from sin and to Christ the Savior instead.

Celebrating the Feast of St. Francis at Lodges

- For this holiday, I think it would be a good representation of St. Francis to collectively volunteer at soup kitchens, collect food for a food drive, and collect socks and scarves in the wintertime.
- Having a cooking demo, where the mostaccioli was baked, would be fantastic for children and adults alike. We could even incorporate language by learning the names of the ingredients.
- We could also make Tau crosses to wear or donate to Catholic nursing homes.
- It would also be worth looking into imitating the events occurring in Assisi during the Saint Francis holiday. Instead of oil lamps, perhaps a local or state lodge could host a candlelight ceremony for those interested. Of course, there would be food afterward, but it should be very simple, plain food to reflect the life of Saint Francis.
- Having a “story time” for young children and their parents to attend would be beneficial. Not every adult knows the life story of Saint Francis, and his life would be a good testament to the children.
- Also, as Saint Francis preferred a simple life, a day of hiking or camping could intrigue young adults. It could become a competition between groups: who can complete basic life skills (such as starting a fire or catching a fish) the quickest. There could also be specific animals that must be spotted, with pictures/ descriptions printed on a bingo board.
- Learn some of the prayers of St. Francis in English and Italian: Prayer for Peace, Canticle of the Creatures, Prayer Before the Blessed Sacrament, Prayer Before the Crucifix, Prayer Given to Brother Leo, Praises of God and the Blessing, We Adore You.
- Have a slide show about the town of Assisi, the Basilica of St Francis, the art in the Basilica (Giotto, Cimabue), his tomb, Portiuncula Chapel, etc., to learn about his life and how he was portrayed in art.

Halloween

Halloween

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ENGLISH

Halloween

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ITALIAN

Halloween

DATE IN ENGLISH

October 31st

DATE IN ITALIAN

31 ottobre

History

Halloween, celebrated on October 31st, is a holiday that has gained popularity worldwide, and Italy is no exception.

The origins of Halloween date back to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, which marked the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter. Over time, Halloween evolved, incorporating various traditions and becoming particularly popular in the United States. Its modern form, characterized by costumes, trick-or-treating, and spooky decorations, has spread globally, including in Italy.

Italy's adoption of Halloween can be attributed to the influence of American pop culture through movies, television, and the internet. The holiday's themes of fun, fantasy, and a touch of fright have resonated with Italians, leading to its rapid integration into Italian society.

National Holiday

Halloween is a relatively recent addition to Italian cultural traditions, but it has been embraced, especially among younger generations. The celebration in Italy blends traditional elements of the holiday with local customs, resulting in a unique and vibrant observance.

Celebrations

In Italy, Halloween is celebrated with a mix of traditional and contemporary activities. Major cities like Rome, Milan, and Florence are hubs of Halloween festivities, where one can witness a blend of Italian flair and Halloween traditions.

Costumes and Parties

One of the most popular aspects of Halloween in Italy is dressing up in costumes. Italians, especially children and young adults, don a variety of outfits, ranging from the scary to the whimsical. Costume parties are a common feature, held in homes, clubs, and public venues. Schools and universities often organize themed events where students can showcase their creativity.

Trick-or-Treating

While trick-or-treating is not as widespread as in the United States, it has been growing in popularity. In some neighborhoods, children go door-to-door, saying "*Dolcetto o scherzetto!*" which translates to "Trick or treat!" The sight of children in costumes collecting sweets is becoming more familiar in Italian towns and cities.

Decorations

Halloween decorations in Italy often include carved pumpkins, known as "***zucche***," which are placed outside homes or in windows. Inside homes, Italians decorate with spooky themes, using items like fake cobwebs, skeletons, and ghosts. Public spaces like shops and restaurants also embrace the Halloween spirit with thematic decor.

Events and Activities

Many Italian cities host special Halloween events, such as haunted houses, ghost tours, and themed amusement park attractions. Cultural institutions, like museums and historical sites, sometimes offer Halloween-themed tours that blend the country's rich history with the holiday's eerie atmosphere. These events attract both locals and tourists, adding a unique twist to Italy's rich cultural landscape.

Influence of Traditional Italian Customs

Despite the growing popularity of Halloween, Italy has a rich tradition of honoring the dead, primarily through the observance of All Saints' Day (***Ognissanti***) on November 1st and All Souls' Day (***Giorno dei Morti***) on November 2nd. These days are dedicated to remembering and honoring deceased loved ones, with families visiting cemeteries to clean and decorate graves.

The proximity of Halloween to these traditional observances has led to a blending of customs. In some regions, Halloween celebrations are followed by more solemn and reflective activities associated with All Saints' and All Souls' Days. This fusion highlights the balance between adopting new cultural elements and preserving traditional practices.

Commercialization and Criticism

As with many global holidays, the commercialization of Halloween has not gone unnoticed in Italy. Retailers capitalize on the holiday by selling costumes, decorations, and themed treats, leading to criticism. Traditionalists argue that Halloween's commercial aspect overshadows Italy's rich cultural heritage and detracts from the significance of All Saints' and All Souls' Days.

However, many Italians see Halloween as an opportunity for fun and community engagement. Schools and community groups often use the holiday to organize activities that bring people together, fostering a sense of community and shared enjoyment.

Conclusion

Halloween in Italy is a vibrant and evolving celebration that reflects the country's ability to adapt and incorporate new cultural influences. While retaining the core elements of costumes, trick-or-treating, and spooky decorations, Italians have infused Halloween with their own traditions and customs. This blend of old and new creates a unique Italian Halloween experience that continues to grow in popularity. As the holiday becomes more embedded in Italian culture, it stands as a testament to the dynamic nature of cultural exchange and adaptation.

