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GREEK EASTER CUSTOMS



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Orthodox Christianity is the
major religion in
Greece: Christmas and Easter
are the most important religious
celebrations for Greek people.

• *Easter is celebrated all over the mainland and on the islands, it is a family celebration as well as being the most significant time in the Greek Orthodox Church. For the church it is a celebration of the death and resurrection of Christ, and also dating from ancient times it marks the changing seasons and the arrival of spring. The date of Easter in Greece is marked by the Grecian calendar and so does not fall at the same time as Easter in other European countries.*

The Holy Week, or Easter week, including Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Easter Monday are all public holidays in Greece. Families get together and people enjoy a holiday air, and there are many wonderful food traditions that Greeks follow around Easter time.

LAZARUS OF BETHANY

Lazarus was a friend and student of Jesus. When he died, his family was disappointed that Jesus didn't arrive fast enough to heal him. When Jesus arrived, he went to his tomb and said "Lazarus come forth" and then he resurrected.

On Saturday before Easter Week, girls decorate small baskets with flowers and go around the neighborhoods to sing the Lazarus song. Each house they visit, treats them with eggs, candy, money or other blessings to fill their baskets.

<https://youtu.be/cw50Ma-S1sE>



Dying Red Eggs

On Holy Thursday, we dye eggs with red paint. The egg symbolizes life and red colour, the blood of Jesus on the Cross.



On Good Friday, there is a sad atmosphere and the church bells ring all day in a mourning tone, and in the evening in every city, town or village a shrine decorated with flowers, representing the tomb of Jesus is carried in the streets followed by lots of people holding candles. <https://youtu.be/vV-kaltCUxE>





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ΑΠΟ ΤΗΝ ΑΝΑΤΟΛΙΚΗ ΑΤΤΙΚΗ

- Late on Saturday night, before midnight all the people go to all the churches, which all seem full to bursting. Then follows a festival of light that is a true delight - at midnight the church goes dark and the bells ring out to proclaim the Resurrection, and people start cheering and letting off fireworks and crackers! The Greeks young and old buy or make their own Easter candles which they take to the church on this night. The priest lights a candle representing of Jesus' eternal flame and everyone lights their candle from this one. People carefully carry their candle home and make a black cross on their house with the flame to bless themselves.



- Afterwards, they return to their homes and the families sit together at the table to have the festive dinner! They always start with cracking the red eggs with each other, which symbolizes the risen Christ's blood. Everyone selects one egg, carefully choosing the one that seems the strongest. Then the egg cracking begins! One cracks their chosen egg on top of another's chosen eggs, saying "Christos Anesti" (meaning "Christ has risen"). The other one responds, "Alithos Anesti" (meaning "Indeed, he did!"). Each time there is a winner and loser. Loser is obviously the one with the cracked egg. The egg cracking keeps on going, until there is only one winner- the chosen one with the un-cracked egg! The one with the strongest egg is said to have good luck for the whole year





Easter Sunday is another day to celebrate. Families gather again before noon to roast the lamb on a spit and then enjoy a long lunch with lots of meat, potatoes, salads and drinks

The roast lamb represents the sacrifice of Jesus and His death on the Cross and that's why he is called "the lamb of God".

Early in the morning, families wake up and start the preparation of the fire ,around the neighborhood, by creating pits and marinating the lamb. At the same time, they listen to traditional music and prepare the appetizers for lunch.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7-vPhRb-j4>



This year Easter is
celebrated on April 16th 2023

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