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Exquisite recipes selected from the Dobrogea Region cuisine



Project co-financed by the European Social Fund
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Investing in people!

**EXQUISITE RECIPES
SELECTED FROM
THE DOBROGEA
REGION CUISINE**

Tulcea
- 2013 -



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Dobrogea's traditional cuisine, as well as the entire Romanian traditional cuisine, in time has emerged as the relationship between the local resources - inhabitants' occupations - the lifestyle specific to this multiethnic area. One can not talk about the food system of an area without considering the reconciliation of permanence with change, of conservatism with modernism, of the fact that a culture can maintain its identity by assimilating in time new values, practices and symbols, adapting them in a process of reinterpretation and synthesis to the models specifically inherited, to tradition. One can notice the consecutive layers of influences, adaptations and changes in the raw materials used, the processing procedures, habits, tastes, which have contributed along the process of the current food system structuring.

The village and the basic occupations (farming and shepherding) have also imposed the food characteristics:

- the natural content, in its almost primitive meaning of "raw" (when it comes to fruit and seeds) and that of "cooked" (for milk, vegetables, meat);
- types of products limited to those found nearby, as those already mentioned above;
- conservatism (but not primitivism) in purchasing (even if directly from the household only) and in cooking (in the rustic kitchen), for which there were used ceramic pots burnt in local kilns and other utensils, made of wood, simple or artistically encrusted.

Regarding the Dobrogea region, the archaeological research and the written sources provide data on the food resources of this area and the cultural-historical conditions that, over time, have created a food pattern based on cereals and dairy products, pattern born from an ancient civilization of wheat.

The unique character of the area is a result of the heterogeneous structure of the population that, by a varied contribution of elements specific to the cultural traditions of each ethnic group, contributes to building a highly complex food system, specific to this area.



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We can also speak of a food system based on raw material resulted from agriculture, livestock breeding, fishing, viticulture, horticulture, apiculture. The main concern was, and still is, the cereal cultivation: especially wheat, rye, millet and, later on, corn. Livestock breeding completed the food resources with dairy and meat products (pork, mutton, goat, beef, poultry, etc.), which are supplemented by fish, venison, fruit, vegetables and honey.

For the late nineteenth century – the beginning of the twentieth century, we distinguish food system elements that become a today's identity brand for each of the ethnic groups even if they are based on the same raw materials. In this respect, we mention for the:

Romanians - wheat bread and bread rings, millet or corn polenta, vegetables soup, some pork dishes (meat in lard, jumări [greaves], tochtură [stew], răcitură, [aspic]) etc.

Aromanians (or Macedo-Romanians) - pita [pie] (pita de veardză - plăcinta de urzici [nettles pie], pita di praș - plăcinta cu praz [leek pie], pita di știr - plăcinta cu lobodă [orach pie], pita di spanac [spinach pie], pita di curcubetă - dovleac [pumpkin pie]), sheep and goat milk dishes (culastra [cooked first milk], mârcatu-iaurtul [yoghurt] etc.), mutton dishes (cucurudu [cooked sheep offal], câvârmă [deep fried meat], pâstârmă [dried meat / pastrami], seu [tallow]);

Lippovan-Russians - simple vegetable soups (șci [cabbage soup], pahliobka [potatoes and onion soup], russian borsch), different bakery products (vareniki [filled dumplings], pirajki [small fried pies], ladâciki [honey and lemon pancakes], cnășî [cheese doughnuts], pișka [fried sweet flat bread] etc.);

Ukrainians - fish dishes (ciorbă [borsch], crap la proțap [carp in the oven], boiled fish with potatoes), ritual pastry (șisca molodoi - colacul miresei [bride's bread ring]);

Turkish - barley bread, mutton / horsemeat / wether-meat dishes (șuberek [mutton fried pie], ghiudem [dry salami], kurban [lamb with onion]), sweets (baklava, revani)



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Tatars - millet borsch, mutton / horsemeat / wether-meat dishes (ghiudem, kurban)

Italians - pasta dishes (pasta asciutta [dry pasta], penne al ragu di verdure [penne pasta with vegetables sauce]), different bakery products (panettone [sweet bread], fritelle di riso [rice doughnuts])

Greeks - lamb and mutton dishes (e.g. Curban [lamb with onion]), pies (karido pitam [walnut cake], spanaco pita [spinach pie]), ritual pastry (kori [girl's cake]).

