

There are several interpretations as to the origin of Valentine's Day. Let the romantic in you decide.

The Feast of Luperus St. Valentine's Day February 14th Link Suggestions

The Feast of Luperus

The first interpretation has this celebration originating as a pagan tradition in the third century. During this time hordes of hungry wolves roamed outside of Rome where shepherds kept their flocks. The God Luperus, was said to watch over the shepherds and their flocks and keep them from the wolves. Every February the Romans celebrated a feast called Lupercalia to honor Luperus so that no harm would come to the shepherds and their flocks. Also during Lupercalia, but in honor of the goddess Juno Februata, the names of young women were put into a box and names were drawn by lot. The boys and girls who were matched would be considered partners for the year, which began in March. This celebration continued long after wolves were a problem to Rome.

St. Valentine's Day

As Christianity became prevalent, priests attempted to replace old heathen practices. To Christianize the ancient pagan celebration of the Feast of Luperus, the church officials changed the name to St. Valentine's Day. To give the celebration further meaning and eliminate pagan traditions, priests substituted the drawing of Saints names for the names of the girls. On St. Valentine's Day the priest placed saint's names into an urn or box. The young people then drew a name from the container. In the following year, the youth was supposed to emulate the life of the saint whose name he had drawn.

By the fourteenth century they reverted back to the use of girl's names. In the sixteenth century they once again tried to have saintly valentines but it was as unsuccessful as the first attempt.

While it can't be proved historically, there were seven men named Valentine who were honored with feasts on February 14th. Of these men, two stories link incidents that could have given our present day meaning to St. Valentine's Day.

One of these men named Valentine was a priest during the reign of Emperor Claudius. Valentine was revered by the young and old, rich and poor, with people of all walks of life attending his services. At this time Emperor Claudius was heavily recruiting men to serve as soldiers for his wars without much success. The men preferred not to leave their wives, families and sweethearts to fight in foreign lands. Claudius became angry and declared that no more marriages could be performed and all engagements were cancelled.

Valentine thought this to be unfair and secretly married several couples. When Claudius found out, he threw Valentine in prison where he died. Friends of the priest retrieved his body and buried it in a churchyard in Rome.

Another version had St. Valentine jailed for helping Christians. While Valentine was in prison he cured a jailer's daughter of blindness. Claudius became enraged and had Valentine clubbed and beheaded on February 14, 269 A.D.

Yet another story claims that Valentine fell in love with the jailer's daughter and wrote her letters that were signed "From your Valentine."

All of the seven Valentines eventually evolved into one. In 496 Pope Gelasius declared the day in honor of St. Valentine. Through the centuries the Christian holiday became a time to exchange love messages and St. Valentine became the patron saint of lovers. Lovers' quarrels come under his jurisdiction and, naturally, he is the patron saint of engaged couples and of anyone wishing to marry.

February 14th - The Day the Birds Began to Mate

The Europeans also believed that on February 14th the birds began to choose their mates. In fact Chaucer, in his "Parlement of Foules," wrote: "For this was Seynt Valentine's Day when every foul cometh ther to choose his mate." The Christian tradition of drawing names on St. Valentine's Eve continued in England and other places. The tradition of birds choosing their mates on St. Valentine's Day led to the idea that boys and girls would do the same. Now when a youth drew a girl's name, he wore it on his sleeve, and attended and protected her during the following year. This made the girl his valentine and they exchanged love tokens throughout the year. Later this was changed to only men giving love tokens to females, usually without names but signed "with St. Valentine's Love."

Later, in France, both sexes drew from the valentine box. A book called Travels in England, written in 1698, gives an account of the way it was done:

On St. Valentine's Eve an equal number of Maids and Bachelors get together, each writes their true or some feigned name upon separate billets, which they roll up and draw by way of lots, the Maids taking the Men's billets, and the Men the Maids'; so that each of the young Men lights upon a Girl that he calls his Valentine, and each of the Girls upon a young Man which she calls hers. By this means each has two Valentines--but the Man sticks faster to the Valentine that is fallen to him than to the Valentine to whom he is fallen. Fortune having thus divided the company into so many couples, the valentines give balls and treats to their mistresses, wear their billets several days upon their bosoms or sleeves, and this little sport often ends in Love. This ceremony is practised differently in different Countries, and according to the freedom or severity of Madame Valentine. This is another kind of Valentine, which is the first young Man or Woman chance throws in your way in the street, or elsewhere . . .

