



**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 Part 2 of Superstitions. The Evil Eye is a big part of Italian culture so we've devoted a whole section just on this curse, how you can recognize it and rid yourself of it.

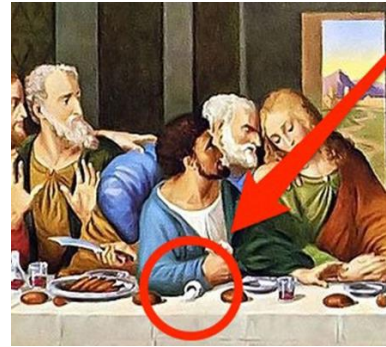


- If an empty hearse crosses your path, a man must grab his testicles or he will be the next to ride in the hearse. If you are female, grab the testicles belonging to any man in the vicinity and make your apologies afterwards.

*Did a hearse go by or was it just an opportunity?*

- When ringing in the New Year, Italians always wear red underwear for good luck and place shiny new coins heads up on the window sill.
- In Italy, eat lentils after the clock strikes 12:00 on New Year's. The more lentils you eat, the richer you will be in the coming new year because lentils resemble coins.

- Spilling salt brings bad luck; everyone knows that. This one actually dates back to the 15th century. Look closely at da Vinci's painting, "The Last Supper," and you'll see a pile of spilled salt near the crook of Judas Iscariot's arm, presumed to have been knocked over by the traitor's elbow. So spilling salt is associated with bad fortune and corruption.



- A loaf of bread must always be placed on a table facing up or else bad luck will come. Bread is considered a symbol of life. It reflects how important bread was in the life of a starving peasant or immigrant family. For them, bread was life and so every precaution was taken in order to keep it on the table. And don't stick a knife in it, either. If you want some, break it off.
- You have to kiss bread before you throw it away. Bread represents Jesus, so you can't just throw it away. You have to kiss it good-bye. You're still throwing it away and why this makes it any better that you're throwing it away is a mystery, but you have to do it. You just do.
- When baking bread, always make the sign of the cross over the dough before baking.
- Pouring wine underhanded (you palm is facing up and the back of your hand toward the table) is bad luck. It means you want the person you are pouring the wine for to choke to death. It goes back to the time of poison rings where it was much easier to pour the poison from your ring into someone's glass when pouring.

- We all know about the Evil Eye in Italy, right? The origin of this belief can be dated back as far as the ancient Greeks and Romans. Immortal Gods could become jealous of human happiness and luck and destroy their life. Avoid making people jealous is how you prevent it. There is a test to see if you have the evil eye: drop olive oil into a glass of water. Holy water is ideal. If the oil sinks, then you're sunk--you have the Evil Eye. But there are several remedies for this.

- Use the complex "mano cornuto" hand gesture (horned hand). Raise your little finger and your index finger, keeping the two center fingers down, point your hand towards the floor. (They make charms in this shape that you can wear on a chain around your neck; see the photo to the right.)

- Wear a small red horn (corni) around your neck or on your keychain to protect yourself from the curse or even impotence.

- Pray a lot.



Here's a video of people giving their interpretation of the evil eye and some examples of the "cure" for it. Get some holy water, olive oil and salt ready and click [here](#).

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Here's how it worked for one woman.

A woman got a great job. Soon after, she began getting terrible headaches that aspirin would not relieve. She suffered with them intermittently for a few weeks. Her old Italian mother knew what the problem was.

"Someone gave you the maloik. (malocchio- evil eye)."

""You're crazy. Who would do that?"

"Who knows? You have that nice job now- someone is jealous and put it on you."

"Nobody is jealous of me."

"I want you to go see the strega (Italian witch) down the street." The witch was capable of removing the malocchio that afflicted Italians.

"I'm not going. Forget about it. The headaches will go away."

Her mother never mentioned the malocchio again to her daughter.

About a week later, the daughter could not find her watch when she was getting ready for work. She asked her mother if she had seen it but she had not. She looked everywhere and thought it must have slipped off to or from work. The stress contributed to her constant headaches.

A few days later she woke up and found her watch on her bureau. She put it on and asked her mother how it got there. Her mother just shrugged and told her she didn't know. When she got home from work she grilled her mother again.

"Are you sure you didn't borrow it and not put it back?"

"Bah! Why do I need a watch? I don't go anywhere! How are your headaches?"

"Funny, I didn't get one today."

Her mother smiled but did not say anything.

"Why are you smiling?"

"I took your watch to the strega since you wouldn't go. She took off the malocchio."

"Mom!" she yelled

"It worked, didn't it?"

How did the strega remove the curse? By inserting the tip of a needle into the eye of another needle while saying: "Occhi e contro e perticelli agli occhi, crepa la invida e schiattano gli occhi." That means "Eyes against eyes and the holes of the eyes, envy cracks and eyes burst." She then dropped the needles on top of three drops of olive oil in water and sprinkled three pinches of salt into the water. She then jabbed scissors into the water through the oil three times and cut the air above the bowl three times and POOF! The spell was FINITO!  
...or the aspirin finally kicked in.

That covers the Superstitions. The next installment will cover people and inventions.

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