

The Story of the Easter Bunny & Easter Eggs



*Here comes Peter Cottontail...
Hopping down the bunny trail...
Hippity... hoppity... Peter's on his way !*

The Easter Bunny is a delightful, magical part of childhood, almost as wonderful to little ones as Santa Claus.

But the tradition of an Easter “bunny” - or more accurately a hare - bringing colorful, decorated eggs to children on Easter Sunday originated hundreds of years ago in Europe.

In fact, the Easter Hare was first described more than 340 years ago in a manuscript called “About Easter Eggs” which was published in Germany in 1682.

Why a Rabbit?

Rabbits have been associated with spring and fertility since humans first saw their frisky antics during mating season and noted their prolific breeding ability. It was originally believed that rabbits could reproduce without mating, which isn't surprising considering some pregnant female hares can get pregnant again before giving birth to their first litter. Those are very busy bunny Moms!

The Goddess of Spring



In northeastern Europe in the days before Christianity, the Teutonic tribes there would hold feasts at the time of the Spring Equinox to honor “Eostre”, their goddess of spring and fertility... who was often symbolized by a rabbit!

In the same way as the early Christian church merged pagan Winter Solstice gatherings with its celebration of Christmas, the tradition of a gathering and feast to honor Eostre was adopted to become Easter.

Here's a neat twist...

The myth that bunnies could have babies without mating, that females could give birth yet still be virgins, led the early Christian church to associate rabbits with the Virgin Mary.

It's why you find bunnies in medieval religious paintings!



Why is it Easter “Eggs”?

From ancient times, eggs were magical because they produced new life!



The egg’s special status in pagan mythology led the early Christian church to order the faithful to abstain from eating eggs during the fasting period of Lent leading up to Easter.

But eggs were valuable, nutritious food... and chickens didn’t stop laying eggs just because it was Lent! To keep those “Easter” eggs from spoiling, they were usually hard-boiled.

On Easter Sunday morning - with the fasting for Lent finally over - those eggs were a delicious treat.

As they waited for Easter to arrive, people began to decorate those special eggs. Eventually, the church relaxed its rules and allowed the faithful to eat eggs again during Lent. But the delightful tradition of decorating colorful “Easter” eggs was born... and it continues today!

Our Easter Bunny

The idea of a hare that brought colorful eggs to children at Easter was carried across the Atlantic to North America by German families who settled alongside the Dutch in Pennsylvania.

They called their magical rabbit “Osterhase” or “Oschter Haws” - the Easter Hare!



Just like Santa Claus, only “good” children would find Easter eggs in the nests they made in their caps and bonnets the night before Easter. Eventually, the caps and bonnets were exchanged for decorated baskets and the colorful hard-boiled eggs were replaced by candy, treats and other Easter gifts.



Easter Fun Facts!

- Easter is the 2nd biggest day for candy sales, Halloween is #1.
- 3 out of 4 people eat the ears on a chocolate bunny first.
- Not everyone in the world has an Easter Bunny!

In some countries it’s the **Easter Fox**, and in Austria and Switzerland it’s the **Easter Cuckoo Bird** that delivers the Easter eggs and candy!