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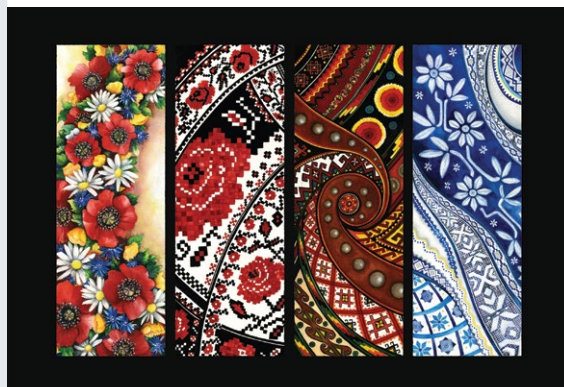
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ACUAVITAE



ON THE COVER

THE FOUR SEASONS BY LARISA SEMBALIUK CHELADYN

"The Four Seasons" is a watercolour painting by Larisa Sembaliuk Cheladyn that was created especially for the 50th anniversary of the Pavlychenko Folklorique Ensemble in Saskatoon, SK. Each section was inspired by the magnificent Ukrainian dance costuming of PFE and reflects the colours and motifs of the four seasons – spring, summer, autumn, and winter.

"Spring" features a spray of poppies, bachelor buttons, and daisies. It was inspired by the *vinok* of flowers worn when dancing the *Hopak*. "Summer" draws inspiration from the blouse embroidery of Central Ukraine. These motifs can be found on the many blouses worn by PFE over the last 50 years. "Autumn" features the colours and motifs of western Ukraine. The imagery is based on the embroidery and motifs that adorn the *Hutzul* costumes. "Winter" captures the season with a variety of blues and white-on-white embroidered motifs that adorn the winter theme costumes.

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A PRIEST BLESSES PUSSY WILLOWS ON PALM SUNDAY. PHOTO FROM CORNELIU CAZACU

Vesna

By Lyrissa Sheptak

Ukrainians have countless time-honored traditions that bring substance to their lives and justify the core of their identity.

As Ukrainians moved throughout the diaspora, these customs and traditions accompanied them, offering comfort and strength when the journey felt unbearable. However, these same traditions also adapted along with the people, contributing to their survival in the new environments. The very fact that some of these traditions have survived thousands of years is testament to their staying power and value within the community.

In Pre-Christian times, our ancestors' lives were determined by the changing

seasons and their many gods. Their beliefs and rituals made ancient Ukrainians feel protected and explained their place in the world. But in 988 AD, Saints Olga and Volodymyr introduced Christianity to the Ukrainian people. Over time, the Church gained traction in Ukraine and the religion became central in the lives of its inhabitants. However, some of their ancient customs remained close to their hearts. Rather than discarding them altogether, Ukrainians symbolically fused many aspects of those practices with the teachings of their new beliefs.

Life for our forbearers was often unstable – they lived to survive. After a long and difficult winter, Ukrainians emerged from their own hibernation to a world that was awakening. Milder weather, blossoming trees and flowers, longer days, a more potent sun. These changes were good excuses to celebrate. Spring, *vesna*, for Ukrainians was a time of hope. Easter, *Velykden* (celebrated in spring) was a time to rejoice in Christ's victory over death. The awakening of both the land and heart renewed their hope for the upcoming year.

For Christian Ukrainians, the Easter season was the pinnacle of the liturgical year. Christ's death and resurrection are two of the biggest celebrations in the Christian faith. Knowing this, Ukrainians have always taken great care in preparing for Easter Sunday. However, that journey begins forty days earlier with the beginning of Great Lent or Great Fast.

Great Lent – Velykyi Pist

Lent is a forty-day period when the Christian faithful not only commemorate but prepare for and fully enter into Christ's passion and resurrection. It is a time of fasting, almsgiving, and intense prayer; and a period of self-denial, repentance, and purification. Great Lent is also an opportunity to reconcile with neighbours. By removing the clutter of their spiritual lives, Christians endeavor to deepen their relationship with God.

Fasting and abstinence is key to a person's Lenten experience. Typically, people abstain from dancing and social celebrations, as well as rich foods such as meat, dairy, eggs, and wine.

These sufferings are an opportunity to understand Christ's own forty days of suffering in the wilderness before his public ministry, as well as his passion and crucifixion.

However, before the intense days of Great Lent begin, Ukrainians celebrate on the Liturgical calendar, and socially as well. *Pushchynnia* is the great dance before the Great Fast – a joyous occasion to unwind, dance, socialize, sing, and feast before the seriousness and solemnity of the upcoming Lenten journey.

Willow or Palm Sunday – Verbovna Nedilia

Willow Sunday -- Palm Sunday among Latin Rite Catholics -- takes place one week before Easter. It commemorates Jesus' triumphal entrance into Jerusalem when crowds proclaimed him as King, scattering palm branches in front of him as he rode into the city.

Latin Rite Catholics receive blessed palm branches. But in Ukraine's past, palm branches were only available near the Black Sea; instead, the Eastern churches blessed pussy willows. Willow trees bloom early and the catkins (buds) are one of the first signs of nature awakening from its wintery slumber. Today, although palm branches are procurable globally, Ukrainians maintain their tradition of blessing pussy willows in church on this reverent day.

After the Willow Sunday service, the Ukrainian faithful have a tradition whereby exiting the church, they tap each other with the blessed branches of



PALM SUNDAY BLESSINGS.
PHOTO FROM CORNELIU CAZACU

Lenten Soup

- 1 onion
- 1 cup chopped celery
- 1 cup chopped pepper
- 1 cup chopped carrots
- 2 potatoes, cubed
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Dill
- Parsley

Dumplings:

- 1 cup flour
- 1 tsp oil
- Salt
- ½ cup water

Directions:

1. Sauté vegetables except the potatoes, then put everything in a large pot half filled with water.
2. Add potatoes, salt, and pepper to taste, and toss in some dill or parsley to bring out the flavour in the soup.
3. Simmer until all the vegetables are soft.
4. Prepare dumplings by mixing the ingredients to a smooth consistency.
5. Take a spoon and drop bits of dumpling dough into the soup.
6. The soup should continue to simmer until the dumplings float.

pussy willows. This custom is known as God's Wounds, *Bozhi Rany* -- a solemn effect is tapping friends lightly as a gentle reminder of Jesus' scourging on Holy Friday. Parishioners also tap friends wishing them good health, happiness, and fortune. It's usually accompanied by a rendition of the following song: "*Bud velykyi yak verba, zdorovyi yak voda, bohatyi yak zemlia*", which translates to "Be as big as the willow, healthy as water, rich as the earth."

Upon returning to their homes, parishioners adorn icons and holy pictures with the pussy willow branches. Willow branches from the previous year are to be burned carefully. In the past, old blessed branches were burned in the oven when the *pashky* and *babky* were being baked.

Long ago, Ukrainians used the blessed pussy willows in other ways. Blessed branches were carried solemnly around the home, farmyard, and beehives to ensure protection, fertility, and a good yield of honey. The catkins were also buried in their fields to secure a good harvest -- and hopefully one that would grow as quickly as a willow tree. Our forebearers also ate the soft, blessed catkins hoping for good health.

Holy Week – *Strasnyi Tyzhden*

Holy week is the week leading up to Easter Sunday. It is an intense time of preparation for not only the state of an individual's soul, but of his or her physical surroundings as well.

