

EASTER CUSTOMS IN GREACE

37TH KINDERGARTEN OF THESSALONIKI

Orthodox Easter is one of the greatest celebration as Greeks follow the Holy Week rites in commemoration of the Passion of Christ and celebrate His Resurrection on Easter Sunday. Some of these customs became the mascots of our school children, who come from different places of Greece.



LAZARINES – Saturday of Lazarus



The last Saturday before Holy Week begins, is the Saturday of Lazarus. In the past women hold baskets in their hands, decorated with flowers, dance and sing songs about the resurrection of Lazarus by Jesus, walking from home to home. In later years, only girls sing songs and people usually give them eggs for their baskets.

Children sing the song of Lazarus to their parents, while they wear on their heads wreath with flowers, made by them



In past, farmers did not work on that day, because they believed that whatever they would cultivate would die. They only collected the woods in order to bake the Easter cookies (koulourakia). On this day mothers bake “Lazarakia”, small demi- sweet breads of a shrouded man shape. They figure them just as Lazarus is represented.

37o Kindergarten of Thessaloniki



Lazarakia Recipe



Ingredients

1 k. flour
1 package active dry yeast
1 cup warm milk
2 cups warm water
150 gr. sugar
1 tbs cinnamon
1/2 tsp anise
1 tsp salt
3 tbs olive oil
whole nuts
Cloves for decoration

The night before baking, mix the yeast with some warm water and 1 ½ cup of flour. Stir well, and set aside, covered, in a warm place.

The next morning, in a bowl sift the remaining flour. Make a well in the center and pour in the all the ingredients.

Knead well till the dough becomes elastic and shiny. Cover it and let it rise for 2 hours. When the dough is doubled in size, divide it in seven pieces. One of them must be larger than the others. Roll the six smaller pieces into cords.

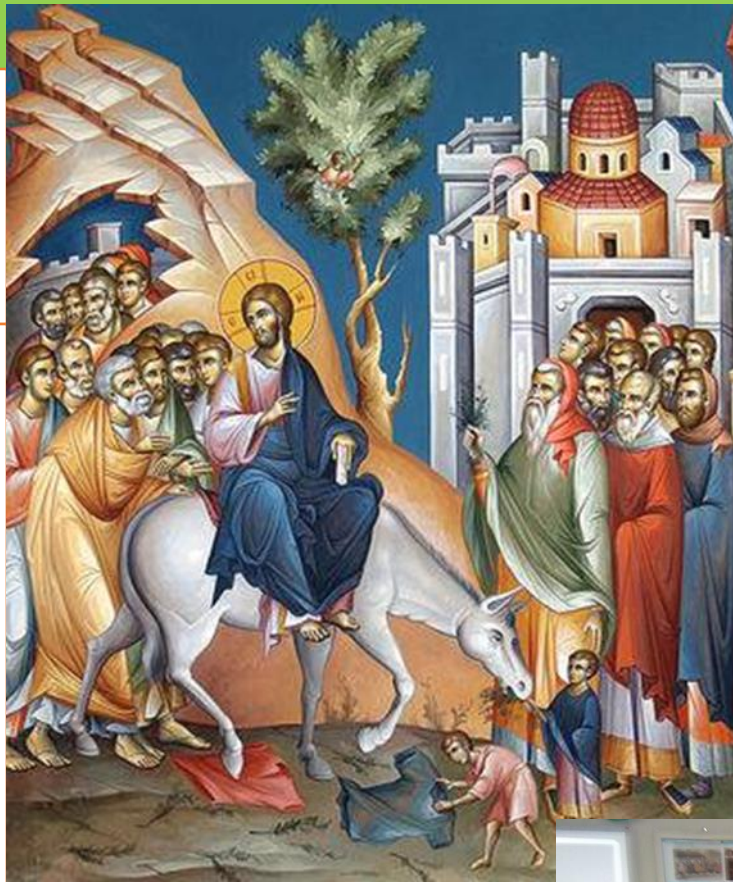
Stick a nut in one end of each cord. Cut the larger piece of dough in 12 ropes. Stick the ends of 2 ropes near each nut and braid forming an ancient shroud.

