

Kneading absolution—It's Shrove Tuesday

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Lexington Park, MD - Call it Mardi Gras and it's a wild, raucous party—a costume ball, all-you-can-eat buffet and college frat kegger all rolled into one. When you call it Shrove Tuesday, however, everybody thinks pancakes. The first thing you need to know—a shrove is not another name for a pancake. Shrove Tuesday, also known as “Fat Tuesday” is the day before Ash Wednesday, which marks the beginning of Lent.

According to the publication “English Heritage,” under its category “Historical How-to's,” the Lenten fast was at one time pretty intense. “Traditionally, Christians would mark the period [Lent] with prayers and fasting, abstaining from a whole range of foods—including meat, eggs, fish, fats and milk,” English Heritage blogger Sam Bilton wrote. Those items were staples of households and rather than try to store them for 40 days and 40 nights—before Easter—the stock of those items would be used up Monday and Tuesday prior to Ash Wednesday. For some of those staples the easiest way to deplete the supply was by making pancakes or fritters (for some reason, International House of Fritters [IHOF?] doesn't sound very marketable, does it?). In many locations, Shrove Tuesday is also known as “Pancake Day.”

As for the “shrove” in Shrove Tuesday, shrove is the past tense of “shrive,” which means to present oneself to a cleric for confession, penance and absolution. In the Northern Maryland county of Frederick, the day is known by many as “Kinkling Day.” A kinkling is a doughnut-like pastry that has its origins in Germany, where it's called “fastnachts,” which sort of looks and sounds like “fast snacks.” Indeed, kinklins are bite-sized and you can't just eat one. In a 2014 story published in the Frederick News-Post, writer reported that many of the county's volunteer fire companies, churches and service organizations make and sell kinklins in the days before Lent begins.

A kinkling recipe is posted below.

Whether your Fat Tuesday indulgence is pancakes, kinklins or even fritters, enjoy and savor these traditional foods. Then pray that Easter gets here soon!

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