

Transition Times

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Spring 2011

Dear Transition Times Families,

We are putting this newsletter together as the snow is disappearing and warm weather seems to be approaching. However, who knows what will be happening by the time you receive this! We have just sent out the questionnaires and the on-line links to each of you. If you didn't receive it, please contact us. One group of you has completed the study (no questionnaire this year), one group is completing the study this spring, and one group is in the middle of the study.

We have some very good news. The National Institutes of Health appears to be impressed by this study – by all of your hard work in sticking with us over the years. It looks like we will obtain additional funding next year to continue the study. Nothing is certain as Congress has not approved the budget, but we are cautiously optimistic. We will keep you posted. If you are moving or planning to move, please drop us a line so that we know how to contact you next year.

Thank you for all of your support. To get you in the mood for Spring, we are providing you with some information about the Mardi Gras celebration. We were curious about this holiday so we did some investigating. We hope you find it interesting.

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What is Mardi Gras?

Mardi Gras, also meaning Fat Tuesday in French, has come to represent a time of indulgence and celebration across the world. This time of merrymaking allowed people to binge on meat, eggs, and milk before the start of the Lenten season of fasting and penitence.

Mardi Gras is celebrated in locations both inside and outside the United States with varying customs. All celebrations carry common elements of music, bold and colorful costumes, and abundant joy. The most famous Mardi Gras celebration in the United States is held in New Orleans, Louisiana.

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The History of Mardi Gras

Where did it begin?

In mid-February, ancient Romans celebrated Lupercalia, a festival that is very similar to the Mardi Gras we celebrate today. When Rome embraced Christianity, the Church chose to incorporate certain pagan rituals into the new faith to subtly convert the local pagans. This festival became a period of abandon and high spirited fun preceding the penance of Lent.

When did Mardi Gras come to the U.S.?

It is generally accepted that Mardi Gras, which had been celebrated in France since the middle ages, came to America in 1699 with French explorer Sieur d'Iberville.

Who else celebrates?

Many countries across the world celebrate their own traditions in the spirit of Mardi Gras. In England, you might attend a pancake festival, while in Brazil, you might celebrate with Samba dancing.



Parades & Krewes

Parades are a large part of the Mardi Gras tradition.



What's a Krewe?

Parades are organized by a group of members referred to as a Krewe. Krewes are masking and parading clubs that typically resemble private social clubs. One must be invited to join a Krewe, and an application must be brought before a membership review board. All of the floats in the parade are designed around that Krewe's theme for the year. Krewe members ride on these floats and toss beads, doubloons (see next page) and trinkets into the crowds during the parade.

What makes up a Parade?

Every parade is unique to the traditions of the individual Krewe. However, they all share a few common characteristics, such as electing a King or Queen for the parade. Typically a Grand Marshal is also nominated. In recent years, various celebrities have been honored as the parade's Grand Marshal.

For the 2011 New Orleans Mardi Gras celebration, a few Grand Marshals are Kelly Ripa, Anderson Cooper, and the rock band Train.

The Colors of Mardi Gras

In 1872, a color scheme was chosen to represent Mardi Gras, but it wasn't until 20 years later that the color meanings were established: purple for justice, green for faith, and gold

for power. Today these colors are a symbol of the season and adorn everything from banners to clothing to cake toppings.

Masks

Masks have been worn in New Orleans during balls for centuries. They originated with carnival crews and the secret upper class, but the concept of wearing masks soon moved to the street.

Why Wear Them?

Masks are worn with or without a costume. They allow participants to be anonymous for the day. Many celebrities come to New Orleans to wear a mask and experience a day of freedom. Often couples will coordinate, or groups of friends will wear themed masks. Masks can be used to express your inner personality or alter ego.

In the French Quarter, masks are often used at the parades to get attention from float riders so that they will throw more trinkets.



Beads

While the first parades occurred in New Orleans in the 1830's, beaded necklaces did not become a tradition until the 1920's when the Rex parade threw inexpensive glass necklaces into the crowds.

What do they look like?

These beaded necklaces traditionally represented the three symbolic

colors of Mardi Gras. However, as celebrations have grown, these beaded necklaces can now be found in all shapes and colors. Beads are getting longer each year, and the most popular size today is about 33 inches long.

As one of the most popular Mardi Gras souvenirs, members of

Krewe spend between \$800 to \$2000 per parade ride on the beads that they toss.



Doubloons



What are they?

Doubloons are one of the most treasured and collected symbols of Mardi Gras. They are detailed and brightly-colored coins Krewe members throw from floats, many of which are now collectors' items.

How are they designed?

Typically they are stamped with the logo of the Krewe on one side and the parade's theme on the other so that they are different from year to year. They are made from various materials such as aluminum, silver, bronze and plastic.

Mardi Gras Tradition: The King's Cake

One of the most treasured Mardi Gras customs is the making of the King's Cake. Epiphany, also called Little Christmas on the Twelfth Night, is celebrated in European countries on King's Day, January 6th. It marks the coming of the wise men who brought gifts to the Christ Child.

The cake is made of cinnamon filled dough in the shape of a hollow circle.

It is glazed with frosting and sprinkled with colored sugar (usually in Mardi Gras colors). Inside of each cake is a plastic baby, and whoever receives the baby in their piece becomes the King or Queen of the party and gets the honor of supplying the next King's Cake or throwing the next party. Some larger Krewe's use the King's Cake to determine who will be their King or Queen on that year's float.



Make Your Own: *A King's Cake Recipe*

Kings Cake Recipe

Ingredients:

- 2 8-ounce pkg. cream cheese, softened
- 1 1/2 cup powdered sugar
- 2 eggs, separated
- 1 tsp. vanilla or almond extract
- 2 cans refrigerated crescent rolls (8 oz each)
- 1/2 jar Steel's Gourmet Pie Filling

Optional: 1 inch plastic baby doll

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Beat cream cheese, powdered sugar (or the replacement), egg yolks and extract together until smooth.

Remove rolls from cans and arrange pieces around cookie sheet with points towards the center. Push the dough together, leaving center open. Spread cream cheese mixture on dough. Top with steel's gourmet pie filling (or the sugar free filling). Fold dough over mixture and seal. (Optional: You can fold in plastic baby doll at this time). Brush with beaten egg whites.

Bake 25 to 30 minutes or until golden brown. Drizzle with glaze made of powdered sugar (or the powdered sugar replacement) and water. Color glaze with food coloring and sprinkle over the cake.

Diabetic exchange 1 bread or 1/2 nonfat milk and 1/2 bread.

Calories for 1 slice: 115 cal (original recipe); 81 cal (sugar free version)

Kings Cake: Sugar Free Version

Ingredients:

- 2 8-ounce pkg. cream cheese, softened
- 1 1/2 cup powered sugar replacement
- 2 eggs, separated
- 1 tsp. vanilla or almond extract
- 2 cans refrigerated crescent rolls (8 oz each)
- 1/2 jar Steel's Sugar Free Gourmet Pie Filling

Optional: 1 inch plastic baby doll