



WHAT IS PANCAKE DAY?

Pancake Day is a special day celebrated in many countries around the world. It is celebrated in English-speaking countries like the UK, Ireland, Australia and Canada. In France, the USA and other countries, it is called 'Mardi Gras' or 'Fat Tuesday'. It is also traditionally the day for eating pancakes.

Pancake Day is also known as Shrove Tuesday or Pancake Tuesday. All three are the same. Pancake Day is always on a Tuesday in February or March. It is the day before Ash Wednesday, the start of Lent. Lent is a period of 40 days before Easter when people often give up or stop eating rich foods like butter, milk and eggs, so to use them up they make pancakes from these ingredients on Shrove Tuesday.

A pancake is a thin, flat cake, made of batter and fried in a frying pan. A traditional English pancake is very thin and is served immediately. Golden syrup or lemon juice and caster sugar are the usual toppings for pancakes.

Pancake Racing

Another tradition on Pancake Day in the UK is pancake racing. Generally, it is a relay race between teams, with each team equipped with a frying pan with a pancake in it. In some pancake races people dress up in fancy dress costumes.



The most famous pancake race takes place in a town called Olney, in Buckinghamshire in the middle of England. People say that Olney has been celebrating pancake races since 1445! According to tradition, in 1445 a woman of Olney heard the shroving bell while she was making pancakes and ran to the church in her apron, still clutching her frying pan. Nowadays competitors have to be local housewives and they must wear an apron and a hat or scarf. Each contestant has a frying pan containing a hot pancake. She must toss it three

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times during the race. The first woman to complete the course and arrive at the church, serve her pancake to the bellringer and be kissed by him, is the winner. At Westminster School in London, the annual Pancake Grease is held. A verger from Westminster Abbey leads a procession of boys into the playground where the school cook tosses a huge pancake over a five-metre high bar. The boys then race to grab a portion of the pancake and the one who ends up with the largest piece receives a cash bonus from the Dean



Pancake Customs in the UK and Ireland

In Ireland, Irish girls were given an afternoon off to make their batter, and the eldest, unmarried girl would toss the first pancake. Success meant she would marry within the year.

In Scotland, special oatcakes called Bannocks were made using oatmeal, eggs and salt and griddle cooked with a charm added to the dough. On eating, if an unmarried person found it, it was believed they would marry within the year.

Wales also had their own customs where people would pass from door to door begging for flour, lard or butter.

