Night sky from Pittsburgh, PA 9 pm EST mid-March

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**What's Up: Breakfast Combo**

On the mornings of March 9 and 10, early risers will be greeted by a cosmic breakfast quartet, served on the ecliptic. On the southeastern horizon, spot faint Mercury, bright Jupiter, Saturn, and a waning crescent Moon, all rising at the break of dawn.

With binoculars, spot Jupiter’s four largest moons. Through a telescope, spy Saturn’s rings, or observe Mercury low on the horizon. Mercury will look like a miniature quarter-moon in the telescope, half-lit by the rising Sun. Of course, be sure to pack that telescope away well before sunrise at 6:39 am to protect your eyes!

**Star Chart FAQ**

**How do I use the star chart?**

Hold it out in front of you with the direction you’re facing at the bottom of the chart. It works even better if you hold it above your head and look up at it.

**Why are east and west switched?**

They are only switched because you’re used to looking at maps of the ground. Hold it above your head, and you’ll see the directions line up just right.

**Why isn’t the Moon on the star chart?**

The chart covers a whole month. During this time, the Moon travels around the Earth, doing a full lap around the sky.

**Space Fact of the Month: Planets and Pancakes**

Blueberries in the batter of a cosmic pancake, the planets formed from a disc-shaped cloud of gas and dust spinning around our young star. Today, Earth orbits the Sun in a flat plane called the ecliptic. The other major planets orbit the Sun in nearly the same plane, having formed from the same proto-planetary pancake.

From our perspective, the ecliptic is the arc the Sun appears to take across our sky. The planets appear to travel along this same path through our sky. The Moon appears to arc across a similar path, since the Moon’s orbit is tipped just 5 degrees with respect to the Earth’s orbit.

Image Credit: NASA