

LA PASSEGGIATA

A special holiday newsletter brought to you by the Italian Club Board



LA PAROLA

Typically, Italians like to say *buone feste*, which means "happy holidays" as opposed to a simple "merry christmas," or *buon natale*.

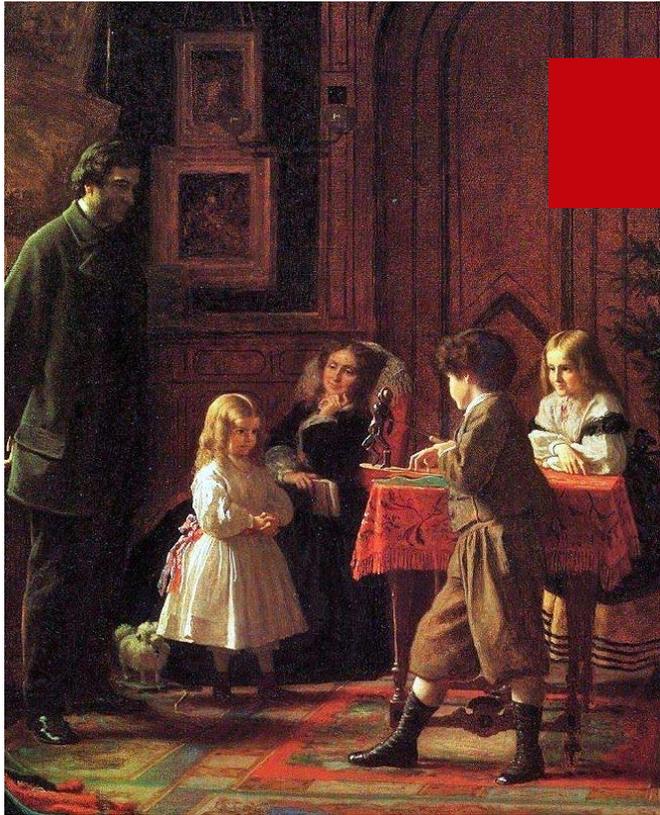
OCCOPATO

Much like the US, the December holiday season is a busy time of year for Italians of all religious backgrounds, packed with several national holidays and traditions.



I SOLDI

Italians still spend considerably more money around the holidays, much like other nations. Reports in 2019 showed that Italians were expected to spend an average of 549 Euros per person during the holiday season.



LE FESTE

Given its history, it is no surprise that the culture of Italy today is influenced heavily by its Catholic past, and this is most evidently seen during the holiday season.

Many traditional Catholic celebrations that are not observed in other countries, where Christmas has a more secular, commercial presence, are observed in Italy.

LA SIGNIFICA

Though a commercial culture still surrounds it, Christmas has less import and obsession with the commercial than in other Western countries like the US or the UK. Instead, focus is placed around loved ones and quality time spent with them.



LA RELIGIONE

Christmas also retains its religious roots to Italians. Even Italians who are secular or non-religious remember and recognize Christmas as a religious holiday, seen on days like the Immaculate Conception.



L'IMMACOLATA CONCEZIONE

Italians celebrate the Immaculate Conception on December 8th, a traditional Catholic celebration that recognizes the birth of Mary (*la Madonna*). A national public holiday in Italy, and celebrating Italians go to mass, have a feast, or simply begin decorating for the Christmas season.

December 8th thus marks the "true", traditional start of the Christmas season in Italy, but it is not the only celebration leading up to the day.

LA NOVENA

Other celebrations lead up to the big day, including *la Novena*, or the period when the shepherds travelled to see Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. In Italy, theaters and street performers reenact these stories.



L'AVVENTO

In addition, the Advent has a strong presence, especially among religious Italians, as churches all around Italy have special services in the Sundays leading up to Christmas.



I PRESEPI

Much like the United States, decorations abound across Italy during the holiday season. However the Nativity scene is more popular in Italy than in the US. Many churches and even homes display nativity scenes throughout the holiday season.

Each nativity scene (*presepi*) is unique, from small figurines, to life sized recreations. Naples is especially famed for its *presepi*, which notably include real life people and figurines.

I MERCATI

Christmas markets are propped up quickly around the big cities and towns of Italy, inspired by the tradition of German *christkindlmarkt*. Italians and tourists go here to buy jewelry and other gifts, as well as *vin brulé*, or mulled wine.



LUCI D'ARTISTA

Light decorations are equally as popular in Italy as in the United States, with many homes and churches and streets adorned with lights. Salerno, a town south of Naples, holds a particularly famous festival of lights.



