

Valentine's Day

This article is about the liturgical celebration and romantic holiday. For Brazil's Dia de São Valentim, see [Dia dos Namorados](#). For uses of Valentine, see [Valentine](#). For other uses, see [Valentine's Day \(disambiguation\)](#).

Valentine's Day, also known as **Saint Valentine's Day** or the **Feast of Saint Valentine**,^[1] is a celebration observed on February 14 each year. It is celebrated in many countries around the world, although it is not a public holiday in most of them.

St. Valentine's Day began as a liturgical celebration of one or more early Christian saints named Valentinus. Several martyrdom stories were invented for the various Valentines that belonged to February 14, and added to later martyrologies.^[2] A popular hagiographical account of Saint Valentine of Rome states that he was imprisoned for performing weddings for soldiers who were forbidden to marry and for ministering to Christians, who were persecuted under the Roman Empire. According to legend, during his imprisonment, he healed the daughter of his jailer, Asterius. An embellishment to this story states that before his execution he wrote her a letter signed "Your Valentine" as a farewell.^[3] Saint Valentine's Day is an official feast day in the Anglican Communion,^[4] as well as in the Lutheran Church.^[5] The Eastern Orthodox Church also celebrates Saint Valentine's Day, albeit on July 6 and July 30, the former date in honor of the Roman presbyter Saint Valentine, and the latter date in honor of Hieromartyr Valentine, the Bishop of Interamna (modern Terni).

The day was first associated with romantic love in the circle of Geoffrey Chaucer in the High Middle Ages, when the tradition of courtly love flourished. In 18th-century England, it evolved into an occasion in which lovers expressed their love for each other by presenting flowers, offering confectionery, and sending greeting cards (known as "*valentines*"). In Europe, Saint Valentine's Keys are given to lovers "as a romantic symbol and an invitation to unlock the giver's heart", as well as to children, in order to ward off epilepsy (called Saint Valentine's Malady).^[6] Valentine's Day symbols that are used today include the heart-shaped outline, doves, and the figure of the winged Cupid. Since the 19th century, handwritten valentines have given way to mass-produced greeting cards.^[7]

1 Saint Valentine

Main article: [Saint Valentine](#)

1.1 Historical facts



Shrine of St. Valentine in Whitefriar Street Carmelite Church in Dublin, Ireland

Numerous early Christian martyrs were named Valentine.^[8] The Valentines honored on February 14 are Valentine of Rome (*Valentinus presb. m. Romae*) and Valentine of Terni (*Valentinus ep. Interamnensis m. Romae*).^[9] Valentine of Rome was a priest in Rome who was martyred about AD 496 and was buried on the Via Flaminia. The relics of Saint Valentine were kept in the Church and Catacombs of San Valentino in Rome, which "remained an important pilgrim site throughout the Middle Ages until the relics of St. Valentine were transferred to the church of Santa Prassede

during the pontificate of **Nicholas IV**".* [10]* [11] The flower-crowned skull of Saint Valentine is exhibited in the Basilica of **Santa Maria in Cosmedin**, Rome. Other relics are found at **Whitefriar Street Carmelite Church** in Dublin, Ireland.* [12]

Valentine of Terni became bishop of Interamna (modern Terni) about AD 197 and is said to have been martyred during the persecution under Emperor **Aurelian**. He is also buried on the **Via Flaminia**, but in a different location than Valentine of Rome. His relics are at the Basilica of Saint Valentine in Terni (*Basilica di San Valentino*). Jack B. Oruch states that "abstracts of the acts of the two saints were in nearly every church and monastery of Europe."* [13] The *Catholic Encyclopedia* also speaks of a third saint named Valentine who was mentioned in early martyrologies under date of February 14. He was martyred in Africa with a number of companions, but nothing more is known about him.* [14] Saint Valentine's head was preserved in the abbey of **New Minster**, Winchester, and venerated.* [15]

February 14 is celebrated as **St. Valentine's Day** in various Christian denominations; it has, for example, the rank of 'commemoration' in the calendar of saints in the **Anglican Communion**.* [4] In addition, the feast day of Saint Valentine is also given in the calendar of saints of the **Lutheran Church**.* [5] However, in the 1969 revision of the **Roman Catholic Calendar of Saints**, the feast day of Saint Valentine on February 14 was removed from the **General Roman Calendar** and relegated to particular (local or even national) calendars for the following reason: "Though the memorial of Saint Valentine is ancient, it is left to particular calendars, since, apart from his name, nothing is known of Saint Valentine except that he was buried on the **Via Flaminia** on February 14."* [16]

The feast day is still celebrated in **Balzan** (**Malta**) where relics of the saint are claimed to be found, and also throughout the world by **Traditionalist Catholics** who follow the older, pre-**Second Vatican Council** calendar. In the **Eastern Orthodox Church**, **St. Valentine's Day** is celebrated on **July 6**, in which **Saint Valentine**, the Roman presbyter, is honoured; furthermore, the Eastern Orthodox Church observes the feast of **Hieromartyr Valentine**, Bishop of Interamna, on **July 30**.* [17]* [18]* [19]