St. Valentine's Day was mentioned by Shakespeare. The poet, Drayton, wrote verses entitled "To His Valentine," in which he expressed the idea of the birds' mating on St. Valentine's Day.

Each little bird this tide
Doth choose her beloved peer,
Which constantly abide
In wedlock all the year.

History of the Valentine

European Valentine

A young Frenchman, Charles, Duke of Orleans, was one of the earliest creators of valentines, called "poetical or amorous addresses." From his confinement in the Tower of London after the Battle of Agincourt in 1415, he sent several poems or rhymed love letters or "valentines" to his wife in France.

During the fifteenth century, one valentine showed a drawing of a knight and a lady, with Cupid in the act of sending an arrow to pierce the knight's heart.

During the seventeenth century people made their own valentines using original verse or poems copied from booklets with appropriate verse.

It was thought that birds chose their mate for the year on February 14. Doves and pigeons mate for life and therefore were used as a symbol of "fidelity."

The first commercial valentine appeared circa 1800 and were rather simplistic. But by the 1830's and 1840's Valentines contained delicate and artistic messages. Valentines made of fine papers and decorated with satin, ribbon, or lace commanded high prices. They had pictures of turtledoves, lovers' knots in gold or silver, bow and arrows, cupids, and bleeding hearts. All of these symbols have become associated with love and lovers.

In the 1840's the first mechanical valentines were introduced. By pulling a tab, a figure or object on the card could be made to move. Some had elaborate honeycomb pop-outs or various other three-dimensional features.

Valentines Day started in the time of the Roman Empire. Under the rule of Emperor Claudius II Rome was involved in many bloody and unpopular military campaigns. Claudius the Cruel, as he was known at the time, was having a difficult time getting soldiers to join his military leagues. He believed that the reason was that Roman men did not want to leave their loves or families. As a result, Claudius cancelled all marriages and engagements in Rome.

This was when a Christian priest named Valentine came to defend love in the empire. Valentine began to secretly marry couples despite the emperor's orders. When Emperor Claudius was informed of these ceremonies Valentine was sent to prison where he remained until his death on February 14 in the year 270.

It wasn't until a few hundred years later when Valentine's Day began to develop as we know it. At the time Christianity was beginning to take control of Europe. As part of this effort the Church sought to do away with pagan holidays. Valentine's Day came to replace a mid-February fertility festival called Lupercalia. In honor of his sacrifice for love Valentine was made a saint and Lupercalia renamed in his honor.

Until today the tradition of honoring Valentine continues. The themes of love and fertility taken from the ancient meanings of the holiday have endured and evolved with our contemporary adaptations of its meanings.

The holiday of Valentine's Day probably derives its origins from the ancient Roman feast of Lupercalia. In the early days of Rome, fierce wolves roamed the woods nearby. The Romans called upon one of their gods, Lupercus, to keep the wolves away. A festival held in honor of Lupercus was celebrated February 15th. The festival was celebrated as a spring festival. Their calendar was different at that time, with February falling in early springtime.

One of the customs of the young people was name-drawing. On the eve of the festival of Lupercalia the names of Roman girls were written on slips of paper and placed into jars. Each young man drew a slip. The girl whose name was chosen was to be his sweetheart for the year.

Legend has it that the holiday became Valentine's Day after a priest named Valentine. Valentine was a priest in Rome at the time Christianity was a new religion. The Emperor at that time, Claudius II, ordered the Roman soldiers NOT to marry or become engaged. Claudius believed that as married men, his soldiers would want to stay home with their families rather than fight his wars. Valentine defied the Emperor's decree and secretly married the young couples. He was eventually arrested, imprisoned, and put to death.

Valentine was beheaded on February 14th, the eve of the Roman holiday Lupercalia. After his death, Valentine was named a saint. As Rome became more Christian, the priests moved the spring holiday from the 15th of February to the 14th - Valentine's Day. Now the holiday honored Saint Valentine instead of Lupercus.

- Version 3

Valentine's Day is a time for friends, a time for family, and a time for lovers, but where did it all begin. The following, is just one of many historical descriptions of Valentine's Day. We hope you enjoy it.