In the past, in order to be prepared for the religious observances from Thursday through to Easter, all pertinent housework and repairs, baking and cooking needed to be taken care of ahead of time. Cleaning and repairs came first. Before the fun traditions could be enjoyed, daughters helped their mothers give the house a proper deep cleaning—beating rugs, whitewashing, airing bedding, and giving special items a solid polish. Boys on the other hand, gathered firewood, cleaned the barns, and repaired outbuildings with their fathers. Everyone's clothes were cleaned, and baths were mandatory -- the same went for confession; souls had to be cleansed as well. These activities were a way of purifying the home and heart, driving away old man winter, and welcoming the spring.

After mother was satisfied with the cleaning, the fun began! There were *pysanky* to be written, eggs to be dyed, sausage to be made, meat to be roasted,

and bread to be baked. It felt like there was never enough time to do everything, yet by the grace of God, mother always finished with time to spare.

Today, the Ukrainian faithful still observe these intense preparations, but with modern adaptations.

Pysanky

Writing *pysanky* is considered to be one of the most popular Ukrainian Easter traditions. The word *pysanka* comes from the verb '*pysaty*', meaning 'to write'. Intricate *pysanka* designs are written on the egg with a *kistka* (stylus), beeswax, and colorful dyes. When the process is complete, the wax is melted off revealing an array of colors.

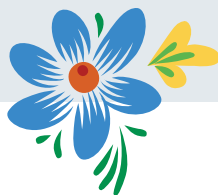
Pre-Christian Ukrainians honored animals, forces of nature, and worshipped the sun. They held birds in high regard because they were the only animal that could get near the sun. The sun was a powerful deity because it gave life to everything that the people needed for



Prayer of St. Ephrem the Syrian

Recited regularly during
Great Lent in Eastern Catholic
and Orthodox churches

Oh Lord and Master of my life,
Keep me from the spirit of indifference
and discouragement,
Lust of power, and idle chatter.
Instead, grant to me, your servant,
The spirit of wholeness of being,
humble-mindedness, patience, and love,
Oh, Lord and King,
Grant me the grace to be aware of my
sins and not to judge my neighbour;
For you are blessed, now and forever, and ever,
Amen.





FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: DYED PYSANKY | ETCHED PYSANKY

survival, as well as new life and renewed hope after a long, fruitless winter.

To early Ukrainians, *pysanky* held almost magical powers. Eggs were decorated with symbols to ward off evil, or summon prosperity, fertility, happiness, health, love, and eternity. Eggs were then strategically placed throughout houses and yards, or given to people (newlyweds, the sick, or dying) almost like a talisman.

But with the introduction of Christianity, *pysanky* took on new meaning. Not only did they express nature's rebirth, but they were likened to Christ's resurrection from the tomb. With the new meaning for *pysanky* came Biblical interpretations of the symbols and colors: fish for faith; nets for 'fishers of men', a triangle for the Holy Trinity, among many others. They were no longer good luck charms, rather they were blessed in the Easter baskets and offered to friends and family as prayers and well-wishes.

Today, the role of *pysanky* as an Easter tradition continues; but they are also sold or used as decorative pieces. Talented artists have created and perfected new designs, techniques, supplies, and colors. However, one thing remains the same: when a *pysanka* is created, the artist embarks on an almost holy journey, planning colors and patterns that best reveal the story or prayer. Despite new techniques and supplies, when we each have a moment to sit in silence, heat up our *kistky* and inhale the aroma of beeswax, we feel a deep connection to the ancient mother who buried a *pysanka*

under the threshold of her door for protection of her loved ones; the young girl who wrote a design hoping for a love interest, or the elder who symbolically recounted the passion of Christ.

Krashynky

To the Ukrainian faithful, the egg holds powerful symbolism. The shell represents Christ's tomb; the white of the egg – the burial shroud; and the yolk, Jesus, the Son of God. *Krashanky* are hard-boiled eggs that are dyed in one solid color. Women and children dye countless *krashanky* to bless in their baskets, share with others, and use for games played on the days after Easter.

Traditionally, these eggs were coloured with naturally made dyes from vegetable sources: beet juice, red onion peel, yellow or brown onion peel, turmeric, blueberries, red cabbage, coffee or tea. Today, there is the added option of chemically synthesized pigments that offer almost any colour imaginable.

Paska and Babka

Ukrainians have always had a love affair with bread. Not only a staple in Ukrainian cuisine valued for its life-giving essence, it is also a part of every significant event in an individual's life. From birth to death, there is a special style of bread and a symbolic role for it in each custom or ritual. A symbol of life, peace, and friendship, bread is considered to be a holy gift from God and a reminder that Christ is the Bread of Life.

Meaning of Pysanky Colors

-  White: purity
-  Red: happiness, passion, ministry of the church
-  Purple: faith, fasting, royalty
-  Yellow: sun, wisdom
-  Blue: sky, health, fidelity
-  Brown: earth, generosity
-  Gold: wisdom
-  Green: spring, hope
-  Black: eternity, remembrance
-  Orange: endurance
-  Pink: success

Pysanka Legend

One of the more famous stories of the *Pysanka* is about the journey of Mary Magdalene and the other women who went to Christ's tomb to anoint His body with ointment and sweet spices. The story goes that these women took a basket of hard-boiled eggs to eat after they visited the tomb. But when they arrived, they saw that the stone door had been rolled aside. Setting down their basket of eggs and spices, they went inside to investigate, only to find it empty. Discovering that Christ had risen, they joyfully left the tomb and found the eggs in their basket had all of a sudden taken on brilliant colors.



Long ago women used to say a prayer before making the bread. Once the dough was mixed and kneaded, a cross was made over the dough before its rising. If any pieces of bread fell off the table, they were quickly scooped up, kissed, and gently placed back on the serving dish. Bread was never thrown in jest. Our predecessors never wasted it either. If any morsels were left over from a meal, they gave them to the birds or animals.

Typically, there are two main Easter breads – *paska* and *babka*. *Paska* – meaning Passover (Christ’s passing from death into life) is a round, decorative loaf adorned with dough ornaments such as crosses, birds, and rosettes. When Easter baskets are being blessed, a candle is placed in the *paska* signifying Christ as the Light of the World.

Babka is a cylindrical-shaped sweet bread. In Pre-Christian times *babka* meant ‘old woman’. Today, it is understood to mean, ‘Blessed Mother (Mary)’. Made of butter, eggs, milk, sugar and flour, saffron can be used to bring out a yellow color, and raisins and other dried fruit can be added for texture and taste. Some people like to cover the top of the *babka* with icing sugar and sprinkle tiny candies on top.

Family recipes lovingly passed down from mother to daughter ensure the perpetuation of not only the recipe, but knowledge of tradition and culture as well. The baking of these special breads often brings family members together. They appreciate these annual moments, as well as the delicious aroma

Symbol	Meaning	Examples
Lily of the Valley	Early spring flower, purity, humility, a young bride	
Oak Leaves	Strength, persistence, cycle of life	
Periwinkle	3 leaves, traditional wedding wreath, sacred to the goddess of love, pure love	
Petal	Same as whole flower, humility	
Pine Needles	Eternal youth and health, stamina, endurance	
Pinwheel	Sometimes associated with the sun, sometimes with windmills	
Pods/Seeds	A plant symbol for fertility and hope for a fruitful harvest	
Poppy	Ukrainian art motif, symbolizing joy and beauty	
Pussy Willows	Anticipation of spring	
Rake	Reference to the harvest, putting things into order	
Ram	Masculine. Leadership, strength in the face of opposition, perseverance, dignity	
Ram's Horns	Leadership, and the kind of strength that overcomes problems	
Rooster / Rooster's Comb	Masculine, rich married life and many children	
Rose	Used interchangeably with the Star. Feminine, wisdom, beauty, elegance	
Saw	Symbolizes fire, life giving heat See also: Wolves teeth	

PYSANKA SYMBOLS. PHOTO FROM PINTEREST

of the bread as it is carefully removed from the oven.

