

Culture – connectedness in diversity

Part two: Spring term festivals in Finland



In Omnibus
Omnia Est



1st theme: Culture

2016-2017

Spring term festivals in Finland

On New Year's Eve everybody says farewell to the last year and welcomes the new year with beautiful fireworks. When the spring term starts, it will bring some festivals that bring joy and happiness to people's everyday life. Most of the festival days have some special pastries which are delicious.



February

In February we celebrate **Valentine's Day** on the 14th of February as in many other countries. However Finnish have created their own unique way to celebrate it. The day is called *Ystävänpäivä* in Finnish meaning Friend's Day. Finnish have decided to include all friends to this day: friends, classmates, colleagues and of course the sweethearts, too. Friends give each other cards, flowers, gifts or chocolate.



Shrove Sunday - Laskiainen

Shrove Sunday is celebrated in February seven weeks before Easter on a Tuesday. Especially children love this day because then it's time to go sledge riding, eat pea soup and buns filled with aim or almond paste. Yummy.



April

Easter

"Easter is usually in April. Then Jesus was resurrected. At Easter we eat Easter eggs. At Easter it is free from school. We grow grass called rai."

Anette 12 years old



Easter is a festival and holiday celebrating the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Finnish Easter traditions mix religious references with customs related to the long-awaited arrival of spring. Good Friday and the Monday following the Easter Sunday, called Second Easter Day, are both public holidays. Compared to Christmas, Easter is not as enthusiastically celebrated among the Lutheran Finns. Only 1 % of the population in Finland are members of the Orthodox Church but the influence of Orthodox Easter on Finnish ones are significant. Whereas the Orthodox emphasize the joyful message of Easter, the resurrection of Christ, the Lutherans, on the other hand, have a more pious attitude toward it, emphasizing the suffering of Christ.

Instead of the true message of Easter, the growing commercialism around the feast is making Easter more popular. Stores are filled with colorful Easter-kitsch including bunnies, chicks and chocolate creamy-colored pudding made of sweetened homemade cheese, eggs, cream and seasonings left overnight to solidify. It's eaten more in eastern Finland where the influence of Orthodox Christianity is more prevalent.

At Easter many Finns like to spend their Easter holiday doing sports outside. The days are usually long and sunny and especially in northern and eastern Finland there is still snow, it's lovely to go skiing.



May

Vappu - the First of May

Springtime's biggest party is definitely Vappu or Walpurgis' night. Everywhere in the country young and old people come together on the eve of May Day in this carnival-style street festivity. Students and former students parade through town city wearing their secondary-school graduation white hats and enjoying the beginning of the summer. Every year on the 30th of April university students place a graduation hat upon the head of Havis Amanda, a landmark statue in Finnish capital Helsinki. This tradition has spread to other university cities in Finland. For the children there are balloons, confetti and masquerade parties and for the older ones champagne and strawberries.

Traditionally May Day has a political context and Worker's Day is celebrated May first when public speeches can be heard in public squares. If it is a beautiful day on the first of May, people love to go to picnic in parks. The traditional dessert of Vappu is *tippaleipä* which is a type of funnel cake, and *munkki*, a type of doughnut but the best of all is drink called *sima*.





Mother's Day

Mother's Day is celebrated on the second Sunday of May. It's been a formal holiday since 1947. Before the day comes, the kids start making cards or some other presents for their mothers at school. And when that day comes, usually the rest of the family wakes up early to make a big breakfast to the mother and they usually wake her up with the breakfast, cards and flowers.

"I make breakfast for my mom. I give gifts. I go out with our dog on behalf of my mother. I wash dishes and then I visit my grandmother."

Joonas 12 years old

"On Mother's day we wake our mom and we make her breakfast and we bring it to her bed. Then we give her cards and gifts that we made for her."

Viveka 12 years old

June

Midsummer - Juhannus

If you want to visit Finland, midsummer is not the best time to do it because Finland shuts down on Midsummer. Most Finns spend their Midsummer at their summer cottages by a bonfire eating sausages, going to sauna and swimming in a lake or in the sea. The midsummer celebrates the year's longest day when the sun doesn't set at all in most parts of the country. Juhannus is celebrated on the Saturday falling between June 20th and 26th. The night between Midsummer Eve and Day is the only night when the Finnish flag waves in the pole the whole night.