Place the breads on a oiled baking pan and cover them. Let them rise for 2 hours.

Brush the Lazarakia with olive oil and bake them in preheated oven of 200° for 20 to 25 minutes

Palm Sunday

The day is celebrated as a memory of the triumphant entrance of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem. This day, people go to the church and the priest gives them laurel branches. This day the faithful can eat only fish.



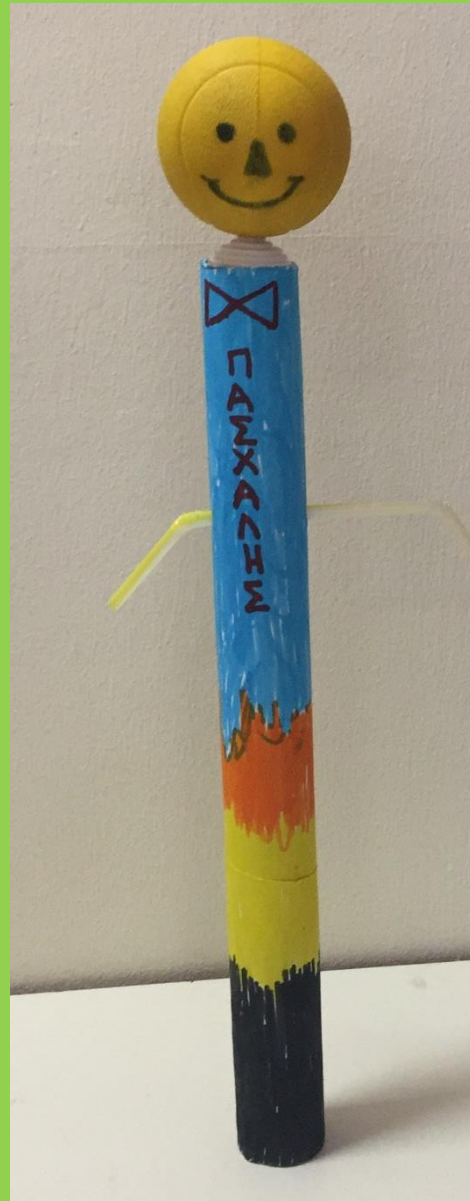
Representation of the art painting



Godfather and Godmother's Presents

It is Greek Orthodox tradition that the godfather or godmother present their godchildren with the Easter Candles each Easter, to hold during the religious celebration. This candle is called lambada and usually carries nice decoration and a little gift for the child to behold after the celebration. They also give them some other gifts like chocolate eggs and cloths or shoes.

