

OSTERSITTEN UND BRÄUCHE / CUSTOMS and TRADITIONS

Bayerische Ostersitten / Bavarian Easter Customs

In Bavaria, many old customs of heathen origin concerning Easter have been preserved through the ages. Many of them are symbols for the cycle of the seasons and the beginning of new growth. Besides, they try to express the joy after the long time of solemn lent and penance. The German word for Easter is "Ostern" and contains the syllable "Ost," reminding of the goddess Ostara. Thus, many Easter customs praise the constellation rising in the East.

The custom of sending Easter cards to friends and relatives can be traced back in Bavaria to the middle of the 18th century. Later, they exchanged colored Easter eggs. The egg, as well as the Easter bunny, is the well-known symbol of fertility. According to an old Bavarian superstition, the Easter egg also has some magic power, which may change a girl's mind in favor of a certain boy. Three red eggs, no more, no less, presented by the boy can accomplish this feat. "Eier-Doppen" is another entertaining, but somewhat messy custom. Two eggs are pressed together in this contest. The loser is the person whose egg cracks first.

At dawn, bonfires spring up on the surrounding mountains and Easter wheels, huge oak barrels stuffed with straw and set aflame, are sent tumbling down the hills. Midnight finds the young village girls gathered around the many mountain springs. Their waters are supposed to beautify their faces and to remove freckles. Walking barefooted on Easter morning will get you fever, mosquito bites, hip stitches, and snake bites.

March - April

Starkbierzeit (Strong Beer Season in Munich)

Strong lent beer had already been served during this period of carnival since the mid 15th century. Monks brewed lent beer, because they weren't allowed to eat during this period. All these strong beers have the suffix "-ator" in their name, like: "**Delicator**", "**Triumphator**", "**Animator**" and so on. One of the most famous events takes place at the "Nockerberg" where a barrel of "**Salvator**" is tapped and the politicians have to face their critics in a very humorous way - which is called "Derblecken".

