

# Party Time! The Origins of Birthday Celebrations

Do you love celebrating your birthday? Many kids do! Birthday parties have been around for a very long time. In this article, you will learn about where birthday parties started and how they have changed over the years.

## The First Birthday Parties

The first birthday parties were probably held in ancient Egypt. The Egyptians thought the day you were born was special because that was the day your soul went into your body. So they would celebrate it. They gave presents and had big feasts.

The ancient Greeks also had birthday parties. But theirs were different. They thought on your birthday, evil spirits might try to get you. So they lit candles on cakes to keep the spirits away.

## Birthday Parties in Rome

The Romans had parties for everyone's birthday, not just important people. Their parties had food, drinks and games. They gave presents and sang songs for the birthday kid.

The Romans made special cakes for birthdays. The cakes were made with wheat, olive oil, cheese and honey. They were shaped like wreaths and had candles. The candles were supposed to help the birthday kid live a long, happy life.

## Birthday Parties in the Middle Ages

In the Middle Ages, birthday parties were simpler. Families and friends would have a small feast. They gave gifts like food, clothes or jewelry.

One tradition was blowing out candles on the cake. This came from the Romans. People thought if you blew out all the candles in one breath, you'd have a year of good luck.

## Birthday Parties Today

Today, birthday parties are bigger than ever. There are parties at home, school, work and with friends.

One tradition is singing "Happy Birthday." This started in the 1800s and is popular everywhere now.

Another tradition is giving birthday cards. Cards became popular in the 1900s. Now they are common at birthday parties.

So birthday parties have changed a lot! But they still celebrate life and are fun with family and friends.

## **Fun Facts About Birthdays**

The oldest known birthday cake was found in Egypt. It had honey, fruit and flowers.

The first birthday card was made in 1842 by a man who wanted to help poor kids celebrate.

In 1989, the oldest birthday party was for a 115 year old woman with over 1,000 guests!

Chocolate cake is the most popular cake in America.

Money is the most popular gift in America.

I hope you liked learning about birthday parties! Now go have an awesome birthday!

## **Glossary**

- ancient - very old, from long ago
- elaborate - fancy or detailed
- feast - large meal with lots of food
- wreath - circle made from plants
- vulnerable - can be easily hurt
- ward off - keep away, protect from

## Questions

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Where were some of the first birthday parties held?  
a) Greece   b) Rome   c) Egypt   d) Middle Ages
2. Why did Greeks put candles on birthday cakes?  
a) To light the cake   b) To decorate the cake   c) To protect from evil spirits  
d) To represent the birthday kid's life
3. What did Romans give as birthday gifts?  
a) Flowers   b) Cards   c) Clothes   d) Cakes
4. When did the "Happy Birthday" song become popular?  
a) 1800s   b) 1900s   c) Middle Ages   d) Ancient Rome
5. What were early Roman cakes made of?  
a) Fruit and honey   b) Chocolate   c) Olive oil and wheat   d) Vanilla and sugar