

November 11th

SPAIN

Magosto (the chestnut celebration)/ Saint Martin

The “magosto” is a traditional festivity in Galicia, and with more or less similarities and differences with other areas in the north and west of the Iberian peninsula; the common elements of this festivity are the celebration in November (or at the end of October) and the use of chestnuts and fire. With this festivity the chestnut recovers the importance that corn and potatoes have been taking for the last centuries.

The festivity

The festivity may be celebrated on the days that go between the 1st (All Saints day) and the 11th November (St. Martin) or on close dates; in this festivity, roasted chestnuts, wine and sausages can not be absent. The celebration consists on lighting a bonfire, and when the ambers are ready, you must put on them a round cylinder with wholes on its base, called drum or saucepan in some areas.

On this container, or on a similar one, the chestnuts are spread; before you must make a small cut on one of their ends, to avoid their jumping or exploding. Once they are roasted, they are peeled and eaten.

It is habitual to blacken your face with the ashes from the bonfire, to jump over the bonfire, (as it brings good luck to you), to play certain traditional games, to tell stories and to sing popular songs.

In Ourense, it is celebrated on the festivity of its patron saint, San Martín de Tours, on November 11th; to celebrate this day, people usually go to a mountain which is near the city (Monte Alegre) and to light a bonfire on which pork meat, sausages and chestnuts will be roasted. The occasion is used to taste the wine from the latest harvest.

Since the Middle of XX century, public institutions (the council, neighbourhood associations, deputations...), associations, political parties (from the arrival of Spanish Democracy...) and firms, usually celebrate “magostos” that may be private, in a certain area, or open to the general public.