



Italian Easter Traditions

Easter Sunday – Pasqua –it’s a big deal in Italy...

...but it doesn't start just on Easter Sunday. Like Christmas, with its month-long celebrations, Easter starts a week before on Palm Sunday. Processions abound and other rites follow.



Holy Week begins the Sunday before, on **Palm Sunday**, the sixth Sunday of Lent--a solemn week focusing on the final days of Jesus' life. You may have seen your parents or grandparents bring home a frond of a palm leaf after church on Palm Sunday. They may have woven that frond into the shape of a cross and hung it for a time in the kitchen or pressed it into a prayer book until Palm Sunday of the following year. So what is so special about Palm Sunday and a palm frond? Here is the story.

Jesus traveled to Jerusalem knowing that this journey would end in his death. He sent two disciples ahead to look for an unbroken donkey. The men returned and placed their cloaks on its back. Jesus sat on the young donkey and made

his entrance into Jerusalem.

The people greeted Jesus, waving palm branches and covering his path with the branches as a symbol that He was worthy to be king. The branches symbolized goodness and victory.

The celebration, however, was bittersweet. The crowd worshiped Jesus as He deserved, yet just one week later, the same people would mercilessly crucify Him.



Good Friday is the day commemorating the death of Jesus Christ. The entire Easter weekend is important as it is the weekend that Jesus Christ both died and was resurrected. It is called Good Friday because Jesus took the punishment for mankind's sins. Therefore, it's good because it's a commemoration of Jesus' death, which is a good thing for all of humanity.

What other things go on for Good Friday? Some of the most well-known are the Good Friday processions – including the “Stations of the Cross” in Rome, led by the pope at the Colosseum.

In Enna, Sicily, thousands of white-hooded friars carry the statues of Jesus and the Virgin Mary; the oldest religious procession is in the Abruzzo town of Chieti, also with thousands of hooded brothers, followed by a choir and an orchestra of 100 violins performing the “Miserere.”



Easter mass at the Vatican!

Going to mass is a must on Easter and afterward the traditional Easter meal is eaten at home. Traditional dishes eaten at Easter include artichokes, roast lamb, and a sweet holiday bread called “Colomba,” which means “dove” in Italian. It’s in the shape of a flying dove and sprinkled with coarse sugar. Other traditional sweets include a special Easter bread adorned with colored eggs and a ricotta pie.



Easter egg bread



Ricotta pie



Colomba



Forget the Easter Bunny and basket and an egg hunt is just not in the cards. He doesn’t exist nor do the baskets. Instead, kids get a chocolate egg with a prize hidden inside. Some of the eggs are large enough to hold a small child and are beautifully decorated on the outside.

If you'd like to see how one of these spectacular eggs are made and decorated, [click here](#)

This one was made in the United Kingdom but is very similar to the ones made in Italy.



Think that's the end of Easter? Nope. Monday is a national holiday, which is known as Pasquetta, or "little Easter."

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 generations who don't have kids – hang out with their friends.

Assuming the weather is nice, Pasquetta is an excellent excuse to pack a picnic and head into the country with your pals. Not everyone gets out of town, though, as some cities organize special events or concerts on Easter Monday.

And that's Easter in Italy. Buona Pasqua!

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