1.2 Legends

J.C. Cooper, in *The Dictionary of Christianity*, writes that Saint Valentine was "a priest of Rome who was imprisoned for succouring persecuted Christians."* [20] Contemporary records of Saint Valentine were most probably destroyed during this **Diocletianic Persecution** in the early 4th century.* [21] In the 5th or 6th century, a work called *Passio Marii et Marthae* published a story of martyrdom for Saint Valentine of Rome, perhaps by borrowing tortures that happened to other saints, as was usual in the literature of that period. The same events are also



St Valentine baptizing St Lucilla, Jacopo Bassano

found in *Bede's Martyrology*, which was compiled in the 8th century.* [21]* [22] It states that Saint Valentine was persecuted as a Christian and interrogated by Roman Emperor **Claudius II** in person. Claudius was impressed by Valentine and had a discussion with him, attempting to get him to convert to Roman **paganism** in order to save his life. Valentine refused and tried to convert Claudius to Christianity instead. Because of this, he was executed. Before his execution, he is reported to have performed a miracle by healing **Julia**, the blind daughter of his jailer **Asterius**. The jailer's daughter and his forty-four member household (family members and servants) came to believe in Jesus and were baptized.* [21]

A later *Passio* repeated the legend, adding that **Pope Julius I** built a church over his sepulchre (it is a confusion with a 4th-century tribune called **Valentino** who donated land to build a church at a time when Julius was a Pope).* [22] The legend was picked up as fact by later martyrologies, starting by *Bede's* martyrology in the 8th century.* [22] It was repeated in the 13th century, in *Legenda Aurea*.* [23]

There is an additional embellishment to *The Golden Legend*, which according to **Henry Ansgar Kelly**, was added centuries later, and widely repeated.* [3] On the evening before Valentine was to be executed, he would have written the first "valentine" card himself, addressed to the daughter of his jailer **Asterius**, who was no longer blind, signing as "Your Valentine."* [3] The expression "From your Valentine" was later adopted by modern Valentine letters.* [24] This legend has been published by both **American Greetings** and **The History Channel**.* [25]

John Foxe, an English historian, as well as the **Order of**



Saint Valentine of Terni and his disciples

Carmelites, state that Saint Valentine was buried in the Church of Praxedes in Rome, located near the cemetery of Saint Hippolytus. This order says that according to legend, “Julia herself planted a pink-blossomed almond tree near his grave. Today, the almond tree remains a symbol of abiding love and friendship.” [26] [27]

Another embellishment is that Saint Valentine would have performed clandestine Christian weddings for soldiers who were forbidden to marry. [28] The Roman Emperor Claudius II supposedly forbade this in order to grow his army, believing that married men did not make for good soldiers. [28] [29] However, this supposed marriage ban was never issued, and in fact Claudius II told his soldiers to take two or three women for themselves after his victory over the Goths. [30]

According to legend, in order “to remind these men of their vows and God’s love, Saint Valentine is said to have cut hearts from parchment”, giving them to these soldiers and persecuted Christians, a possible origin of the widespread use of hearts on St. Valentine’s Day. [31]

Saint Valentine supposedly wore a purple amethyst ring, customarily worn on the hands of Christian bishops with an image of Cupid engraved in it, a recognizable symbol associated with love that was legal under the Roman Empire; [29] [32] Roman soldiers would recognize the ring and ask him to perform marriage for them. [29] Probably due to the association with Saint Valentine, amethyst has become the birthstone of February, which is thought to attract love. [33]

2 Folk traditions

While the European folk traditions connected with Saint Valentine and St. Valentine’s Day have become marginalized by the modern Anglo-American customs connecting the day with romantic love, there are some remaining as-

sociations connecting the saint with the advent of spring.

While the custom of sending cards, flowers, chocolates and other gifts originated in the UK, Valentine’s Day still remains connected with various regional customs in England. In Norfolk, a character called ‘Jack’ Valentine knocks on the rear door of houses leaving sweets and presents for children. Although he was leaving treats, many children were scared of this mystical person. [34] [35]

In Slovenia, Saint Valentine or Zdravko was one of the saints of spring, the saint of good health and the patron of beekeepers and pilgrims. [36] A proverb says that “Saint Valentine brings the keys of roots”. Plants and flowers start to grow on this day. It has been celebrated as the day when the first work in the vineyards and in the fields commences. It is also said that birds propose to each other or marry on that day. Another proverb says “*Valentin – prvi spomladin*” (“Valentine — the first spring saint”), as in some places (especially White Carniola), Saint Valentine marks the beginning of spring. [37] Valentine’s Day has only recently been celebrated as the day of love. The day of love was traditionally March 12, the Saint Gregory’s day, or February 22, Saint Vincent’s Day. The patron of love was Saint Anthony, whose day has been celebrated on June 13. [36]

3 Connection with romantic love

3.1 Lupercalia

Main article: [Lupercalia](#)

There is no evidence of any link between St. Valentine’s Day and the rites of the ancient Roman festival, despite many claims by many authors. [15] [38] [notes 1] The celebration of Saint Valentine did not have any romantic connotations until Chaucer’s poetry about “Valentines” in the 14th century. [21]

Popular modern sources claim links to unspecified Greco-Roman February holidays alleged to be devoted to fertility and love to St. Valentine’s Day, but prior to Chaucer in the 14th century, there were no links between the Saints named Valentinus and romantic love. [21] Earlier links as described above were focused on *sacrifice* rather than romantic love. In the ancient Athenian calendar the period between mid-January and mid-February was the month of Gamelion, dedicated to the sacred marriage of Zeus and Hera.