Celebrating Halloween at Lodges

To incorporate Halloween celebrations at lodges in a way that fosters interest in Italian culture, heritage, and language, consider a range of activities tailored to various age groups and interests. These activities can blend traditional Halloween fun with elements of Italian culture, ensuring an engaging and educational experience for all participants.

For Children

1. Italian Storytelling Sessions:

- Narrate spooky tales from Italian folklore, such as the legend of the "*Monaciello*" or the "Befana."
- Use costumes and props to make the stories more engaging.

2. Pumpkin Decorating with Italian Themes:

- Instead of typical Halloween designs, encourage children to decorate pumpkins with Italian cultural symbols, like the Italian flag, famous landmarks, or traditional masks from Venice.

3. Italian Language Trick-or-Treat:

- Organize trick-or-treating within the lodge, where children learn and use basic Italian phrases to receive treats.

4. Arts and Crafts Workshops:

- Create masks inspired by the Venice Carnival.
- Make "*Zucche*" (pumpkin lanterns) and Italian-themed Halloween decorations.

5. Italian Cooking Classes:

- Teach children to make simple, fun Italian treats like "*biscotti*" decorated with Halloween themes.

For Young Adults

1. Halloween Costume Party with an Italian Twist:

- Encourage participants to dress up as famous Italian historical figures, mythical creatures, or characters from Italian literature and opera.

2. Italian Horror Movie Night:

- Screen classic Italian horror films like Dario Argento's *Suspiria* or Mario Bava's *Black Sunday*.

3. Escape Room with Italian History and Legends:

- Create an escape room experience based on Italian legends or historical mysteries.

4. Cooking Competitions:

- Organize a competition to create the best Italian-themed Halloween dish, such as pasta with spooky shapes or Halloween-themed pizza.

5. Language Exchange Nights:

- Host events where participants can practice Italian while engaging in Halloween-themed activities and games.

For Families

1. Family-Friendly Ghost Tours:

- Organize tours exploring local legends and ghost stories, incorporating Italian history and folklore elements.
2. **Cultural Exhibits and Displays:**
 - Set up displays that showcase Italian Halloween traditions, such as the "*Ognissanti*" and "*Giorno dei Morti*" celebrations.
 3. **Themed Dinner Nights:**
 - Host Italian-themed dinner events with a Halloween twist, featuring traditional dishes and decorations.
 4. **Family Costume Contests:**
 - Encourage families to dress in coordinated costumes with an Italian theme and hold a contest with prizes.
 5. **Interactive History Lessons:**
 - Use Halloween as a backdrop for teaching about significant historical events and figures in Italy through interactive, family-friendly presentations.

For Other Members and Specific Interest Groups

1. **Lectures and Discussions:**
 - Host talks about the history of Halloween in Italy and its evolution, exploring how different regions celebrate it.
2. **Traditional Italian Music and Dance:**
 - Organize events featuring traditional Italian music and dance with a spooky twist.
3. **Cultural Workshops:**
 - Offer workshops on making traditional Italian crafts or foods, such as creating "Papier-mâché" masks or baking Italian pastries.
4. **Book Clubs and Reading Groups:**
 - Read and discuss Italian literature and folklore that align with the Halloween theme.
5. **Photography Contests:**
 - Hold a contest for the best Halloween photos, encouraging participants to capture the essence of Italian culture and heritage in their submissions.
6. **Wine Tasting Events:**
 - Pair Italian wines with Halloween-themed appetizers in a sophisticated setting for adult members.

General Activities

1. **Decorating the Lodge:**
 - Use Italian-themed Halloween decorations, such as Venetian masks, Italian flags, and traditional symbols.

2. Charity Events:

- Organize Halloween charity events, including Italian cultural elements, raising funds for community projects or cultural preservation.

3. Language Immersion Activities:

- Incorporate Italian language lessons into Halloween activities, making learning fun and engaging.

4. Collaborations with Local Italian Organizations:

- Partner with local Italian cultural organizations to enhance the authenticity and educational value of the events.

By integrating these activities, lodges can create a vibrant and educational Halloween experience that highlights Italian culture, heritage, and language, appealing to a wide range of age groups and interests.

All Saints' Day

Festa di Ognisanti

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ENGLISH

All Saints' Day

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ITALIAN

Festa di Ognisanti

DATE IN ENGLISH

November 1st

DATE IN ITALIAN

1 novembre /
il primo novembre

History

Just over a century later, November 1 was finally chosen as the date for commemorating the saints. It was Pope Gregory III who made this change official. Around 835, Pope Gregory IV even made it a world holiday. In the 20th century, when Pius X was head of the papacy, All Saints' Day was added to the list of eight Christian feasts. At the same time, it became a public holiday.

All Saints' Day is a holy day of obligation in the Catholic Church. Every Sunday, Catholics are obligated to attend mass. This holiday holds the same weight as a holy Sunday, regardless of the day of the week All Saints Day falls upon. Other days throughout the year honor particular saints that have been canonized. This means that the Church has declared a person or saint worthy of universal veneration and celebration. All Saints' Day honors the saints that have not been canonized. This refers to loved ones who have

lived a good moral life and are believed to be in heaven but were not canonized. Not to be confused with the very next day of celebration, All Souls' Day, which refers to those who have passed and may not have made it to heaven yet and are in purgatory.

National Holiday

This religious holiday is celebrated nationally in Italy but varies by region and family.

Celebrations

All Saints' Day is a national holiday, but it is especially popular in Rome due to its strong ties to Roman culture. Historically, the Romans would have a meal beside the grave of a deceased loved one to honor them. Many businesses, schools, and government offices are closed so families and friends can spend time together. Families often visit their local parishes. Many people will pray to the Saints, especially their patron saint, and ask for intercession so that they might also become saints one day.