The adults buy their own Easter candles

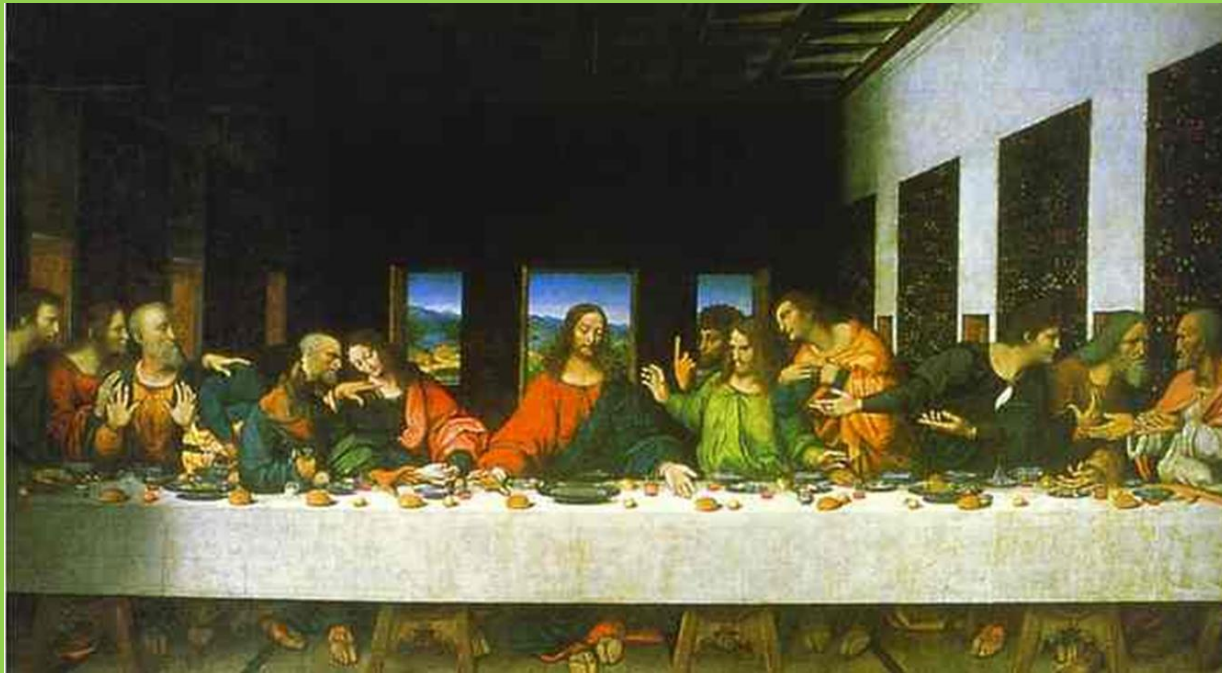


On Thursday, Greeks prepare for the Holy Weekend. Everybody makes the delicious sweet Easter bread, called Tsoureki, or buys it from the bakery. This is eaten on Easter as the three braid of the bread represent the Holy Trinity. Many people even cut into the shape of a cross.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sga1l3plZlI>



The Secret Dinner



On Good Friday, the atmosphere is very depressed, as the church bells ring and the flags fly half mast. Eggs are being boiled and dyed red, likewise Jesus' blood.



At night, everybody goes to the church, which are shrouded in purple as a sign of mourning. Processions of Epitaphs come out from every church and all intersect at the city center in all Greek towns and villages. The choir and thousands of believers hold the lit candles.

The epitaph procession



Holy Saturday

On Holy Saturday the mood changes from the mourning of the epitaph to the joy of the first Easter which happens in the morning of Saturday. In the island of Corfu, from all the balconies in every home of the island residents throw in the streets large clay pitchers, many filled with water, and at the same time all the church bells peal joyfully.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXE9AIL--5U>



Holy Saturday

Late on Saturday night, before midnight all the people go to all the churches. At midnight the church goes dark and the bells ring out to proclaim the resurrection. People start letting off fireworks and crackers! The priest lights a candle representing of Jesus' eternal flame and everyone lights their candle from this one. They carefully carry their candle home and make a black cross on their house with the flame to bless themselves.



The burning of Judah

At most villages of Crete on the day of Holy Saturday people meet preparations for the big fire that burns Judah, called “founara”. On the morning the boys of the village gather dry woods and branches near the church or at a point which is visible from all the neighborhoods of the village. At the top of the wood pile they place the effigy of Judas, made of cloths, and at midnight they set fire to the wood.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBDXQZO6G3U>



Easter Balloons

On the night of Easter Saturday, in Leonidio, the spectacular custom of the balloons takes place. The hot-air balloons are prepared weeks before the “great” night, as almost every house builds its own balloon.

Locals and visitors gathered in the central square of the village and at midnight the men of the village set a fire the oil-and-petroleum-soaked pieces of cloth at the bottom of each balloon and release them in the sky.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CgnnGJrH_ag



Eating Magiritsa and Red Egg Cracking

Afterwards, they return to their homes and the families sit together at the table to have the festive dinner!

They always start with cracking the red eggs with each other, and eat the traditional magiritsa! This dish contains the offal of the lamb just before it is roasted, along with some green vegetables (lettuce, dill and onion) boiled together and served to break the 40 day Great Lent period



Roasting the Lamb

Holy Sunday is perhaps the best moment of Easter. Families gather again before noon to roast the lamb on a spit and then enjoy a long lunch with lots of meat, salads and drinks.



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