

Fish Fridays: A Short History [A2]

Un'usanza popolare britannica è quella di cenare pesce il venerdì. Sebbene questa abitudine abbia origini religiose, è diventata popolare per motivi pratici.

In many places in the world, it is traditional to eat fish on Friday evening. In the UK, it is the perfect moment [to treat yourself](#) to fish and chips, and in the US some fast food restaurants offer fish burgers to attract customers on Fridays. But where does this tradition come from? To answer this question, we must go back a couple of millennia.

FISHY TALES

For a very long time, many Christians believed that the origin of Friday [fasting](#) was in a secret pact made by a medieval [pope to boost](#) the fishing [trade](#). By imposing the rule of eating fish on Fridays, fishermen were assured of making enough money [to last through the week](#). This was widely believed until relatively recently, when researchers [looking through](#) the Vatican archives revealed that they had found no evidence of [any such](#) pact.

A SYMBOLIC SACRIFICE

The practice of abstaining from eating meat on Fridays dates to significantly earlier and exists in Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican and Methodist church traditions. According to Christian teachings, Jesus died on a Friday, so by [fasting](#) on Friday [believers](#) share in his suffering. The rule is [to avoid](#) eating the [flesh](#) of [warm-blooded](#) animals that sacrificed their lives for us, the same way Jesus sacrificed his to redeem the [sins](#) of [humankind](#). Fish are not only cold-blooded, they have also been associated with sacred holidays since pre-Christian times; they were [therefore](#) the preferred Friday [meal](#) among Christians.

FISH BY LAW

After King Henry VIII broke with the Catholic Church and founded the Church of England, eating fish became political. It was seen as pro-Catholic, and was frowned upon in Protestant England. This had such negative consequences for the fishing industry that in around 1547 — with Henry's son, Edward VI on the throne — a law was passed that reestablished fast days and encouraged people to “use fish, for the benefit of the commonwealth, where many be fishers, and use the trade of living”. The rule of fasting on Fridays was strictly adhered to by Christians for centuries. Although nowadays not everyone follows this tradition for religious reasons, on a typical Friday night in the UK you can see people waiting in line at fish and chip shops, honouring fish Fridays with Britain's favourite takeaway food.

Glossary

- **to boost** = promuovere
- **to last through the week.** = durare tutta la settimana
- **believers** = fedeli
- **flesh** = carne
- **was frowned upon** = essere malvisto
- **commonwealth** = comunità dei cittadini
- **waiting in line** = fare la fila
- **pope** = papa
- **fasting** = digiuno
- **trade** = commercio
- **looking through** = esaminare, consultare
- **warm-blooded** = sangue caldo
- **sins** = peccati
- **meal** = pasto
- **was passed** = approvare
- **to treat yourself** = concedersi, viziarsi con
- **takeaway food** = cibo da asporto
- **to avoid** = evitare
- **humankind** = umanità
- **therefore** = perciò, quindi
- **any such** = di questo tipo