In Ancient Rome, Lupercalia, observed February 13–15, was an archaic rite connected to fertility. Lupercalia was a festival local to the city of Rome. The more general Festival of Juno Februa, meaning “Juno the purifier” or “the chaste Juno”, was celebrated on February 13–14. Pope Gelasius I (492–496) abolished Lupercalia. Some re-

searchers have theorized that Gelasius I replaced Lupercalia with the celebration of the Purification of Mary in February 14 and claim a connection to the 14th century's connotations of romantic love, but there is no historical indication that he ever intended such a thing.*[notes 2]*[39] Also, the dates don't fit because at the time of Gelasius I the feast was only celebrated in Jerusalem, and it was on February 14 only because Jerusalem placed the Nativity on January 6.*[notes 3] Although it was called "Purification of Mary", it dealt mainly with the presentation of Jesus at the temple.*[40] The Jerusalem's Purification of Mary on February 14 became the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple on February 2 as it was introduced to Rome and other places in the sixth century, after Gelasius I's time.*[40]

Alban Butler in his *Lives of the Principal Saints* (1756–1759) claimed without proof that men and women in Lupercalia drew names from a jar to make couples, and that modern Valentine's letters originated from this custom. In reality, this practice originated in the Middle Ages, with no link to Lupercalia, with men drawing the names of girls at random to couple with them. This custom was combated by priests, for example by Frances de Sales around 1600, apparently by replacing it with a religious custom of girls drawing the names of apostles from the altar. However, this religious custom is recorded as soon as the 13th century in the life of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, so it could have a different origin.*[15]



Geoffrey Chaucer by Thomas Hoccleve (1412)

3.2 Chaucer's love birds

Jack B. Oruch writes that the first recorded association of Valentine's Day with romantic love is in *Parlement of Foules* (1382) by Geoffrey Chaucer.*[21] Chaucer wrote:

*For this was on seynt Volantynys day
Whan euery bryd comyth there to chese his
make.*

["For this was on St. Valentine's Day, when every bird cometh there to choose his mate."]

This poem was written to honor the first anniversary of the engagement of King Richard II of England to Anne of Bohemia.*[41] A treaty providing for a marriage was signed on May 2, 1381.*[42]

Readers have uncritically assumed that Chaucer was referring to February 14 as Valentine's Day; however, mid-February is an unlikely time for birds to be mating in England. Henry Ansgar Kelly has observed that Chaucer might have had in mind the feast day of St. Valentine of Genoa, an early bishop of Genoa who died around AD 307; it was probably celebrated on 3 May.*[41]*[43]*[44] Jack B. Oruch notes that the date on which spring begins has changed since Chaucer's time because of the precession of the equinoxes and the introduction of the more accurate Gregorian calendar only in 1582. On the Julian calendar in use in Chaucer's time, 14 February would have fallen on the date now called 23 February, a time when some birds have started mating and nesting in England.*[21]

Chaucer's *Parliament of Foules* refers to a supposedly established tradition, but there is no record of such a tradition before Chaucer. The speculative derivation of sentimental customs from the distant past began with 18th-century antiquaries, notably Alban Butler, the author of *Butler's Lives of Saints*, and have been perpetuated even by respectable modern scholars. Most notably, "the idea that Valentine's Day customs perpetuated those of the Roman Lupercalia has been accepted uncritically and repeated, in various forms, up to the present".*[15]*[45]

Three other authors who made poems about birds mating on St. Valentine's Day around the same years: Otton de Grandson from Savoy, John Gower from England, and a knight called Pardo from Valencia. Chaucer most probably predated all of them but, due to the difficulty of dating medieval works, it is not possible to ascertain which of the four first had the idea and influenced the others.*[46]

3.3 Court of love

The earliest description of February 14 as an annual celebration of love appears in the *Charter of the Court of Love*. The charter, allegedly issued by Charles VI of France at Mantes-la-Jolie in 1400, describes lavish festivities to be attended by several members of the royal court, including a feast, amorous song and poetry competitions, jousting and dancing.*[47] Amid these festivities, the attending ladies would hear and rule on disputes from lovers.*[48] No other record of the court exists, and none of those named in the charter were present at Mantes except Charles's queen, Isabeau of Bavaria, who may well have imagined it all while waiting out a plague.*[47]

3.4 Valentine poetry

The earliest surviving valentine is a 15th-century *rondeau* written by Charles, Duke of Orléans to his wife, which commences.

Je suis desja d'amour tanné

Ma tres douce Valentinée...

