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## Easter Processions in Mendrisio

The two processions which take place during Holy Week can be traced back to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.

On Maundy Thursday, Christ's journey to Calvary is portrayed by two hundred people acting as the Jews and Romans who played a role in the crucifixion of Christ. These amateur actors wear mag-



nificent costumes from La Scala in Milan. There are also some fifty horses in the presentation. The procession, accompanied by torch bearers and musicians with brass instruments and drums, moves through the old city, which the inhabitants have decorated with transparencies, painted material

lit from behind. Some of the Biblical scenes depicted are centuries old. They were once lit by candles, but now have electric lighting. Christ, wearing a crown of thorns, walks behind Pontius Pilate, accompanied by Roman soldiers and Jews. He carries his cross, stumbling now and again under its weight. Following him are the three Marys, Veronica, the dice players, the two prisoners in chains, Herod, and the high priests.

The Good Friday procession is even older. It begins and ends at the Padri Serviti monastery. It Portrays the burial of Christ. The present day procession conforms to rules laid down in the eighteenth century. Children carry antique lanterns. Around the statues of the dead Christ and the sorrowful mother are articles pertaining to the Passion, such as candles, ladders, sponges, hammers, nails, whips and similar objects. Funeral music is played as the lighted procession moves through the old town in the evening.

## The Slaves Revolt

Spartacus was Greek. In 73 BC he was sold to a school for gladiators. That same year Spartacus and two Gallic gladiators led a riot at the school. About eighty slaves escaped, using kitchen tools as weapons. When soldiers tried to stop the escaped slaves, they used their accustomed gladiatorial weapons, easily defeating the soldiers. Then they took the weapons of the beaten soldiers, and set out on their way south to Mt. Vesuvius. Along their route, they picked up rural slaves.

Little realizing how well Spartacus had organized his band of slaves, the praetors made an inadequate attempt to end the revolt. Clodius besieged the Spartacans on a mountain, which had only one narrow path to the top. The rest of the mountain was steep and slippery. As it turned out, the slippery

surface didn't matter to Spartacus. Ample vines on the mountaintop provided suitable material for ropes, which they used to climb down and surprise the Romans. Instead of the Romans putting an end to the slave revolt, the slaves took the Roman camp. Then the slaves headed towards the Alps, picking up a total of 70,000 slaves along the way. Spartacus intended for his men to disband and head to their pre-slave homes after a quick march to the Alps. He had shown remarkable skill in creating a force capable of defeating Roman legions, but when many of his men started pillaging the countryside, the Senate in Rome had to take the slave revolt seriously.

In the end, the slaves were defeated and six thousand were crucified, along Via Appia. If the crosses were 5m apart, that made 30km of crucified slaves.. *tb*

## Osterkuchen

Line 28cm diameter tin with your favourite sweet shortcrust pastry and chill.

### Filling:

120g rice  
500ml milk  
pinch salt  
100g butter  
120g sugar  
4 egg yolks  
100g ground almonds  
grated rind of a lemon  
100g sultanas  
200ml cream  
4 egg whites  
apricot jam (optional)



- Cook the rice in the milk with the salt added until thick. Cool.
- Whisk together butter, sugar and egg yolks until light and frothy, then add to cooled rice.
- Add almonds, grated lemon, sultanas and cream.
- Whisk egg whites until stiff, then fold into mixture.
- Spread a layer of thick apricot jam onto bottom of pastry (optional) then the mixture on top.
- Bake at 180°C about 45 minutes.
- Sprinkle with icing sugar over a Scherenschnitt and perhaps add a few small chocolate Easter eggs.



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