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What is Shrove Tuesday?

What is celebrated on Shrove Tuesday?

Shrove Tuesday occurs the first Tuesday before [Ash Wednesday](#), usually February 2nd or March 9th. It officially ends the season of [Epiphany](#) and is the vigil for the starting of Lent.

Traditionally viewed as a day of repentance, Shrove Tuesday has become the last day for celebration and feasting before the period of fasting required during the Lenten season. The name "Shrove Tuesday" is derived from the word "shrive", which means to confess and receive absolution. The name denotes a period of cleansing, wherein a person brings their lusts and appetites under subjection through abstention and self-sacrifice.

The concept behind this practice is found in 1 Corinthians 9:27, where the Apostle Paul states: "I buffet my body and make it my

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Originally beginning on Sunday, Shrove Tuesday was a three-day celebration that culminated in large feasts on Tuesday night. By the beginning of the 20th century, however, the event was restricted to the Tuesday observance. *Carnival* became associated with Shrove Tuesday, in part from the Spring Equinox celebrations that were practiced by the Romans and the ancient tribes of Europe. The word "carnival" comes from the Latin *carne(m) levare*, meaning "to take away the flesh". However, in the New Orleans and Rio de Janeiro celebrations, public revelry and carousing have become the tradition for Carnival around the world. It was mostly as a result of the Carnival celebrations that the Church restricted the observance to a single day.

Shrove Tuesday Traditions

Shrove Tuesday has a variety of customs that have derived from different regions around Europe and the Americas. As previously mentioned, England began the tradition of serving pancakes, and for this reason the day is known as "Pancake Day". In addition, there are the annual Pancake Day Races, where contestants dress in aprons and scarves and race down a course flipping a pancake in a frying pan or skillet.

In Eastern Europe, the Carnival celebrations include boisterous processions where people in large masks parade around and play jokes on bystanders. The masks are often caricatures of individuals from traditional folklore. Men and women will dress as one another and engage in gendered mimicry. The day is filled with eating, drinking, fortune telling, and practical jokes.

Perhaps the most prominent customs are the balls and pageants in New Orleans and Rio de Janeiro. Like Eastern European

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slave..." Ironically, Shrove Tuesday has evolved into a day of frivolity and indulgence, during which people participate in as much pleasure and self-gratification as they can before Lent begins.

The Origins of Shrove Tuesday

Shrove Tuesday originated during the Middle Ages. As in contemporary times, food items like meats, fats, eggs, milk, and fish were regarded as restricted during Lent. To keep such food from being wasted, many families would have big feasts on Shrove Tuesday in order to consume those items that would inevitably become spoiled during the next forty days. The English tradition of eating pancakes on Shrove Tuesday came about as a way to use as much milk, fats, and eggs as possible before Ash Wednesday began. In France, the consumption of all fats and fatty foods on this day coined the name "Fat Tuesday" or *Mardi Gras*.

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celebrations, participants wear masks and costumes, many of which are quite flamboyant and elaborate. Rio has a parade of multi-colored feathers, which include hundreds of dancers dressed in costumes decked with feathers, all dancing the samba. In New Orleans, Mardi Gras includes a variety of parades featuring grand floats and giant effigies of eccentric characters. There is much eating, drinking, and dancing, as well as practical jokes and humorous street plays.

For many Protestant believers, Shrove Tuesday holds no particular significance. For Catholics and Anglicans, however, the day is still observed with confession and absolution, in addition to modest feasting and rejoicing.



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