

How pancakes won over the world

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Into the frying pan: Britons are set to crack 52 million eggs today — or 22 million more than on the average day.

Is indulgence as important as restraint? In many countries Shrove Tuesday is an excuse for feasting and fun — and some experts believe that we should have more of both.

What's happening?

Francesca tosses the pancake perfectly. Down it comes, into the frying pan and straight onto her plate! It is her sixth of the day.

But then she has a terrible thought. Tomorrow is the beginning of **Lent** and she will have to give something up. What will it be — chocolate, sweets or pizza?

Find out more

The **tradition** of making pancakes on Shrove Tuesday goes back to **medieval** times. The following day, Ash Wednesday, marks the beginning of Lent. As many Christians gave up eggs and dairy products during the 40 days that it lasted, pancakes became a way of using up their supplies.

Fasting is an important element in other religions too. **Muslims** fast during **Ramadan**. And some say denying the body can help with **meditation** — although you should only fast if a doctor says it is safe to do so.

But recent studies suggest that too much **restraint** can be a bad thing. Some experts argue that we need to have both restraint and **indulgence** in our lives.

This could explain how Pancake Day became so popular.

Indulgence can help us relax and recharge our batteries. Having a delicious meal with loved ones strengthens relationships and makes life happier and more fun.

Overindulgence, though, can create all kinds of problems. Eating or drinking too much can seriously harm your health, while focusing on fun could lead to failed exams.

To strike a balance, we need to increase our self-awareness — for example, by meditating or keeping a diary.

Is indulgence as important as restraint?

Some say

Yes! We live in a stressful world. We all need to relax sometimes. There is no point in living a life without fun. We should all indulge sometimes.

Others think

No! We are living in an age of climate crisis. We should not use up more than we need. It is time to stop focusing only on fun.

Some people say

“Indulgences, not fulfilment, is what the world permits us.”

Christopher Fry (1907 – 2005), English poet and playwright

Empty heading

What do you think?

Six steps to discovery

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - Do you make pancakes on Shrove Tuesday?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: How did Shrove Tuesday get its name?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Pick out one thing we know for certain about this story and one thing we cannot say for sure.

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - You are told that you have to give up your favourite activity for 40 days. Think about what you would say.

5. Express

What do others believe? - What would be the hardest food to give up for Lent? Take it in turns to say.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - Imagine you are setting up a creperie, or a pancake restaurant. Design your menu.

Glossary

Lent - In the Christian calendar the period of penitence runs from Ash Wednesday (when penitents mark their foreheads with ashes as a sign of repentance) to Easter. Deeply significant in Christianity, it is followed by Easter Sunday. Easter and its symbolism coincide with the celebration of spring.

Tradition - A custom or event that has been taking place for many years, often passed down from generation to generation.

Medieval - Relating to the Middle Ages.

Fasting - Going without food or drink, either for religious or health purposes. You should only fast if it is safe medically.

Muslims - People who follow the religion of Islam.

Ramadan - The ninth month of the Islamic year, during which Muslims are required to fast from dawn until dusk.

Meditation - The name for a variety of techniques to train attention and awareness, for instance by focusing on the movement of your breath. Meditation existed long before Buddhism and is also an element in the practice of other religions, including Hinduism.

Restraint - Moderation or self-control.

Indulgence - Allowing oneself to take pleasure in luxurious things.