

# CELEBRATING MOTHERS



Throughout the month of May, mothers worldwide are celebrated by the citizens of more than 40 countries. While other nations may hold observances on different dates, all their moms will be honored just the same.

We in the United States can be credited with creating a national day in honor of mothers in 1914, but the women who nurture us have been saluted for as long as time.

Ancient Romans and Greeks rewarded their mother goddesses with festivities, and in medieval times, Mothering Sunday was the day when indentured family members were allowed to visit their homes, loved ones, and “mother church.”

**The history of our modern tributes, though, is steeped in controversy.**

## The Mothers of Mother's Day

**Anna Jarvis** is recognized as the originator of the holiday, thanks to her unceasing efforts to honor her own mother. When Ann Reeves Jarvis passed away on the second Sunday of May in 1905, Anna Jarvis dedicated herself to memorializing the day as a celebration of mothers.

By 1908, when churches in West Virginia and Philadelphia focused their services on mothers at the request of Anna Jarvis, the idea had grown in popularity thanks to her activism. The second Sunday of May was declared a national holiday in 1914.

Although she considered Mother's Day to be her personal creation, and fought legal challenges to end the commercialization of the holiday until her death, she was certainly not the first to believe that mothers deserve a special day of honor.

Suffragette **Julia Ward Howe**, author of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” went on to advocate for a “Mother's Day of Peace” to be celebrated in June 1872, but was unsuccessful in creating an annual observance.

In 1887, **Mary Towles Sasseen** of Henderson, Ky., started a campaign to recognize mothers. She was responsible for promoting a “Mother's Day Celebration” in 1893, and published literature to accompany her nationwide activism.

Mary Towles Sasseen married in 1904, and although she died in childbirth in 1906, she is credited in her obituary with instituting “Mothers' Day” in local schools. She was also commended by the State of Kentucky as the “originator of the idea of a Mother's Day celebration” in 1926.

# The Fathers of Mother's Day

Believe it or not, **Napoleon Bonaparte** suggested a day to honor mothers way back in 1806, but it wasn't until World War I that Americans brought the holiday to Europe. France declared its first Mother's Day in 1950, and celebrations commence on either the last Sunday in May or the first Sunday in June of each year.

Another gentleman, **Frank Hering** of the Fraternal Order of Eagles, publicly proposed the "setting aside of one day in the year as a nationwide memorial to the memory of Mothers and motherhood" in February 1904.

The Fraternal Order of Eagles organized annual festivities thereafter, and still assert that Frank Hering is recognized as "The Father of Mother's Day" — despite the objections of Anna Jarvis.

And there are those who consider **President Woodrow Wilson** to be the "father" of Mother's Day, since he declared the second Sunday of May a national day of recognition to honor "the mothers of our country."

*Over time, the original "Mothers' Day" moved away from encouraging recognition and support for all mothers to emphasizing personal interaction within families, and became the "Mother's Day" we celebrate today.*

## Mother's Day Tributes

The **white carnation** became the symbol to honor a mother who has passed on thanks to Anna Jarvis, who chose her mother's favorite flower. Customarily, a **red carnation** denotes respect for a living mother.

**Fresh flowers** are still high on the list of gifts women receive for Mother's Day and account for a quarter of all holiday plant purchases. Only Valentine's Day tops it.

Mother's Day is third for **holiday card** sales, trailing Christmas and Valentine's Day (again). **Jewelry** remains a significant gift item, too; in 2019, sales were expected to increase by 31% over the year before.

**Dining out** is the biggest treat for moms on this day, with almost half of all Americans going to restaurants — Mother's Day is the number one holiday for going out to eat.

**It's also the day with the highest phone traffic of the year in the US, and is one of the biggest gift-giving holidays in the world.**

# Celebrating Mothers

Much like International Women's Day, Mother's Day originated as a celebration of women worldwide who are the guardians of future generations as well as the mothers who shaped our lives today.

**Remember and celebrate** the mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and mentors who helped you become the person you are. **Thank the women** you know who are raising families and working to make the world a better place. **Respect the lives** of women worldwide, every day.



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