

## Father's Day

Father's Day - **La Festa del Papà** - is celebrated typically on the 3rd Sunday in June in the United States

In Italy Father's Day coincides with **la Festa Di San Giuseppe** and is celebrated on March 19. The day was officially recognized in Italy in 1977, but its history dates back much further.

How did St. Joseph's Day become Father's Day in Italy? Celebrated with the Catholic tradition of St. Joseph who is the Patron Saint of Fathers, workers, and families. It's a day to honor fathers, express appreciation for their love and support and celebrate the role of fathers in families and society. In Italian culture, "**papà**" and "**babbo**" refer to fathers who hold a special place in their children's hearts. On Father's Day children express the love, respect, and admiration for their fathers, something that is deeply ingrained in Italian society.

There are no specific individuals associated with the holiday in the same way as they are with other aspects of Italian Culture, their influences as father figures contribute to the broader cultural significance of the observance.

Pope Francis - Leader of the Catholic Church, often emphasizes the importance of family and fatherhood in his teachings.

It is not a religious holiday, but it does have religious roots in that it is closely linked to the Feast of St. Joseph in Italy.

In Italy it is celebrated with:

- family gatherings
- outdoor activities and sports such as playing soccer together, riding bikes, or enjoying other activities outdoors
- gift giving (usually small tokens of appreciation, such as a book, a new watch, or a bottle of his favorite wine)
- meals together, enjoyed either at home or at their father's favorite restaurant
- they time spent together to strengthen family bonds and show love and appreciation for one another.
- Children write poetry to their fathers and create homemade cards to present to them. I remember that when I was a child, the custom was to put the card under his dinner plate and expectantly wait for him to discover the "surprise" card. My dad always reacted with utmost surprise, joy, and thankfulness to express his appreciation.

Traditions can differ from region to region. In Sicily, for example, it's traditional to give gifts of small oranges or lemons, which are believed to bring good luck. In Tuscany, fathers are given gifts of handmade wallets or belts. In Sardinia, they are given a type of bread made with semolina and saffron.

The most well-known food associated with St. Joseph's Day: **Zeppole di San Giuseppe**, a sweet pastry made from flour, eggs, and sugar, filled with custard cream, and topped with a cherry. They are also called **Bignè di San Giuseppe**. There are many recipes available for this St. Joseph's Day typical pastry.

Families traditionally share cakes and sweets in honor of the holiday. How does the custom of eating sweets connect with St. Joseph's Day and Father's Day? There are two stories behind these traditions. The first comes from the story of Joseph selling pancakes to support his family after they fled to Egypt, so eating and sharing sweets on March 19 came to symbolize Joseph's paternal commitment to his family. The second story is based on Saint Joseph's role as the patron saint of carpenters. Before Father's Day became a national holiday, Italians celebrated Saint Joseph on March 19 by exchanging wooden toys and trinkets. When *Festa di San Giuseppe* became synonymous with **Festa del Papà**, the practices of eating sweets and giving gifts merged, turning March 19 into a celebration of both Saint Joseph and fathers.

Special greetings and vocabulary heard on this day are:

- **"Buona Festa Del Papà"**
- **"Auguri Papà"**
- **"Caro babbo. Grazie mille."**
- **"Grazie per tutto quello che fai, Papà"**
- **"Sei il migliore Papà del mondo"**

In my family we celebrated and continue to celebrate this holiday. We honor the fathers in our family who have gone before us and pay tribute to their contributions to our family. Our special tradition is to make **Pasta alla Chitarra** to honor our grandfather.

Ideas for lodge activities:

- Activity for children - making greeting cards for their father or father figure in their family
- Gifting fathers a small token of appreciation (for example, oranges or lemons as they do in Sicily)
- Learning Father's Day vocabulary in Italian
- Serving **Bignè di San Giuseppe** at a meeting
- Zeppole baking class
- Play the Andrea Bocelli song: **"A mio padre"** ("My Father")
- Learn the **"Padre Nostro"** ("Our Father") in Italian