Regardless of the ethnic group, in the traditional life, the nourishment is characterized by a clear distinction in its quality and content between the daily foods and the feasts food. Also, the religious and spiritual views of the community impose certain culinary rules according to the fasting and holidays periods.

Differences in food code of the ethnic groups are represented also by the components referring both on the material aspects (procurement, consumption, conservation), and the intangible ones (norms, customs, beliefs about food).

Important for the food system of each ethnic group is also the holidays' calendar that they comply with:

- **The Romanians** and the **Aromanians** are keepers of the new-style Orthodox beliefs;

- **The Ukrainians** and the Greeks from the countryside respect the holidays according to the old-style Orthodox calendar;

- **The Lippovan-Russians** respect the ancient and old rites Orthodox holidays;

- **The Italians** from Greci village are Catholics;

- **The Turkish** and **Tatars** follow the rules of the Islamic calendar.



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Romanian Dishes

PLĂCINTĂ DOBROGEANĂ [DOBROGEA PIE]

It is always present at the **New Year's** meal (with hidden coins or with fortune messages, in order to see who will be most lucky in the new coming year). The New Year's celebration is marked by feasts and constitutes a limit-situation, a threshold that the primitive man and then the modern man has tried to overcome by rites, manifestations of a whole system of attitudes and beliefs, of a particular cultural stage.

The characteristic of this celebration is the repertoire incomparably rich in traditions, beliefs and magic acts. It is the time when the individual and the family express their desire for fruitfulness, prosperity in the year to come. The wishes for prosperity and rich harvest said at the Plugușor [New Year recited poem], the wishes with the Sorcova [fruitfulness song], Vasilca [Saint Vasile celebration song], the Dances with masks, The Star Songs, are only some of the folkloric manifestations that make out of the winter holidays season one of the most unique and original spiritual manifestations throughout the year.

The Dobrogea pie was also made at Lăsata Secului [Beginning of Fasting], fasting from dairy products (in the Sunday prior to the Great Lent). Lăsata Secului actually is the first celebration from the series of the spring traditional celebrations. At the same time, it starts the period of purification, fasting and praying, waiting for the Divine Miracle: The Resurrection of the Saviour. It was waited through several manifestations: parties with food, drink, singing and dancing. The Dobrogea pie also gave the name of a day from the wedding ceremony: the Tuesday after the wedding was called "*La plăcinte*" [At pies]. The bride had to prove to the wedding guests that she could roll the thinnest pie dough sheet.



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Ingredients:

Flour, oil, cattle sweet cheese (made without using curd), eggs, yoghurt and sour cream, sugar, and recently there are added vanilla sugar and lemon

Preparation method:

Make a piece of medium soft dough. Leave to rest for half an hour, divide into several pieces (according to the quantity, the number of dough sheets to be made), and with the rolling pin the sheets are rolled as thin as possible. Prepare the filling out of cheese, eggs, yoghurt and sour cream. Spread oil on the dough sheets, and then on half of each sheet put the filling. Cover the filling with the other half and squeeze by hand, pleating the sheet. The sheets filled in such manner are laid, one next to the other, in a well-oiled tray. Bake in the oven on medium heat.





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SĂRMĂLUȚE ÎN FOI DE VARZĂ MURATĂ [STUFFED SAUERKRAUT ROLLS]

In the traditional life this dish would always be present at the **Christmas dinner**.

The Christmas Celebration, in terms of food, is equivalent with the swine sacrificing and the varied processing of its meat and fat. During the Christmas days, the menu included pork dishes: borsch, soup, fried meat, stuffed sauerkraut rolls, răcitori, tobă [pork offal in aspic], jumări.

On Christmas Eve evening, the groups of carollers were walking the streets with songs and shouts.

From ancient times in the village Luncavița the inhabitants go with "Moșoiul" [half-human, half-supernatural being] - a custom that is enlisted as carolling with masks.