Holy Thursday or Passion Thursday – *Strasnyi Chetver*

When all of the week’s chores and cleaning had been completed in time for the upcoming religious observances, the Christian faithful turn their focus on Christ. Passion Thursday service recalls the Passion of Christ as priests read twelve Gospels from the Bible. Bells are rung after each chapter is read, but after that, the bells are replaced by

wooden clappers which, when they are shaken or twisted, are intended to sound like nails being driven into Christ when He was being crucified.

Good Friday or Passion Friday – *Velykodnia Piatnytsia*

Good Friday, a harbinger to Easter Sunday, is a sacred day when the Christian faithful observe a strict fast. One is not to partake in manual labour, and is expected to act solemnly. Parishioners attend a church service



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: BABKA BREAD. PHOTO FROM THE KITCHEN MAGPIE | FRESHLY-BAKED PASKY. PHOTO FROM GLOBAL | EASTER BASKETS READY TO BE BLESSED. PHOTO FROM PYSANKY.INFO

commemorating our Lord's crucifixion and burial. The burial service is a procession of Christ's Holy Shroud (*plashchynytsia*) to the tomb. The shroud is an unframed canvas oil painting depicting Jesus' body lying in repose. This procession is led by priests, followed by church elders carrying the shroud, altar boys carrying wooden clappers, and Children of Mary carrying candles or standards. The procession circles the church three times re-enacting how Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus and others removed Jesus' body from the cross and brought it to the tomb.

A 'tomb' is set up at the altar and adorned with flowers and candles. The worshippers carry the shroud and gently place it at the tomb where the congregation is able to approach the *plashchynytsia* on their knees and pay homage to the Lord by kissing His wounds (and gently wiping the shroud for the next person). Church organizations and parishioners take turns keeping vigil at the tomb.

Holy Saturday – *Sviata Subota*

Holy Saturday is another day of strict fasting, and a final opportunity for

parishioners to finish chores, go to Confession, visit the Holy Shroud, and pray.

Easter basket food – *Sviachene*

Holy Saturday is also a day of quiet excitement as the people prepare their Easter baskets and take them to church to get blessed. For many Ukrainians, Easter would not feel like Easter without the traditional basket. Originally, baskets were blessed on Resurrection Sunday after the morning service. Most churches in Ukraine still observe this tradition. Throughout the diaspora, however, most parishioners bring baskets to be blessed on Holy Saturday, although priests still bless them on Sunday morning if required.

There's friendly competition when comparing how other Easter baskets are arranged, and foods are prepared. Colorful eggs, expertly designed *pysanky*, butter lambs, ornately decorated *paska*, homemade sausage and embroidered basket covers -- preparing the baskets is a great source of pride. Easter baskets are filled with particular food, all holding symbolic meaning:

- **Paska** – Christ is the Bread of Life
- **Krashynky** – New Life and the Resurrection of Christ
- **Horseradish** – The Passion of Christ
- **Cheese** – Abundance and peace
- **Salt** – Perseverance of faith
- **Butter** – Graces and Goodness of Christ
- **Meats and Sausage** – God's mercy and reminder of His sacrifice.





PASKY BEFORE BEING BAKED

Easter Sunday – Velykden

The day of anticipation has finally arrived! For Ukrainians, the tradition of Easter Sunday begins at church where they attend Resurrection Services at the crack of dawn. As the sun's first rays seep into the church, shining radiantly on the icons and altar, the parishioners enter into a church with no shroud because Christ has resurrected. "*Khrystos Voskres, Christ is Risen!*" everyone exclaims joyfully to one another, "*Voyistynu Voskres, Indeed He is Risen!*" is the reply. The priest is the first to officially sing this Easter song, and the choir and congregation join in. The many weeks of fasting and purification were worth the effort – renewed hope permeates the hearts of all.

After Divine Liturgy, families return home to finally break-the-fast of Great Lent and eat the blessed foods from their Easter baskets.

A hard-boiled egg is the first food eaten. Traditionally, the head of the household slices a hard-boiled egg and passes it to everyone around the table proclaiming, "*Khrystos Voskres!*"

A fun game to play with *krashynky* is "egg battles". This is when people crack eggs with each other at the table. The winner is the person whose egg doesn't break.

Easter is generally celebrated for three days. During this time, children and teenagers play games, sing, tell stories, and dance. A week after Easter the churches hold their *panakhyda* services, where everyone spends time at the cemetery, praying for the souls of the dearly departed. Priests bless the graves and candles are lit, affirming Christ's victory over death. Eggs and treats are exchanged, and well-wishes are passed along. These are true days of celebration!

From Easter to the Feast of the Holy Trinity, young girls and boys openly enjoy their youth. There's much socializing, singing and dancing. Girls especially enjoy the songs and dances of the ritual spring *hahilky*. It is a time for young women to charm young men in hopes of finding true love and eventually a marriage proposal.


Green Holidays – Zeleni Sviata

In Pre-Christian Ukraine, people celebrated their year according to the

sun cycle. Green Holidays launched the summer season. It was a cult that worshiped the magic of nature. Stories of tricky *rusalky* (water nymphs) and 'devilish' merrymaking filled those early summer days of celebration. Houses were decorated with all types of greenery because villagers believed that the souls of their ancestors inhabited the greenery and would stave off the evil that lurked.

But today Green Sunday, or Trinity Sunday/*Trytsia* in Ukraine is the celebration of Pentecost. The 50th day after Easter commemorates the birth of the Church when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles giving them courage and wisdom to evangelize the world. Legend says that when the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles, God decorated the Upper Room with beautiful greenery. Thus, Ukrainians decorate their houses and churches with branches of foliage, flowers, and greenery.

Still, many Pre-Christian practices remain a part of Green Sunday. It is associated closely with nature, the world of the living and the dead, magical mischief-makers, and superstition. There is much merrymaking as young people kick-off their summer season.

Most Ukrainians would have a difficult time comprehending a traditional Easter without the kiss of spring. Intertwined by tradition and ritual for over a millennium, spring is the harbinger of nature's rebirth, while the promise of Easter is an individual's rebirth. After weeks of intense fasting, and purification of house and heart, the freedom to finally celebrate and rejoice are welcome distractions before summer's toil. 

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WEAVING WREATHS. PHOTO FROM UKRINFORM

Lito

By Tamara Soltykevych

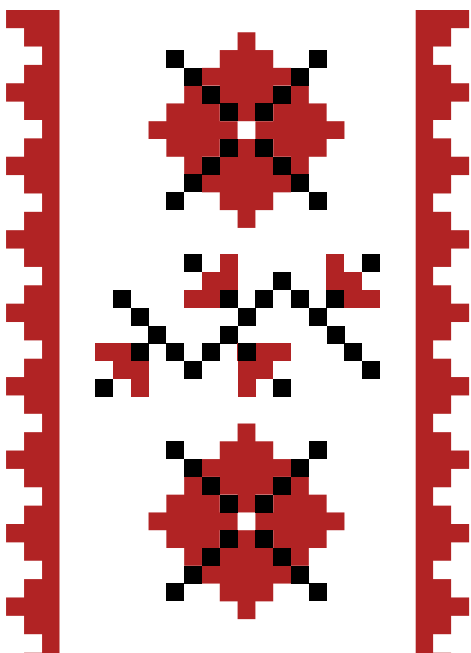
Ivana Kupala

Woven wreaths with candles floating down a river, in hopes of them reaching the right hands. Couples jumping over a fire to cement their long-term partnership. An evening flickering with mystery, magic, and promise. These are a few images that are brought to mind when thinking of the celebration of *Ivana Kupala*, also referred to as Feast of St. John the Baptist or Summer Solstice. This summer celebration takes place on June 23 and 24 in the Julian calendar, and on July 6 and 7 in the Gregorian calendar. It is a Slavic tradition celebrated not only in Ukraine but in various other Eastern European countries, including Russia, Belarus, Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia. “*Ivana*” comes from the name “John” in Ukrainian, and “*Kupalo*” is the name of the Pagan God of harvest and fertility. The verb “*Kupala*” also means “bathing” and is associated with the water baptism performed by St. John the Baptist. This tradition pre-dates Christianity, originating from pagan times where it

marked the transition from the end of the summer solstice to the beginning of the harvest. It is the time where the days start to get shorter and the nights longer.