Special Customs

It is not uncommon for families to visit the graves of their deceased loved ones, lay flowers on their graves, and light candles.

Special Foods

Pane dei Santi, which means All Saints' bread, is common all over Italy on All Saints' Day. The bread dough includes raisins, figs, and walnuts. *Castagnaccio*, a cake made with chestnut flour, is another traditional All Saints' Day treat.

Recipes

Pane dei Santi

<https://www.ilclubdellericette.it/ricetta/pane-dei-santi>

Castagnaccio

<https://www.cucchiaio.it/ricetta/ricetta-castagnaccio/>

Sweets for All Souls' Day

<https://www.giallozafferano.it/ognissanti-dolci-tradizione>

Greetings & Vocabulary

Auguri! Happy holiday

A common prayer recited on All Saints Day is as follows:

“Almighty ever-living God, by whose gift we venerate in one celebration the merits of all the Saints, bestow on us, we pray, through the prayers of so many intercessors, an abundance of the reconciliation with you for which we earnestly long.”

Personal Connection

This is a Catholic religious holiday, and my family is protestant, so unfortunately, I have nothing to add personally. However, my family often will gather and share stories of our deceased loved one near the deceased's birthday. We also try to speak of them and their love during Memorial Day. We have planted flowers and named stars in their honor.

Interesting Facts

All Saints' Day was initially only celebrated in Rome. In 837, Pope Gregory IV extended All Saints' Day to the entire church, making it a holiday to be celebrated nationally.

Celebrating All Saints' Day at Lodges

- A cooking demo with the recipes listed above and a history lesson would be a great activity.
- Hold a candlelight vigil honoring saints that members are named after. Learn what day is their specific saint's day.
- Research and learn about Italian saints that members are named after. Who are some well-known Italian saints, and why are they remembered/why do Italian Catholics pray to them? What are some unique Italian saint stories? What are some unique traditions that are connected to specific saints?
- Children could learn about a favorite saint and create a poster about that saint.

All Souls' Day

Il Giorno dei Morti

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ENGLISH

All Souls Day

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ITALIAN

Il Giorno dei Morti

DATE IN ENGLISH

November 2nd

DATE IN ITALIAN

2 novembre /
il due novembre

History

Starting in AD 998, the 2 November date and customs spread from the Cluniac monasteries to other Benedictine monasteries and then to the Western Church in general. The abbot of Cluny had funeral bells rung after vespers on November 1, and the next day, November 2, offered the Eucharist for all the dead. The Diocese of Liège was the first diocese to adopt the practice under Bishop Notger (1008). November 2 was adopted in Italy and Rome in the thirteenth century.

National Holiday / Celebrations

It is celebrated all over Italy but is not a day off from work.

In Sicily and other regions of southern Italy, families visit and clean grave sites, home altars are decorated with family photos and votive candles. Children are gifted a special basket or *cannistru* with chocolates, pomegranates, and other gifts from their “ancestors.” Because of the gifting

of sugary sweets and the emphasis on sugar puppet decorations, these local Sicilian events in which communities celebrate the dead are known as the *Notte di Zuccherò* (Nights of Sugar).

Special Customs

Italians recall the dead by bringing flowers, particularly chrysanthemums, to cemeteries. Chrysanthemums are symbolic because they are the only flowers that need darkness to grow. Prayers are offered for the dead and souls stuck in purgatory.

They also light candles at the gravesites and recite the following prayer three times:

“L'eterno riposo dona a loro Signore. Splendi ad essi la luce perpetua. Riposino in pace, Amen.”

“Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.”

Special Foods

Piada dei morti, a sweet focaccia topped with raisins, almonds, walnuts, and pine nuts, is traditionally eaten in November for All Souls' Day in the region of Rimini, in Emilia-Romagna.

Bones of the Dead Cookies, *Ossa di Morto*, are made in different regions.

Recipes

Piada dei morti

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 15 minutes

Total Time: 30 minutes

Servings: 36 cookies

Ingredients

- 1 cup raisins
- 1 cup dried figs or dates
- 1 1/2 cups almonds or hazelnuts toasted and ground
- 1/2 cup Nocino or another Italian liqueur or even orange juice
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 2 cups ground ladyfinger cookies
- 1 cup ground amaretti cookies
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 5 eggs 3 egg yolks, 2 whole eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- Confectioner's sugar for dusting

Instructions

- Preheat oven to 350°F. Line 3 cookie sheets with parchment paper.
- On a baking sheet, toast the almonds for about 5 minutes. When they are cool, grind them (you could use hazelnuts or a mixture of almonds and hazelnuts); set aside.
- In a small bowl, soak the raisins and dried figs in the liqueur.
- Place the amaretti and ladyfingers in the food processor bowl and finely grind them; set aside.
- Reserve the liqueur from the dried fruit and grind the raisins and dried figs; set aside.

- In a large bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder, and spices. Whisk in the ground cookies; set aside. Stop the mixture while mixing to scrape the sides of the bowl.
- In the bowl of a mixer, add sugar, eggs, egg whites, and vanilla. Mix until combined.
- Slowly add in the flour mixture. Mix until combined.
- Add the dried fruit and a tablespoon of the liqueur. Keep adding the liqueur a teaspoon at a time until the dough is combined (it shouldn't be too wet).
- Remove the dough from the bowl and wrap it in plastic wrap. Chill in the refrigerator for 30-45 minutes.
- Lightly flour the counter or a pastry board. Cut the dough into six parts. Flour your fingers if it helps you work with the dough. Roll the first part of the dough into a rope about 18 inches long. Cut the rope into two parts.
- Cut the first section of dough into pieces about 3 inches long and 1 inch wide. Line them up with some space between them on the first baking sheet. Press down a little on each cookie to fix its shape (the dough can be messy).
- Continue the process with the other parts of the dough.
- Bake for about 15 minutes. Dust with confectioner's sugar.

