

## Italian Holiday – April Fools Day

### Pesce d'Aprile

April Fools Day or **Pesce d'Aprile** in Italian is celebrated on April 1<sup>st</sup>, **il primo d'aprile**.

#### A brief history of the holiday:

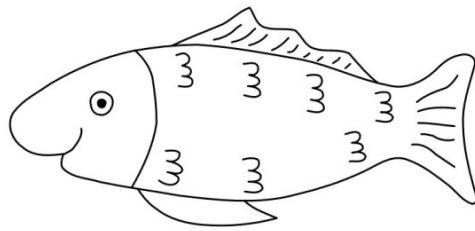
Il **pesce d'aprile**, literally means “April’s Fish”. Like April Fools’ Day, it is a day during which Italians have the custom of playing practical jokes on friends and relatives.

The exact origin of the **pesce d'aprile** tradition is unknown, although several theories exist. It is supposed to have its origins in the sixteenth century, but it only really became popular in Italy around 1860-1880. It is believed that it originated in Genoa and was particularly popular among the upper classes. The name **pesce d'aprile** is linked in Italy to the zodiac because every event on that day was connected to the Sun’s exclusion from the Pisces constellation. From there comes the custom of celebrating the event in an unusual way, on April 1st.

Although this holiday is not exclusively Italian, it is celebrated all over Italy with the playing of harmless pranks on friends and family. Italians do this in a very colorful way and the longer it takes for a friend or family member to figure it out, the funnier the joke.

#### Special customs connected with this holiday:

The most common prank involved in **Pesce d'Aprile** is to affix a paper drawing or cutout of a fish onto the back of an unsuspecting victim. Then, everyone else asks if anyone has seen “April’s fish” – when, of course, the victim doesn’t know he or she is the one they’re talking about. Although this may be a bit old-fashioned today, taping a fish onto someone’s back is still something Italian children do.



Along with pinning a fish on someone’s back, some pranks are more elaborate and far-reaching, designed to fool larger segments of the population into believing something. It’s always supposed to be done in the spirit of fun, not to harm anyone. There are many stories of historic **Pesce d'aprile** hoaxes in Italy that drew in large crowds of gullible “fools”.

#### Special phrases/vocabulary:

The phrase of the day is “**pesce d'aprile**”, “you’ve been fooled”.

#### Ideas for incorporating this holiday in lodge activities:

- Have children make a creative “pesce d'aprile” out of construction paper or felt fabric. Give prizes for creative ones.
- Have children try to trick others by putting the pesce d'aprile on their backs and everyone playing along and saying “pesce d'aprile”, “you’ve been fooled”.
- Play a “pesce d'aprile” joke on the members at a meeting (in fun, of course). Then yelling out “pesce d'aprile”.