

## International Women's Day

International Women's Day - **Festa Della Donna** - is celebrated on March 8 all over the world.

### How did International Women's Day originate?

Originally first celebrated in 1922, however it was not until the end of WWII that this holiday became important in Italy. IWD celebrated Womanhood across the country of Italy as Women were finally able to vote and pursue a political career. It was a critical period. Women began advocating for their rights including suffrage, better working conditions, and gender equality. The first observance of this day was marked by rallies, demonstrations and events across the country where Women were finally allowed a platform to speak for themselves.

In the United States, it was first celebrated on February 28, 1909. The day commemorates a strike that took place in the garment district in 1908 in New York. Women had protested about the poor working conditions. These women were primarily Jewish and Italian. The strike lasted for several weeks and was highly publicized. This led to improved working conditions and better pay.

Not too long after, Denmark and other countries also proposed the idea of IWD as to advocate for Women's Rights. This is not a religious holiday, rather, a national holiday for reflecting on the many contributions women have provided to society.

It has become a major day of recognition. It is celebrated with:

- Marches - Remembering accomplishments and those who came before by marching together
- Speaking engagements - organizations bringing in various leaders to inspire audiences
- Social media campaigns - blasted all over social media
- Workplace initiatives - recognizing women in the workplace.
- Recognizing gender equality
- Community outreach
- Social media campaigns creating awareness
- Parties and dances - Local establishments bringing in entertainment for dance parties
- Group dinners
- Special gatherings to support Women owned businesses

In Italy a special custom used in celebrating this day is the giving of the Mimosa Flowers. The giving of these flowers represents solidarity and resistance. Originally given by political activists, Teresa Matei and Rita Montagnana back in 1946.

While there are no special meals offered to celebrate this day, Prosecco and potluck dinners are usually the drink and food choices. This holiday has been celebrated all over Europe and in other countries for quite some time. Only in the past few years has it been recognized in United States.

Special greetings and vocabulary heard on this day include:

“Buona Festa della Donna”

“Felice 8 Marzo”

“Auguri a tutte le Donne”

“Ricordiamoci sempre di celebrare le donne”

“In questo giorno speciale, auguro le donne di realizzare i propri sogni di raggiungere ogni obiettivo”

It has only been in the past few years that the women in our family began to celebrate this holiday. We have organized a group family dinner right on the date of March 8.

**Ideas for Lodge activities:**

- Panel discussions or workshops - secure speakers to cover topics for Women’s rights, gender equality and women in leadership
- Community Service Project - organize volunteer activities that benefit women in the community like fundraising for a Women’s shelter
- Watch movies about strong Italian women who are role models, for example the Cabrini Movie.
- Read books about strong Italian women.
- Discuss the role of the Italian immigrant woman in America. What did some of our mothers, grandmothers or great grandmothers do that proved the strength, resiliency, and intelligence of women. Write down some of their stories.