

Each year on the fourth Sunday of Lent, countries around the world celebrate Mothering Sunday. This typically involves lavishing Mums with gifts and attention and celebrating the women who have nurtured us throughout our lives.

But with the day becoming increasingly commercialised, how many people are aware of its very different origins?



Here are some of the traditions that have shaped Mothering Sunday into the celebration recognised today:

The Journey to the Mother Church

In the 16th century, Mothering Sunday was less about mothers and more about church. Back then, people would make a journey to their 'mother' church once a year. This might have been their home church, their nearest cathedral or a major parish church in a bigger town. The service which took place at the 'mother' church symbolised the coming together of families. This would have represented a significant journey for many.

A day off to visit Mother

Another tradition was to allow those working in the fields on wealthy farms and estates in England to have the day off on the fourth Sunday of Lent to visit their mothers and possibly go to church too. This was a variation on the theme of visiting the 'mother' church and was a move towards a more family focussed occasion. Before the days of cars and roads, family get-togethers were far more rare, (and facetime was still a long way off). In some ways this tradition is still alive today as grown up children often visit their parents on mothering Sunday.

Simnel Cake

Simnel cake has a strong affiliation to Mothering Sunday as it is usually associated with spring and Easter. It resembles a Christmas fruit cake but should be slightly lighter in texture. The other difference is the two layers of marzipan. Yum. Simnel cake should have a layer of marzipan running through the middle like a victoria sponge and then another layer of marzipan on the top. Traditionally, you should also roll some marzipan into eleven eggs and place these on the top. The eggs are supposed to symbolise the disciples who followed Jesus – note that Judas is excluded.

The question is, do you boil or bake your simnel cake? Some say it's necessary to do both because of an argument from folktale where two people could not agree on the correct way to cook the cake. –

[Here is a recipe to try if you would like to make your own Simnel cake](#)

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Traditions today

This Sunday, churches around the country will be sharing their own traditions, celebrating and giving thanks to the huge impact mothers have on each of our lives. The main service on Mothering Sunday in churches across the country is central to the life of the church.

The church recognises that the day may be difficult for some people and so it is common place for services to include prayers for those who don't find the day particularly easy.

Families across the country will be preparing little presents and cards and – in some churches flowers are blessed and handed out during the main service.

Families come together to have lunch, or children make breakfast in bed for their mothers, leaving all the mess to be cleared up later! – It's all about showing appreciation and many make a huge effort to make their mother feel special.

Share what your church is doing for Mothering Sunday with us on social media.

[If your church is hosting a special service or event for Mothering Sunday, make sure you add details to your A Church Near You page.](#)

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