

CELEBRATING CARNIVAL



Carnival is a wild, happy and dazzling time. It is the last celebration that occurs before the solemnity and seriousness of Lent and the Easter period. People really let their hair down and celebrate with gay abandon. Dressing up in elaborate and lavish costumes and wearing interesting masks that conceal identities are common occurrences. The air is filled with laughter, fireworks, loud music and food smells. The streets show outrageous parades, stilt walkers, confetti, miming and clowns.

The name Carnival comes from the Latin word (which means) no meat. Carnival becomes the last party before the Lenten fast. True fasting means that the people will not eat meat or dairy products during the fasting period. Traditionally Carnival was seen as the last chance to indulge in rich foods. Over time the party mood has prevailed and Carnival seems anything but a religious observance. However, Carnival is a carry over from several Pagan feasts that have been adapted to suit the Christian calendar.

Carnival is many different names. Activities and entertainment vary and differ around the world Carnival may be called Carnevale, Fastnacht, Mardi Gras, Karnewal, Carnaval and even Carnival. There are many characters Kings and Queens, Columbines, Harlequins, Pierrots, Jesters and Fools, Pantaloons, Gregoires and Punchinellos. Many recognisable political and society characters are portrayed. The identities of the participants are usually concealed with masks and disguise. Interesting behaviour is often displayed but does not have to be explained at Carnival time.

Special foods are prepared for the occasion. Lucky trinkets and charms may be hidden in cakes, especially placed there for the eaters to find. Pretzels and doughnuts are popular Carnival foods. Doughnut eating competitions take place all around the world. Heart-shaped pretzels adorn many homes. Street stalls are set up with a variety of foods to cater for the hungry crowds.

Folk tales, puppet shows, sideshows, games, fireworks, competitions for best costumes and masks, music bands, singing and dancing entertain the participants. Street parades draw huge crowds who come to watch and join in the extravaganza

Wherever Carnival is celebrated, it becomes a spectacular and memorable highlight of the year

Carnival began as a European religious festival but with the spread of Catholicism to South America and the Islands located close to Asia, the festival has changed from what was a religious festival to an irreverent one. African influences have become noticeable with the introduction of drumming music styles, colourful feathers and fire-stick dancing. The Americas have introduced spectacular displays, parades and elaborately designed costumes.

Activities could include:

- Mask making
- Face painting
- Multi-coloured wigs
- Crazy hats
- Dress-ups (in bright colours)
- Puppetry (make Arlecchino/Punchinello)
- Puppet shows
- Fireworks (use fluoro paints and glitter on block card)
- Make Lucky Charms and Trinkets
- Treasure Hunts
- Paper Mache faces (Character Sun, Moon, Happy and Sad)
- Party treats (Confetti and Party poppers)
- Carnival parade
- Dance and move to Multicultural Music
- Cook Frittoles, Chicken dishes and Pancakes
- Enjoy Hot Chocolate and Iced Pineapple Crush (drinks)
- Eat fresh Fruit salad, Coconut and Toffee apples
- Try Stilt Walking
- Hold a Doughnut Eating contest
- Buy and try Pretzels
- Play Games (street style)
- Create Carnival Banners and Flags
- Wear Coloured Feathers (boas, headdresses and wings)
- Bake a King/Queen Carnival Cake and decorate it
- Choreograph an extravaganza
- Noisemakers (whistles, drums, cymbals, bells, hooters, ratchets, triangles, guiros, castanets, maracas and interesting sounding shakers)
- Coloured streamers and ribbons/decorations
- HAVE FUN!

