

Easter in Italy

Eataly Magazine (March 30, 2018)



In Italy, Pasqua is a celebration second only to Natale. Accompanied by the arrival of spring, this time of year represents rebirth. From Thursday to Monday, Italians revel in the joyful holiday and warmer days with colorful processions, traditional services, and — our favorite — great feasts.

THE FESTIVITIES

[Easter](#) [2] celebrations are foreshadowed by [Carnevale](#) [3], the final hurrah before the restrictions of [Lent](#) [4] begin. While Pasqua is traditionally a religious holiday, it is more recently considered an opportunity to spend time with those you love. As a popular Italian proverb dictates, “Natale con i tuoi e Pasqua con chi vuoi,” or, “Spend Christmas with your family and Easter with whomever you like.”

While many Italians continue to spend Easter with their family, more and more of us are banding



together with our friends. That said, the holiday has roots that run deep and last for an extended weekend, starting with Giovedì Santo (Holy Thursday), moving to Venerdì Santo (Good Friday), when we eat only seafood and no meat, and continuing to Sabato Santo (Holy Saturday).

Each holy day offers its own special masses and somber observances. (Read: if you are in Italy during Easter, do not expect to run errands for at least four days.). Finally, church bells toll at midnight on Domenica di Pasqua, joyously announcing the arrival of Easter Sunday. After weeks of austerity, the time has come to celebrate. Cobblestone streets are overtaken by festive processions through the city center to the central cathedral. The day culminates with il pranzo di Pasqua, an extravagant midday feast.

THE FEAST

While Easter Sunday's menu varies depending on each region's unique traditions, most Pasqua feasts in Italy include a few nationwide classics. Lamb is a must, especially when accompanied by spring vegetables, like wild artichokes, mushrooms, and asparagus (snag our recipe for roasted leg of lamb [here](#) [5]!). Savory cheese breads have spread from central Italy to the rest of the country. Sweets, such as the dove-shaped colomba cake and chocolate eggs, are ubiquitous. In the weeks leading up to Easter, store windows feature intricate displays of the traditional treats, which are enjoyed at the end of the Easter feast.

THE AFTERMATH

Surprise! Pasqua is the holiday that keeps on giving. The Monday following Easter is called [la Pasquetta](#) [6], which translates to "Little Easter." Towns typically celebrate the nonreligious holiday with festivals comprising music; games (you haven't celebrated Easter until you have tried rolling enormous wheels of cheese down village walls in the fewest number of strokes, like they do in Panicale, Umbria); and picnics in the great outdoors with the delicious leftovers from yesterday's feast.

However you choose to celebrate it, la Pasquetta is dedicated to fun, friends, and food.

Source URL: <http://iitaly.org/magazine/dining-in-out/eataly-magazine/article/easter-in-italy>

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- [5] https://www.eataly.com/us_en/magazine/eataly-recipes/roasted-leg-lamb/
- [6] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter_Monday