—Charles d'Orléans, *Rondeau VI*, lines 1–2* [49]

At the time, the duke was being held in the Tower of London following his capture at the Battle of Agincourt, 1415.* [50]

The earliest surviving valentines in English appear to be those in the *Paston Letters*, written in 1477 by Margery Brewes to her future husband John Paston “my right well-beloved Valentine” .* [51]

Valentine's Day is mentioned ruefully by Ophelia in *Hamlet* (1600–1601):

*To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine.*

*Then up he rose, and donn'd his clothes,
And dupp'd the chamber-door;
Let in the maid, that out a maid
Never departed more.*

—William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act IV, Scene 5

John Donne used the legend of the marriage of the birds as the starting point for his *epithalamion* celebrating the marriage of Elizabeth, daughter of James I of England, and Frederick V, Elector Palatine, on Valentine's Day:

Hayle Bishop Valentine whose day this is

*All the Ayre is thy Diocese
And all the chirping Queristers
And other birds ar thy parishioners
Thou marryest every yeare
The Lyrick Lark, and the graue whispering
Doue,
The Sparrow that neglects his life for loue,
The houshold bird with the redd stomacher
Thou makst the Blackbird speede as soone,
As doth the Goldfinch, or the Halcyon
The Husband Cock lookes out and soone is
spedd
And meets his wife, which brings her feather-
bed.*

This day more cheerfully than ever shine

*This day which might inflame thy selfe old
Valentine.*

—John Donne, *Epithalamion Vpon Frederick Count Palatine and the Lady Elizabeth married on St. Valentines day*

The verse *Roses are red* echoes conventions traceable as far back as Edmund Spenser's epic *The Faerie Queene* (1590):

*She bath'd with roses red, and violets blew,
And all the sweetest flowres, that in the forrest
grew.* [52]*

The modern cliché Valentine's Day poem can be found in the collection of English nursery rhymes *Gammer Gurton's Garland* (1784):

The rose is red, the violet's blue,

*The honey's sweet, and so are you.
Thou art my love and I am thine;
I drew thee to my Valentine:
The lot was cast and then I drew,*

*And Fortune said it shou'd be
you.* [53] [54]*

3.5 Modern times

In 1797, a British publisher issued *The Young Man's 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.* [55]

Paper Valentines became so popular in England in the early 19th century that they were assembled in factories. Fancy Valentines were made with real lace and ribbons, with paper lace introduced in the mid-19th century.* [56] In 1835, 60,000 Valentine cards were sent by post in Britain, despite postage being expensive.* [57] The Laura Seddon Greeting Card Collection at Manchester Metropolitan University gathers 450 Valentine's Day cards dating from the early nineteenth century, printed by the major publishers of the day.* [58] The collection is cataloged in Laura Seddon's book *Victorian Valentines* (1996).* [59]



Valentine's Day postcard, circa 1910

In the United States, the first mass-produced valentines of embossed paper lace were produced and sold shortly after 1847 by Esther Howland (1828–1904) of Worcester, Massachusetts.*[60]*[61] Her father operated a large book and stationery store, but Howland took her inspiration from an English Valentine she had received from a business associate of her father.*[62]*[63] Intrigued with the idea of making similar Valentines, Howland began her business by importing paper lace and floral decorations from England.*[63]*[64] A writer in *Graham's American Monthly* observed in 1849, "Saint Valentine's Day ... is becoming, nay it has become, a national holyday."*[65] The English practice of sending Valentine's cards was established enough to feature as a plot device in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mr. Harrison's Confessions* (1851): "I burst in with my explanations: 'The valentine I know nothing about.' 'It is in your handwriting', said he coldly."*[66] Since 2001, the Greeting Card Association has been giving an annual "Esther Howland Award for a Greeting Card Visionary" .*[61]



Valentines candy



Valentine's Day red roses



Box of Valentine chocolates

Since the 19th century, handwritten notes have given way to mass-produced greeting cards.*[7] In the UK, just under half of the population spend money on their Valentines and around £1.3 billion is spent yearly on cards, flowers, chocolates and other gifts, with an estimated 25 million cards being sent.*[67] The mid-19th century Valentine's Day trade was a harbinger of further commercialized holidays in the United States to follow.*[68]

In the second half of the 20th century, the practice of exchanging cards was extended to all manner of gifts. Such gifts typically include roses, and chocolates packed in a red satin, heart-shaped box. In the 1980s, the diamond industry began to promote Valentine's Day as an occasion for giving jewelry.

The U.S. Greeting Card Association estimates that approximately 190 million valentines are sent each year in the US. Half of those valentines are given to family members other than husband or wife, usually to children. When the valentine-exchange cards made in school activities are included the figure goes up to 1 billion, and teachers become the people receiving the most valentines.*[60] The average valentine's spending has increased every year in the U.S, from \$108 a person in 2010 to \$131 in 2013.*[69]

The rise of Internet popularity at the turn of the millennium is creating new traditions. Millions of people use, every year, digital means of creating and sending

Valentine's Day greeting messages such as e-cards, love coupons or printable greeting cards. An estimated 15 million e-valentines were sent in 2010.*[60] Valentine's Day is considered by some to be a Hallmark holiday due to its commercialization.*[70]

In the modern era, liturgically, the Anglican Church has a service for St. Valentine's Day (the Feast of St. Valentine), which includes the optional rite of the renewal of marriage vows.*[71]

4 Celebration and status worldwide

Valentine's Day customs developed in early modern England and spread throughout the Anglosphere in the 19th century. In the later 20th and early 21st centuries, these customs spread to other countries, but their effect has been more limited than those of Hallowe'en, or than aspects of Christmas, (such as Santa Claus).

