

Cake it easy!



Birthday celebrations, though a common convention across the globe, are ablaze with the warmth of the country the candles are ignited in. The cake, the heart of any and every birthday celebration, is served with authentic, sometimes even bizarre, customs that carry the (vanilla) essence of the home nation. **Madhav Ahuja, AIS Noida, XI I**, is here to narrate the tale behind these unique birthday traditions.

Country: China
Custom: Eating Yi Mein or Longevity Noodles

Referred to as the Longevity Noodles, these noodles symbolise a long life sans obstacles, reflected in the length of the noodles, with one noodle being long enough to fill a bowl, meant to be slurped without splitting. The roots of the tradition steamed in the kitchens of Emperor Wu's kingdom in the 2nd century, where the earliest bowls of the noodles were cooked.



Country: Latin America
Custom: Quinceanera

A quinceañera is the commemoration ceremony of a girl's 15th birthday that represents her transformation from childhood to young womanhood. The tradition traces back to Spanish and Aztec history, wherein girls would dress up in quinceanera gowns to be presented to their potential suitors by their father.



Country: Mexico
Custom: Bursting pinatas

Formerly used to portray the Christian doctrine of sin and virtue, wherein the stick stood for virtue and the goodies inside the pinata symbolised the riches of heaven that one can receive with virtue, pinatas, are the heart of Mexican birthday festivities. Children take a swing each at the pinata, as the family members sing a song alongside, waiting for it to burst open.



Country: Canada
Custom: Buttering the nose

Buttering one's nose is an auspicious Canadian birthday tradition, performed by the Inuit population to welcome newcomers into their community, as a mark of acceptance. The practice, surmised to slip off bad luck, is said to have travelled to Eastern Canada from the ceremonies of superstitious Scottish cultures.



Country: Vietnam
Custom: Tet

The epitome of unity continues to age in the country of Vietnam, where everyone has the same birthday. Though peculiar it sounds, the Vietnamese believe that everyone grows a year older on Tet, the Lunar New Year's Day, and so, in the most glorious and grand of ways, they celebrate their birthday in unison instead of celebrating their actual birthdays.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY



Country: South Africa
Custom: Gifting a key

Opening your birthday present only to find a key resting behind the slivers of wrapping paper at the bottom of the box - unusual, right? But in South Africa, it's a tradition. The key, made from gold or silver, symbolises the opening of new opportunities in the celebrant's life and their readiness to explore it all.

