

# Cultural Celebrations: *March*



## What's on in *March*?

March is a vibrant month filled with cultural, spiritual, and social celebrations. From Irish Heritage Month, honoring the contributions of Irish Canadians, to Ramadan, a sacred time of fasting and reflection for Muslims, this month brings opportunities to learn and connect.

Holi, the joyful Hindu festival of colors, and Nowruz, the Persian New Year, mark the arrival of spring with renewal and festivity. St. Patrick's Day and International Women's Day encourage us to celebrate heritage and advocate for equality. As we embrace March, let's take time to appreciate the diverse traditions that bring our communities together.

### Heritage Month:

Irish Heritage month

### International Days:

- **March 8th:** International Women's Day

### Cultural & Religious Celebrations

- **March 1st - 30th:** Ramadan March 1st- 30
- **March 14th:** Holi – Hindu festival of colors
- **March 17th:** St. Patrick's Day - March 17
- **March 20th - 21st:** Nowruz (Persian New Year)

## Irish *Heritage Month*

Irish Heritage Month recognizes the contributions of Irish Canadians to the country's culture, history, and society. The Irish have played a significant role in shaping Canada, from early immigration to modern-day influences in politics, arts, and business. Celebrations from this month typically include events showcasing Irish music, dance, and literature, community gatherings and storytelling, displays of Irish symbols like the shamrock and the harp.

### Did you know?

Over 4.6 million Canadians claim Irish ancestry, making Irish heritage one of the most prominent in Canada.

## St. Patrick's Day *March 17th*

St. Patrick's Day honors Saint Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, who is credited with bringing Christianity to the Irish people. It has evolved into a global celebration of Irish culture.

### How is it celebrated?

**Parades:** Large celebrations featuring Irish music and dancing.

**Wearing green:** Green symbolizes Ireland and is associated with good luck.

**Celebrating with food:** Traditional Irish foods play a central role in the festivities, with dishes like corned beef and cabbage, Irish soda bread, and hearty stews made with lamb or beef. Another favorite is colcannon, a comforting mix of mashed potatoes and cabbage or kale.

Irish Stew



Soda Bread



Lucky Shamrock



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## International Women's Day March 8th

International Women's Day, celebrated on March 8th, is a global event recognizing the achievements of women and advocating for gender equality. It highlights progress in women's rights while acknowledging ongoing challenges. The day is marked by rallies, discussions, and initiatives that empower women in all aspects of life, from politics and business to science and the arts. With themes that change each year, International Women's Day serves as a reminder to celebrate, support, and uplift women worldwide.



### Did you know?

'According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in developing nations, **if women worldwide had the same access as men to information, land, improved technologies, financing and markets, they could increase their agricultural yields by up to 30 per cent, and lift more than 100 million people out of hunger.** By investing in women, we truly strengthen the economy for everyone.'

- Government of Canada, 2022

### Articles

[!\[\]\(6059a5aa8b4ca7bb793408023d6c6e42\_img.jpg\) The Status of Women in Agri-food systems](#) (United Nations)

[!\[\]\(c50c8b7b2cc2cf9ff925edec0ee94c0d\_img.jpg\) Women of the land are custodians of culture, community and cuisine](#) (International Women's

### Resources

[!\[\]\(9c2e8d1b5bd77cb5c9f83b7a9cff79fd\_img.jpg\) Women, Food and Agriculture Network](#) (WFAN is a community for food growers and land stewards who have been historically excluded from access to education, infrastructure, and support networks in agriculture.)

## Ash Wednesday March 5th

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent in the Christian tradition, a solemn period of reflection, fasting, and repentance leading up to Easter. Many observe the day by attending church services, where ashes are placed on their foreheads as a symbol of mortality and penance.

### Ash Wednesday & Food

Ash Wednesday is traditionally a day of fasting and abstinence from meat, leading many to eat simple, meat-free meals. Common dishes include fish, vegetable soups, and hearty meatless staples like rice, beans, or pasta. In some cultures, special dishes such as pancakes (inspired by Shrove Tuesday) or seafood-based meals are enjoyed as part of the Lenten tradition.