The parade consists of a masked man called Moșoi (group leader), a group of carollers and sometimes appears the Moșeicuța (the wife of the Moșoi). The Moșoi mask is made of a cătrună [a gourd] (the face), sheepskin (the back), with ram horns or roebuck antlers adorned with ribbons and tassels (the nose and horns), and sometimes, still as adornment, there were also used small pieces of mirror. The mask-suit is completed by a sheepskin coat worn inside out (with the fur on the outside) and a string with cattle bells attached to the waist belt.

The custom is still preserved today, although with some modifications.

The carollers' gang comply with the carolling ceremonial. The gang wanders around the village carolling in each households of the village.

The mask's significance and the cattle bells wearing is the same as on the whole Romanian territory. Both the mask and the sound of the bells, the whips snapping, have traditionally magical and ludicrous meanings (removing the evil spirits - benefactor role, and the laughter and joy - ludicrous role).



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Ingredients:

Minced pork, rice or bulgur [wheat groats] (in the past), eggs, onion, bulion [tomatoes or red peppers pasta], herbs, black pepper, thyme, sauerkraut

Preparation method:

The minced pork is mixed with the onion (cleaned and finely chopped), the rice (in the past there was used bulgur - wheat largely milled or crushed) and the spices until it becomes homogenous. In time, the housewives began to lightly fry the onion and to lightly boil the rice before rolling/packing sarmaua in the sauerkraut leaves (washed and desalinated to taste). The sarma dimension in Dobrogea is an average one, as large as a handbreadth.

In a clay pot lay the remains of the sauerkraut cut in fine scraps together with oil/grease and laurel leaves over which start laying orderly (circular, row on top of row), the cabbage rolls. Then, fill the bowl with water and then, finally cover with sauerkraut leaves and add bulion.

Cook in the oven or on the stove.





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DROB DE MIEL [TRIPLE / LAMB FILLED CAUL]

The drob [tripe], pasca [Easter filled sweet bread], reddened eggs, cozonac [sponge cake] are the dishes always present on the Passover meal.

The Easter is celebrated according to a lunar calendar, on the fourteenth day of the full moon after the vernal equinox. The word Easter is of Hebrew origin, but the Romanian term derives from the Latin term "dies pascharum", as well as the French term "pâques".

The Easter is a ritual scenario of the World's annual renewal initiated with the Palm or Flowers' Sunday and concluded with the Thomas' Sunday and intersected with the night of Jesus' Resurrection. It falls in the prehistoric model of symbolic rebirth of time and space by the sacrifice of divinity. After three days of chaos and darkness during which the mankind remained without divine protection, there follows the miracle of the Lord's Resurrection in the Easter night and the acts of the Bright or Renewal Week purification which bring back balance and harmony.

The lamb's sacrifice is even today a traditional norm that needs to be respected. It is accompanied by a ritual scenario that includes sprinkling of holy water, tracing a cross with a knife on the head, or just the act of blessing in the church of the already cut or prepared animal. The meat processing results in various dishes (borsch, soup, lamb stuffed with rice, steak) but the most elaborated recipe remains the drob.



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Ingredients:

Lamb offal (liver, heart, lungs, kidney, spleen), eggs, green onions, parsley, dill, fat / grease / oil, caul, salt, pepper

Preparation method:

Wash the offal several times changing the water, lightly boil in hot water to remove the blood. Boil the offal in water with a little salt (for approximately 30 minutes).

Finely chop with the knife both the offal and the onion and the greenery. Beat the eggs separately and then mix the composition with the spices.

Wash the caul, drain the water out of it and lay it in an oiled deep tray, then put the stuffing and cover with the caul.

Bake it in the oven.



COLACII [THE BREAD RINGS]

With a ritual value precisely regulated in the old traditions as well as being a secure identity landmark secure, there is the dough shaped and decorated in a great variety of shapes and ornaments.

The bread ring is always present in the Romanian folkloric customs.

