28 Birthday Traditions From Around the World - mental_floss on YouTube (Ep.201)

List Show
https://youtube.com/watch?v=IWLGvaeDAlU
https://nerdfighteria.info/v/IWLGvaeDAlU

=====Introduction=====

Hi, I'm John Green, welcome to my salon. This is Mental Floss on YouTube, and it is our birthday! Happy birthday, us! We even got you a cake. Actually, we got ourselves a cake. Hold on, I'm gonna make a wish.

I can't tell you what I wished for, but I can say that I sure hope Beyonce is a guest host of Mental Floss next year.

Alright, so the Mental Floss List Show is officially one year old. Today I'm gonna talk about some ways that people celebrate birthdays around the world in different cultures and different religions, plus, I'm gonna demonstrate some of these so that we can properly celebrate our birthday.

And for those of you who have been complaining that we've been a little bit US eccentric lately, we're gonna get very worldwide today.

(Title sequence)

=====1-5=====
Let's start with the actual origins of birthdays themselves -- they may have started with the ancient Egyptians, like the Bible notes a Pharaoh's birthday, although it's possible that could mean the date of the Pharaoh's death, like the day that he became a god.

The ancient Romans definitely celebrated birthdays, though, and were probably the first people to celebrate their family and friends' birthdays, not just those of rulers and gods.

In Denmark, a Danish flag placed outside the home means that it's somebody's birthday. If it's a child's birthday, the presents are usually placed on or around the child's bed so they can wake up surrounded by presents. That's nice. Sometimes a cake man or cake lady is served, depending on whether the party is for a boy or a girl. The head of the cake person is usually chopped off first, which I will now demonstrate. This was a camel. And now it is a decapitated camel.

At birthday parties for children in Australia and New Zealand, you might find Fairy Bread, which is white bread, butter, and sprinkles. By the way, the round and colorful sprinkles are called "hundreds and thousands" there. I'm now gonna make some fairy bread 'cause it is basically the perfect food, so far as I can tell. What I'm not an expert in: butter spreading. Alright, then you just... What do you do, you just kind of... Oh! Can you fold it up like a Fairy Bread sandwich? Is that frowned upon, Australians? I don't know. I'm gonna try it, though. Good.

At a Brazilian birthday party, people might pull the earlobes of the guest of honor. You can also probably expect to see brigadeiro there, which are a kind of chocolate truffle.

=====6-10=====
Ear pulling is also a thing in Hungary, where there is in fact a rhyming song that accompanies it. The translation is: "God bless you, live so long so your ears reach your ankles."

Earlobe pulling is kind of similar to what other culture's refer to as "the bumps". The bumps are especially common in the UK and Ireland, where the birthday boy or girl is lifted up and bumped on the ground once per each year they have been alive. The US and Canada have a similar tradition, but with punches instead of bumps, because we're much more violent.

Another violent sounding tradition in the US are smash cakes. These are small, individual cakes given to babies to do what they do best: make a mess of their food. I'm not gonna explain this one because you're on the internet, so I assume that you've already seen how adorable it is to watch babies destroy stuff. Instead, I'm gonna demonstrate. So, I am a father, I've seen children do this a lot. Basically you just go an you just... And... That's basically it.

In addition to punches, Canadians have been known to spread butter on the nose of the birthday person. Mark, I know that you're Canadian, but please don't make me do this one, because I just finished cleaning myself up after the smash cake.

Similarly, it's considered good luck in Nepal to put colored rice yogurt on your forehead for birthdays.

=====11-15=====
Mexicans have a special birthday song, "Las Mananitas", AKA "The Little Mornings", which is usually sung at a party before the group eats cake, and of course, pinatas are a common way to celebrate a birthday in Mexico.

Although we usually think of them as Mexican, pinatas actually originated in China, and were used to celebrate New Years. It was Europeans who eventually brought them over to Mexico.

In Ghana, a traditional birthday dish is "oto", mashed yams with eggs and onions.

In China, Yi Mein is commonly eaten on birthdays. In English, those are "longevity noodles", or "long life noodles".

Also, be sure to avoid giving a watch or clock as a gift in China. Those are considered bad luck.

=====16-20=====
Celebrating individual birthdays is rare in Vietnam. Instead, all birthdays are celebrated on the Vietnamese holiday of "Tet", which is a New Year's celebration. Children do receive gifts, though, their elders give them red envelopes with money inside.

Korea operates somewhat similarly. First birthdays are celebrated, but subsequent birthdays are all celebrated on the New Year.

Wishing someone happy birthday before their actual birthday is considered bad luck in Germany. On someone's sixteenth birthday in Germany, they may have flour thrown on their head.

Which may sound rough, but in Jamaica, throwing flour on the head is a every birthday tradition, not just a one-time thing. I'm not gonna throw flour on anyone's head here, but I will demonstrate with a doll. Happy birthday, Yoda. What are you, like a thousand, now?

Anyway, back to Germany. On eighteenth birthdays, flour is replaced with eggs. And if a man reaches his twenty fifth birthday before he marries, his friends will hang a sockencranz, or sock wreath outside of his house. The old socks are a symbol of his old age.

=====21-25=====
On that note, some cultures have different traditions for when people turn a certain age -- like you probably already know that girls who practice Judaism have bat mitzvahs when they turn twelve, and boys have a bar mitzvah when they turn thirteen. Those ceremonies represent a move into adulthood.

Let's finish up with some more age specific traditions. I'm sure you've also heard of the Quinceanera, especially if you were spending all of your free time watching My Super Sweet Sixteen in 2005. I'm not pointing any fingers, Meredith.

In South Africa, when a person turns twenty-one, their parents

present them with a key that symbolizes responsibility and a future.

In Holland, they celebrate "crown years", which are the ages five, ten, fifteen, twenty, and twenty one. On those birthdays, you get bigger presents.

The first, fifth, tenth, and fifteenth birthdays are the most important in Nigeria -- up to one hundred people might show up to those celebrations, which usually involve a feast.

=====26-28=====
For those who practice Orthodox Judaism and Hasidic Judaism, the third birthday is important because it's the day they receive their first haircut. In fact, that tradition has now spread in Israel, and doesn't always apply only to religious people.

Similarly, people from the Indian island of Minicoy shave their newborn baby's head after twenty days. Then, the hair is weighed. Whatever the weight is will be given to charity in silver or gold. That's not a birthday thing, really, we just thought it was cool.

And now I return to my salon to tell you that the Chinese also have a special first birthday tradition: the baby is placed in front of a bunch of objects like books, flowers, stationary, coins, and toys. Parents believe that the items the baby reaches for are indications of future interests. So like, if a coin is chosen, it's considered good luck and a sign that the baby in question will one day be rich. We're gonna try this out, actually with our office dog, Alex. Alright, Alex, what will you choose? Oh, mmm, it turns out that Alex is beyond material possessions. She chooses enlightenment.

=====Outro=====

Thanks for watching Mental Floss on YouTube, which is made with the help of all of these nice people. Every week we endeavour to answer one of your mind blowing questions, and this week's question comes from TheNightTroll13, who asks, "Why do we call a sixtieth of a minute a second?"

Well, NightTroll13, this comes from a Latin word, "secundus", which meant second diminished part, because the hour is divided twice by sixty: the first edition gives us the minutes, the second edition gives us seconds.

If you have a mind blowing you'd like answered, please leave it below and we'll endeavour to answer as many as we can. Thank you again for watching, and as we say in my hometown, don't forget to be awesome.