The night before *Ivana Kupala* is known as *Tvorila*, where mischief and pranks are aplenty. Plants and herbs are gathered on the eve of *Ivana Kupala*, which are believed to have magical properties that can rid of evil spirits and cure illnesses. The herbs and grasses are hung around the house and act as protective talismans for the whole family.

On *Kupala* night, all possible evil spirits awaken, including snakes, mermaids, witches, and werewolves. Even the trees become enchanted and talk to one another. One should never sleep on this night, but rather go to a body of water and celebrate the holiday there, warding off evil spirits through noisy festivities. While people go in the water as a purification act, they don’t go swimming, as the evil spirits can pull you down and drown you!





FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: LAYING WREATHS IN THE WATER. PHOTO FROM UKRAINIAN PEOPLE | PHOTO FROM UKRAINIAN PEOPLE | PHOTO FROM WHAT'S ON

Fire and water gain magical properties on *Ivana Kupala*, and they both play a big role in the celebrations. People can bathe naked in water, undergoing a cleansing ritual in an attempt to purify themselves.

It is customary for women to wear flower garlands and *vyshyvanky* (embroidered shirts) on *Ivana Kupala*. They also weave wreaths, which symbolize the potential of a budding relationship. The wreaths can contain as many as 12 species of plants. This celebration is largely about young women guessing about their future family. They release their intricately woven wreaths, lit with candles, into the river in hopes of finding their soulmates. Those whose wreaths stay afloat on the river are destined to find their true love; those whose wreaths sink will not be so lucky. It is said that if your wreath stays close to the shore, your lover is nearby. If the wreath sails far away, the love will come to you from a distance.

It is also believed that the morning dew on *Ivana Kupala* contains magical properties. People collect the dew and wash themselves with it in hopes that it will increase their attractiveness and ward off any evil forces.

One of the ancient beliefs passed down is that this is the only night on which ferns bloom, "*Tvist Paporoti*", and those

who find one will flourish with prosperity and good fortune. Youth walk through the forest in search of this elusive fern, which supposedly only blooms for a few moments around midnight. If you see a flower in bloom and grab hold of it, you will gain magical powers. You'll be able to see all the treasures buried in the forest, no matter how deeply they may be buried. Some even say if you're lucky enough to hold the flower from the fern, you'll begin to understand what animals and birds are saying.

After sunset, a huge fire is lit by the youth. The fire is one of the highlights of the holiday, where everyone gathers around to perform dances and sing songs of love, romance and marriage. Some jump over the flames to show their bravery, or to cleanse themselves of illness or bad luck. The higher you jump, the better the luck you will have. Couples try to jump over the flames holding hands. If their hands break apart, their relationship is doomed to fall apart. If their hands stay together, that is a sure marker of a partnership destined to last. In historic traditions, people would lead their cattle through the fires to protect them from disease. Mothers would burn clothes of sick children in hopes of burning away the illness.

This holiday continues to be celebrated in modern-day Ukraine. There are

well-known traditional experiences at Shevchenkivskiy Hai Park and in ancient Zhydachiv (65 km south of Lviv). Many *Kupala*-related activities also take place across the capital.

Feasts of Saints Peter and Paul - *Sviato Petra i Pavla*

Saint Peter and Saint Paul were apostles who laid the foundation for the Church of Christ. They were martyred in Rome in the year 67, under the Emperor Nero. Each year, Eastern Orthodox and Catholic Christians observe a liturgical feast on the day of their deaths in celebration of their martyrdom on June 29th and July 12th according to the Gregorian and Julian calendars, respectively. The feast represents the relationship between Peter and Paul's work. Peter was originally a fisherman



IVANA KUPALA. PHOTO FROM KYIV POST

named Simon whom Christ referred to as His “rock” upon which He would build the church. St. Peter travelled on behalf of the Universal Church, consecrating bishops and speaking on matters affecting the entire Church. St. Peter was Rome’s first bishop and was crucified there upside down as he felt unworthy to die the same way as Christ. Paul was raised under strict Judaism and actually persecuted Christians until he met Christ. St. Paul became the patron of the local church, writing letters to Churches expressing Christ’s teachings. He was beheaded in Rome, also giving his life up for Christ.

Peter and Paul are honoured in a joint event because they bring both understandings of the church from two perspectives: universally and locally. It is a major celebration; in fact, in Italy, this day is considered a public holiday and schools and many businesses are closed.

Throughout the years, Christian worshippers around the world have gone on pilgrimages to the tombs of Saints Peter and Paul. Locally, the Saints Peter and Paul Parish in the Town of Mundare has been holding an annual pilgrimage, or *Vidpust* in Ukrainian, in honour of this day since 1911. Mundare, a town of less than 1,000 people, is located about 90 km east of Edmonton. The first pioneers settled in the Mundare area around 1898, the majority of them of Ukrainian descent. For many years, the Mundare church served as the Provincial Centre of the Basilian Fathers in North America. The original Saints Peter and Paul Parish was built in 1910, and the cornerstone was blessed in the presence of the Prime Minister of Canada, Sir Wilfred Laurier.

The Mundare *Vidpust* consists of a Divine Liturgy, a procession, banquet and concert. The pilgrimage site is at the Golgotha Grotto, which was built in 1934 on a hill with a 55-foot cross above it.

Vilkha

The Black or European Alder tree is the most common species in Ukraine and can reach a height of 25 metres. This type of tree grows in moist soil and forms entire groves in a few regions of Ukraine. Pokuttia, a region of Western Ukraine, was and remains a region primarily dependent on agricultural activity due to its fertile soil (like much of Ukraine). Back in the time of Kyivan-Rus in the 13th Century, the Mongol-Tatar tribes attacked the region of Pokuttia, among many other places. In fact, this invasion, which began due to start of the break-up of Kyivan-Rus, resulted in the division of the East Slavic People into three nations: Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus.

Upon attack, the Ukrainian villagers fleeing from the violence would hide in marshes amongst the Alder trees. *Vilkha*, the word for Alder tree, has come to be known as a celebration of this tree that saved many Ukrainian lives from the Mongol-Tatars. When the Tatars left, the survivors decorated the tall Alder trees to express their gratitude. This tradition has been passed down throughout the centuries. During the annual celebration of *Vilkha* on July 12th, people dance, sing, and decorate Alder trees. The Alder tree has now become an important symbol for the Pokuttian region.

Baptism of Kyivan Rus

Over one millennium ago, in the year 988 in Kyiv, residents were baptised en masse when the Grand Prince Vladimir embraced Christianity as the religion of the land. This event is considered a turning point for Christianity in Eastern Slavic culture. Once the Prince accepted Christianity, he had his sons and boyars (members of the aristocracy) baptized. Then, Prince Vladimir called his citizens to the Dnipro River where they were baptized by Orthodox Priests.

In 2008, then-President of Ukraine Victor Yushchenko created a holiday to commemorate this historic event. On July 28th, public processions and prayer services are commonplace. In recent years, a service has been held at St. Vladimir’s Hill, followed by a procession of about six kilometres to Kyiv’s *Pecherska Lavra* (Monastery of the Caves). In 2018, the estimated number of participants was 250,000. To add to the excitement of the day, there is a spectacular show complete with horse-tricks and theater performances, and various activities reminiscent of *Kyivan Rus* are hosted. 



