



**It's Italy in a nutshell. Here are some things you may not know and some that you might know about Italy. It's a little of this and a little of that.**



This is our third in the Nutshell series. It's all about superstitions. After all, Italians are VERY superstitious--so much that we had to divide our Superstitions into two messages.



▪ Due to their association with witchcraft, we all know black cats are often seen as bad luck while others see them as a positive omen--bringers of good luck. Both beliefs are held in Italy—seeing a black cat is bad karma, but if it **sneezes**, good fortune is on its way.



*Achoo and bless you!*

- You're going to dinner at an Italian family's home and you've decided to bring a bouquet of flowers--the perfect gift. You buy a beautiful bunch of chrysanthemums. NO! Don't. Chrysanthemums are used on All Souls Day when people visit cemeteries; it represents mourning and death. Bringing them is a BIG mistake. Buy daisies instead.
- In the U.S., people will knock on wood to avoid tempting fate. In Italy, it's common for people to "tocca ferro" or "touch iron." (We hope they aren't touching a hot iron.)
- The blessing or exorcism of a new house in Italy is still practiced, especially when it comes to newlyweds. Moving into a first home requires rituals to rid the place of any spirits left by the previous owners that could harm the new couple or their first child. A new broom is a common first gift to sweep away evil spirits. Salt sprinkled in the corners of the house will purify it.

- The number 17 is considered extremely unlucky in Italy. Hotels and buildings do not have a 17th floor, Alitalia Airlines has no 17th row or seat on the plane, hotels do not have a Room 17; it's much like the number 13 in the U.S The Roman numeral for 17 is XVII; when rearranged, it becomes VIXI, which means "I have lived," (in other words, you're no longer living) a symbol that's associated with death.



- Never put objects in the shape of a cross--for example, your fork and knife--as this is considered to be an insult to the religious symbol of the cross and will bring you bad luck.

*This is a no-no!*

- If you are single lady, beware of brooms. If someone brushes a broom over your feet, you will not marry. And, if you sit in the corner seat of a table, you are also condemned to a single life.



*The broom of doom.*

- Making a toast is pretty simple, right? You pour the wine, clink your glass with another and drink. Not in Italy.
- Never a toast with a glass of water in your hand; it's bad luck.
- Never cross arms when you clink your wine glass.
- Ensure you look your fellow diner in the eye as you do this.
- Not married? You should never finish the wine in a bottle or you will remain single till the end of your days.
- If you spill wine then dab some behind your ears to prevent bad luck and if you spill wine on a new dress or brand new tablecloth then actually you are in for some luck. Go figure...



*Follow the rules!*



- Trying to sell your house? Bury a statue of St. Joseph upside down in your front yard. (People absolutely swear by this one.)

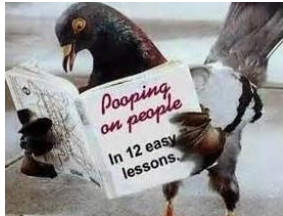
*Make sure his face is toward the house.*

- A bed should never face the door because it replicates the position of a coffin in a church.
- Both mothers of a newlywed couple should prepare the bed together for the wedding night. They will sprinkle coins between the sheets for good luck.
- Spilling olive oil! One of the worst things you can do! Some people say that this will bring a whole lifetime of bad luck to your family, others say it'll only last 7 years. To reverse your luck, dab a small amount of olive oil behind each ear. This superstition dates back to a time when olive oil was seen as a precious, extremely valuable possession.

- Never put a hat on a bed. When the sick were on their deathbeds, a priest would come to receive his/her final confession and give the last rites. The priest would remove his hat and place it on the bed so that he could put on vestments. Thus, a hat's temporary resting place is associated with eternal rest.



*Get it off!*



- If you are walking outside and a pigeon poops on your head, it's a sign of good luck. (Do you **really** want good luck this badly?)

*Getting ready to spread some luck!*

- There should never be 13 people sitting around a table. It is said that Judas, the one who betrayed Jesus, was the 13th man to sit at the table.
- The first foot you place on the ground in the morning should be your right foot. The left is associated with the devil (apologies to any lefties out there reading this). In fact, the word for 'left' in Italian is 'sinistra', which sounds an awful lot like 'sinister'.
- Italians often believe that having a bird in the house brings bad luck. Why? The morning singing of the cockerel is associated to St Peter's betrayal of Christ.

We hope you enjoyed reading about these bad luck traditions. There's more of them coming in Part 2.

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