Ossi dei Morti

Prep Time: 40 minutes

Cook Time: 15 minutes

Total Time: 55 minutes

Servings: 3 dozen cookies

Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons softened unsalted butter
- 1 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 egg white lightly beaten with 1 teaspoon of vanilla
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup whole wheat flour
- 1/2 cup ground almonds
- grated zest of one lemon
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon of ground cloves

- 1–2 Tablespoons Nocino or another Italian liqueur, white wine or even water
- Confectioner's sugar for dusting

Instructions

- Line 3 cookie sheets with parchment paper.
- Cream the butter and sugar. Add in the egg white mixed with the vanilla and beat on medium speed for a minute or two until combined.
- In a small bowl, combine the flour, ground almonds, grated lemon zest, and spices.
- Slowly add in the flour mixture and mix until combined, stopping the mixer to scrape the sides of the bowl and combine all the flour.
- Add 1 Tablespoon of the Nocino (or other liqueur or water). Add in more 1 teaspoon at a time if needed until the dough is combined (but not too wet).
- Remove the dough and wrap it in plastic wrap. Let chill for about 30–45 minutes. While the dough is chilling, preheat the oven to 350°F.
- Lightly flour a clean counter or a pastry board. Cut the dough into four parts. Roll the first part of dough into a rope 18 inches long. Cut the rope into two parts. Cut the first section into cookies that are about 3 inches long and about 1/2 inch thick. Line them up with some space between them on a first baking tray. Press down a little on the cookie. Continue the process with the other parts of the dough.
- Bake for about 15 minutes or until the edges just start to turn golden brown. Dust with confectioner's sugar.

Greetings & Vocabulary

Festa dei Morti Commemoration of the Dead

U juornu rii morti dialect for the "Day of the Dead"

Personal Connection

My family still goes to church and lights candles. At our church, we have the Book of All Souls, where you can write the names of your family members who have died during the year. We also go to the cemetery.

Celebrating All Souls' Day at Lodges

- Encourage members to attend a church service together.
- Have a gathering at our lodges, do a prayer service, and celebrate the lives of the deceased.
- Put flowers on the graves of members who have died through the years, keeping their memories and contributions alive.
- Create a memory garden to honor deceased loved ones.
- Ask members to choose one or two members from their families to write a short snippet of fond memories they have of their Italian ancestors. Then, if available, create a collective book of their Italian stories with

photos. It would be an interesting way to begin a library of Italian history at the local level while also celebrating All Souls' Day.

- Recite the “Rest in Peace” prayer in Italian:

“L'eterno riposo dona a loro Signore. Splendi ad essi la luce perpetua. Riposino in pace, Amen.”

“Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.”

Immaculate Conception

Festa dell'Immacolata/Immacolata Concezione

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ENGLISH

Immaculate Conception

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ITALIAN

Festa dell'Immacolata /
Immacolata Concezione

DATE IN ENGLISH

December 8th

DATE IN ITALIAN

8 dicembre

History

In 1854, after centuries of theories and theological debates, Pope Pius IX issued the bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, which definitively sanctioned Mary's "Immaculate Conception." This official communication thus established that the mother of Jesus was not only born absolutely pure but was conceived in her mother's womb devoid of Original Sin (and thus "immaculate," without stain). It is one of the most important Marian feasts in the liturgical calendar of the Roman Catholic Church.

National Holiday

It is a National Holiday—nobody works.

Celebrations / Special Customs / Special Foods

Throughout Italy, December 8 opens the Christmas season. In homes across most of the country, the tree is decorated, and the nativity scene is prepared. Italians visit art cities, explore exhibitions, experience Christmas markets, and begin Christmas shopping.

Many Italians attend a church mass to honor Mary. In Rome, the pope lays a floral wreath on the statue of the Madonna at Piazza Mignanelli. Christmas trees are set up and lit, and the famous St. Peter's Square nativity scene is set up.

Shops sell paintings, statues, relics, and artwork related to Mary.

In some places, street entertainment is provided by jugglers and street clowns.

It is particularly popular in southern Italy because the Immaculate Conception was the patron saint of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

- In Matera, Basilicata, people start fasting on December 7 to prepare for the feast on December 8. On the 8th, children and the elderly nibble on *Tarallo dell'Immacolata* (*pan di Tarallo*) while everyone else dips them in wine. This keeps everyone from getting hungry until the big meal, which includes cod, spaghetti with garlic, oil, and chili pepper (*spaghetti aglio e olio*).
- In some regions such as Abruzzo, Puglia, Marche, and Umbria, fires are lit, and fritters are prepared! The fires symbolize the elimination of original sin, fertility, and family unity. In Puglia, they fry cakes called *pettole* or *pitulle* accompanied by *vin cotto*, a wine made with grapes and figs. They also prepare *puccia*, a bread filled with breadcrumbs and served with tuna and Swiss cheese, plus a dish of *baccala in pignata con patate*.

- Campania, especially in Naples, the Immaculate Conception is celebrated in commemoration of a miracle when a fisherman prayed to Mary and was saved. They place flowers at the Obelisk of the Immaculate Conception in Piazza del Gesù, and they set up lights and traditional fairs such as the fair of San Biagio dei Librai, San Gregorio Armeno, and Rione Sanità. In Naples, faith and art come together as they gear up for Neapolitan Christmas. They enjoy eating the Roccoco cake filled with almonds and spices.
- In Sicily, some towns hold processions, such as the Mattutino in Altofonte, Palermo. During the procession, they eat and drink sweets such as the *vastedde*, a flatbread seasoned with oil, cheese, and ricotta, or *mafoletta*, *sfinccete*, or *petrafennula*. In Termini Imerese and Syracuse, there are processions, band concerts, and fireworks. In Messina, they celebrate by eating *nipitidda*, a filled puff pastry.