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: PHOTO FROM UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF EDMONTON | PHOTO FROM UA DESTINATION



PHOTO FROM UKRTNFORM

Osina

People have the luxury of enjoying each season for what it is. Autumn carries a particular magic. Cooler breezes kiss our cheeks after hot weather, and a melancholy comforts people as they prepare to bid farewell to the lazy days of summer.

By Lyryssa Sheptak

Nature exhales its last breath leaving us with carpets of colorful leaves ushering in the next season. Autumn is associated with sweet smelling spices, birds summoned south, and bountiful gardens.

Praying for a sluggish transition to winter, people make a point of enjoying autumn to the fullest: the last fire pits of the outdoor season, meandering walks in the woods, and cool dips in the lake. The celebration of Thanksgiving is a time for family, reflection, and gratitude. But life hasn't always been this easy. Even in the

not-so-distant past people lived solely to survive. Everyday things were not merely prosaic; rather, they were done with great intention and specificity.

One can find the roots of Ukrainian autumn traditions and rituals in ancient times. In pre-Christian Ukraine, people worshipped many gods and believed that all of nature contained a spirit. As agrarian societies, ancient Ukrainians venerated the sun the most intensely because it gave life to everything they needed for survival.



LEFT PHOTO: TYING THE *DIDUKH*. PHOTO FROM UKRINFORM



Ritual permeated all aspects of these early societies. Nothing was done without an incantation, procession, offering, or sacrifice of some sort. Instead of having powerful doctrine, their fundamental determinations were actions—or reactions—to forces of nature or temperaments of their gods. And in the mind of our ancestors, these forces and temperaments needed regular appeasing. They treated their rituals like insurance in hopes of averting droughts, bad harvest, or extreme weather. People felt at the mercy of their gods; their prosperity and safety were determined by the whims of these supernatural beings. These superstitions were engrained in generations of society, and many of these eventually immigrated to new lands along with the people.

With the acceptance of Christianity in 988 AD, the habits of these old pagan ways took on Christian connotations and symbolism. Instead of rituals and traditions holding magical inclinations, they now became prayers, ceremonies, or celebrations based on Christian meaning and doctrine.

Harvest - *Obzhynky*

Harvest is one of the many examples where the celebrations and practices of ancient Ukrainians were maintained, but took on Christian meaning and intention once it became the predominant religion of the people. In the not-so-distant past, harvest

had particular rituals to follow. And in order to have a successful harvest people felt that each step of the process was integral.

Zazhynky was the commencement of harvesting. Due to a different growing season in Ukraine than Canada, this usually began at the beginning of August. On the morning of the first day of harvest the reapers walked together to the fields singing. Dressed in loose, light-coloured clothing, large brimmed hats, and tools in hands, they were ready to tackle the back-breaking work of harvest.

In ancient times, a shaman or village elder kicked-off the big day with incantations imploring the many gods and supernatural phenomena for their kindness during harvesting. Fields were asked to “surrender” their yield.

In Christian times, it was the landlord or land owner, *hospodar*, who walked to the field and prayed, beseeching God to give stamina and fortitude to the workers, good weather, and a bountiful harvest.



Honey Cookies

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1/3 cup plus 1tbsp honey, melted
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 4 cups flour
- 2 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp cinnamon

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. Cream butter and sugar. Beat eggs and add to butter and sugar mixture.
3. Next, add honey and vanilla. Mix well.
4. Add flour, soda, and cinnamon. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours.
5. Roll out on floured surface to 1 cm thickness and use a cookie cutter, glass, or soup can to cut out circles. Place on cookie sheet with parchment paper.
6. Bake for about 15 mins, or lightly browned.



Reapers didn't work without the constant hum or singing of harvest songs. Their movements echoed the beats of the songs creating a natural rhythm between man and nature. Harvest songs, *zhnyvarski*, touched on themes of aching bodies, animals, birds, tools, forces of nature, grain, and the relationships between the worker and *hospodar*, but the most commonly sung theme was about the back-breaking work of the reaper.

After many days of harvesting, the end was in sight. Great ceremony surrounded the completion of the harvest. A solemn procession was held around the field where workers and villagers came to an eventual stop by the last remaining

clump of uncut grain. This last clump of grain was left unharvested as an offering for the following year's harvest. These last remaining pieces of grain were then braided together. Slumping over because of the weight, these braided strands of grain looked like a goat's beard or an old man's beard. People referred to this last bit of grain as *boroda*, beard.

Early Ukrainians believed that after the death of a loved one, their soul, along with those of their ancestors, lived in the fields and orchards, gardens and forests. It is no surprise then, that the last official sheaf of grain was gathered with purpose and ceremony as well. This *didukh*, meaning 'spirit of ancestors', was harvested and then decorated with ribbon and garland by girls and young women. It was intended for their masters and mistresses as an offering and an act of good will.

A young woman of good reputation – innocent and beholding of good morals and virtues – was chosen to carry this last sheaf of grain to the master. This young woman was crowned in her own special *vinok* of flowers and grain called a *kniahynia*. In a special procession, villagers and workers sang songs specific

to this situation as they followed the young woman to the master's house.

With great ceremony at the *hospodar's* house, the young woman offered the master and mistress the decorated *didukh* along with wishes of joy and prosperity. In turn, they presented her with a gift. The master and mistress then placed the *didukh* in a place of honour by the icon.

After this exchange of gifts, the master and mistress treated all the workers, reapers, and guests, to a special dinner and much *horilka* (vodka). *Obzhynky*, the harvest festival, officially began. *Obzhynky* always had much singing, eating, and dancing, celebrating the fact that the bountiful grain was harvested in time. Everyone had their moment to let loose before preparations for the upcoming winter needed to begin.

Spas (Feast of Our Saviour) ushered in autumn and the first frosts. If all went according to plan, all crops should have been harvested by then. *Spas* continued to be celebrated in Canada by early Ukrainian settlers as well. Today, harvest in Canada remains a joyous time when we can finally gather the fruits of our labours. To the faithful, the spiritual

A Song for Obzhynky

From the Cherkas'ka Oblast



Obzhynky, panochku, obzhynky,
/ Khoche vinochok horilky. / 2
Ne tak vinochok, yak zhentsi,
/ Shcho dozhalo panovi pshenytsi. / 2
Pshenytsi panovi dozhalo,
/ Shchob nam hrala muzyka z Varshavy. / 2
Khoch z Varshavy, ne z Varshavy, khoch z mista,
/ Shchob nam hrala muzyka troista. / 2

Harvest, sir, harvest,
/The wreath asks for whiskey/2
Not so much the wreath as the reapers [want whiskey]),
/Who finished harvesting wheat for the master./2
The reapers finished harvesting for the master,
/That music from Warsaw would play for us./2
Whether from Warsaw or not from Warsaw, but from the city
/That troysta [trio] music would play for us./2





FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: HOLY TRANSFIGURATION. PHOTO FROM THE HOLY TRANSFIGURATION MONASTERY | HARVESTER BY MYKOLA PYMENKO. PHOTO FROM WIKIART | BUCKWHEAT PYRIZHKY. PHOTO FROM UKRAINIAN RECIPES

harvest is also a time to gather the bounty from the seeds sown earlier as an offering to God.

The Holy Transfiguration of Our Lord – *Preobazhennia Hospoda i Spas*

The Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord takes place on August 6th on the Gregorian calendar and August 19th on the Julian calendar. On this day, Jesus revealed His divine glory and power to the apostles Peter, James, and John. There, on Mount Tabor, or Mount of the Transfiguration, Jesus became illuminated in Heavenly glory. His face and clothing shone in a brilliant glow. God spoke aloud at this time proclaiming, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.”