The bread rings are made to be given on several occasions: when the first furrow is ploughed, when one waits for the carollers, on Ziua Babei [Eldmother's Day], when one welcomes someone coming from far away, for the midwife of the newborn baby, for the godfathers, bride, for a smooth trip of the one left from "this" world to the one "beyond".

The symbols concentrated in various forms and decorations, with their numerous ciphered messages reveal their rich meanings in the spiritual life of the Romanians. The most dough shapes are done for the main ceremonial sequences of the baptism, wedding or funeral. Thus there are increased the events' significance and solemnity.

By their rich symbolism, entirely beneficial, as well as the bread, the bread rings prepared for a holiday have an apotropaic and auspicious role. By cumulating the known encoded messages, understood and accepted by all the members of the group, the bread rings becomes a cultural code destined to the communication with the divinity, with the ancestors, but especially with the other people.



Ingredients:

Flour, water, oil, yeast, salt, sugar.

Preparation method:

The yeast is dissolved in warm water.

The sifted flour is kneaded with the yeast, sugar, oil and water until a stiff dough is obtained. Let it ferment.

Strips of dough (two or three) are interwoven, usually in a circle shape.

The shapes and the size vary according to use of the bread rings. For example, the large wedding rings, interwoven in three, were meant for the godfathers, and the smaller ones were given to the wedding guests. A annular shaped bread ring, interwoven in two or three with four apples and four basil twigs in the corners, named a pupăză [hoopoe] was broken above the bride's head when she left for the wedding ceremony. The bread ring for the fir tree [wedding tree] was given to the boys participating to the wedding, for a beneficial influence of their future.





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Aromanian Dishes

PITA [PIE]

The “pita” or “platzinta” was a dish always present on the Aromanians table. It was prepared with a great variety, both for the everyday food and also for the holiday meals.

In the fasting periods people prepared the spinach pie, pita di curcubetă (pumpkin pie), pita de veardză (nettles pie); pita di praș (leek pie); pita di știr (orach pie), beet pie.

For the great holidays, the New Year, Easter, the pie was filled with meat, sweet or salty cheese, nuts (băclăvie).

The pie is not missing from the ceremonial of the customs from the cycle of life. At birth, the cheese pie was made and at the wedding it was prepared, in a special manner, the “pita tzea dultzea” [the sweet pie]. It was customary that, after the wedding (on Monday or Wednesday), the bride, in her new quality of wife ('nveastă), to prove her qualities of good housewife. Surrounded by women, the 'nveasta (wife), with an apron, kneaded the dough for the pita tzea dultzea. The dough was sweetened with sugar so that the life and the living with her husband would be sweet. All the men present at this event, led by the godfather, “mesc 'nveasta” (would give money to the woman, and she would thank to all of them, and to the older ones, she would kiss their hand).



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Ingredients for the leek pie:

Flour, oil, sheep salted cheese, eggs, leek.

Preparation method:

The pie is made of unleavened dough. The flour is mixed with water and salt to taste. Five sheets are rolled with the rolling pin.

The filling is prepared as such: the leek is washed and chopped, it is lightly fried in hot oil until it becomes soft; the eggs are beaten, the cheese is grated and all of these are mixed with the fried leek.

The tray is oiled, the first dough sheet is laid (wrinkled), then a part of the leek composition is spread all over the sheet's surface, it is covered with the next sheet, another layer of filling is put. The sheets and the filling are alternated this way up to the last sheet that will also be sprinkled with oil.



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PÂSTÂRMĂ [DRIED MEAT / PASTRAMI]

Pâstârmă - the dried sheep meat was one of the traditional dishes of the Aromanian shepherds.

Among the Aromanians occupations, the shepherding had an important role. It was a transhumant, alternant shepherding, because the movements of the population with their flocks, were periodically made towards the same areas.

This type of shepherding forced the entire group (men, women and children) and the other members of the village community to go at the same time with the flock. Their life alternated between the highland and the lowland, between one season and another. There were special preparations for the whole family: the milk and wool processing tools were packed with all the other objects necessary for the processing.

The shepherding year would begin on the Saint Gheorghe's day (23rd of April) and was ended on the Saint Dumitru's day (26th of October).

