

THE COMPUTER CORNER

No. 309: Linux Mint

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Linux Mint is one of the many versions or distributions of Linux, and is one of the most popular today. It is bundled with free and open-source applications. For example, so long as you choose to include proprietary (but free) multimedia codecs when you install it, you get full out-of-the-box multimedia support when your installation is completed. Another big plus is that the inclusion of the bundled Libre Office suite makes it largely compatible with Microsoft Office and even exceeds the capabilities of the Office suite in several aspects. But Mint was started long after Linux itself.

Linux itself began in 1991 when a computer science student at the University of Helsinki (Finland) began a personal project to write an operating system that was free and available to anyone who wanted to use it, thus bypassing almost all systems available then which were expensive and proprietary. Linus Torvalds was the guy, and what he wrote was named (with help by friends) as a combination of his first name and Unix, an existing operating system that inspired his project. Today, about 90% of the top supercomputers, and nearly 3% of all desktop computers use Linux. Even more impressive, nearly 72% of all mobile devices run on Linux. This includes smart phones — most run on Android (a Linux-based operating system).

Mint first began as a distribution or version of Linux at the end of August 2006, nearly 18 years ago and about 15 years after Torvalds began Linux itself. The mint project was created by C. Lefebvre and is actively maintained by a Linux Mint Team. Version 1.0 of Mint was code named “Ada”. Based on Kubuntu Linux, it was not very popular at all. Version 2.0, “Barbara”, surfaced in November of the same year and used Ubuntu Linux as its base. It morphed into Version 2.1, “Bea”, in December and Version 3, “Cassandra” in early 2007.

Every version of Linux Mint since the first has been given a version number and a code name. The code names are always feminine first names ending in the letter ‘a’ (one exception, noted in the next sentence) and beginning with a letter of the alphabet that increased with every major revision. The except is Version 18, Sarah, which sounds the same as all the rest but ends in a silent letter ‘h’. Too bad they didn’t just drop the ‘h’, and name it Sara, for consistency!

The table which follows (markedly abridged from Wikipedia) lists all 38 versions and code names since the start of Mint. Also noted is the cut off date (END in the table), at which no more updates to a particular version are released. In other words, this is the

date at which a particular version's support ends. Examination of the table will show you that only Version 20 ("Ulyana") and newer releases are currently supported.

This end to support by releases prior to Version 20 causes a significant "hit" for owners of older, 32-bit machines. Specifically, you cannot install versions 20 or newer of Linux Mint Cinnamon on an i386 (32-bit) machine. However, the Debian edition of Linux (**Linux Mint Debian Edition**) continues to work with 32-bit critters, so if you have a really old laptop that you just cannot part with using, there is a solution. Start with looking up **LMDE** on the web. For all more modern laptops and desktops, stick with Linux Mint Cinnamon 21.2 ("Victoria"), supported until April 2027, or newer. Minimum hardware requirements for Victoria: 2GB RAM (4GB recommended), 20GB of hard drive or other storage space (100GB recommended), 1024×768 screen resolution, either a CD/DVD drive or a 2.5GB flash drive for installation, and Internet access is also really helpful.

TABLE 1 LINUX MINT RELEASES

*VER	NAME	RELEASED	*END		*VER	NAME	RELEASE	*END
1.0	Ada	Aug 2006	Unknown		17	Qiana	May 2014	Apr 2019
2.0	Barbara	Nov 2006	Apr 2008		17.1	Rebecca	Nov 2014	Apr 2019
2.1	Bea	Dec 2006	Apr 2008		17.2	Rafaela	Jun 2015	Apr 2019
2.2	Bianca	Mar 2007	Apr 2008		17.3	Rosa	Dec 2015	Apr 2019
3.0	Cassandra	May 2007	Oct 2008		18	Sarah	Jun 2016	Apr 2021
3.1	Celena	Sep 2007	Oct 2008		18.1	Serena	Dec 2016	Apr 2021
4.0	Daryna	Oct 2007	Apr 2009		18.2	Sonya	Jul 2017	Apr 2021
5	Elyssa	Jun 2008	Apr 2011		18.3	Sylvia	Nov 2017	Apr 2021
6	Felicia	Dec 2008	Apr 2010		19	Tara	Jun 2018	Apr 2023
7	Gloria	May 2009	Oct 2010		19.1	Tessa	Dec 2018	Apr 2023
8	Helena	Nov 2009	Apr 2011		19.2	Tina	Aug 2019	Apr 2023
9	Isadora	May 2010	Apr 2013		19.3	Tricia	Dec 2019	Apr 2023
10	Julia	Nov 2010	Apr 2012		20	Ulyana	Jun 2020	Apr 2025
11	Katya	May 2011	Oct 2012		20.1	Ulyssa	Jan 2021	Apr 2025
12	Lisa	Nov 2011	Apr 2013		20.2	Uma	Jul 2021	Apr 2025
13	Maya	May 2012	Apr 2017		20.3	Una	Jan 2022	Apr 2025
14	Nadia	Nov 2012	May 2014		21	Vanessa	Jul 2022	Apr 2027
15	Olivia	May 2013	Jan 2014		21.1	Vera	Dec 2022	Apr 2027
16	Petra	Nov 2013	Jul 2014		21.2	Victoria	Jul 2023	Apr 2027

*Ver = version. *End = end of support for this version.

Prior to version 20, Linux Mint could be booted from either i386 (32-bit) or amd64 (64-bit) machines. Since version 20, only 64-bit architecture is supported.

Keep an eye out for 21.3, which should be out very soon. Happy Computing!