Celebrating the Immaculate Conception at Lodges

- Prepare the Christmas tree in the lodges with Christmas ornaments with an Italian theme.
- Set up a traditional *presepe* (manger).
- Learn about the traditions and origins of the Presepe, especially the Neapolitan Presepe.
- Prepare and serve some of the dishes mentioned above.
- Learn the “Hail Mary” prayer in Italian.
- Learn about Italian art that portrays the Immaculate Conception (Mary, the mother of Jesus).

Christmas Eve

Vigilia di Natale

By: Marisa Ranalli

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ENGLISH

The Vigil / Christmas Eve

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ITALIAN

Vigilia di Natale

DATE IN ENGLISH

December 24th

DATE IN ITALIAN

24 dicembre

History

The Vigil/*La Vigilia* is held on Christmas Eve. This essential Italian event sees families come together to share a feast. Some families will exchange gifts on La Vigilia, although these presents are generally only for the children, whose role on Christmas Eve is to recite poems for the guests. On this day, family and friends greet each other with *Buona Vigilia di Natale*.

National Holiday / Celebrations

Christmas is the time to indulge and enjoy yourself to the fullest. In Italy, the feasting starts on *La Vigilia di Natale* (Christmas Eve), December 24th. That day is a national holiday in Italy; all shops are closed, and public transportation is pretty much non-existent.

Special Customs

On Christmas Eve in Italy, bells ring out, and families wrap up warm to attend Midnight Mass at their local churches. Services begin around 11:00 p.m. in many of Italy's most iconic cathedrals, including il Duomo in Florence, Orvieto's Cathedral, the Basilica di San Marco in Venice, and, of course, the local churches in small towns and other cities.

Christmas Eve is also when families get together and play *Tombola* after they eat and before they go to church. What is Tombola? It's the Italian version of Bingo. This Italian game has a long tradition, and it is the typical entertainment of the holidays. It is played on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year's Eve when everyone is together with family and friends.

Special Foods

Italians celebrate Christmas Eve with a large feast known *il Cenone della Vigilia*.

Since Catholic tradition prohibits the consumption of meat on the evenings before religious holidays, traditionally, Italian Christmas Eve dinner is a meat-free meal, only fish, please! During La Vigilia di Natale, we eat a variety of fish dishes, varying from region to region or even from town to town. In some parts of Italy and the Italian American celebration of Christmas Eve, the tradition is a seven-fish dinner. Some of these fish dishes include:

Appetizers: Smoked salmon *crostini*, scallops au gratin, and octopus salad

Main dish: Fried or stewed cod (*baccala*), roast sea bream (*orata al forno*) or stewed eel (*capitone in umido*). These dishes are often served with vegetables.

Pasta: Spaghetti with clams (*spaghetti alle vongole*), *risotto* with a mix of seafood, squid ink spaghetti (*spaghetti al nero di seppia*), and pasta with sardines (*pasta con le sarde*)

Desserts: *Panettone* is a traditional sweet.

Recipes

My Lobster Sauce Recipe

This recipe uses 6 to 8 live lobsters, depending on how many people you serve. (My husband takes care of preparing the lobsters.)

- Clean lobsters.
- When cleaned, cut into pieces with the shell on.
- Dip them in your prepared tomato sauce.
- Simmer in sauce until the shell is orange and the sauce is flavored with lobster.
- Prepare your sauce just like you would for a meat sauce, but substitute meat with lobsters.
- Serve the spaghetti as a separate course then serve the lobster and enjoy.

Remember to use a BIB or, in Italian, *Bavaglino*...

Personal Connections

My family and I do follow the tradition of eating only fish on La Vigilia. We don't prepare seven fish, but we do prepare about four seafood dishes: spaghetti with lobster, calamari, shrimp and *baccala* (salt cod). Because the family is growing and some of the in-laws don't eat fish, I have had to make some exceptions, but I only make spaghetti and meatballs—nothing fancy (ha ha)! My daughters love our traditions, and they are teaching their daughters these same traditions. We do allow opening one gift on Christmas Eve. For the rest, they must wait for Babbo Natale.

Who is *Babbo Natale*....? You will have to read my Christmas story...

Celebrating Christmas Eve at Lodges

- Celebrate with a Feast of the Seven Fishes meal at the lodge. Include some of the traditional dishes and desserts.
- Serve panettone or other traditional Christmas treats for dessert at a meeting.
- Learn and sing a traditional Italian Christmas song like “*Tu scendi dalle stelle*.”
- Teach children a simple Christmas poem and have them recite it for the members.
- Members talk about their family's Italian Christmas Eve traditions.
- Set up an Italian-style *presepe*.
- Make or buy Italian-themed Christmas ornaments and decorate a tree.

- Play tombola (bingo Italian style), calling the numbers in Italian and English and using tombola-specific vocabulary/expressions.
- Learn Italian vocabulary about Christmas. (See vocabulary list in the Natale report.) Create simple games using that vocabulary.

Christmas

Natale

By: Marisa Ranalli

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ENGLISH

Christmas

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ITALIAN

Natale

DATE IN ENGLISH

December 25th

DATE IN ITALIAN

25 dicembre

History

Natale is the most magical and memory-filled holiday of the year, characterized by snow, warm lights, candles, and the timeless red and green colors. For thousands of years, Italians have celebrated the season with a variety of unique customs and traditions and are passed down from generation to generation. In Italy, this holiday is closely tied to religious roots and traditions. It is a period of spending time with family (*famiglia*) and close friends (*amici*), celebrating religious traditions, and eating special foods.

