Polish Easter: Sugar lambs in sprigs of boxwood

Read the text and solve the tasks.



photo: Andrzej Sidor / Forum

Poland has a series of unique rituals connected to Easter, ranging from joyful to spiritual, and of course always including plenty of homemade delicacies.

Easter in Poland is celebrated according to the Western Roman Catholic calendar. Easter Sunday falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon of spring. Rites and practices are therefore marked by Christianity, but still remain strongly influenced by pagan traditions. It is usual for both modern and conservative families to partake in the celebrations, regardless of what their religious beliefs may be.

The first sign of approaching Easter in Poland is a large number of branches and dried flowers being brought to church. One week before Easter, Palm Sunday (in Polish *Niedziela Palmowa*) takes place. According to Catholic tradition, the day marks the entrance of Jesus in Jerusalem. Since palm trees are rare in Poland churchgoers often bring catkins or 'palms' made of colourful woven dried branches.

According to the text are the following statements true (T), false (F) or is it impossible to determine (NI)?

Easter can sometimes be celebrated in February. ☐

Polish Easter traditions include a range of special meals. ☐

Palm Sunday marks the end of Lent. ☐

Folklore customs are present in Polish Easter celebrations. ☐

Palms do not grow naturally in Poland. ☐

Circle the information that is NOT given in the text.

Polish Easter celebrations are part of religious practice.

Easter becomes less important in modern Polish homes.

An important historic event is remembered seven days before Easter Sunday.

Rare species of trees are usually planted outside churches to mark the beginning of Easter celebrations.

based on articles by Marta Jazowska and Gabriel Stille published on the culture.pl website:
https://culture.pl/en/article/smigus-dyngus-polands-national-water-fight-day
https://culture.pl/en/article/polish-easter-traditions

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Complete the text with sentences from the next page. Two sentences are extra.

The Holy Week preceding Easter involves spring cleaning. In the countryside, people would use the occasion to repaint their barns. A Families visit representations of the tomb of Christ, often decorated in a spectacular fashion for the occasion.

On the Saturday before Easter Sunday, Poles paint hard-boiled eggs (called *pisanki*). Some use store-brought kits which make the colouring and decorating easier, others continue to make dyes the traditional way – with boiled onion skins. Egg painting is encountered in several other Slavic cultures. B

Another Saturday activity is the preparation of Easter baskets. Lined with a white linen or lace napkin and decorated with sprigs of boxwood (*bukszpan*), the baskets contain a sampling of Easter foods: *pisanki*, a piece of sausage or ham, salt and pepper, bread, a piece of cake and an Easter Lamb made of sugar or even plastic. They are brought to church to be blessed.

On the most important day, Easter Sunday, some go to church at 6am for the Resurrection mass – a ceremonial service and procession. C Before the meal people share wedges of the blessed Easter eggs from the basket and exchange wishes.

The breakfast is dominated by cold dishes and is a feast for meat lovers: ham, sausage, roast meats, pâté (pasztet), eggs, horseradish relish, bre D It includes a tall, round 15-yolk sweet yeast cake with a hole in the middle (*babka*) that can be compared to the American election cake; *mazurek*, a cake with a fat layer of icing, decorated with dried fruit, walnuts, almonds, roasted seeds; or *sernik*, a classic Polish cheesecake.

The last festive day is Easter Monday, known as *Śmigus-Dyngus* (Wet Monday), on which tradition requires that boys throw water over girls and spank them with willow branches. E Although this advice might seem strange, you really should take it to heart, 'cause otherwise... you'll get soaked! The tradition of *Śmigus-Dyngus* is still going strong in Poland.

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- It's garnished with boiled white sausage and boiled egg halves.
- And better beware of it!
- It is thought to date back to talismanic pagan rituals that are over 5000 years old.
- A frenzy of Easter cakes follows.
- The egg symbolises new life and Christ's resurrection.
- Homes come alive with families who gather to eat breakfast.
- Religious fasts are sometimes observed in varying degrees of strictness.

Read the text on the previous page and find words that are desribed below.

	happening before someone or something
	a place of burial, usually underground
	relating to certain countries of central, eastern or southern Europe
	a decorative cloth made by twisting thin tread in delicate patterns with holes in them, often white
	pieces of something, especially food, in the shape of a triangle
	a type of sauce that is eaten with food to add flavour to it
	the yellow, middle part of an egg
	twigs, parts of a tree that grow out from the main trunk

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Read the text. Then fill the missing information in the message.

The tradition most likely goes back to the 14th century, but it likely also has pre-Christian origins connected to the March equinox and the coming of spring – water being a symbol of life and renewal. Similar traditions can be found all around Central and Eastern Europe. It's also known as '*Dyngus* Day' in Polish communities outside Poland.



photo: Michał Tulinski / Forum

As it turns out, *Śmigus* and *Dyngus* were originally two separate customs. There are many different ideas, however, of what they looked like and exactly where they came from. Most commonly, *Śmigus* was known to involve the symbolic whacking of people's legs with willows and drenching them in cold water. This was meant to cleanse them of dirt and diseases, and later of sin. *Dyngus*, however, was supposedly a chance to save yourself from being drenched a second time by bribing the 'drencher' with a decorated egg. Another idea suggests that *Śmigus* was the time for whacking willows, while *Dyngus* was the time for throwing water. Others believe the custom is related to the Baptism of Poland.

Now *Śmigus-Dyngus* is a natural part of Easter festivities in Poland. Funnily enough, the first mention of the custom in Poland comes from 1420, when the archdiocese of Poznań issued an edict named '*Dingus Prohibetur*' – which warned people about the sinful acts committed by taking part in *Śmigus-Dyngus*.

Today this relatively harmless set of rituals has turned into a full-blown national water fight. It no longer only involves just young boys and girls. *Śmigus-Dyngus* has become a free-for-all: water guns, water bottles, water balloons from above – you never know where the water is going to come from! In some cases, even fire trucks have been known to join in the festivities.

So, you seem to have two choices: either come prepared with a raincoat and an umbrella, or arm yourself with a heavy-duty water gun.

Hej, dzięki za link do tekstu o Dyngusie! O tym, że pierwotnie to były dwa _____ kiedyś słyszałem, ale to, że Dyngus mógł być szansą na _____ to dla mnie nowość. No i ciekawe o tym, że biskupi uznali udział w Dyngusie za _____. Dobrze, że dziś już tak nie jest! :) Z tymi _____ to też prawda. Ostatnio widziałem filmik, jak polewali wodą z wozu. Masz już jakiś sprzęt na poniedziałek? Ja w zeszłym roku lałem z butelki, ale w tym roku chyba wezmę wiadro. Widzimy się o 10?

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