



Purim



What & When:

Purim takes place on the 14th day of the Hebrew month of *Adar*. Purim is usually celebrated in early to mid March. The holiday of *Purim* celebrates the rescue of the Jews of Persia by Queen Esther and her cousin Mordechai, approximately 2,400 years ago. The story is recounted in the Hebrew Bible in the book of Esther, (called the *Megillah* in Hebrew, meaning scroll).

History: According to the Book of Esther

Haman was the second-in-command to the Persian King Achashverosh and declared that all people should bow down to him. When he was told that Jews bow only to God, Haman obtained the king's permission to execute the entire Jewish community of Persia. He ordered that "lots" (*"purim"*) be drawn to decide which day the massacre would take place.

A Jewish man, Mordechai, heard of Haman's plot and told his cousin Esther, who was one of the king's wives. Esther agreed to appeal to the king, and in doing so dared to reveal that she herself was Jewish. All the Jews in Persia fasted to lend support to Queen Esther before she approached the king. She appealed successfully, and hearing of Haman's plan, the king ordered Haman's decree cancelled, and that Haman be hung instead of the Jews. Mordechai was appointed as the new minister in place of Haman.

Observances and Traditional Foods:

The day before *Purim* is the **Fast of Esther**, which honors the queen who abstained from food for 3 days before she petitioned the king to save the Jewish people. The Fast of Esther is a minor fast day which lasts from dawn to sundown. Although the Fast of Esther is not widely observed outside the observant community, it is better not to arrange celebrations during the daytime on that day.

The celebration of *Purim* begins at sundown with the chanting of the *Megillah* in the synagogue. The *Megillah* is read again in the synagogue the following morning as well. It is customary to dress in costume and

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use *groggers* (noisemakers) to drown out Haman's name each time it is read. The atmosphere may be more like a party than the usual formal religious service. A *Purim shpiel* (a humorous skit or play) is often performed to add to the celebration. There is an old custom of adults becoming drunk to the point of being unable to distinguish between the words "blessed be Mordechai" (the story's hero) and "cursed by Haman" (the story's villain). Many synagogues and Jewish community centers also hold *Purim* carnivals with costumes, food, games and prizes on the Sunday before or after the holiday. As it is a celebration, it is appropriate to wish one another a "**Happy Purim**".

It is also a tradition on *Purim* to distribute gifts to the poor and exchange food baskets with family and friends. The special food for this holiday is called **Hamantaschen** (triangular pastries filled with fruit fillings, particularly prune, or a poppy seed paste). The shape of the pastry is reminiscent of the three-cornered hat supposedly worn by Haman.

For more information check out this great on-line resource:

http://www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Jewish_Holidays/Purim.shtml

Purim Recipe – Easy to Make *Hamantaschen*

Ingredients:

½ cup sugar	2 eggs
1 ½ tsp. baking powder	¼ cup oil
½ tsp. Salt	1 tsp. Vanilla

- 1) Preheat the oven to 325 degrees.
- 2) Mix the flour, sugar, salt, and baking powder in a bowl. Mix the eggs, vanilla and oil in another bowl.
- 3) Combine the mixtures & mix well. Let the dough rest for about 5 minutes.
- 4) Roll out the dough about 1/3 inch thick, using extra flour to avoid the dough sticking to the board or to hands. Use a plastic cup to make circles about 3-4 inches in diameter.
- 5) Add a spoonful of your favorite filling (berry, prune, poppy seed or even chocolate chips!) in the center of each round. Fold up the sides to make a three-cornered pastry. Pinch corners well to avoid spillage of the filling.
- 6) Place on lightly greased cookie sheet and bake for 15 minutes or until golden brown.