The Transfiguration is a pivotal moment to Christians because it was where, “the present met the eternal; the meeting place between man and God. Jesus connected Heaven and Earth.” It is also the moment that Jesus foretold His death to the three apostles present. Just as Christ foretold His death, the Transfiguration was also a harbinger of greater things to come.

Likewise, to Ukrainians, harvest -- a time for celebrating the fruits of their labour -- likened a spiritual harvest of souls sown by prayer, dedication, faith,

and charity. Foods are blessed in church on this day. The church prays for the sanctification of those who partake of these blessed foods -- so the faithful's spiritual fruits may multiply.

Around the feast of the Transfiguration, the Three Feasts of the Saviour (held between August 14-29) are celebrated by Ukrainian people.

The first Feast of the Saviour is the Honey Feast (first *Spas*). Honey was, and still is, highly prized by Ukrainians. Not only is it valued for its beeswax products, but honey also heals cuts, burns, wounds, blemishes, coughs, and promotes overall health. The first of the three feasts, the first *Spas* takes place when honey is ready for harvesting. Once gathered, it is brought to church to be blessed. Only after the blessing can people enjoy the sweet treat.

Also honoured on this special day are the Seven martyrs Maccabees who incited rebellion to have a faith in a singular God. As a result, they were punished severely. In the biblical book of 2 Maccabees, the Maccabee king prayed for souls of his slain soldiers (12:44-46). Because of his gesture, faithful Ukrainians take this opportunity in autumn to pray over the graves for the souls of loved ones.

The second *Spas* is the Apple Feast and the most celebrated of the three.

Buckwheat Pyrizhok

(MAKES 6 PIES)

Yeast

- 1 pkg dry yeast
- 1 cup lukewarm water
- 2 tsp sugar

Dough

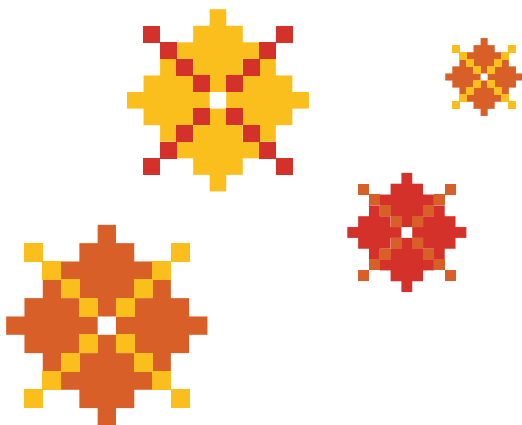
- 2 cups milk
- 2 eggs
- 1 Tbsp salt
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1/3 cup oil
- 8 cups flour

Filling

- 1 Dutch oven full of potatoes, peeled and sliced good enough for mashing
- 1 onion, diced and sautéed in butter
- ½ package roasted buckwheat

Directions:

1. Dissolve the yeast in sugar and water and let sit for 10 mins.
2. Combine all the ingredients for the dough, including the yeast mixture. Let it rise until it becomes double in bulk (about 45 mins)
3. Boil the potatoes and buckwheat together. Drain when potatoes and buckwheat are soft. Fry onion and add it to the potato and buckwheat mixture.
4. Roll out the dough to about 7 mm thick and place on a board lined with flour. Place the potato mixture in the middle, then wrap and pinch the edges of the dough. Flip the pie onto a pie plate or baking sheet (also lined with baking paper) so seam is the bottom.
5. Bake at 350 degrees until golden brown.



In pre-Christian times, a sacrifice of harvested fruits and vegetables was made to their gods in hopes of future prosperity, love, or cleansing. The Apple Feast often coincides with the ripening of fruits and vegetables. Traditionally, baskets were full of apples and grapes, but now other freshly harvested fruits and vegetables are brought to church to be blessed as well. This is also a time of thanksgiving for the successful harvest. After the food is blessed, it is shared with everyone.

Some people believe that the first bite of a blessed apple will bring good luck. Traditionally, much superstition shrouds this feast. People refrained from eating apples for two weeks beforehand. Parents believed as long as they did not eat apples before this feast, their children would have many presents in the afterlife. But loathe to those who did not fast from eating them. It was considered a sin and it was feared that bad luck would befall the family.

The final feast of this trio is the Nut Feast (including grains). By this day, hazelnuts and walnuts have ripened and people enjoy foraging in the forests or orchards. It was believed that a good harvest of nuts foretold of a good harvest of grains in the following

year. As well, traditionally, grains were ground into flour and used for pies and cakes on this day.

Feast of Dormition (Assumption) – *Uspinnia Presviatoi Bohorodytsi*

The Feast of the Dormition, or Assumption, (August 15 on the Gregorian calendar, August 28 Julian

God) had the opportunity to see all the disciples (except for Thomas) one final time. At the moment of her death, Jesus Christ himself descended and, along with the angels, carried her soul into Heaven.

Traditionally, in the Byzantine Rite the faithful fast up to two weeks prior to the feast-day. There is a celebration of the Divine Liturgy on the feast day, and continued celebrating for eight more days afterwards.

Folk belief claims that at the time of Mother Mary's assumption into Heaven, there was a heavenly fragrance. In honour of this belief, Ukrainians customarily blessed flowers and medicinal herbs. The Assumption, or Dormition, is a time of reverence and deep prayer. The faithful also venerated the Holy Mother asking her to bless the crops of autumn.

There are many beloved religious feasts and folkloric customs that take place during autumn, and Ukrainians practice them in varying degrees. Harvest, or *Obzhynky*, celebrations are now open festivals integrating Ukrainian harvest customs with modern inventions like rides, parades, games, and performances. Harvested food and grains are still taken to church to be blessed. *Didukhy* are still ceremoniously reaped and set aside for Christmas, and the church remains the backbone of many of the people. Harvest is a time when people hope for a bountiful crop in both the spiritual and material realms of their lives. From ancient times to today, Ukrainians, and those of Ukrainian heritage, value their customs and beliefs, perpetuating their culture despite an ever-changing world. **AV**



HOLY TRANSFIGURATION. PHOTO FROM THE HOLY TRANSFIGURATION MONASTERY

calendar) is a solemn major feast in the Byzantine Rite which honors the "falling asleep" of the Blessed Mother Mary and then her glorious assumption into Heaven. Foretold of her upcoming departure from Earth by the Archangel Gabriel, the Theotokos (Mother of



PHOTO BY ALBERTACULTURE

Zyma

By Elyse Dzenick

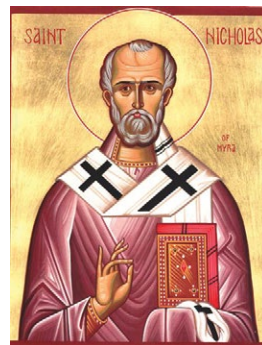
Like the other seasons, many winter celebrations blend Ukrainian folk traditions with Christian celebrations. Ukraine is known to have very successful wheat and grain harvests, and as such, many of the folkloric traditions followed are related to wealth found with a prosperous future harvest.

When Christianity was introduced to Ukraine, these traditions were still incredibly important to Ukrainian people. Celebrations became a unique and beautiful combination of religion and folklore. As Ukrainian people immigrated to new countries, they found a way for the celebrations to have a place in new lands. Ukrainian diasporas around the world have continued to find ways for traditions to be passed on.

St. Andrew's Day – *Den sviatoho Andriia*

St. Andrew is the patron saint of Ukraine and is widely known as the founder of the Byzantine Church. The saltire— 'X'-shaped cross—is often associated with Andrew, as he chose this shape of cross to be crucified upon. Orthodox Christians observe this Feast Day celebrated on December 12th to honour him. In other countries, such as Scotland and Romania, it is celebrated on November 30th.