In ancient Rome, February 14th was a holiday to honor Juno. Juno was the Queen of the Roman Gods and Goddesses. The Romans also knew her as the Goddess of women and marriage. The following day, February 15th, began the 'Feast of Lupercalia', which was a time to honor several other Gods and Goddesses.

In ancient Rome, the lives of young boys and young girls were strictly separate. However, during the Lupercalia Festival, the boys would each pick a girl's name from a vase. The boys then became partners for the duration of the festival with the girl that they chose. During the festival, the pairs of children danced and played together. Sometimes the pairing of the children lasted an entire year, and often, they would fall in love and would later marry.

Bibliography:

Valentine's Day by Cass R. Sandak
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Version 4

Romans celebrated on February 15th the feast of Lupercalia. This spring holiday was held in honor of the god Lupercus, protector of the herd and crops. The people entreated to Lupercus to protect their flocks and keep animals and people healthy and fertile through singing and dancing. On the eve of this festival, young women would put their names in a ceramic jar and every young man would pick a name. They would be partners in the festivities and dances, off times they would not need to participate in this particular event the next year.

Christian legends believe that Valentine's Day is the Feast of St. Valentine, who was beheaded on February 14th under the orders of Roman Emperor Claudius II. The Emperor believed that if his men remained single his army would be larger. He wouldn't lose men to wanting to stay home with the family. Valentine was arrested and beheaded because he would secretly marry people forbidden to wed. He became known as the patron saint of lovers.

Believing that Valentine's Day exists to celebrate the memory of a saint who valued love and romance, many exchange love notes or Valentines. Others believe that Valentine was later confused with the Norman French word 'galantin' meaning "lover of women". Through the passage of time, the two have merged with the result of St. Valentine being remembered as the patron saint of lovers.

• Version 5

St. Valentines Day: 5th Century Rome

"...The Catholic Church attempt to paper over a popular pagan fertility rite with the clubbing death and decapitation of one of its own martyrs is the origin of this lovers holiday.

As early as the fourth century B.C., the Romans engaged in an annual young mans rite of passage to the god Lupercus. The names of teenage women were placed in a box and drawn at random by adolescent men; thus, a man was assigned a woman companion, for their mutual entertainment and pleasure (often sexual), for the duration of a year, after which another lottery was staged. Determined to put an end to this eight-hundred-year-old practice, the early church fathers sought a "lovers saint to replace the deity Lupercus. They found a likely candidate in Valentine, a bishop who had been martyred some two hundred years earlier.

In Rome in A.D. 270, Valentine had enraged the mad emperor the mad emperor Claudius II, who had issued an edict forbidding marriage. Claudius felt that married men made poor soldiers, because they were loath to leave their families for battle. The empire needed soldiers, so Claudius, never one to fear unpopularity, abolished marriage.

Valentine, bishop of Interamna, invited young lovers to come to him in secret, where he joined them in the sacrament of matrimony. Claudius learned of this "friend of lovers," and had the bishop brought to the palace. The emperor, impressed with the young priests dignity and conviction, attempted to convert him to the Roman gods, to save him from otherwise certain execution. Valentine refused to renounce Christianity

and imprudently attempted to convert the emperor. On February 24, 270, Valentine was clubbed, stoned, then beheaded.

History also claims that while Valentine was in prison awaiting execution, he fell in love with the blind daughter of the jailer, Asterius. Through his unswerving faith, he miraculously restored her sight. He signed a farewell message to her "From Your Valentine," a phrase that would live long after its author died.

From the Church's standpoint, Valentine seemed to be the ideal candidate to usurp the popularity of Lupercus. So in A.D. 496, a stern Pope Gelasius outlawed the mid-February Lupercian festival. But he was clever enough to retain the lottery, aware of Romans' love for games of chance. Now into the box that had once held the names of available and willing single women were placed the names of saints. Both men and women extracted slips of paper, and in the ensuing year they were expected to emulate the life of the saint whose name they had drawn. Admittedly, it was a different game, with different incentives; to expect a woman and draw a saint must have disappointed many a Roman male. The spiritual overseer of the entire affair was its patron saint, Valentine. With reluctance, and the passage of time, more and more Romans relinquished their pagan festival and replaced it with the Church's holy day.

