



Bulletin Fastelavn



www.okocentrum.blogspot.cz



www.oko-centrum.cz

The Scandinavian version of Halloween

When Christmas and New Year's Eve have past, and all that are left are the cold winter wind and the slightly longer days, we in Scandinavia prepare ourselves for more festivities. **Fastelavn** is the time for children (and adults) to dress up as their favourite superheroes and characters. The time for games, songs and the delicious traditional cream filled buns, **fastelavnsboller**.

Many of the traditions connected to Fastelavn are actually quite similar to the ones of Halloween. Although the major difference between the two celebrations is that **Fastelavn has nothing to do with being scary**. On the contrary it is about driving the evil spirits away and sharing with each other.

What is Fastelavn?

Fastelavn has its origin in the **Roman Catholic Carnival**, where people gathered to celebrate the last days before the 40 days long fasting. This they did by making jests and parties in the streets. After the Reformation, which made Denmark a Protestant nation, the fasting was cut out of the culture, while the preceding celebration was kept intact.

Since Fastelavn takes place in the transition between winter and spring, **it celebrates the arrival of the warmer weather and the end of the freezing winter**. In the old days, It was also around this time people started the preparation for crops, which is the background of the superstitious traditions and events of Fastelavn – as for instance the game of “hitting the cat of the barrel”.



Fastelavn in the olden days.

Kings, Queens, Cats and Barrels

The main event of Fastelavn is the “**hitting the cat of the barrel**”, where people (nowadays only children) line up in front of a big wooden barrel decorated with masks and figures of black cats. One after another they take turn bashing the barrel with a bat until the barrel bottom falls down and sweets are spread everywhere underneath. The person making this happen is crowned the “**Queen of Cats**”, while the one making the final barrel piece fall down is elected the “**King of Cats**”. Hereafter everyone gathers to collect their part of the barrel's contents.

The cat bashing tradition goes far back in the history and until the mid 19th century the barrel actually contained a real life cat. Back then black cats were seen as companions of the witches and therefore the embodiment of bad luck. Originally the event was only intended for adults, since **it took place on horseback and the person crowned as King of Cats didn't had to pay taxes for an entire year**.

Boller op, boller ned, boller i min mave...

After the sweets of the barrel have been sorted out and pictures are taken of the new royal pair of Fastelavn, it is time for **trick or treating**. Likewise the English Halloween tradition of trick or treating, the dressed up children go from door to door around their neighbourhood. Though in Denmark you won't get anything unless you sing a song for the person opening the door. Highlights of the most common song sung includes: **"Fastelavn is my name, buns I want, if I get no buns, I will make trouble"**. When the song is sung the children receive a coin or two, which they put into their little collecting boxes. Some families also give the children some of the traditional Fastelavn buns.



Barrel decorated for Fastelavn.



Typical Danish fastelavn buns

Fastelavnsboller

During the weeks about Fastelavn it is common for families to gather for **coffee and "fastelavnsboller"** - **special cream filled buns decorated with frosting**. The buns are known in all of the Scandinavian countries, though the style of the bun can variate a lot depending on where you get it. In Sweden and Finland the buns are usually cut open and filled with whipped cream and a bit of almond cream, while in Denmark they can be made from puff pastry or baked with the cream within them.

Fastelavnsris

Apart from trick or treating, bashing cats and eating buns, it is also common to see living rooms decorated with "fastelavnsris" - bunches of twigs, usually from fruit trees, decorated with figures of cats or storks, feathers, candy and more. **Ritually they are used by children to flog their parents to wake them up on the morning of Fastelavn. This is done while singing the same song as sung for the trick or treating.**

The history of the fastelavnsris is a bit more painful than the contemporary tradition. Originally the branches were used by religious people to flog their children on Good Friday to remind them of the sufferings of Christ. In other times the fastelavnsris was mainly used by young men to gently flog young women as a symbol of fertility – a bit like the Czech Easter tradition of *Pomlázka*. Later on it became the children's special right to flog their parents and as a reward for the flogging they would receive a fastelavnbolle.

Usually children make their fastelavnsris in the kindergarten or at school during the first years of studying. Mostly it is acceptable for children up until 12 years or so to flog their parents.

