

## When is Mother's Day ?

'Mother's Day next Sunday! Somebody has an idea for a gift ?' Martha's mischievous look spoke volumes, 'It's more than time to discuss this highly relevant topic'. Her colleagues laughed, appreciating her sense of humour, again today. All knew about Martha's unpleasant mother in far Groningen. Both were in all respects, far apart !

'You're kidding, Mother's Day is only at the end of the month'. Their French colleague, Pauline looked up from her laptop. 'I bought already my Thalys ticket, my mom won't survive, misère !' she sighed. A low voice interrupted them, 'You do not seem to know that our mothers are celebrated all around the world, but not on the same day'. All looked at Juan, the Mexican export manager of Softech, 'In my country it's always on May 10th and a very significant event', but there was sadness in his voice. A problem with a major customer had held him back in Utrecht and no trip was scheduled to Veracruz before July'. His mother had sounded so disappointed.

Pauline however, looked relieved, 'And in your country, Asako ?' The Japanese girl hadn't said a word yet. 'We celebrate our mothers with some flowers on the second Sunday of May', was her shy answer. Asako suffered from being far from home, but felt happy to be part of their conversation today. There was a short silence. 'Why not have lunch outside to celebrate Juan's mother, what do you think ?' Martha had already put her coat on when suddenly the door flew open on a tall blond man looking hastily around. 'Somebody has seen Paolo ?' Martha flashed a dazzling smile, 'Hi Viking, come and have lunch with us, we're celebrating our mothers today, and as for Paolo, our charming bambino is already with Mamma in Roma'. Sven chuckled, 'But Mother's Day is only in a few weeks, no ?'

Mother's Day as discussed by Softech's multicultural export team in Utrecht, was founded in the USA in the early 20th century and adopted by over 40 countries, to become a legal holiday honoring mothers of the family and their influence in society.

The celebration is meaningful but the role of the mother is even more. The different aspects of child-rearing depend mainly on two fundamental patterns : autonomy and interdependence. The goal of mothers - and fathers I'd say - in individualistic cultures like North America, Northern Europe, Australia and New Zealand, is to make their child independent or self-reliant. Parents and children live in a nuclear family, under one roof. On the opposite, in collectivistic cultures like Asia, Africa, Southern Europe, Russia as well as Central- and South America, children learn to think of themselves as part of a 'we'-group, making them interdependent. Children are not only raised by their mother but also by other relatives, all living as an extended family.

In an individualistic culture, a mother looking at the first steps of her toddler, will feel proud while in a collectivistic culture the mother may feel worried. Isn't her toddler walking away, after all ?

*By Micky Keeren  
For Etiquette à la Carte  
May 2018*