

# Happy International Women's Day, Ladies!

March 8, 2013

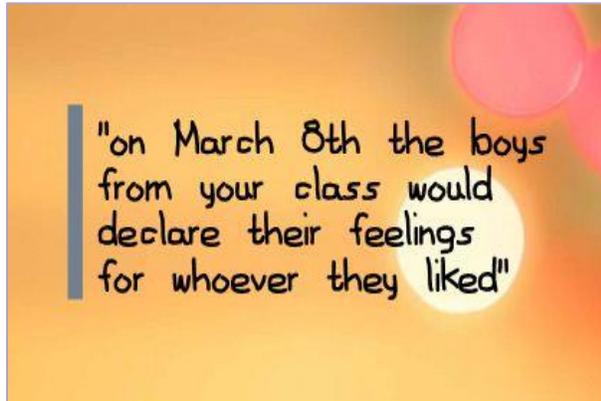


March 8<sup>th</sup> is considered to be the "International Women's Day", however, it is mostly celebrated in Eastern Europe, especially Russia, and countries of the former Soviet Union. Initially, the holiday had political undertones but was later transferred into a celebration of womanhood and love. Most of the countries that do celebrate March 8<sup>th</sup>, declare it to be a non-working day and a true holiday. In America, "International Women's Day" has only been reintroduced into the popular culture in the recent years, so much so that the morning newscasters now congratulate women with the holiday and even "1-800-Flowers" presented a whole section of spring flower arrangements designed specifically to celebrate March 8<sup>th</sup>.

Since I grew up in Russia, this holiday holds a lot of meaning and memories for me, even as a child I used to receive gifts and flowers from my father as a woman to be. I particularly remember saving all my lunch money just so I could surprise my mom with a special gift and hand-crafting cards in art class with a big number "8" featured on the front. Back in the day, holidays such as "Mother's Day" and "Valentine's Day" were not celebrated in my part of the world, so "March 8<sup>th</sup>" was the holiday that honored all the mothers, wives, girlfriends, sisters, daughters, female friends and coworkers. Only in the recent decade or so have the American holidays sipped into the Russian culture, yet March 8<sup>th</sup> still trumps all the other woman-related holidays. However, since we live here, in US, we have welcomed all the local holidays as well – on the upside, I get flowers for my birthday, Valentine's Day and Women's Day, and on the downside, I, in turn, have to send flowers to all the important women in my life for all those holidays and Mother's Day as well, which ends up costing a small fortune. The local flower industry must really love us. 🙄

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In my early school days, back in Moscow, this holiday was the one all the girls looked forward to. The Russian school system is a little different from the one here in US, well it's a lot different really, but I will just mention this one aspect because it is relevant to my story. In my New Jersey based High School, every class the kids went to, had different people in it, you were lucky if you had one or two of your friends in the same classroom as you, because every single person had a different schedule. In Russian schools, you would start first grade with 29 other boys and girls, who would be with you for most of your school career. In other words you spent the whole day with 29 of your friends, who through the years turned into your extended family. Now back in my Russian school days, on March 8<sup>th</sup> the boys from your class would declare their



feelings for whoever they liked or were really friendly with at the time. For example, last year I attended school there, the teacher asked all the girls to step out into the hallway, while the boys carefully placed their specially prepared gifts onto the desks of the girls they fancied. Of course, the parents also organized gifts for all the girls from the class, just so no one would feel left out and those were also placed on our desks by the teacher while we stood wondering in the hallway. Basically, the idea is similar to the American version of getting a Valentine request on V-day. If I remember correctly, I

had more than one teddy bear on my desk that year and ended up being walked home by 2 guys at the same time, which was extremely awkward since I didn't like either one of them and of course we were babies still, just 11 or so years old. Nevertheless, I only have positive memories of this holiday and look forward to it each year. 😊

Now it's your turn: How do you, and do you at all, celebrate the International Women's Day?

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**And again – Happy International Women's Day to all the ladies! Make sure to appreciate, love and cherish yourself today and every day, because you are all special and there is no one else like you!**