On the Saint Gheorghe's day, they would select the sheep, the milk was measured and the shepherds were hired. The first milking of the sheep flock, followed by a rustic party, is called the "Purnirea cupiilor" - the flocks' start and "Prima muldzearii" - the first milking. On this day the milk from each of the sheep owners, was measured and marked on the tally wood, and then they would calculate the cheese quantity due to each of them after the shepherding period.



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Ingredients:

Mutton, salt.

Preparation method:

It is made during the fall, when the outside temperature is lower, so that pastrami could be prepared. Sacrifice the sheep, especially the sterile ones which do not produce milk, as they are fatter. The sheep are skinned, the meat is removed from the bones, then washed, the blood is left to drain, then the meat is left to dry in the wind.

On the dried meat, a mixture of oil, salt and paprika powder is poured. The mixture is applied on the meat in a thick and even layer, and then the meat is rolled so that the mixture better penetrates it and then it is laid in a bowl. It is left like this for several days. Afterwards the meat is taken out, the salt from it is removed and it is left to dry. There is also the smoked version. It is kept outdoors.





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TIGĂNI [DOUGHNUTS]

A special event, an immense joy in the Aromanian family, was also the birth of a boy, a future “picurar” [shepherd].

It is still considered that the boy is the one to carry on the name of the family. At the Aromanians there is a custom according to which the person who brings the news (sîhîrichea [messenger]) has to be honoured (miscut) by the relatives. When the “sîhîrichea” announces the birth of a boy, he/she is obviously better rewarded. Today the piece of news is usually brought by children who compete to be rewarded.

After a few days from the birth, the relatives (only the women) come to congratulate the mother, the child and also those who live in the house, bringing different gifts to them (they say they go “cu tigănila” - with the doughnuts).

To protect the mother and the child, a red thread is put around the bed.



The baptism in the church could have taken place even at the child's age of three, depending on the material possibilities of the family or of the godparents.



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Ingredients:

Flour, water and sugar.

Preparation method:

In a bowl mix the flour with water obtaining a soft composition. On the stove, in a cast-iron kettle, put oil to heat. With the spoon it is taken a small quantity of composition and it is dropped in the hot oil. After frying, they are passed through sugar.





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Lippovan-Russians Dishes

VARENIKI [FILLED DUMPLINGS]

On the occasion of various holidays, among the dishes prepared for the meal after the sermon, there were also the famous vareniki.

The belief of the Lippovan-Russians from Romania is Christian-Orthodox of the old and ancient rite. The religious services are held in Slavonic, and the calendar used is the Julian one, which means a delay of 13 days compared to the Gregorian calendar.

The main holidays from the Christian-Orthodox calendar of the old rite are on the: 7th of January – Christmas – Christ's Birth; 14th of January – Sf. Vasile cel Mare [Saint Basil the Great] (at the beginning of the new year); 19th of January – Epiphany; 7th of April – Annunciation; Easter, Ascension of Our Lord and Holy Trinity coincide with the same days in which those holidays are celebrated also by the Gregorian calendar; 6th of May – Saint Gheorghe [George]; 12th of July – Saints Petru and Pavel [Peter and Paul]; 2nd of August – Saint Ilie [Elijah]; 19th of August – Transfiguration; 28th of August – Saint Mary. Dormition of the Mother of God; 21st of September – Nativity of the Mother of God; 14th of October – Protection (Cerement) of the Mother of God; 4th of December – Entrance of Our Most Holy Lady into the Temple; 19th of December – Saint Nicolae [Nicholas]. At the Lippovans, this saint is the patron of sailors and fishermen.

Between the feasts Nativity of the Mother of God and Dormition of the Mother of God there is a series of celebrations related to the wonders made by the icons of the Mother of God on the Russian territory, since the year 1150.



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Ingredients:

Sweet cottage cheese, flour, salt, egg, sugar, sour cream or honey, oil.

Preparation method:

Beat the eggs well with lukewarm water. Gradually incorporate the flour in the mixture. Knead the dough well. Then let it rest. Meanwhile, prepare the filling out of cheese and eggs, salt and sugar. Roll the dough with the rolling pin into a large sheet.

