



## **La Festa di Santa Lucia. Celebrate Saint Lucy with Delicious Meals!**

Eataly Magazine (December 09, 2017)



Santa Lucia, or Saint Lucy, was persecuted for her faith around 300 C.E., making her one of the earliest recorded Christian martyrs. According to the traditional story, the virtuous young woman refused to marry a powerful pagan man, who had fallen in love with her legendary eyes. Spurned, he sent his soldiers to blind her, but miraculously, her eyes were restored. Thus, Santa Lucia is venerated as the patron saint of the blind across the world.

Perhaps not coincidentally, Lucia translates to "light" in Latin. Held around the winter solstice, the shortest and darkest day of the year, Santa Lucia's feast day accordingly often centers around light, offering revelers in the days of yore a reason to gather together, burn candles and torches, and enjoy an abundance of food and drink.

Today, traditional celebrations of Santa Lucia vary according to the region. However, this is still an Italian holiday, so you know that there will be feasting. Families across Italy typically gather together



on December 13 for a delicious meal of caserecce (literally homemade pasta), roasted meats, and light sweets.

In northern Italy, Santa Lucia is said to visit homes on the eve of December 13, riding her donkey, to give presents to good and obedient children (and sometimes even adults!). Families thoughtfully leave out coffee and cake for the saint and water and hay for the donkey to refresh them for their next visit.

In southern Italy, Santa Lucia is honored with more traditional religious parades and feasts. The saint's hometown of Siracusa begin the celebrations the night before by moving her statue from its chapel to the high altar of her candle-lit cathedral. On December 13, a procession of 60 men with green berets will carry Santa Lucia throughout the entire city, making stops at the most important cathedrals and finally the Ionian Sea.

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