HANUKKAH

Italy has one of the oldest Jewish populations in Europe. Fleeing persecution and violence, the first Jewish people arrived in what we now know as Italy around 160 BCE. While Italy is predominantly and culturally Catholic, around 45,000 Jewish people live in Italy today. The first ghetto ever created was the one made for the Jews in Venice, and is the setting for one of Shakespeare's well known plays, *The Merchant of Venice*.

LE CELEBRAZIONI

In Venice, following the lighting of the menorah in the Cannaregio, one of Italy's oldest Jewish communities, there is music and dancing around the neighborhood. In Milan, similar to Rome, a large menorah is placed in the middle of Piazza San Carlo and lit during Hanukkah.



LA CITTADINA DI HANUKKAH

A small town in the Piemonte region of Italy used to be the home of 850 Jewish people. Now, it is only home to two Jewish families, but it still houses one of the most beautiful synagogues in the world, where in the basement a matzah basement once stood, and today holds a menorah museum!



FRITTELLE DI MELE

Fried apples, or *frittelle di mele*, are a delicious part of the Hanukkah tradition in Italy. Made with tart apples (usually Granny Smith), white wine, sparkling water, cognac or brandy, and sugar, these are the perfect treats during the holidays or any other time of the year when you are craving something sweet and tart!

First, measure the flour and mix in the wine, water, and egg yolk, as well as a pinch of salt. Rest for 1 hour.

PARTE I

While the flour mixture is resting, peel and core the apples, then cut into rings and sprinkle them with sugar and brandy. Let rest and return to the batter, whipping the leftover egg white, then fold it into the batter.

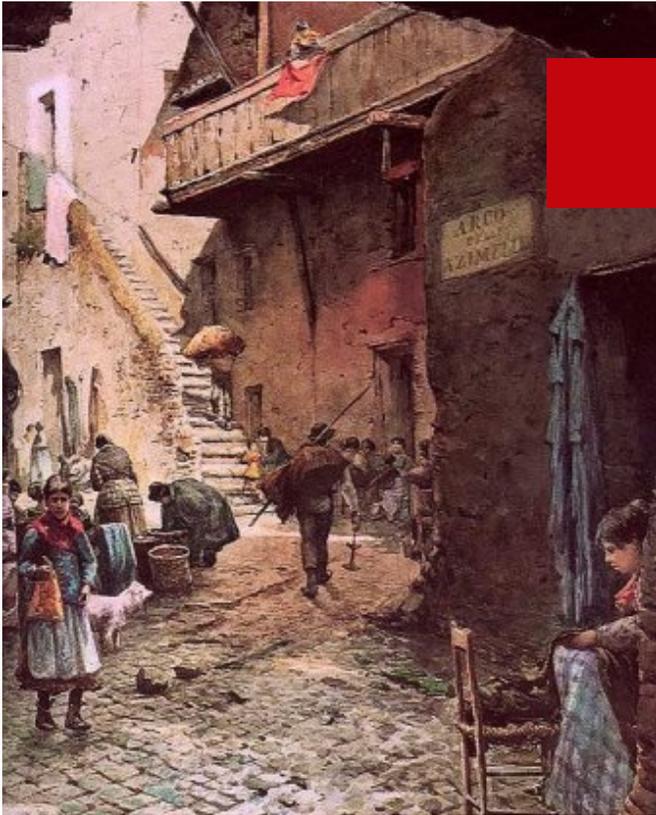


PARTE II

Heat oil in a pan. Dip the apple slices into the batter and coat evenly, then place the apple in the oil and fry two to three minutes each side until they're golden on both sides. Place them in the oven (300 degrees F) and let them continue to gently cook. Once finished, dust with powdered sugar and serve!

ROME AND HANUKKAH

Today, 15,000 Jewish people live in Rome. Even though Jews had been in Rome longer than Christians, by the 16th Century they were forced into a ghetto by Pope Paul IV. The walls of the ghetto were only demolished in the 19th Century when the Kingdom of Italy abolished the requirement for Jews to live in the ghetto.



PIAZZA BARBERINI

Piazza Barberini, known by its *Fontana di Triton* (pictured on the right), is also home to a twenty-foot tall menorah that is brought out during Hanukkah each year. The celebration includes food, dancing, and wine.



OTHER FOOD TRADITIONS

Along with *frittelle di mele*, *frittelle di riso* is another traditional Italian-Jewish dish that is made with rice and flour; they're essentially deep-fried rice pudding balls!