Using a glass cut the dough into small circles. Place a teaspoon of filling in the centre of each circle. Fold in half and join the edge to intertwine. Flatten it a little to get a flat shape of a semicircle.

Boil them. At first, the vareniki goes down on the bottom of the pot. When they start to get up to the surface of the pot, it means they are almost ready. Carefully take them out. Serve with cream or honey.





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PIROȘKI [SMALL FRIED PIES]

A wedding meal at the Lippovan-Russians meant the preparation of some specific dishes: fish dishes, meat stew, piroșki, vareniki, pampușki, etc. The piroșchi are made in different versions and types, either for the fasting period or not, filled with: cabbage, rice, pumpkin, jam, cheese, more recently with chicken liver, mushrooms, rice mixed with Turkish delight and raisins.

The wedding started on Friday evening with the feast called “divișnic” – at the bride's house. Handkerchiefs or kerchiefs were put on girls and handkerchiefs on boys. The procession walked towards the groom's house to “honour the home”, then the party continued at the bride's house.

On Sunday, the groom's relatives came to “buy” the bride. The bride was prepared for the wedding while the guests ate the meal prepared by the groom's in-laws and religious songs were sung.

The most important ritual of the wedding is happening in the church and it is solemnized by the priest complying with the religious dogma. During the religious ceremony, when the priest puts the “wedding crowns”, the godmother attaches to the bride head the “kicika” [an adorned skull-cup] – a sign that the girl has become a wife. This ritual act belongs to the rites of passage from one civil state to another.

When they come back from the sermon there is the custom of “throwing with water” at the gate of the couple's house. The Sunday party was held at the groom's house and was called “sviadba”. The wedding was ended on Monday with another party called “pirasva”.



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Ingredients for the rice piroșki:

Flour, rice, milk, yeast, oil, sugar, raisins, Turkish delight.

Preparation method:

In a pot boil the milk with salt and sugar (for those with sweet filling). Allow to cool for a little while and then dissolve the yeast. Gradually add the flour until the dough is soft and a little sticky. Knead and leave to ferment. Then a sheet is rolled with the rolling pin.

Using a glass cut the dough in circles. Using a teaspoon the filling is laid (in our case, the rice boiled in sweet milk mixed with small pieces of sugar and raisins) in the middle of each circle. From the top of the dough piece, start joining the edges (left – right) towards the middle (until you reach the lower point). Slightly flatten to get an oval shape.

Fry in hot oil.





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PAMPUȘKI [FILLED DOUGHNUTS]

Pampușki together with haladeț (aspic served with horse radish), halupți (stuffed sauerkraut rolls), pasca (Easter sweet bread filled with uzium – mixture of raisins, Turkish delight, cocoa and nuts) are the main dishes of the Lippovan-Russians for the Christmas day. After a fasting not as harsh as the Easter one, but completely without meat and milk products, the special dishes not permitted during the fasting were prepared on the Christmas Eve, until the religious sermon of the Eve. The religious ritual is resumed on the Christmas day in the morning hours, when, dressed in clothes for church, the Lippovans go to the sermon again. Girded with pois (a woven belt that signifies the connection with the divinity), with the lestovka in hand (prayer rope, which in Romanian language is translated by “scară” is made of cloth or leather strings on which there are attached short and thin sticks), the women with kerchiefs on their heads and long skirts, and the men dressed with rubașka – the traditional shirt, are prepared to listen the sermon for the Nativity of the Lord. Afterwards they can all sit at the Christmas table (rashavleața). They are waiting for the carollers who have in their repertoire religious songs (e.g.: Hristos rajdaiețea – a fragment of the sermon, Hristos slavite – Christ is born, glorify Him).



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Ingredients for pampușki:

Sweet cheese mixed with salty cheese, eggs, butter, flour, yeast.

Preparation method:

Make a piece of leavened dough. Roll two thick sheets, cut them in a rectangular shape, as long as the tray. The cheese mixed with the eggs, is laid on the dough, then squeezed as in the picture below.



The two pieces are put in the tray and baked. After baking spread beaten eggs on them.





