

<p>Easter/ Pascha</p> <p>A Germanic goddess called Eostre was honoured in April. She was a dawn goddess, bringing light after the dark winter. Hares and eggs are associated with her. The word 'Easter' comes from Eostre.</p> <p>Easter was also called 'Pascha' in Britain and Europe, a Greek version of the Hebrew word 'Pesach' meaning Passover. Jesus and his followers celebrated the Jewish festival of Passover the night before he died.</p> <p>The word 'pascha' is still found in Easter symbols such as the 'paschal candle' and 'paschal lamb'.</p>	<p>Decorated Eggs</p> <p>Eggs are an ancient symbol of rebirth all over the world. In ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian (present day Iraq), Persian (present day Iran) and Cretan culture eggs symbolised death and rebirth. In Jewish culture baked eggs symbolise sacrifice at Passover.</p> <p>The first connection between eggs and Jesus' resurrection was in the early Christian community of Mesopotamia. Eggs were stained red to symbolise Jesus' sacrifice and rebirth.</p> <p>Many Christian cultures decorate eggs at Easter to symbolise Jesus' rebirth. Chocolate or sugar eggs are a continuation of this symbolism.</p>	<p>Easter bunny</p> <p>The Easter bunny was originally a hare or a rabbit. Both species are associated with fertility as they produce large litters in spring.</p> <p>Ancient cultures celebrated fertility and new life in Spring, referring to the baby animals born at this time of year, as well as new crops.</p> <p>Easter bunnies reflect this pre-Christian celebration of new life and fertility at Spring time.</p>
<p>Paschal candle</p> <p>In Western churches (such as Anglican and Roman Catholic) and Eastern churches the Paschal candle is lit over the Easter period. It is a large white candle, often decorated.</p> <p>At times over the Easter period the candle is lit to symbolize the light and life brought by Jesus. At other times it is extinguished to symbolize Jesus' death, such as on Good Friday.</p> <p>The word 'pashcal' is from the Jewish Spring festival of Passover ('Pesach' in Hebrew). Jesus, a Jew, died during this period.</p>	<p>Hot Cross bun</p> <p>Traditionally these buns were made without dairy products, which are not eaten during Lent. This is a period of fasting or denial of luxuries, in identification with the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness. Lent starts on Ash Wednesday (after Shrove Tuesday, or Pancake Day) and ends on Good Friday.</p> <p>The cross on the bun represents Jesus' death on the cross. The spices cooked in the bun represent the scented oils used to anoint Jesus' body.</p>	<p>Chocolate Eggs</p> <p>Eggs are a pre-Christian symbol of Spring. Christians in Europe used this tradition to symbolise Jesus' new life at Easter.</p> <p>Easter eggs were originally real eggs painted or stained in bright colours and given as gifts.</p> <p>In pre-Christian African, Egyptian and Mesopotamian (Iraqi) cultures decorated eggs were given as gifts and symbolised new life or rebirth.</p> <p>The first chocolate Easter Egg was produced in England in the 1800s, and became increasingly popular.</p>