

Mother's Day

Sunday, May 10, 2026

A day to honor mothers, grandmothers, mothers-in-law, and all motherly figures.

Time to spoil and celebrates the mothers in your life. And yes, it's important to do so. You don't remember it, but your birthday (or adoption day) was a big event for two people: you and the person you made a new mother in that instant. Ever since that fateful day, she's gone on to play a lot of roles in your life. Mothers guide, teach, nurture, love, discipline, snuggle, feed, laugh and so much more.

Even though mothers have existed since the beginning of humanity, celebrating Mother's Day as a formal holiday is a fairly recent invention. It begins with a powerful bond between a mother and daughter.

Ann Reeves Jarvis, known as Mother Jarvis, was a mother and Sunday-school teacher in rural West Virginia—until the Civil War broke out in 1861. She then became an activist for human rights and mothers, no matter which side of the blue-gray divide they were on. To begin, she organized “mothers' day work clubs.” These clubs taught mothers basic health, hygiene and child-rearing skills to fight the unsanitary living conditions that caused so much death and disease in young children. She went on to organize “women's brigades” to help wounded soldiers and a Mothers' Friendship Day to improve relations between former Union and Confederate families. After all, if anyone can calm down a heated argument, it's a mother.

Mother Jarvis's daughter, Anna M. Jarvis, was her devoted disciple and served beside her mother. As Mother Jarvis's health declined, Anna became her caretaker, devoting years to her beloved mom. On May 8, 1905, Mother Jarvis died of heart complications.

Anna, by then a young mother herself, was devastated by the loss. In 1906, she invited friends and family to a special church service to honor her mother on the one-year anniversary of her death. She handed out carnations, Mother Jarvis's favorite flower, to all the mothers in attendance. It was such a moving tribute that Anna and her loved ones decided to keep the tradition going each May. They broadened the celebration to include mothers in general.

Anna went on a campaign to spread her favorite holiday, writing letters, petitioning politicians and talking about her mother to anyone who would listen. In 1915, her efforts paid off. President Woodrow Wilson declared Mother's Day an annual national observance in the United States, to be held on the second Sunday of May.

Why is it called Mother's Day?

More perplexing than the question “When is Mother's Day?” is the question of why the holiday's name is singular, not plural—Mother's Day, not Mothers' Day. Anna Jarvis was adamant that it be dedicated to just one mother. Its purpose, she said, is “to honor the best mother who ever lived: yours.”

The History of Mother's Day

A day to honor mothers has existed for as long as, well, there have been mothers. Festivals honoring mothers in ancient times were often tied to gods and goddesses and maternal symbols of fertility, birth, creativity, and growth cycles. The mother is the protector and nourisher of children and, by extension, of all humanity. The Phrygians held a festival for Cybele, the Great Mother of the Gods. The Greeks and Romans also honored the mother figure of their gods. Even today, an important festival in India, Durga-puja, honors the goddess Durga.

Long before Americans celebrated Mother's Day, Europeans honored their mothers on Mothering (or Simnel) Sunday, the fourth Sunday of Lent. During the Middle Ages, laborers, apprentices, and servants—mainly daughters who had gone to work as domestic servants—would be given a holiday on the fourth Sunday of Lent to return to their mothers and the “mother” church.

Family reunions were the order of the day, with sons and daughters assuming all household duties and preparing a special dinner in honor of their mother. Sometime during the day, the mother would attend special church services with her family. The Lenten fasting rules were relaxed for that day.

Happy Mother's Day