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Sham El Nessim

A traditional Egyptian festival

Sham el nessim is one of the oldest Egyptian festivals in which Egyptians celebrate the spring. The festival was originally celebrated by ancient Egyptians (Pharaohs) more than 4500 years ago. The ancient Egyptians celebrated “Shemu”- their harvest season by offering salted fish, green onions, and lettuce to their deities. In modern days, sham el nessim is the Monday following the Egyptian Easter indicated by the Coptic Orthodox Church. However, the festival is not religious and is celebrated by all Egyptians regardless of their faith.



Sham el nessim is a national holiday in Egypt and is more of a family holiday. In Arabic- the official modern Egyptian language- sham el nessim literally means smelling the fresh breeze. And that is exactly how Egyptian families celebrate sham el nessim. With the beginning of spring and flowers everywhere, families wake up early and go enjoy the great Egyptian weather and the beautiful



nature in different public parks or the zoo. You can also see people sailing in the Nile or enjoying the different Egyptian beaches on both the Mediterranean sea and the Red sea.



Just like all major festivals, sham el nessim is associated with specific foods. You can easily guess the foods associated with sham el nessim. Yes! Egyptians still keep the ancient tradition of having salted fish and green onions on that day. The Egyptian salted fish is called “feseekh” and is usually prepared a week or two before sham el nessim using Grey Mullet. Feseekh is very smelly, thus, it is perfect to eat in the open air- not indoors 😊. Also, since sham el nessim directly follows Easter, it is very natural to find colored eggs. Actually, people tend to color boiled eggs first thing in the morning before going on picnics.



There are lots of songs inspired by the celebrations of Sham el nessim. One of the most popular songs that Egyptians always hear in sham el nessim is a song from the seventies by one of the most loved Egyptian divas- Soad Hosni. The song is called “el donia rabee3” – It is spring time. The song describes how spring is the time for people to have fun and enjoy the great nature and weather. You can watch the song’s video here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C5bpYFcZOVg>

Reference

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sham_el-Nessim