

What is Purim?

Purim celebrates the failure of a plot to kill the Jews in Persia a long time ago. This minor holiday is celebrated with food, drink, costumes and noisemaking.

The story of Purim is told in the Bible's Book of Esther. Three to five hundred years before the Common Era, a Jewish community flourished in Persia. The king banished his queen for failing to obey his every command, then married a new bride, Esther. Esther was told to keep her Jewish faith a secret by her cousin, Mordecai. When Mordecai refused to bow down before Haman, the Royal Vizier, Haman plotted to kill all the Jews as revenge.

Mordecai persuaded Esther to risk her life by going to the king without being summoned and revealing her faith. After inviting the king and Haman to a great feast, she revealed that she was Jewish and persuaded the king to allow the Jews to defend themselves against Haman's plot. The Jews defeated the assassins, Haman was executed and Mordecai was appointed to take his place. Purim reminds us that, even though we face enemies, we will overcome adversity.

When is it?

Purim is the Hebrew word for "lots" and refers to the lottery that Haman used to choose the date of the massacre. That was the 13th day of Adar, the 12th month in the Jewish calendar, so Purim is celebrated on the 14th day of Adar (typically in March) to celebrate the failure of the plot.



How do I celebrate Purim?

As might be expected when celebrating a failed massacre, Purim can get a little raucous. The holiday is marked by several customs, but the primary commandment is reading aloud the Book of Esther (The Megillah). It's customary whenever Haman's name is mentioned for listeners to boo, hiss and rattle noisemakers called graggers.

Purim also commands us to eat, drink and be merry. Along with feasting, adults are actually encouraged to drink to the point that they can't tell the difference between "blessed be Mordecai" and "cursed be Haman." It's also customary to send gift baskets to loved ones, give to charity and even dress up in costume.

Sounds fun, but not 21

Purim is a time for puppets and plays. Put on a skit that tells the story of Purim. Gragger noisemakers can be made by filling a plastic water bottle with dried beans or rice. Or, fill the bottle with coins and donate it to a charity afterward. Check the PJ Library for Purim stories at pjlibrary.org.

For many, Purim isn't Purim without hamantashen, a triangular cookie filled with jam, preserves or chocolate.

Still have questions?

For more information about Purim, interfaith events and programs around Atlanta, and the JFGA's Interfaith Connector, contact Doug Konkel at dkonkel@jewishatlanta.org



Hamantashen Recipe

- 1 stick butter/margarine
- 1 egg
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2 Tbsps. orange juice
- 2 cups flour
- 2 tsps. baking powder
- Salt, pinch
- Any flavor pastry or pie filling

1. Mix together margarine, egg, sugar, vanilla and orange juice.
2. Add flour, baking powder and salt. Mix well.
3. Roll out the dough on a floured board to 1/4 inch thickness. Cut into circles. Fill the circles with pastry filling and pinch dough into triangles around the filling. Place on a cookie sheet.
4. Bake at 375 degrees for 15 to 20 minutes until lightly browned.