Quoted from "Panati's Extraordinary Origins of Everyday Things," Charles Panati, Harper & Row Publishers, New York, NY 1987 pp 50-52

- Version 6

"Valentine was a pagan priest who lived during the Roman persecution against Christians. Though he wasn't a Christian himself, he was repulsed by the Roman tortures & began secretly to protect believers.

Helping Christians was a serious crime & Valentine landed in a dull, dark prison. His time there would have been fairly short, except while there he became a Christian. As a result: Valentine was sentenced to death. During his last days, Valentine often thought of his family & friends. Since they were forbidden to visit, they developed an unique way of sending messages to each other. Valentine would squeeze his arms through the bars in his window, to reach the violets that grew outside. Each day, after picking a heart-shaped leaf, he would carefully pierce it with a message like "Remember Your Valentine". He would then send it up to his loved ones by way of homing pigeons supplied by his family. Toward the end of his life the message changed to a simple, daily "I love You."

When he refused to renounce his Christian faith and turn back to the Lord he had grown to love, Valentine was clubbed to death in his cell on Feb 14, 269 AD.

For Valentine, love was more than the mushy gushy stuff we think of today. It was above sentimental feelings or infatuation. It was deeper than sexual attraction or physical desire. It was a love tough enough to survive the rugged times of life.

Love is more than a feeling that comes and goes. It is not based on circumstance, climate, clothes, character or come-ons. It is a commitment that carries a price tag. It demands action. It means caring for a person even if they're in a bitter angry mood. It means putting the other person's needs, desires and wishes before yours. It means going out of your way to accept, respect and forgive.

This Valentine's Day, remember Valentine."

Valentine Cards

Traditionally, mid-February was a Roman time to meet and court prospective mates. The Lupercian lottery (under penalty of mortal sin), Roman young men did institute the custom of offering women they admired and wished to court handwritten greetings of affection on February 14. The cards acquired St. Valentine's name:

As Christianity spread, so did the Valentine's Day card. The earliest extant card was sent in 1415 by Charles, duke of Orleans, to his wife while he was a prisoner in the Tower of London. It is now in the British Museum.

In the sixteenth century, St. Francis de Sales, bishop of Geneva, attempted to expunge the custom of cards and reinstate the lottery of saints names. He felt that Christians had become wayward and needed models to emulate. However, this lottery was less successful and shorter-lived than Pope Gelasius. And rather than disappearing, cards proliferated and became more decorative. Cupid, the naked cherub armed with arrows dipped in love potion, became a popular valentine image. He was associated with the holiday because in Roman mythology he is the son of Venus, goddess of love and beauty.

By the seventeenth century, handmade cards were oversized and elaborate, while store-bought ones were smaller and costly. In 1797, a British publisher issued "The Young Mans Valentine Writer," which contained scores of suggested sentimental verses for the young lover unable to compose his own. Printers had already begun producing a limited number of cards with verses and sketches, called "mechanical valentines," and a reduction in postal rates in the next century ushered in the less personal but easier practice of mailing valentines. That, in turn, made it possible for the first time to exchange cards anonymously, which is taken as the reason for the sudden appearance of racy verse in an era otherwise prudishly Victorian. The burgeoning number of obscene valentines caused several countries to ban the practice of exchanging cards. In Chicago, for instance, late in the nineteenth century, the post office rejected some twenty-five thousand cards on the ground that they were not fit to be carried through the U.S. mail.

The first American publisher of valentines was printer and artist Esther Howland. Her elaborate lace cards of the 1870s cost from five to ten dollars, with some selling for as much as thirty-five dollars. Since that time, the valentine card business has flourished. With the exception of Christmas, Americans exchange more cards on Valentine's Day than at any other time of the year...."

Quoted from "Panatis Extraordinary Origins of Everyday things, Charles Panati, Harper & Row Publishers, New York, NY 1987 pp 50-52

Valentines History

Valentine's Day is celebrated February 14th. It is the holiday of romance and lovers. On this day greeting cards, candy, flowers or other gifts are often exchanged.

Lupercalia

Valentine's Day seems to have its origins in the Roman festival Lupercalia, observed on February 15th. Lupercalia celebrated the coming of spring (in the Roman calendar February was observed later in the year than it is today).

