

Easter and Passover Customs + Bunny

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Did You Know? Easter & Passover Customs

"Easter"

The name "Easter" may derive from *Eostre*, a Teutonic goddess of spring or from the Teutonic festival of spring called *Eostur*.

Easter Origins

Easter is a Christian festival that celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the most important holiday in the Christian religion. It is usually celebrated on a Sunday between March 22 and April 25.

Bunny Rabbit

The rabbit delivering Easter eggs started as a legend in Germany. A poor woman dyed eggs during a famine as a Easter gift for her children. She hid them in a nest. When the children discovered the eggs, a big rabbit leaped away, and the story spread that the rabbit delivered the eggs. In Ancient Egypt, the rabbit symbolized birth and new life. Some considered it as a symbol of the moon, and the moon determines the date of Easter.

Cross

The cross represents the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The cross is special to Christians because it represents Christ's victory over death. The cross is an Easter symbol. It is shown on eggs, and on food, too. Hot cross buns have a cross of icing across the crust. Greeks and Portuguese eat a baked round flat bread with a cross mark and decorated with Easter eggs.

Eggs

Eggs represent new life. The exchanging eggs started in ancient times. Ancient Egyptians and Persians often dyed eggs in spring colors and gave them as gifts. Persians believed that the earth hatched from a giant egg. Early Christians of Mesopotamia were the first to use colored eggs for Easter. Red represents joy of resurrection. In England, people would write messages and dates on the eggs they exchanged. Elaborate candy eggs with a window

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in one end, and tiny scenes inside were very popular as gifts in 1800's.

Easter Egg Roll

One of the most popular Easter egg rolls occurs the Monday after Easter on the lawn of the White House in Washington, DC. President Hayes started this tradition in 1878. The only time it wasn't held was during 1942-1953.

Green Eggs Please

In Germany, green eggs are dyed on Green Thursday. People carry them around all day for good luck.

"He Is Risen"

"He is Risen" comes from the Bible account of Easter. Gospels tell us that the body of Jesus disappeared from His tomb on the 3rd day after His crucifixion. An angel appeared to His followers and announced, "He is risen."

Lamb

The lamb is a symbol of Jesus. It is a traditional Easter food. Cookies and cakes are baked in the shape of the lamb. The lamb also comes from the Jewish Passover holiday. The Jews sacrificed a lamb, called a paschal lamb, during their traditional Passover ceremony in the Temple of Jerusalem. Early Christians interpreted this sacrifice as a forecast of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Jesus is spoken about as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Lights

Roman Catholics put out all lights of their churches on Good Friday. On Easter Eve, they make a new fire by lighting the main Easter candle. They relight all candles with this candle.

Passover

Passover is a Jewish festival of freedom. The celebration of the exodus from Egypt, when Israelites became free men. It begins on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Nisan and lasts 8 days. The festival is sometimes called the Feast of Unleavened Bread because Israelites hastily baked unleavened breads called *matzahs* before they left Egypt. Jews celebrate Passover at home at a festival called the *Seder*. The head of the family reads aloud the story of Passover from the Haggadah.

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