Due to a concentrated marketing effort, Valentine's Day is celebrated in some East Asian countries with Chinese and South Koreans spending the most money on Valentine's gifts.*[72]

4.1 Americas

4.1.1 Latin America

In some Latin American countries Saint Valentine's Day is known as “el día de los enamorados” (day of lovers)*[73] or as “Día del Amor y la Amistad” (Day of Love and Friendship). For example, Colombia,*[74] Costa Rica,*[75] Mexico,*[76] and Puerto Rico, as well as others. It is also common to see people perform “acts of appreciation” for their friends. In Guatemala it is known as the “Día del Cariño” (Affection Day).*[77]

In Brazil, the *Dia dos Namorados* (lit. “Lovers' Day”, or “Boyfriends'/Girlfriends' Day”) is celebrated on June 12, probably because that is the day before Saint Anthony's day, known there as the *marriage saint*.*[78] when traditionally many single women perform popular rituals, called *simpatias*, in order to find a good husband or boyfriend. Couples exchange gifts, chocolates, cards and flower bouquets. The February 14 Valentine's Day is not celebrated at all because it usually falls too little before or too little after the Brazilian Carnival*[79] —that can fall anywhere from early February to early March and lasts almost a week. Because of the absence of Valentine's Day and due to the celebrations of the Carnivals, Brazil is a popular tourist spot during February for Western singles who want to get away from the holiday.*[80]

In most of Latin America the *Día del amor y la amistad* and the *Amigo secreto* (“Secret friend”) are quite popular and are usually celebrated together on February 14 (one

exception is Colombia, where it is celebrated on the third Saturday in September). The latter consists of randomly assigning to each participant a recipient who is to be given an anonymous gift (similar to the Christmas tradition of Secret Santa).

4.1.2 United States



Tree in San Diego decorated with hearts on Valentine's Day

In the United States, about 190 million Valentine's Day cards are sent each year, not including the hundreds of millions of cards school children exchange.*[81] Additionally, in recent decades Valentine's Day has become increasingly commercialized and a popular gift-giving event, with Valentine's Day themed advertisements encouraging spending on loved ones. In fact, in the United States alone, the average valentine's spending has increased every year, from \$108 a person in 2010 to \$131 in 2013.*[69]

4.2 Asia

4.2.1 China

In Chinese, Valentine's Day is called lovers' festival (simplified Chinese: 情人节; traditional Chinese: 情人節; pinyin: *qíng rén jié*). The “Chinese Valentine's Day” is the Qixi Festival, celebrated on the seventh day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar. It commemorates a day on which a legendary cowherd and weaving maid are allowed to be together. In Chinese culture, there is an older observance related to lovers, called “The Night of Sevens” (Chinese: 七夕; pinyin: *Qī Xī*). According to the legend, the Cowherd star and the Weaver Maid star are normally separated by the Milky Way (silvery river) but are allowed to meet by crossing it on the 7th day of the 7th month of the Chinese calendar.

In recent years, celebrating White Day has also become fashionable among some young people.

4.2.2 India

In India, in antiquity, there was a tradition of adoring *Kamadeva*, the lord of love; exemplified by the erotic carvings in the *Khajuraho Group of Monuments* and by the writing of the *Kamasutra* treaty of lovemaking.*[82] This tradition was lost around the *Middle Ages*, when *Kamadeva* was no longer celebrated, and public displays of sexual affection became frowned upon.*[82] This repression of public affections persisted until the 1990s.

In the state of West Bengal, *Saraswati Puja*, a festival observed in early spring where *Saraswati*, the goddess of learning is worshipped; has often been seen as a *Bengali* version of Valentine's Day; especially among the urban middle-class youth.

Valentine's Day celebrations did not catch on in India until around 1992. It was spread due to the programs in commercial TV channels, such as *MTV*, dedicated radio programs and love letter competitions, in addition to an economical liberalization that allowed the explosion of the valentine card industry.*[82]*[83] Economic liberalization also helped the Valentine card industry.*[83] The celebration has caused a sharp change on how people have been displaying their affection in public since the Middle Ages.*[82]

In modern times, Hindu and Islamic*[84] traditionalists have considered the holiday to be cultural contamination from the West, a result of the globalization in India.*[82]*[83] *Shiv Sena* and the *Sangh Parivar* have asked their followers to shun the holiday and the “public admission of love” because of them being “alien to Indian culture”.*[85] Although these protests are organized by political elites, the protesters themselves are middle-class Hindu men who fear that the globalization will destroy the traditions in their society: *arranged marriages*, *Hindu joint families*, *full-time mothers*, etc.*[83]*[84]

Despite these obstacles, Valentine's Day is becoming increasingly popular in India.*[86]

Valentine's Day has been strongly criticized from a postcolonial perspective by intellectuals from the Indian left. The holiday is regarded as a front for “Western imperialism”, “neocolonialism”, and “the exploitation of working classes through commercialism by multinational corporations”.*[87] It is claimed that as a result of Valentine's Day, the working classes and rural poor become more disconnected socially, politically, and geographically from the hegemonic capitalist power structure. They also criticize mainstream media attacks on Indians opposed to Valentine's Day as a form of *demonization* that is designed and derived to further the Valentine's Day agenda.*[88]*[89] Right wing Hindu nationalists are also hostile. In February 2012, *Subash Chouhan* of the *Bajrang Dal* warned couples that “They cannot kiss or hug in public places. Our activists will beat them up”.*[90] He said “We are not against love, but we criticize vulgar exhibition of love at public places”.*[91]

