

OSTERSITTEN UND BRÄUCHE / CUSTOMS and TRADITIONS

OSTEREIER/ EASTER EGGS

Easter egg traditions

An egg hunt is a game during which decorated eggs, real hard-boiled ones or artificial ones filled with, or made of chocolate candies, of various sizes, are hidden for children to find, both indoors and outdoors.^[10]

When the hunt is over, prizes may be given for the largest number of eggs collected, or for the largest or the smallest egg.^[10]

Real eggs may further be used in egg tapping contests.

In the North of England, at Eastertime, a traditional game is played where hard boiled *pace eggs* are distributed and each player hits the other player's egg with their own. This is known as "egg tapping", "egg dumping" or "egg jarping". The winner is the holder of the last intact egg. The losers get to eat their eggs. The annual egg jarping world championship is held every year over Easter in Peterlee Cricket Club. It is also practiced in Bulgaria, Hungary, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Lebanon, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Ukraine, and other countries. They call it *tucanje*. In parts of Austria, Bavaria and German-speaking Switzerland it is called *Ostereiertitschen* or *Eierpecken*. In parts of Europe it is also called *epper*, presumably from the German name *Opfer*, meaning "offering" and in Greece it is known as *tsougrisma*. In South Louisiana this practice is called Pocking Eggs^{[11][12]} and is slightly different. The Louisiana Creoles hold that the winner eats the eggs of the losers in each round.

The central European Slavic nations (Czechs and Slovaks etc.) have a tradition of gathering eggs by gaining them from the females in return of whipping them with a pony-tail shaped whip made out of fresh willow branches and splashing them with water, by the Ruthenians called *polivanja*, which is supposed to give them health and beauty.

Egg rolling is also a traditional Easter egg game played with eggs at Easter. In the United Kingdom, Germany, and other countries children traditionally rolled eggs down hillsides at Easter.^[13] This tradition was taken to the New World by European settlers,^{[13][14]} and continues to this day each Easter on the White House lawn.

Different nations have different versions of the game.

Egg dance is a traditional Easter game in which eggs are laid on the ground or floor and the goal is to dance among them without damaging any eggs^[15] which originated in Germany. In the UK the dance is called the hop-egg.

The Pace Egg plays are traditional village plays, with a rebirth theme. The drama takes the form of a combat between the hero and villain, in which the hero is killed and brought to life. The plays take place in England during Easter.

In some Mediterranean countries, especially in Lebanon, chicken eggs are boiled and decorated by dye and/or painting and used as decoration around the house. Then, on Easter Day, young kids would duel with them saying 'Christ is resurrected. Indeed He is', breaking and eating them. This also happens in Greece (where the eggs are painted red). In Easter Sunday friends and family hit each other's egg with their own. The one whose egg does not break is believed to be in for good luck in the future.

In Germany, eggs decorate trees and bushes as Easter egg trees, and in several areas public wells as Osterbrunnen.

Christian traditions

While the origin of Easter eggs can be explained in the symbolic terms described above, a sacred tradition among followers of Eastern Christianity says that Mary Magdalene was bringing cooked eggs to share with the other women at the tomb of Jesus, and the eggs in her basket miraculously turned brilliant red when she saw the risen Christ. The egg represents the boulder of the tomb of Jesus.^[17]

A different, but not necessarily conflicting legend concerns Mary Magdalene's efforts to spread the Gospel. According to this tradition, after the Ascension of Jesus, Mary went to the Emperor of Rome and greeted him with "Christ has risen," whereupon he pointed to an egg on his table and stated, "Christ has no more risen than that egg is red." After making this statement it is said the egg immediately turned blood red.^[18]

Parallels in other faiths

The egg is widely used as a symbol of the start of new life, just as new life emerges from an egg when the chick hatches out [citation needed].

The ancient Zoroastrians painted eggs for Nowruz, their New Year celebration, which falls on the Spring equinox. The Nowruz tradition has existed for at least 2,500 years. The sculptures on the walls of Persepolis show people carrying eggs for Nowruz to the king. [citation needed]

There are good grounds for the association between hares (later termed Easter bunnies) and eggs, through folklore confusion between hares' forms (where they raise their young) and plovers' nests.^[19]

There are also parallels (though no direct connection) between the easter egg tradition and the celebration of Passover in Judaism, notable because in Christian tradition, Christ was celebrating Passover with his disciples on the evening before Good Friday. An egg is one of the components of a traditional Seder plate, a traditional centerpiece of the Passover meal. The tradition of hiding easter eggs for children to find is also similar to another Passover tradition, whereby the head of the household hides a piece of matza (the "afikomen") during the meal. After the meal, the children search the home for the afikomen, and are rewarded once it is found.