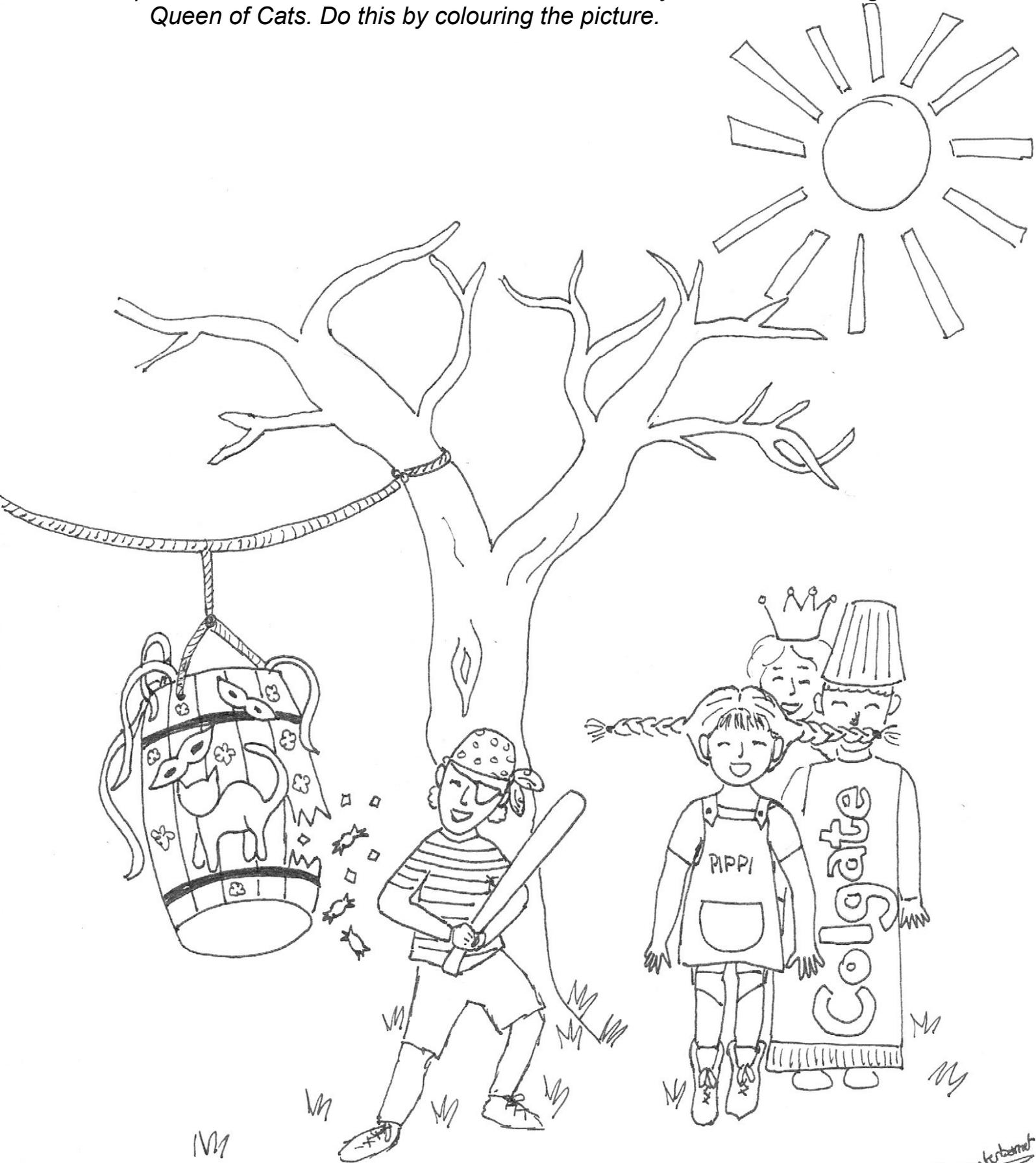


A fastelavnsris



Hit the Cat of the Barrel!

Help the children hit the cat of the barrel, so they can find the King and Queen of Cats. Do this by colouring the picture.





Fastelavns Puzzle



Y V J A Q L M K V C L C E U A W G R Z V
G N U U F H V C J B J K A B C W Z G A T
Y E U M I M Q K Y G O O B R I F X L D V
V M D F J L U D A H G O C U N M Z E T Q
P G J K X X E H X T I K M G X I G J R D
K S N N O S U B N L R A M F T H V A M H
Z Y R Y I R N H C W S V Z C B G M A B U
Z J Z U D Z E T Q S O M D W O B S I L Q
P D K H P P C H E X N L R J K K I I G V
V O C Z K I N C R J W E C L F J N N T X
T P R C A T N F C E O U G E J D C U O V
Z L K J N I A J F I P P P T M C N X B K
Y B A R R E L R S J W U Z G U S K G Q F
M T Y P U H A C U O A R S F R E T N I W
G S P K B E A C U W P R B C N L G N I K
F Z G V E K M A O U Z L J V A N M S E Q
W I T C H G T X A S J N K Z V N K K U H
O B X X P A U N O I T I D A R T D L S K
C E V I E T J G Y R R U L F X Y R Y C R
Y O K P W Q N D A U F E M N A B R C N E
K P I I T I G U U B T O S E E N O N W R
X W O F R S Y E Q S K V A E S Q P I P K
V W U P R T U Y A Z J V F U S W T I T C
R X S K R U Y F W L N Y Q Q M P G D N H
G F J W Z L N B C Q W N H L I E D J Z R

BARREL
BUN
CANDY
CARNIVAL
CAT
CLOWN
COSTUMES
FASTELAVN
KING
MASK
PRINCESS
QUEEN
SPRING
SUPERHERO
TRADITION
WINTER
WITCH