4.2.3 Iran

In the first part of the 21st century, the celebration of Valentine's Day in Iran has been harshly criticized by Islamic teachers who see the celebrations as opposed to Islamic culture. In 2011, the Iranian printing works owners' union issued a directive banning the printing and distribution of any goods promoting the holiday, including cards, gifts and teddy bears. “Printing and producing any goods related to this day including posters, boxes and cards emblazoned with hearts or half-hearts, red roses and any activities promoting this day are banned ... Outlets that violate this will be legally dealt with”, the union warned.*[92]*[93]

In Iran, the *Sepandarmazgan*, or *Esfandegan*, is a festival where people express love towards their mothers and wives, and it is also a celebration of earth in ancient Persian culture. It has been progressively forgotten in favor of the Western celebration of Valentine's Day. The Association of Iran's Cultural and Natural Phenomena has been trying since 2006 to make *Sepandarmazgan* a national holiday on February 17, in order to replace the Western holiday.*[94]

4.2.4 Israel

In Israel, the Jewish tradition of *Tu B'Av* has been revived and transformed into the Jewish equivalent of Valentine's Day. It is celebrated on the 15th day of the month of *Av* (usually in late August). In ancient times girls would wear white dresses and dance in the vineyards, where the boys would be waiting for them (*Mishna Taanith* end of Chapter 4). Today, *Tu B'Av* is celebrated as a second holiday of love by secular people (beside Valentine's Day), and it shares many of the customs associated with Saint Valentine's Day in western societies. In modern Israeli culture *Tu B'Av* is a popular day to pronounce love, propose marriage and give gifts like cards or flowers.*[95]

4.2.5 Japan

In Japan, *Morozoff Ltd.* introduced the holiday for the first time in 1936, when it ran an advertisement aimed at foreigners. Later in 1953 it began promoting the giving of heart-shaped chocolates; other Japanese confectionery companies followed suit thereafter. In 1958 the *Isetan* department store ran a “Valentine sale”. Further campaigns during the 1960s popularized the custom.*[96]*[97]

The custom that only women give chocolates to men may have originated from the translation error of a chocolate-company executive during the initial campaigns.*[98] In particular, office ladies give chocolate to their co-workers. Unlike western countries, gifts such as greeting cards,*[98] candies, flowers, or dinner dates*[99] are uncommon, and most of the activity about the gifts is

about giving the right amount of chocolate to each person. * [98] Japanese chocolate companies make half their annual sales during this time of the year. * [98]

Many women feel obliged to give chocolates to all male co-workers, except when the day falls on a Sunday, a holiday. This is known as *giri-choko* (義理チョコ), from *giri* (“obligation”) and *choko*, (“chocolate”), with unpopular co-workers receiving only “ultra-obligatory” *chō-giri choko* cheap chocolate. This contrasts with *honmei-choko* (本命チョコ, lit. “true feeling chocolate”), chocolate given to a loved one. Friends, especially girls, may exchange chocolate referred to as *tomo-choko* (友チョコ); from *tomo* meaning “friend”. * [100]

In the 1980s the Japanese National Confectionery Industry Association launched a successful campaign to make March 14 a “reply day”, where men are expected to return the favour to those who gave them chocolates on Valentine's Day, calling it *White Day* for the color of the chocolates being offered. A previous failed attempt to popularize this celebration had been done by a marshmallow manufacturer who wanted men to return marshmallows to women. * [96] * [97]

Men are expected to return gifts that are at least two or three times more valuable than the gifts received in Valentine's Day. Not returning the gift is perceived as the man placing himself in a position of superiority, even if excuses are given. Returning a present of equal value is considered as a way to say that the relationship is being cut. Originally only chocolate was given, but now the gifts of jewelry, accessories, clothing and lingerie are usual. According to the official website of White Day, the color white was chosen because it's the color of purity, evoking “pure, sweet teen love”, and because it's also the color of sugar. The initial name was “Ai ni Kotaeru White Day” (Answer Love on White Day). * [96] * [97]

In Japan, the romantic “date night” associated to Valentine's Day is celebrated on *Christmas Eve*. * [101]

In a 2006 survey of people between 10 and 49 years of age in Japan, Oricon Style found the 1986 Sayuri Kokushō single “Valentine Kiss” to be the most popular Valentine's Day song, even though it sold only 317,000 copies. * [102] The singles it beat in the ranking were number one selling “Love Love Love” from *Dreams Come True* (2,488,630 copies) and “Valentine's Radio” from *Yumi Matsutoya* (1,606,780 copies). The final song in the top five was “My Funny Valentine” by *Miles Davis*. * [102]

In Japan, a slightly different version of a holiday based on a lovers' story called *Tanabata* (七夕) has been celebrated for centuries, on July 7 (Gregorian calendar). * [103] It has been considered by Westerners as similar to *St. Valentine's Day*, * [104] but it's not related to it, and its origins are completely different.



Bouquet of homemade cupcakes made by Chantal Hanna on Valentine's Day

4.2.6 Lebanon

Saint Valentine is the patron saint for a large part of the Lebanese population. Couples take the opportunity of Valentine's feast day to exchange sweet words and gifts as proof of love. Such gifts typically include chocolates boxes, Valentine's Cupcakes as well as red roses which are the emblem of sacrifice and passion.

