

**Ognissanti – (i morti)** <http://www.athomeintuscany.org/2009/10/20/ognissanti-in-tuscany/>

In Italy, we celebrate *Ognissanti* or simply *I Santi* (**All Saints' Day**) on **November 1st** and *I morti* (**All Souls' Day**) on **November 2nd**. Only the former is an actual holiday. Traditionally, this marks the **beginning of the olive harvest** in my family: starting November 3rd, we all spend a few hours in the **olive groves** every day, until all the olive trees have been harvested. This year it promises to be a good, “tiring” year, as, contrary to most people in our area, our trees are loaded with hundreds of (still) **green and purple berries!**

Obviously, *Ognissanti*, *il Giorno dei Morti* and *Halloween* all have roots in some “pagan” festival, promptly substituted with a religious festivity as is common in the history of the Christian church. I think it was **Pope Gregory III** to pick November 1st for All Saints' Day in the 8th century, so that it would overlap with the **Samhain**, the Celtic celebration of the New Year. All Souls' Day was a later addition. The Abbey of Cluny started celebrating the memory of the dead on November 2nd only at the end of the 10th century was this habit extended to the entire Roman Catholic Church.

All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day are celebrated **with the family** (*what holiday is not in this country!?*). Ognissanti is a festive day, on which people go to mass and then have lunch together. In Tuscany we celebrate Ognissanti with two **typical desserts: Schiaccia dei Santi** (elsewhere *schacciata*, meaning focaccia) and **Pane dei Santi** (meaning All Saints' bread). Schiaccia dei Santi is a type of focaccia and it contains **raisins, figs and walnuts**. Pane dei Santi is exactly the same, but instead of being crispy and thin, the same ingredients are added to bread dough. **Castagnaccio**, a delicious cake made with **chestnut flour**, is often prepared in this time of the year.

On **All Souls' Day**, *I Morti*, people go to the **cemetery** and pay their respects to their beloved departed ones. Most people who have moved away from the village **return for the occasion** and bring **flowers**. The traditional flower for the occasion is chrysanthemums. They symbolize death in our culture, and are always associated with cemeteries and graveyards (so don't give them as a present!). *Il Giorno dei Morti* is somehow a sad day, but also a day in which you meet people you don't often see and get a chance to think about the people who are not here anymore.

Over the last few years, people have been organizing **Halloween parties** in almost every large town and city. **Halloween themed decorations and candies** are sold in shops and it's not uncommon to see people dressed up in **Halloween costumes**. Every year the Catholic Church does all it can to remind people that Halloween is a “heathen tradition”, but apparently, consumerism is managing to bring back what Celtic people had to give up a few centuries ago.

Some of the Halloween traditions, though, are also popular in **Tuscany**. I remember **carving pumpkins** with my grandmother when I was a kid, and putting them on our balcony with candles inside. Pumpkin carving was more a **seasonal activity** though, rather than being related to a particular day.

In the Veneto Region of Italy, specifically in my husband's town, Calvene, Ognissanti and i Morti, while they used to be celebrated on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of November, are now both celebrated on the same day (November 1<sup>st</sup>.) Here is how a typical *primo novembre* would be:

*Pranzo* – con polenta e uccelli, patate americane e zucca

Dopo pranzo...

*La messa (la chiesa)* - durante la messa, fanno onore ai cimeli nella chiesa.

Dopo la messa

*La processione* – tutti i cittadini del paese inseguono il prete fino in cimitero dove pregano (dicono le preghiere) e si mettono davanti alle tombe dei familiari e i parenti (gli antenati). Durante i giorni prima di Ognissanti, le persone puliscono le tombe dei familiari e mettono dei fiori per ornare.

Dopo il cimitero – alcune persone vanno agli altri paesi per visitare le tombe dei parenti negli altri cimiteri.

Alla fine, mangiano marroni/castagne arrostiti e bevono vino rosso.







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