### Resources

[!\[\]\(83bbbd261710c59db0214aa27b2edc0d\_img.jpg\) About Ash Wednesday & Lent](#)

Vegetable Soup

Pancakes







## Ramadan *March 1st - 30th*

Ramadan is the holiest month in Islam, observed by Muslims worldwide as a time of fasting, prayer, reflection, and community, in observance of the fourth pillar of Islam; Sawm. It commemorates the month when the Quran was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).



Ramadan is observed by fasting (Sawm), prayer (Taraweeh), and increased charity (Zakat & Sadaqah), as well as strengthening bonds with family and the community. The month concludes with Eid al-Fitr, a joyous celebration marked by feasting, prayers, and giving to those in need.



### Ramadan and Food

#### Suhoor

**Pre-fast meal, before dawn:** Muslims eat suhoor, a nourishing meal that provides energy for the day ahead, often including protein-rich foods including omelettes, yoghurt, and other dairy products like labneh and cheese, hydrating drinks, fruits and vegetables, and bread.

#### Iftar

**Braking of the fast, after sunset:** Common dishes include Mehchi Koussa (stuffed zucchini), soups, such as lentil soup (shorabet adas), rice, grilled meats, samosas, and a variety of sweets like baklava or qatayef.

#### Eid

Eid al-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan with prayer, family gatherings, and generosity. Festive meals include traditional sweets like baklava and maamoul, along with savory dishes. It's a time of gratitude, community, and giving to those in need.

### Recipes

[Kousa mahshi](#) (Stuffed Zucchini)  
Zaatar & Zaytoun

[Shorabet Adas](#) (Lentil Soup)  
Fufu's Kitchen

[Qatayef \(Katayef\)](#) (Sweet Dumplings)  
Amira's Kitchen

### Resources

[Traditional food of Ramadan](#)  
The Food Heritage Foundation

[Ramadan Recipes](#)  
BBC Good Food

[Supporting Muslims at Work during Ramadan](#)

[Supporting Muslim Students during Ramadan](#)





# Cultural Celebrations: *March*

## Holi March 14th

Holi, the Festival of Colors, celebrates the arrival of spring, the triumph of good over evil, and the renewal of relationships. Rooted in Hindu mythology, it commemorates the victory of Prahlad over his evil father, Hiranyakashipu, and the playful love between Lord Krishna and Radha. During the festival, people throw colored powders, sing, dance, and enjoy festive foods, creating an atmosphere of joy and unity. Holi is a time for celebration, fostering inclusivity and strengthening social bonds.

### Holi and Food

Popular Holi delicacies include gujiya, a deep-fried pastry filled with sweetened khoya (milk solids) and dry fruits; thandai, a spiced, chilled milk-based drink infused with saffron, almonds, and cardamom; and dahi vada, soft lentil dumplings soaked in yogurt and topped with chutneys. Sweets like malpua (syrup-soaked pancakes) and jalebi (crispy, spiral-shaped treats) add to the festive indulgence, making Holi a feast for both the soul and the senses.



### Resources

 [Holi Recipes](#)

BBC Good Food

 [What is Holi and why is it celebrated?](#)

Dahi Vada



Thandai



Gujiya




## Nowruz March 20th - 21st

Nowruz, the Persian New Year, is celebrated on the spring equinox, marking the first day of spring and the beginning of the year in the Iranian calendar. Traditionally, families clean and decorate their homes, and set up a Haft-Seen table, which includes seven symbolic items:

1. **Sabzeh:** Wheat, barley, or lentil sprouts: symbolizing rebirth and growth.
2. **Samanu:** Sweet pudding made from wheat germ: symbolizing sweetness and fertility.
3. **Senjed:** Dried oleaster fruit: symbolizing love.
4. **Seer:** Garlic: symbolizing medicine and health.
5. **Seeb:** Apple: symbolizing beauty and health.
6. **Somagh:** Sumac: symbolizing the sunrise and new beginnings.
7. **Serkeh:** Vinegar: symbolizing age and patience.

Celebrations involve gathering with family and friends, sharing meals, visiting loved ones, and lighting bonfires to symbolize the burning away of the old year's negativity. The festivities typically last for about two weeks, culminating in a joyful celebration of renewal and rebirth.

### Resources

 [International Nowruz Day](#). (United Nations)