4.2.7 Malaysia

Islamic officials in Malaysia warned Muslims against celebrating Valentine's Day, linking it with vice activities. Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said the celebration of romantic love was “not suitable” for Muslims. Wan Mohamad Sheikh Abdul Aziz, head of the Malaysian Islamic Development Department (Jakim), which oversees the country's Islamic policies said that a fatwa (ruling) issued by the country's top clerics in 2005 noted that the day ‘is associated with elements of Christianity,’ and ‘we just cannot get involved with other religions' worshipping rituals.’ Jakim officials planned to carry out a nationwide campaign called “Awat Jerat Valentine's Day” (“Mind the Valentine's Day Trap”), aimed at preventing Muslims from celebrating the day on February 14, 2011. Activities include conducting raids in hotels to stop young couples from having unlawful sex and distributing leaflets to Muslim university students warning them against the day. * [105] * [106]

On Valentine's Day 2011, Malaysian religious authorities arrested more than 100 Muslim couples concerning the celebration ban. Some of them would be charged in the Shariah Court for defying the department's ban against the celebration of Valentine's Day.*[107]

4.2.8 Pakistan

The concept of Valentine's Day was introduced into Pakistan during the late 1990s with special TV and radio programs. The *Jamaat-e-Islami* political party has called for the banning of Valentine's Day celebration.*[86] Despite this, the celebration is becoming popular among urban youth and the florists expect to sell a great amount of flowers, especially red roses. The case is the same with card publishers.*[108]

4.2.9 Saudi Arabia

In Saudi Arabia, in 2002 and 2008, religious police banned the sale of all Valentine's Day items, telling shop workers to remove any red items, because the day is considered a Christian holiday.*[109]*[110] This ban has created a black market for roses and wrapping paper.*[110]*[111] In 2012 the religious police arrested more than 140 Muslims for celebrating the holiday, and confiscated all red roses from flower shops.*[112] Muslims are not allowed to celebrate the holiday, and non-Muslims can celebrate only behind closed doors.*[113]

In 2014, religious police in Saudi Arabia arrested five men for celebrating St. Valentine's Day "in the company" of six women. The *Buraidah* criminal court pronounced sentences totaling 32 years of imprisonment and 4,500 lashes to the men.*[114]

"Saudi cleric Sheikh Muhammad Al-'Arifi said on Valentine's Day Eve that celebrating this holiday constitutes *bid'a* – a forbidden innovation and deviation from religious law and custom – and mimicry of the West."*[115]*[116]

4.2.10 Philippines

In the Philippines, Valentine's Day is called *Araw ng mga Pusò* ("Day of Hearts"), and is celebrated in much the same manner as in the West. It is usually marked by a steep increase in the price of flowers, particularly red roses.

4.2.11 Singapore

According to findings, Singaporeans are among the biggest spenders on Valentine's Day, with 60% of Singaporeans indicating that they would spend between \$100 and \$500 during the season leading up to the holiday.*[72]

4.2.12 South Korea

In South Korea, women give chocolate to men on February 14, and men give non-chocolate candy to women on March 14 (White Day). On April 14 (Black Day), those who did not receive anything on February 14 or March go to a Chinese-Korean restaurant to eat black noodles (jajangmyeon) and lament their 'single life'.*[99] Koreans also celebrate Pepero Day on November 11, when young couples give each other Pepero cookies. The date '11/11' is intended to resemble the long shape of the cookie. The 14th of every month marks a love-related day in Korea, although most of them are obscure. From January to December: Candle Day, Valentine's Day, White Day, Black Day, Rose Day, Kiss Day, Silver Day, Green Day, Music Day, Wine Day, Movie Day, and Hug Day.*[117] Korean women give a much higher amount of chocolate than Japanese women.*[99]

4.2.13 Taiwan



Taipei 101 in Valentine's Day 2006

In Taiwan, traditional Qixi Festival, Valentine's Day and White Day are all celebrated. However, the situation is the reverse of Japan's. Women give gifts to men on Valentine's Day, and men return them on White Day.*[99]

4.3 Europe

4.3.1 Finland and Estonia

In Finland Valentine's Day is called *ystävnpäivä* which translates into "Friend's Day" . As the name indicates, this day is more about remembering friends, not significant others. In Estonia Valentine's Day is called *sõbrapäev*, which has the same meaning.*[118]

4.3.2 France

In France, a traditionally Catholic country, Valentine's Day is known simply as "Saint Valentin", and is celebrated in much the same way as other western countries.

4.3.3 Greece

St. Valentine's Day, or Ημέρα του Αγίου Βαλεντίνου in Greek tradition was not associated with romantic love; In the Eastern Orthodox church there is another Saint who protects people who are in love, Hyacinth of Caesarea (feast day July 3), but in contemporary Greece, this tradition has mostly been superseded by the "globalized" form of Valentine's Day.

4.3.4 Portugal

In Portugal it is more commonly referred to as "Dia dos Namorados" (Lover's Day / Day of the Enamoured).

