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culture

13 Easter Bunny Facts You Didn't Know

THERE'S MORE TO THIS HOLIDAY HARE THAN MEETS THE EYE. HERE ARE SOME AMAZING FACTS ABOUT THE EASTER BUNNY.

By
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If holiday mascots were musicians in a rock band, Santa Claus indubitably would be the lead singer and celebrity front man, hogging the spotlight with his magnetic personality, iconic style, and legendary biography. The Easter Bunny, on the other hand, would be the drummer: Although the adoring public never fails to cheer and head-bang through the drummer's solo, most fans don't actually know much about them. Isn't it time that changed? Whether Easter for you is a devout religious holiday or just another secular-yet-celebratory Sunday, these amazing Easter Bunny facts will help you finally get to know the bunny behind the basket.

1 | The Easter Bunny brings in $18 billion annually.

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Approximately eight in 10 U.S. adults celebrate Easter, according to the National Retail Federation, which says consumers spend an average of $151 per person on the holiday, encompassing everything from clothing and candy to cards and flowers. Collectively, it says, Easter spending totals more than $18 billion per year in the United States. Although the Easter Bunny alone isn't responsible for all that spending, it definitely deserves at least some of the credit, as 65 percent of consumers say their Easter shopping is motivated by tradition and 22 percent is motivated by store displays and decorations; the Easter Bunny typically has a starring role in both.

2 | The Easter Bunny is a German import.

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Whether it originally was a product of paganism or Christianity—and more on that later—Americans ultimately have just one group to thank for the Easter Bunny: the Germans.

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As early as the 17th century, German folklore references the legend of Oschter Haws, German for "Easter hare." The mythical rabbit who visited children while they slept rewarded them with colored eggs for their good behavior, which it left in nests that German children made out of hats.

When German Lutherans settled in Pennsylvania in the 18th century, they brought their customs—including Oschter Haws—with them. As their traditions spread across the United States, nests eventually migrated from hats to baskets, whose contents gradually grew to include candy and gifts alongside colored eggs.

3 | And chocolate Easter bunnies came from Germany, too.

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To older kids and adults, the best version of the Easter Bunny might just be the one that's made of chocolate, wrapped in foil, and sold in stores.

Like the original Easter Bunny, the chocolate Easter Bunny has German lineage: By the 19th century, Easter traditions in Germany had evolved to include cardboard or fabric bunnies that children left out for Oschter Haws, who filled them with candy. At the same time, Germany was becoming an epicenter for chocolate making. It was only a matter of time, then, until Germans had the sweet idea to replace their cardboard candy vessels with chocolate ones.

So the chocolate bunnies likely came from the same German immigrants who brought the Easter Bunny to America via Pennsylvania. In fact, the first American credited with creating a chocolate bunny was Pennsylvanian **Robert Strohecker**, a drugstore owner who created a five-foot chocolate rabbit as an Easter promotion in 1890.

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4 | Children used to leave carrots for the Easter Bunny.

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Although it's not as common now, German children in the early days of Oschter Haws used to leave out carrots for the Easter Bunny—just as children now leave out milk and cookies for Santa Claus on Christmas.

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