Andrew the Apostle was born in Galilee and he, along with his brother Simon Peter, was a fisherman. Jesus called upon both of them to become disciples—“fishers of men”. Over his lifetime, Andrew travelled throughout Europe, spreading the word of Jesus Christ everywhere he went. Andrew followed the Dnipro river, which eventually led him to Greece, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine. As he reached Ukraine, he came across the Dnipro Hills, where he erected a cross and proclaimed a great city would one day stand upon those



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: *KALYTA* BREAD. PHOTO FROM OPINION | ST. ANDREW. PHOTO FROM PINTEREST | ST. ANDREW ERECTS A CROSS ON THE DNIPRO HILLS IN KYIV. PHOTO FROM INTO ENGLISH | ST. NICHOLAS. PHOTO FROM PINTEREST | ST. NICHOLAS BRINGS PRESENTS TO CHILDREN. PHOTO FROM PINTEREST

very hills. Today, the Dnipro Hills are home to Kyiv, Ukraine's capital city.

Before Christianity reached Ukraine, this holiday was known to Ukrainians as the *Kalyta* holiday. This day of ritual is named after the *kalyta*, a bread covered with honey and seeds and is wrapped with a red ribbon. The bread represents the sun and earth. According to pagan traditions, the nights of December 12th and 13th are the best time of the year to perform fortune-telling rituals. These rituals are many and are used by young women attempting to find and identify their future husbands. One ritual involves young women bringing elaborately decorated *varenyky*, or dumplings, to the house of an older, childless widow. The *varenyky* are fed to a dog, and it is said the whoever's *varenyk* is the first to be eaten, will be the first woman to be married. For young men, St. Andrew's Day is a time to misbehave and cause trouble. Other rituals involve throwing a boot over the rooftop or whispering into candlelight.

As Christianity became the dominant religion throughout most of Europe, the pagan holiday *Kalyta* was renamed St. Andrew's Day—the Feast Day observed to honour St. Andrew. Many of the rituals continue to be followed by Ukrainians today. It was believed that if St. Andrew's Day was celebrated, the family would have a successful harvest in the future. St. Andrew's Day also

marks the beginning of Advent, the time designated to prepare for the Nativity, similar to Lent before Easter.

St. Nicholas' Day – *Den sviatoho Mykolaia*

St. Nicholas of Myra—also known as Nicholas of Bari—was an early Christian bishop during the third and fourth centuries. When the previous bishop of Myra died, the priests decided the first priest to enter the church one morning would become the next bishop. Nicholas, who was returning from his travels to the Holy Land, entered the church to pray, and hence was named the new bishop of Myra. No firsthand accounts of Nicholas survive, but legends tell tales of his acts of selflessness: he saved three women from prostitution by tossing bags of gold coins through their window at night to pay for their dowries. He is the patron saint of children, sailors, travelers, and merchants.

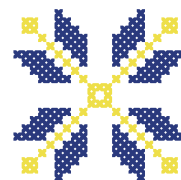
According to Ukrainian tradition, on December 6th (December 19th according to the Julian calendar), St. Nicholas brings chocolate and gold to children who have been well-behaved all year. For the children who were not so well-behaved, St. Nicholas places coal in their shoes. This tradition comes from legends of St. Nicholas himself, who was said to give small gifts to children and people in need. Children sing a special song that summons St. Nicholas, who

will appear dressed in his bishop's robes and rides on a sleigh. St. Nicholas is always accompanied by angels.

St. Nicholas Day is still celebrated in both Eastern and Western countries, though traditions and legends vary among countries and religious dominations. In North America, the traditions of Santa Claus evolved from St. Nicholas Day traditions. Even the name "Santa Claus" is derived from the Dutch name for St. Nicolas—Sinterklaas.

Christmas and *Sviat Vechir*

On Christmas Eve, Christians all over the world celebrate the birth of Christ with dinners, decorations, traditions, and celebrations. In Ukrainian traditions, Christmas Eve is an eventful night, with a dinner, carollers, and church at the end of the night. It is customary to fast during this time. This special dinner, called *Sviata Vecheria*, can take weeks to prepare. Though Holy Supper has its roots in religion, this night is also about reconnecting with family and ancestors. Eastern countries, including Ukraine, traditionally celebrate on the eve of January 6th, which coincides with the Winter Solstice celebrations held by pagans during





pre-Christian times. According to the Gregorian calendar, it is celebrated on December 24th.

There are many different elements to this special night; decorations for the home and for the table, twelve different dishes, and events throughout the night. Each member of the family has a job to do. The women prepare the food, the men host and entertain guests, and children decorate the *ialynka* (Christmas tree).

Preparations for *Sviat Vechir* are almost complete; the food has been prepared, the decorations are set, and the fast is almost over. The most important tradition of the night is the First Star. It represents the star which led the three wisemen to Bethlehem, and until it appears in the night sky, dinner will wait to be eaten. Once the star appears and the candle in the window has been lit, a prayer is sung. *Boh Predvichnyi*—quite literally “God Eternal”—proclaims the birth of the Lord. Now it is time to eat.

12 Dishes

On the night of *Sviat Vechir*, the *hospodar* and *hospodynia* (hosts) serve twelve dishes to the family. After Christianity was introduced to Ukraine the number twelve was made to represent the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. Every dish is dairy-free and meatless to honour the animals present at the Nativity of Christ.

It is common for families to have dishes and traditions unique to them.

The dinner begins with two dishes. *Kutia* is a wheat, poppyseed, and honey dish that can be served hot or cold. There is a tradition where each member of the family throws a spoonful of *kutia* on the ceiling. If it sticks, the harvest will be prosperous. *Borshch*, a meatless beet soup, is the second starter dish. It's common for each family to have a recipe that is unique to them. In the centre of the table sits the *kolach*. This bread is circular shaped to represent the continuous cycle of life. It is cut and shared with everyone at the table.

The main dish is baked or fried fish, served alongside *oseledtsi* (pickled herring), *holubtsi* (cabbage rolls), and *varenyky* (dumplings). The cabbage rolls are prepared with rice and seasoning inside—no meat or tomato sauce. The *varenyky* are commonly filled with potato and onion, sauerkraut, or mushrooms. Fried or mashed beans, mushrooms, and greens are also served to the family.

For dessert, a fruit compote called *uzvar* is served with *pampushky*, a doughnut-style pastry filled with apple or prune fruit fillings.

Decorations

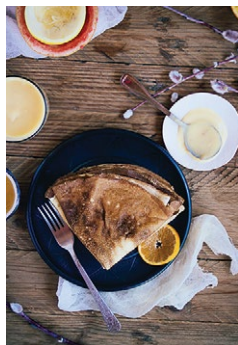
The house is decorated very carefully for a guest who may stop by on the night of the Holy Supper. The finest silverware and dishes are brought out, and hand-embroidered *rushnyky* are laid out on the table to mark the occasion. There is a place for everyone at the table, family, friend, or stranger. An empty place at the table honours the ancestors who have already passed on. If a guest should stop by for dinner on *Sviata Vecheeria*, this is the place they are invited to take.

Didukhy are carefully laid around the house to represent a prosperous harvest and to bring good fortune. Before dinner, one person (usually the host) will light a candle and place it in the window, as an invitation for anyone who is lost or without a home on *Sviat Vechir*.