Lupercalia seems to have been associated both with the Roman gods Lupercus and Faunus. Lupercus watched over shepherds and their flocks; Faunus (like the Greek god Pan) was a god of flocks and fertility. The day became a celebration intended to ensure the fertility of flocks, fields and people.

On Lupercalia goats and a dogs were sacrificed on Palatine Hill (fabled birth home of Romulus and Remus). Young men known as Luperci would then race the street beneath the hill wielding goat-skin thongs called februa. With these thongs they would lash women gathered in the streets. A februa lashing (a febratio) supposedly ensured fertility and easy child delivery.

As the Roman empire grew, the celebration of Lupercalia was transformed and spread throughout the Roman Empire. During the celebrations of Lupercalia in Roman conquered France, the first Valentine-like cards may have been exchanged. Apparently a container in which women had placed their names (possibly accompanied by love notes) was used in a lottery. Men drawing a woman's name would either seek (or were guaranteed -- this detail seems obscured by time) a woman's "favors" -- whatever those might be.

Saint Valentine's Day

As Christianity began to take hold in Europe, the Roman church attempted to clean up this pagan Roman day by merging its feast with Saint Valentine's Day (observed like today's Valentines Day on the 14th of February). This day honored two legendary Christian martyrs.

The legend of these martyrs may have stemmed from real people or from a single person. One of these martyrs is believed to have been a Roman priest and physician who was killed in the 3rd century during the persecutions of the Emperor Claudius II Gothicus (the Groth). After his death this Valentine was apparently buried in the Roman road Via Flaminia. Pope Julius the first is said to have later built a basilica above his grave. A second Saint Valentine candidate is believed to be a bishop of Terni (a province in central Italy) who was executed in Rome.

These men's status comes from legends of harboring Christians from persecution, of curing the blindness of a cell-keeper's daughter, and of conducting marriages while marriages were forbidden during times of war. It is perhaps this last repute and the traditions of Lupercalia that coupled to honor Saint Valentine as the patron saint of lovers.

In 1969 this day of feast was dropped from the Roman Church Calendar.

Eros, Cupid, Amor - Cupid's Arrow

From its association with Lupercalia and that day's association with fertility comes Valentines association with love and romance. This led Valentines enthusiasts to co-opt the Roman god Cupid as a patron of Valentines day. Cupid is also known as Amor and as Eros in Greek mythology. Eros seems to have been responsible for impregnating a number of other gods -- Gaea (mother earth) and Chaos. The ancient Greeks believed Eros was the force love -- a force they believed was behind all creation.

As Cupid this god is often depicted with wings and carrying a bow and quiver of gold typed arrows. Sometimes referred to as the son of Aphrodite, Cupid is said to be mischievous and able to inspire love with a shot of one of his arrows.

THE TRUE HISTORY OF VALENTINES DAY

by Mani Niall

5th Century, Rome

Mid February was traditionally the time of the Lupercian festival, an ode to the God of fertility and a celebration of sensual pleasure, a time to meet and court a prospective mate. In AD 496, Pope Gelasius

outlawed the pagan festival. But he was clever to replace it with a similar celebration, although one deemed morally suitable. He needed a "lovers" saint to replace the pagan deity Lupercus.

The martyred Bishop Valentine was chosen as the patron saint of the new festival.

Saint Valentine had been beheaded for helping young lovers marry against the wishes of the mad emperor Claudius. Before execution, Valentine himself had fallen in love with his jailer's daughter. He signed his final note to her, "From Your Valentine", a phrase that has lasted through the centuries.

Pope Gelasius didn't get everything he wanted. The pagan festival died out, it is true, but he had further hoped people would emulate the lives of saints. Instead they latched onto the more romantic aspect of Saint Valentine's religious life. While not immediately as popular as the more passionate pagan festival, eventually the concept of celebrating true love became known as Valentine's Day.

Mani Niall, with 19 years in the food industry, has become known as the "baker to the stars". Niall is a renowned chef, cookbook author and food consultant. (He is also the founder of Mani's Bakery which continues under separate ownership). Niall, 38, discovered his knack for cooking while attending a boarding school near Sedona, Arizona. A group of like-minded students began to cook healthful meals for themselves--Niall was the only one asked to cook dinner for the entire school! A professional chef was born.