Christmas in Italy is all about family and spending time with loved ones. Italians have a saying about it: ***Natale con i tuoi, capodanno con chi vuoi***, which means that if you spend Christmas with your family (respecting tradition), you are allowed to meet up with whoever you want for New Year's Eve!

National Holiday

Given that it is a national holiday, schools are closed, and most people have time off from work. Children are out of school from a few days before Christmas until after the ***Giorno della Befana***, Epiphany.

Celebrations

The Christmas holidays in Italy officially begin on December 8th, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, ***la Concezione Immacolata***, with the lighting of the Christmas tree and end on January 6th, with the celebration of Epiphany, ***Epifania/la Befana***. However, in some regions it begins even earlier on the 6th of December, when Catholics celebrate ***la festa di San Nicola***, Saint Nicholas. For example, in Puglia, it is celebrated with a traditional cake called ***Pupi di Natale***, made of almond paste and chocolate.

Special Customs

The evening before Christmas, Italians celebrate Christmas Eve or ***La Vigilia di Natale***. This is celebrated with an important holiday dinner, ***Il Cenone della Vigilia***. In Southern Italy, families gather to eat a traditional seven-course fish dinner, known as the Feast of the Seven Fishes, ***Festa dei Sette Pesci***. After dinner, it's time to play ***tombola***, exchange gifts, and attend ***la messa della Vigilia***, Christmas Eve Mass. ***Tombola*** is the Italian version of the popular game Bingo and is all about the joy of friendly competition.

On the morning of December 25th, *il giorno di Natale*, most Italians go to church to celebrate Christmas Mass. Afterward, they typically go home and have a big family dinner where they enjoy traditional dishes, followed by special desserts enjoyed during this season.

One of the most popular Christmas traditions in Italy, which has religious roots, is setting up the *presepe* or *presepio*, the Nativity Scene. The presepe is arranged in churches, public areas, and family homes. Often made of wood or clay, these hand-crafted pieces depict the birth of Jesus Christ, complete with the manger, shepherds, and wise men. For many Italians, the nativity scene is a treasured family heirloom, passed down from generation to generation. Families will gather around the presepe to remember Jesus' birth. Traditionally, the figure of the baby Jesus does not get added to the presepe until Christmas Eve, and those of the Three Wise Men do not get added until January 6th.

Italians will add to their collection of presepe figurines by shopping at *mercatini di Natale*, outdoor Christmas markets typically held in town squares and churches. These Christmas *mercatini* feature vendors selling traditional handmade crafts and decorations.

Another unique way Italians celebrate Christmas is with the sound of bagpipe music played by musicians known as *zampognari*. These musicians, dressed in traditional shepherd clothing, play in town squares during the holiday season, symbolizing the shepherds who visited Jesus on the night of his birth.

In Italy, the day after Christmas Day is celebrated as *Santo Stefano*, St. Stephen, which is, itself, a national holiday. It commemorates the feast day of Saint Stephen. Though the tradition only started in 1949, it is now widely celebrated as a day of rest and recovery from the previous day's feasting!

New Year's Eve, *Capodanno*, is known as *La Festa di San Silvestro* and is a time for celebration with family and friends. At midnight, Italians gather around the TV to watch *Il Concerto di Capodanno*—a televised music concert—and sing 'Auld Lang Syne.' Fireworks are often set off to commemorate the start of a new year.

As the Christmas season ends, Italians also have another important tradition: the Epiphany, or *La Festa dell'Epifania*, on January 6th. During this holiday, people celebrate the visit of the Three Wise Men, who brought gifts to baby Jesus. Children wait anxiously to see what *La Befana* will bring them.

For many Italians, La Befana is essential to the holiday season. Even though *Babbo Natale*, what Italian children call Santa Claus, is becoming more popular in Italy for giving gifts on Christmas Day, La Befana is the kindly old woman who brings gifts to children on Epiphany Eve. The tradition of La Befana dates to ancient Rome when it was believed that the goddess Janus bestowed gifts on those who had been good during the year.

In medieval times, the story of La Befana became entwined with that of the Three Kings, and she came to be seen as a kind of magical guide who led them to the infant Jesus. Today, children leave out shoes or stockings for La Befana to fill with candy and small toys, and she is often depicted riding a broomstick through the night sky.

Special Foods

The special dishes prepared for Christmas vary from region to region. The traditional lunchtime Christmas meal is the *pranzo di Natale*, a lavish feast shared with family.

Christmas dinner might include:

- ***Antipasti:*** cured meats, crostini, bruschette, and cheese plates
- **Pastas:** ravioli, *tortellini in brodo*, *agnolotti*, lasagne, *pasta al forno*, spaghetti bolognese
- **Meat and seafood dishes:** veal, roasted chicken, capon soup, roast pork, roast lamb, roasted whole fish with lemon sauce

Traditional desserts:

- ***Panettone:*** a sweet bread filled with candied fruit and raisins
- ***Pandoro:*** a star-shaped sweet bread, sprinkled with sugar
- ***Tiramisu***
- ***Torrone:*** traditional Christmas nougat candy made with honey, egg whites, and sugar
- ***Panforte***
- ***Struffoli:*** a Sicilian dessert made by frying small balls of dough and coating them in honey

Drinks:

- **Mulled Wine** Mulled wine, or ***vin brulé:*** a popular Christmas drink in northern Italy made with red wine, sugar, and spices such as cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg
- ***Espresso:*** served at the end of the meal
- ***Prosecco:*** a sparkling wine from Veneto popular in Italy during the holidays
- ***Asti spumante:*** a sweet sparkling wine
- ***Limoncello:*** a lemon liqueur that is traditionally served as a digestif after meals, or a variety of other digestifs like Amaro:

Recipes

Limoncello Tiramisu

Ingredients:

- 1 Cup Limoncello Liqueur
- 1 Cup Water
- 1/2 Cup Sugar
- 3/4 Cup Lemon Juice
- 40 Savoiardi or Lady Finger Cookies (2 Packages)

For the Mascarpone Cream:

- 1 1/2 Cups Heavy Cream
- 1/2 Cup Powdered Sugar

- 16 Ounces Mascarpone Cream, Room Temperature
- 1 10-Ounce Jar of Lemon Curd, divided

Garnish:

- Remaining Lemon Curd
- Lightly Toasted Sliced Almonds

Directions:

1. In a small pan, heat the limoncello, water, sugar, and lemon juice to a boil over medium-high heat. Then reduce the heat to low and cook, stirring often, until the sugar has completely dissolved. Set the syrup aside to cool to room temperature.
2. In one bowl, beat the cream with an electric mixer on high until soft peaks form. Then, begin adding 1/2 cup of the powdered sugar until blended.
3. In a separate bowl, beat the mascarpone with 3/4 of the jar of lemon curd until smooth, reserving the rest of the curd for the garnish.
4. Fold the cream mixture into the mascarpone mixture until blended.
5. Pour the cooled syrup into a bowl. Quickly dip each of the cookies into the mixture and lay them side by side in a 13x9-inch casserole dish. If you need to fill spaces, you can cut the cookies.
6. When you have the first layer of cookies done, spoon over half of the mascarpone mixture.
7. Add another layer of dipped *savoardi* cookies to the mascarpone cream layer, then finish by topping the second layer with the remaining cream mixture.
8. Smooth the top of the cream with a knife or spatula, and garnish with toasted almonds (optional).
9. Stir the remaining curd and then drizzle over the cream. Refrigerate for at least 6 hours or overnight. (I prefer refrigerating it overnight).

Greetings & Vocabulary

<i>Albero di Natale</i>	Christmas tree
<i>Addobbi natalizi</i>	Christmas decorations
<i>Babbo Natale</i>	Santa Claus
<i>Canzoni di Natale</i>	Christmas carols
<i>Pranzo di Natale</i>	Christmas lunch
<i>La messa della Vigilia</i>	Midnight mass
<i>Regali</i>	Gifts
<i>Presepe</i>	Nativity scene

<i>I re magi</i>	The three wise kings
<i>Il cenone della Vigilia</i>	Christmas Eve meal
<i>Buon Natale!</i>	Merry Christmas!
<i>Buone Feste!</i>	Happy Holidays!
<i>Ti auguro un Buon Natale</i>	I wish you a Merry Christmas
<i>Giorno dell'Epifania</i>	Epiphany Day

Personal Connection

My tradition for Christmas is having dinner with my family and extended family. My sister-in-law and I take turns reuniting our families for Christmas, one year at my house and the following year at her house. At my home, when I set my table, I place name tags that serve as place cards for each person attending, and I make favors, which include a lottery scratch ticket for each person. We always hope that someone wins BIG!

The main dishes I serve are the typical traditional foods listed above. For dessert, I serve *panettone* and *torrone*. I also make *Limoncello Tiramisu* for my family.

St. Stephen's Day

Festa di Santo Stefano

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ENGLISH

St. Stephen's Day

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ITALIAN

Festa di Santo Stefano

DATE IN ENGLISH

December 26th

DATE IN ITALIAN

26 dicembre

History

St. Stephen's Day in Italy, known as "*La Festa di Santo Stefano*," is celebrated on December 26th and is rooted in the commemoration of Saint Stephen, the first Christian martyr. This holiday's basis is historical and religious, reflecting the early Christian church's reverence for Stephen and his martyrdom.

Saint Stephen's Life and Martyrdom: Saint Stephen was one of the first seven deacons appointed by the Apostles to assist in ministering to the needs of the early Christian community in Jerusalem. His story is told in the Acts of the Apostles (Chapters 6–7). Stephen was known for his faith, wisdom, and ability to perform miracles. His preaching and defense of the Christian faith led to his arrest and trial by the Sanhedrin (Jewish council).

He was accused of blasphemy, and after a passionate speech defending his faith, he was stoned to death. As he was dying, he prayed for his persecutors, echoing Jesus' words on the cross.

Legacy of Charity and Service: Saint Stephen's role as a deacon highlights his dedication to service and charity, which are emphasized during his feast day. His martyrdom is a powerful testimony to the strength of faith and the importance of forgiveness and compassion.

Liturgical Significance: The feast of Saint Stephen is one of the earliest Christian feast days, and it has been celebrated since the early centuries of the Church. It follows Christmas Day, highlighting the theme of witness and martyrdom immediately after celebrating the birth of Christ. This placement underscores the idea that the joy of Christ's birth is accompanied by the call to witness and sometimes suffer for one's faith.

National Holiday

In Italy, December 26th is a public holiday, providing a continuation of the Christmas celebrations. It allows families to extend their festive gatherings and participate in communal activities.

Celebrations

The celebration of St. Stephen's Day in Italy is deeply rooted in the historical and religious significance of Saint Stephen's life and martyrdom. It emphasizes themes of charity, service, and witness to faith, continuing the spirit of Christmas through communal and familial activities, religious observances, and acts of kindness.

Family Gatherings: Italians usually spend the day with family, enjoying leftovers from the Christmas feast or preparing another special meal.

Religious Services: Many people attend Mass to honor Saint Stephen, the first Christian martyr.

Charity and Good Deeds: In the spirit of Saint Stephen's legacy, some Italians engage in acts of charity, such as donating to the needy or volunteering.

Local Events and Festivals: Various towns and cities host local events, including parades, nativity scenes, and sometimes even reenactments of Saint Stephen's life.

