



You're not just sitting on your bottom all day, are you?

How about getting up and preparing for Easter. Do what the Italians do: prepare a decorated egg or two.

This is one tradition. We've listed a few more you might not know about.



Pasqua in Italia

Pasqua (or "Easter") in Italy is kind of a big deal and, like most countries, it celebrates in its own way--from family to fireworks, here are some things you might not know:

1) **Easter Celebrations Aren't Just Family Affairs.**

Natale con i tuoi, Pasqua con chi vuoi is a popular expression throughout Italy, which translates as "Christmas with your family, Easter with whomever you want." Of course, no Italian would miss Nonna's Easter feast, but Italians use the holiday to reach out to friends.

2) The Traditional Easter Cake is the Colomba.

Colomba is the word for "dove" and also the name of a dove-shaped yeast cake traditionally served at Easter. It's studded with candied orange peel, then topped with almonds and a sprinkling of sugar to form a crisp, nutty crust.



According to one particularly dramatic story, the city of Milan was defending itself against invaders on Easter Day in 1176. Just when the Milanese seemed destined to lose the battle, three doves flew over the city. Soon after, the battle shifted and the invaders were vanquished. After the victory the Milanese celebrated by eating cakes shaped like their savior doves.

3) Easter Eggs--Yes! But not the Easter Bunny.

During Lent, meat and dairy products are not to be eaten, so eggs were hard-boiled so as not to waste food. Painting them to be given as gifts Easter Sunday is likely to have begun there. Originally, the eggs were colored red. The story goes that following the death of Christ on Good Friday, Mary Magdalen traveled to Italy to spread the word of the resurrection. In an audience with Emperor Caesar, an egg she had taken as a gift miraculously turned red, symbolizing the blood of Christ.



Nowadays, hollow chocolate eggs with surprises inside are very popular--large, beautiful, intricately decorated, and



pricey! And speaking of large, the Italians built (and ate!) the world's biggest chocolate egg--15,873 lbs and 64 feet high!

4) Florence's Easter Fireworks

Scoppio de Carro (or "Exploding of the Cart") is an unusual Easter custom in Florence. A huge, decorated wagon filled with fireworks is pulled by white oxen through Florence to the Basilica in the city's historic center. Near the end of the Easter Mass, the Archbishop sends a dove-shaped rocket into the cart to ignite the fireworks. If everything goes as smoothly and spectacularly as planned, it's considered an omen of good luck for the coming year. To see a video of the Exploding Cart, [click here](#).



So now you know just a few of the Easter traditions in Italy. Like here in the USA, many of those traditions will not happen this year. Despite that, let's give thanks for what we have and pray that life returns to normal soon.

Buona Pasqua a tutti voi,
Lilly LaPira and Karen Zimmerman

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