Sviat Vechir is not only a celebration for the adults, it is an eventful time for children, too. They decorate the *ialynka* with ornaments and decorative spider webs before dinner. It is said that if a spider spins a web on your tree, it will bring luck and good fortune in the new year. Underneath the table, hay is sprawled across the floor. Though this Christmas isn't about gift giving, after dinner children get to dig through the hay to find the chocolates, gold coins, and other goodies that are buried.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: PHOTO FROM PINTEREST | UKRAINIAN CHRISTMAS BREAD *KOLACH*. PHOTO FROM PINTEREST | UKRAINIAN CAROLERS. PHOTO FROM PINTEREST | *SVIAT VECHIR* TRADITIONAL MEAL. PHOTO FROM PINTEREST





FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: PHOTO BY ANCIENT FAITH MINISTRIES | UKRAINIAN CREPES, *MLYNYSI*. PHOTO BY THIS IS A SWEET BLOG | PHOTO FROM DESTINATIONS UA

Traditions

After dinner, groups of carollers stop by to bring good fortune and celebrate with song. They carry with them a star which represents the First Star of the night. Once the carollers have stopped by, shared their gifts, and have been offered food and drinks, it is time for church. A midnight liturgy celebrates the birth of Christ and marks the end of the advent season. Priests don their white robes and parishioners greet each other with "Khrystos Narodysia". Churchgoers respond with "Slavite Ioho" and "Slavim Ioho". These greetings translate to "Christ is born!" and "Glorify Him".

The next morning is Christmas Day. Though Ukrainian celebrations are not

as large as the night before, many families host dinners with family. Since the advent season has drawn to a close, meat and dairy are allowed to be eaten again.

In Ukrainian diaspora in North America, families will commonly celebrate Christmas Eve in a traditional way, whereas Christmas Day is the day to open gifts from Santa Claus and to celebrate with other non-Ukrainian traditions.

New Year's Celebrations – Shchedryi Vechir or Malanka

Shchedryi Vechir, or *Malanka*, is Ukrainian New Year's. It is celebrated on January 13th, according to the Julian calendar. Celebrations for this holiday are sometimes even bigger than celebrations held for Christmas. *Malanka* is a holiday

that is celebrated within the community, whereas *Sviat Vechir* is a family-oriented holiday. It centers around a pagan tale similar to that of Hades and Persephone. When Ukraine was Christianized, *Malanka* adopted a more Christian connotation, but many traditions and rituals stayed the same.

Malanka is a holiday that has been celebrated long before Ukraine was a Christian country. The story centers around Malanka, a young girl who symbolizes youth and new life. Versions of the folktale include the evil Baba Yaga, who is jealous of Malanka's youth and beauty and kidnaps Malanka to prevent the new year from coming. Because Malanka is gone, the land is cold and frozen. The warmth of summer is gone. Malanka is then rescued by her love, Vasyl, who defeats Baba Yaga. Spring returns and they live happily ever after.

In Ukraine, *Malanka* is celebrated with a traditional dinner similar to *Sviat Vechir*, but with more food. Carollers are expected throughout the night, so small offerings like dumplings, *kutia*, and *mlyntsi* (crepes) are made in advance. Carollers carry a star to represent the first star on the nativity. The star lights the way and shows others they are coming. A skit with masks or puppets, called a *vertep*, travels with the carollers from home to home. Sometimes young men will dress up as Malanka for the skit. Today, it is celebrated with parades, drinking,

Lyrics to the St. Nicholas Song

Ой, хто, хто Миколая любить?
Ой, хто, хто Миколаю служити?
Тому Святий Миколай
На всякий час помагай,
Миколай (x2)

Oh him, who Nicholas does love,
Oh him, who Nicholas does serve,
For to him Saint Nicholas
At all times will he assist,
Dear Nicholas (x2)

dancing, singing, and plenty of food to go around.

On the morning of New Year's Day, it's lucky for the first person who enters a room to toss grains of wheat onto the floor and recite a poem that brings good luck, happiness, and a fulfilling harvest season to the family. The wheat is left on the floor until the next day, otherwise the good luck and well-wishing will be swept up! Long ago, only the men would do this, but today, everyone partakes in this tradition, both around the home and sometimes the workplace.

When Ukrainian pioneers settled in Canada, *Malanka* traditions came with them, but adjustments had to be made. In Ukraine, homes were closer together so carollers would travel to individual homes throughout the night. In Canada, most Ukrainians lived on farms several miles apart, and winters were much colder and harsher. Communities began gathering in town halls to celebrate together. *Malanka* became an opportunity to celebrate a shared cultural heritage.

Today, Ukrainians outside of Ukraine gather in halls to celebrate *Malanka* together. In Edmonton alone, there are many different organizations that host celebrations. Most include a dinner, a *Malanka* skit or performance by the members of the organization, and a dance to celebrate. One popular dance is the *Kolomeika*, a dance that has been popularized in the diaspora in Canada. People gather in a circle then take turns showing off their best dance tricks. At midnight, people often hold hands and gather in a circle to sing *De Z Hoda V Rodyni*, a song that celebrates family.


Feast of Jordan – *Sviatoho Iordana*

The final feast day of the winter season is the Feast of Jordan, or Theophany. It is observed twelve days after the birth of Jesus on January 19th. It is believed that Theophany originally commemorated

the birth of Christ. When Christmas became widely known as the date to celebrate the Nativity, Theophany became the commemorative day for the baptism of Jesus by St. John the Baptist. Eastern Christianity continues to observe Theophany as the baptism of Christ in the river Jordan.

Celebrations begin on the eve of January 18th and continue the next day. A celebration similar to *Sviat Vechir* occurs; fasting occurs throughout the day, twelve meatless and dairy-free dishes are served, and carollers stop by throughout the night. A priest is invited to bless the home, clearing any evil from it.

Water is the central motif for this feast day. Special religious services are held for the blessing of water. In some places, the service is held outdoors at a river, despite the cold January temperatures. Ice is carved out in the shape of a cross and once the water has been blessed, Christians collect it to use year-round. Some even brave the cold weather to break the ice and immerse themselves in the newly blessed water.

In Alberta, the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village (UCHV) hosts a full day of celebration. The Village has three churches on site: St. Nicholas Russo-Greek Orthodox Church, St. Nicholas Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, and St. Vladimir's Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church. Both Orthodox and Catholic Divine Liturgy services are held in the churches. Afterwards, people gather to bless water under a cross made out of ice. Burning of the *didukh* also takes place outside. Many people jump over the *didukh* while it is burning to bring good fortune for the following year. The UCHV then hosts a lunch to end the celebration. 

Varenyky

RECIPE FROM
BESSIE ONYSCHUK

Filling

- 2 cups mashed potatoes
- ¼ sautéed onion
- OR 2 cups sauerkraut, drained and fried. Let sit in fridge overnight to cool down.

Optional Filling

- ¼ cup of shredded cheddar cheese (or Cheez Whiz) OR ¼ cup cottage cheese and 1 egg
- Mix potatoes, onions, and other fillings well in a bowl. Set aside.

Dough

- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/3 cup canola or corn oil
- 3 cups warm mashed potatoes
- 4 cups flour

Directions:

1. Add warm mashed potatoes to beaten eggs and oil. Add flour and salt to potato mixture and mix well, then knead into a soft dough.
2. Roll the dough out flat. Cut dough into circles (or squares for triangular *varenyky*). Repeat with extra dough if necessary.
3. With a teaspoon, scoop filling and roll into small balls. Place 1 ball in the centre of 1 dough circle. Fold circle in half around the filling and pinch close.
4. Bring a pot of water to a boil. Place *varenyky* into boiling water (not too many at a time). Boil for 7-8 minutes, or until *varenyky* are floating at the top.
5. Take *varenyky* out of the water and place into a bowl. Carefully coat with a small amount of oil or butter to prevent sticking. Serve hot with fried onions and sour cream (optional).



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