

FASCHING IN GERMANY

Stuttgart Girl Scouts Patch Program

During the following activities, girls can explore German traditions and religious customs through their participation in Fasching events. The Stuttgart Neighborhood Girl Scouts hope you enjoy learning about Fasching in Germany and have fun participating in the festivities.



In order to receive the patch, scouts must complete the following requirements:

1. Learn about Fasching in Germany.
2. Learn some of the German words that describe Fasching and their meanings.
3. Make a Fasching mask.
4. Attend a Fasching event; a parade, party or procession OR plan a Fasching party for your troop.

FASCHING IN GERMANY:

There is music in the air. It is snowing bits of paper. Clowns are dancing with witches, queens walk with beggars. Candy and trinkets are thrown from decorated floats. Everyone wanders the streets wearing a costume and mask. Yes, it's Fasching in Germany and it's fun!

The celebration goes back to an ancient Roman custom of merrymaking before a period of fasting. Fasching is now celebrated in many countries around the world where the Roman Catholic Church has had a significant historical role. In other countries, the event is called by a different name. In France and New Orleans, they celebrate Mardi Gras. In Brazil and Venice, it's called Carnival.

Fasching began in Germany as an older pagan tradition involving the wearing of masks and has now been incorporated into the celebrations leading up to Lent. The Fasching season begins on January 6th, Drei Koenig Tag (3 Kings Day) or Twelfth Night. It ends in a frenzy of parties and parades leading up to Ash Wednesday.

FASCHING WORDS:

Ash Wednesday: The first day of Lent. It is called Ash Wednesday because of the ashes used by the Parish Priest to mark a cross on the foreheads of the congregation. This is a mark of penance.

Altweiber-Fastnacht or Schmutziger Donnerstag: The start of the celebrations on the Thursday before Ash Wednesday. Schmutziger Donnerstag literally means "Dirty Thursday" but is a corruption of "schmalz." This is the fat used to bake a special cake on that day.

Carnival: Corruption of the Italian words "carne vale," which means "goodbye meat."

Fasching or Fastnacht: Meaning may stem from the night before fasting or from an old German word meaning to act the fool.

Jecken: Jesters who appear in Dusseldorf's big Sunday afternoon procession.

Jugendmaskenzug: Describes the children's masked processions that take place on the Saturday before Ash Wednesday.

Lent: The 40 days leading up to Easter. A traditional time of fasting, penance, and prayer.

Narren: Fools or Mummers. They wear jester type costumes with bells and behave in a noisy and rowdy way. In Southern Germany they are usually masked. For some obscure reason, Narren are associated with the number 11. This explains why Fasching officially begins at 11:11am on November 11.

Narrenbaum: A Fool's Tree erected in many villages by the Narren and the children they have released from school on Schmutziger Donnerstag.

Narrensprung: Fool's Jump or a Parade of Fools. A famous one takes place at the Schwarze Tor of old Rottweil in the Black Forest.

Rosenmontag: Translated as "Rose Monday." The name really stems from the German word "rasen" which means to rush about.

Schuttignarren: Devilish Fools dressed in red who can be seen on Sunday at Elzach, deep in the Black Forest.

Shrove Tuesday: This is the day before Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. Its name came from the old custom of confessing (being shriven) on that day. This often is celebrated with a large meal of pancakes with bacon and sausages since abstinence from meat is part of traditional fasting that begins with Lent.

Fasching Masks: Fancy, frilly, or scary, either on sticks or covering their heads, you will see all kinds of masks at Fasching events. Make your own from a variety of materials and wear it to a Fasching activity.

FASCHING EVENTS:

Watch for signs and posters advertising local Fasching parades and activities. American community papers often list parade sites of where parties will be held. Wear a mask or costume, you'll blend right in! Don't forget to bring a basket or bag for all the goodies thrown from the floats. Or you might plan a Fasching party for your troop, wear masks and costumes and make special treats. Invite another troop to participate!

