

Easter in Italy

begins on Palm Sunday, when Italians attend Mass. There, they receive a blessing from the priest. They then [weave their palm](#) to create [crosses](#) and other works of art that they exchange with friends and family for good luck. The more religious Italians go to church every day between Palm Sunday and Easter. On Good Friday, many cities have parades to remember Christ carrying the cross to his crucifixion. On Easter Eve at midnight, everyone in town turns out for one of the longest Masses of the year to wait for the coming of the Lord. On Easter morning, after the lengthy Mass of the night before, this one is usually short and sweet, so goes the Italian motto for Easter or "Short Mass, Long Table" .. The idea is that after worshipping for an entire week, your reward is a fantastic celebration with food and friends at the table. Italians can observe Pasqua in their own special way. The other saying for this season as translated is "Christmas with your family, Easter with whomever you want." With this philosophy, thousands of Italians go on vacation for Holy Week. Often, they head for the mountains or the newly reopened beaches. For southern tourist spots, like Capri, [Ischia](#), and [Sicily](#), Easter is the start of the high season.

Wherever Italians go, they make food the star of the show. Truly, tables all over Italy - from [Naples](#) to Milan - overflow with hard boiled eggs, antipasto that includes dry sausage, cold cuts and fresh cheese, then pasta, peas, rabbit and of course lamb, which is the centerpiece of the holiday. Popular Easter desserts vary by region but include [the wheat pie pastiera](#), the spaghetti cake, and a dove-shaped cake with icing and almonds.

Usually the meal does not end abruptly. Often, young children recite poems or stories that they learned in school. Although there is no Easter bunny in Italy, they usually receive a gift for their performances. The traditional present is a large chocolate egg wrapped in foil and stuffed with a surprise inside - often a toy or a little knapsack. Couples often give each other one of these eggs. And many artisans will actually design and make a personalized chocolate egg for you - and they'll stuff it with a present that you've chosen for your other half.

Many Italians in the south use natural dyes, such as tea or [onion skins](#), to color their Easter eggs. Red onion skins, which produce maroon or brown eggs, are by far the most popular Easter egg dye. All you have to do is fill a pot with water, the onion skins, and eggs and then boil it all together.. Eggs are a symbol of rebirth and therefore are perfect for the holiday table - and Italians are sure to have it represented at their Easter celebrations.

At the end of your meal, you can grab some of those dyed Easter eggs to play a game. You hold one egg, and your opponent holds the other. Then, you smack your eggs together and see which one cracks first. The one with a cracked egg is out, and the winner goes onto the next person with an egg. You keep up this tournament with the other guests until there is only one egg standing. The keeper of the strongest egg is the winner.

Pasquetta, also known as Easter Monday, is still a holiday in Italy. Those who haven't taken off on vacation, often take a road trip on Pasquetta. If they are already at their destination, then they are probably going to pack up a meal and have a picnic somewhere beautiful and outside. Hikes in the forest or strolls on the beach are popular post-picnic activities. From the fragrant flowers to the scorching sun, nature in Italy at this time of year is God's way of reminding everyone that He resurrected from the dead - and so can His land.