Special Customs

Religious Observance: Many Italians attend church services on this day to honor Saint Stephen. These services often include readings from the Acts of the Apostles, recounting Stephen's martyrdom, and homilies focusing on his example of faith and service.

Acts of Charity: Reflecting Saint Stephen's legacy, the festival is focused on charitable activities. People might donate to the poor, volunteer at local shelters, or engage in other acts of kindness.

Local Festivities: Various regions in Italy have their own local traditions and festivities. These might include processions, reenactments of Saint Stephen's life, and community feasts.

Celebrating St. Stephen's Day at Lodges

For Children:

1. **Craft Workshops:** Organize a workshop where children can make holiday crafts, such as decorating ornaments or creating nativity scene figures.
2. **Storytelling Sessions:** Have a storyteller read or enact the story of Saint Stephen in an engaging way, possibly followed by a short discussion or Q&A.
3. **Games and Contests:** Host games like scavenger hunts with a St. Stephen's Day theme or costume contests where kids can dress up as figures from the nativity or historical Christian saints.

For Teens:

1. **Volunteer Activities:** Arrange group volunteer opportunities at local charities or community centers to instill a sense of giving back, reflecting the charitable spirit of Saint Stephen.
2. **Movie or Documentary Screening:** Show a film or documentary about the life of Saint Stephen or related historical events, followed by a discussion.
3. **Sports Tournaments:** Organize a friendly sports tournament (soccer, basketball, etc.) to foster community spirit and teamwork.

For Adults:

1. **Cooking Classes:** Host a cooking class where participants can learn to make traditional Italian holiday dishes, followed by a communal meal.
2. **Lecture or Discussion Group:** Invite a speaker to give a talk on the history and significance of Saint Stephen's Day, followed by a discussion or Q&A session.
3. **Wine Tasting Event:** Organize a wine tasting featuring Italian wines, perhaps paired with traditional holiday foods.

For Seniors:

1. **Cultural Presentation:** Arrange a presentation on the history and traditions of Saint Stephen's Day in Italy, including slideshows of historic churches, art, and local celebrations.
2. **Social Tea or Coffee Gathering:** Host a relaxed gathering with tea, coffee, and traditional Italian pastries, providing an opportunity for socializing and sharing memories.
3. **Music and Caroling:** Arrange for a choir or musicians to perform traditional Italian Christmas carols and other festive music.

Combined Events:

1. **Intergenerational Activities:** Plan activities encouraging interaction between different age groups, such as a communal feast, a large-group game, or a joint craft project.
2. **Community Service Projects:** Organize a lodge-wide community service project where members of all ages can participate, fostering unity and shared purpose.

These events can help celebrate St. Stephen's Day by bringing together the lodge community, honoring traditions, and encouraging acts of kindness and charity. Our family never celebrated St. Stephen's Day as such, but we enjoyed visiting with relatives during the Christmas season and dined on typical fare including pasta with meatballs, salad, nuts and fruit for dessert and taralli.

New Year's Eve

Vigilia di Capodanno

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ENGLISH

New Year's Eve

History

Ringling in the new year!

NAME OF THE HOLIDAY IN ITALIAN

Vigilia di Capodanno

National Holiday

All over Italy.

DATE IN ENGLISH

December 31st

Celebrations

Many regions celebrate the new year with classic traditions, such as wearing red underwear, having a large dinner, and dancing in their local “*piazza*.” However, a few regions do some special things to celebrate.

DATE IN ITALIAN

31 dicembre

In ancient Rome, people gave each other figs and honey during the New Year's Eve celebration. A similar tradition continues in Naples, where figs are gifted wrapped in laurel leaves.

Fireworks are also a staple in Italian New Year's Celebrations, especially over Rome's colosseum.

Special Customs

Wear red underwear—Emperor Augustus considered it lucky and believed it represented passion and love. For the tradition to work, the underwear *must* be a gift!

Throw old things out the window—literally, “out with the old.” These items are often crockery.

Kiss under the mistletoe—if any mistletoe is left over after Christmas, kiss your partner under it! This is thought to drive evil spirits away from the couple, as mistletoe is thought to provide protection.

Special Foods

Eating lentils after midnight symbolizes prosperity, wealth, longevity, and luck. The more lentils you eat, the more prosperous the new year will be for you.

The sausages, when sliced to resemble the shape of coins, symbolize wealth and abundance.

Rice also represents coins and wealth, so risotto is another dish to be served on New Year's Eve.

Grapes represent wisdom, frugal spending, and good luck. It is also a tradition to eat 12 grapes or raisins at the stroke of midnight to bring good luck for the next 12 months. If your partner is with you at midnight, share a pomegranate, as this fruit represents loyalty and fertility.

Recipes

Cotechino e lenticchie

<https://www.cucchiaio.it/ricetta/ricetta-cotechino-lenticchie/>

Pandoro

<https://ricette.giallozafferano.it/Pandoro.html>

Greetings & Vocabulary

Felice Anno Nuovo! Happy New Year!

Personal Connection

My family would eat black-eyed peas and say, “Money, money, money.”

Interesting Facts

The first person you see after midnight may give you a glimpse into the year to come. According to Italian tradition, if the first person you see on the street is an old person or a hunchback, luck is in your future. If you meet a priest, a baby, or a doctor, misfortune could be ahead.

Celebrating New Year’s Eve at Lodges

- Hosting a New Year’s Eve party at our local lodges would be beneficial, where we could sing and dance in our own “piazza.”
- We could make and eat *cotechino e lenticchie*.
- Have a wine tasting.
- Walk around after midnight to see how people are celebrating.
- Have a “heritage hour” where each person finds their family’s town on a map, and we discuss those regional traditions to see what new things we can learn from each other.
- Incorporate some new Italian phrases into our vocabulary.