4.3.5 Romania

In recent years, Romania has also started celebrating Valentine's Day. This has drawn backlash from several groups, institutions*[119] and nationalist organizations like Noua Dreaptă, who condemn Valentine's Day for being superficial, commercialist and imported Western kitsch. In order to counter the perceived denaturation of national culture, Dragobete, a spring festival celebrated in parts of Southern Romania, has been rekindled as the traditional Romanian holiday for lovers. Its date used to vary depending on the geographical area, however nowadays it is commonly observed on February 24. The holiday is named after a character from Romanian folklore who was supposed to be the son of Baba Dochia. His name has been associated, possibly through folk etymology, to the word *drag* ("dear"), which can also be found in the word *dragoste* ("love").

4.3.6 Scandinavia

In Denmark and Norway, although February 14 is known as *Valentinsdag*, it is not celebrated to a large extent, but is largely imported from American culture, and some people take time to eat a romantic dinner with their partner, to send a card to a secret love or give a red rose to their loved one. The cut-flower industry in particular is still working on promoting the holiday. In Sweden it is called *Alla hjärtans dag* ("All Hearts' Day") and was launched in the 1960s by the flower industry's commercial interests, and due to the influence of American culture. It is not an official holiday, but its celebration is recognized and sales of cosmetics and flowers for this holiday are only exceeded by those for Mother's Day.



Lars Jacob and Emil Eikner host a Valentine's Day celebration dinner in Stockholm in 2015

4.3.7 Spain

In Spain, Valentine's Day is known as "San Valentín" and is celebrated the same way as in the UK, it is however not celebrated in Catalonia.

4.3.8 Wales

In Wales, some people celebrate Dydd Santes Dwynwen (*St Dwynwen's Day*) on January 25 instead of (or as well as) Valentine's Day. The day commemorates St Dwynwen, the patron saint of Welsh lovers.

5 See also

- Sailor's valentine
- Saint Valentine's Day Massacre
- Singles Awareness Day
- *Valentine's Day* (2010 film)
- V-Day, the global movement to end violence against women and girls.
- Women's Memorial March, held on Valentine's Day in Vancouver, British Columbia.

6 Notes

- [1] For example, one source claims incorrectly that "Pope Gelasius I muddled things in the 5th century by combining St. Valentine's Day with Lupercalia to expel the pagan rituals." Seipel, Arnie, *The Dark Origins Of Valentine's Day*, Nation Public Radio, February 13, 2011
- [2] Ansgar, 1976, pp. 60–61. The replacement of Lupercalia with Saint Valentine's celebration was suggested by researchers Kellog and Cox. Ansgar says "It is hardly

credible, then, that Pope Gelasius could have introduced the feast of the Purification to counteract the Lupercalia, and in fact the historical records of his pontificate give no hint of such an action.”

- [3] Ansgar, 1976, pp. 60–61. This feast is celebrated 40 days after the Nativity. In Jerusalem the Nativity was celebrated on January 6, and this feast in February 14. But, in the West and even in Eastern places such as Antioch and Alexandria, Nativity was celebrated on December 25, and this Purification was not celebrated. When this feast was introduced to Rome, it was directly placed in February 2. Around that time, Jerusalem adopted the Nativity date of December 25 and moved the Purification to February 2.

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- [2] Ansgar, 1986, *Chaucer and the Cult of Saint valentine*, pp. 46-58
- [3] Ansgar, 1986, p. 59. It originated in the 1797 edition of *Kemish's Annual*, according to Frank Staff, *The Valentine and Its Origins* (London, 1969), p. 122. Ansgar was unable to corroborate this.
- [4] “Holy Days” . Church of England (Anglican Communion). 2012. Retrieved October 27, 2012. February 14 Valentine, Martyr at Rome, c.269
- [5] Pfatteicher, Philip H. (August 1, 2008). *New Book of Festivals and Commemorations: A Proposed Common Calendar of Saints*. Fortress Press. p. 86. ISBN 9780800621285. Retrieved October 27, 2012. IO February 14 The Lutheran Service Book, with its penchant for the old Roman calendar, commemorates Valentine on this date.
- [6] “St Valentine Key, Italy” . *Pitt Rivers Museum*. University of Oxford. 2012. Retrieved June 20, 2014. While Saint Valentine’s keys are traditionally gifted as a romantic symbol and an invitation to unlock the giver’s heart, Saint Valentine is also a patron saint of epilepsy. The belief that he could perform miraculous cures and heal the condition – also known as ‘Saint Valentine’s illness’ or ‘Saint Valentine’s affliction’ – was once common in southern Germany, eastern Switzerland, Austria, and northern Italy. To this day, a special ceremony where children are given small golden keys to ward off epilepsy is held at the Oratorio di San Giorgio, a small chapel in Monselice, Padua, on 14 February each year.
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- [8] Henry Ansgar Kelly, in *Chaucer and the Cult of Saint Valentine* (Leiden: Brill) 1986, accounts for these and further local Saints Valentine (Ch. 6 “The Genoese Saint Valentine and the observances of May”) in arguing that Chaucer had an established tradition in mind, and (pp. 79 ff.) linking the Valentine in question to Valentine, first bishop of Genoa, the only Saint Valentine honoured with a feast in springtime, the season indicated by Chaucer. Valentine of Genoa was treated by Jacobus of Verazze in his *Chronicle of Genoa* (Kelly p. 85).
- [9] *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, s.v. “Valentine”: “The Acts of both are unreliable, and the Bollandists assert that these two Valentines were in fact one and the same.”
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8 External links

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