



*Special Occasions:*

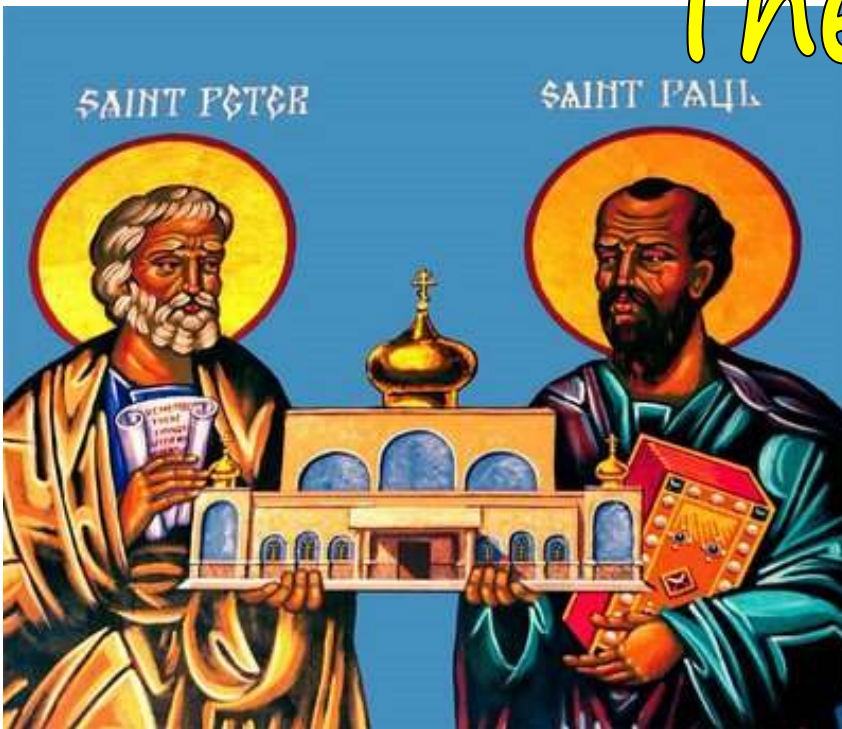
*L-Imnarja*

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# The Feast



The feast of Saints Peter and Paul on June 29th marks an important event in the calendar of Maltese popular customs and festivities.

Traditionally known as "L-Imnarja", this feast, goes back further to even before the coming of the Knights in 1530 and is essentially a country folk-festival. Following closely the hard toils of harvest time, it made a pleasant break in the dull

everyday routine that made up the peasant's life in the past: - a few crowded hours of merrymaking and rustic song, amidst a yearly routine of sweat and toil working the land.

The name 'L-Imnarja' is a corruption of Italian 'luminaria' - illumination. Meant a Festival of Light. Thus being a festival of light, recalling tile illumination of the Mdina cathedral, the city walls of the old capital, and of other rural parts with lights, as a sign of rejoicing on June 28th and 29th.

## *On the Eve of the Feast*

On the eve of the feast the scene shifts to Buskett Gardens, a wooded Park in the outskirts of Rabat. Here the cries of food and drink vendors mingle with the boisterous crowd. By this time the Agricultural Show would have been blessed and declared open and visitors flock to watch the display of animals, vegetables, fruits, poultry, honey, local and many other exhibits.



*Food Produce Display*

# The Feast...

As the shades of evening fall slowly on the enchanting valley surmounted by Verdala Castle country-folk and other merrymakers seek out trees where they intend to spend the night beneath a flurry of leafy branches.



*Maltese Traditional Folk Dancing*

Even today, from all parts of Malta, people still make their way to Buskett, where the scene is set for a feast of song and food beneath the trees.

The appetising smell of fried rabbit entices the merrymakers to indulge in a good feed washed down with wine from the local vats. The night is then spent in good-humoured mirth and fun, while revellers compete in singing bouts to the strains of Spanish guitars and the popular hands from the various villages

On the afternoon of the 29th the 'Imnarja' festivities reach their climax with the traditional horse and donkey races held in the vicinity of Mdina. Long before the appointed time the racecourse is lined with throngs of people who defy the scorching rays of the June sun to get a good view of the races.

A characteristic of traditional horse races in Malta is that animals are ridden bare-backed, the jockeys gripping their mount with the knees and urging on the beasts with short sticks in either hand.

In the 17th and 18th centuries these races generally, comprised seven events i.e. races for boys, negro slaves, men, donkeys, mules, mares and horses.



*The famous race*

# The Feast...

With the abolition of slavery by Napoleon in 1798 the event for negroes came to an end, and since the middle of the 18th century the races for men and boys have been held in Imdina on the occasion of the feast of Our Lady Of Mount Carmel, observed on the third Sunday of July.

For about three centuries the loggia overlooking the traditional racecourse at the foot of 'Saqajja' has served for the distribution of the '*palji*'. A Latin motto inscribed on the wall reads as follows: "Cuicumque Legitime Certaverit -1696", which may be freely translated as "for all who lawfully strive to win."

After the races, the crowds disperse and return to their homesteads by car, by bus or as was the case in the past by the traditional horse-driven cart. This event brings to a close this yearly summer folk - festival amidst the lingering joyful shouts and carefree songs of the merry-makers.

The feast of St. Peter and St. Paul is also celebrated in Nadur, Gozo, this time in the usual festive manner that is normally held in towns and villages.



# St. Martin's Bread

## *Ingredients needed for the Bread:*

- 400g plain flour
- 1 sachet instant yeast
- 75g margarine
- 75g Sugar
- Few drops of Vanilla essence
- 250ml tepid milk

## *Ingredients needed for the Glazing:*

- 50ml water
- 50g sugar

## *Ingredients for decoration:*

- Sesame Seeds
- Liquorice sweets

## *How to do it:*

- Mix well flour and Margarine then add the yeast, sugar, vanilla, and stir well.
- Then add the tepid milk to make dough and knead well by hand for around 10 to 15 minutes, or until dough is elastic.
- Leave to rise for around an hour, (by then the dough would have doubled in size) then knead the dough again until it becomes elastic once again.
- The shape into small buns leaving enough space between the buns since these will grow in size over the next hour.
- In the mean time prepare the glaze by melting the sugar in the water until it becomes like a syrup.
- Glaze the buns with the syrup and place in preheated oven for around 20 minutes or until golden brown.
- Slight variations to this recipe include, sprinkling the buns with sesame seeds and / or sticking a liquorices in the middle of the bun.