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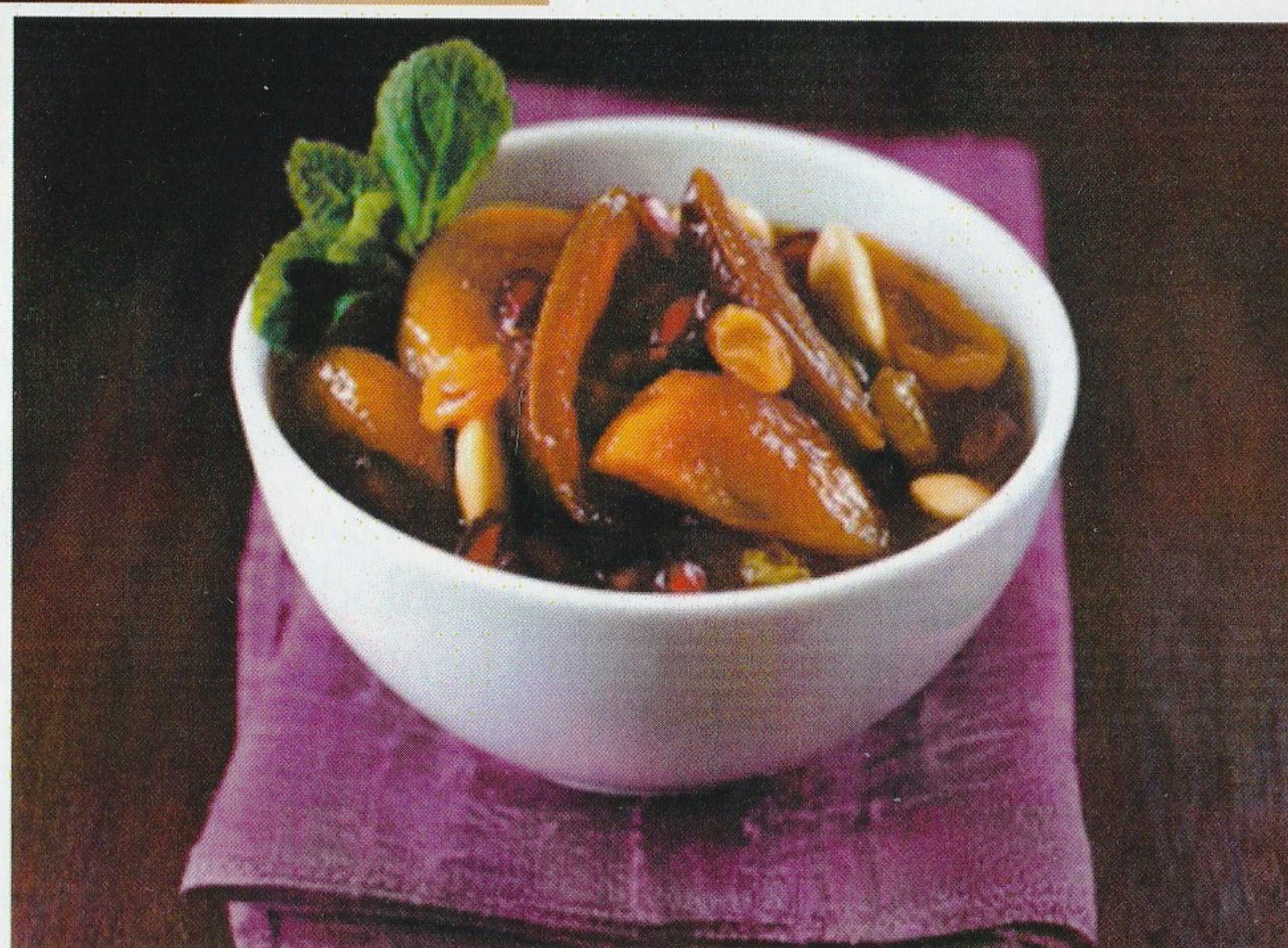
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Ingredients:

Fruits preserved by drying: apricots, quinces, plums, sugar.

Preparation method:

The fruit are boiled in water with sugar.





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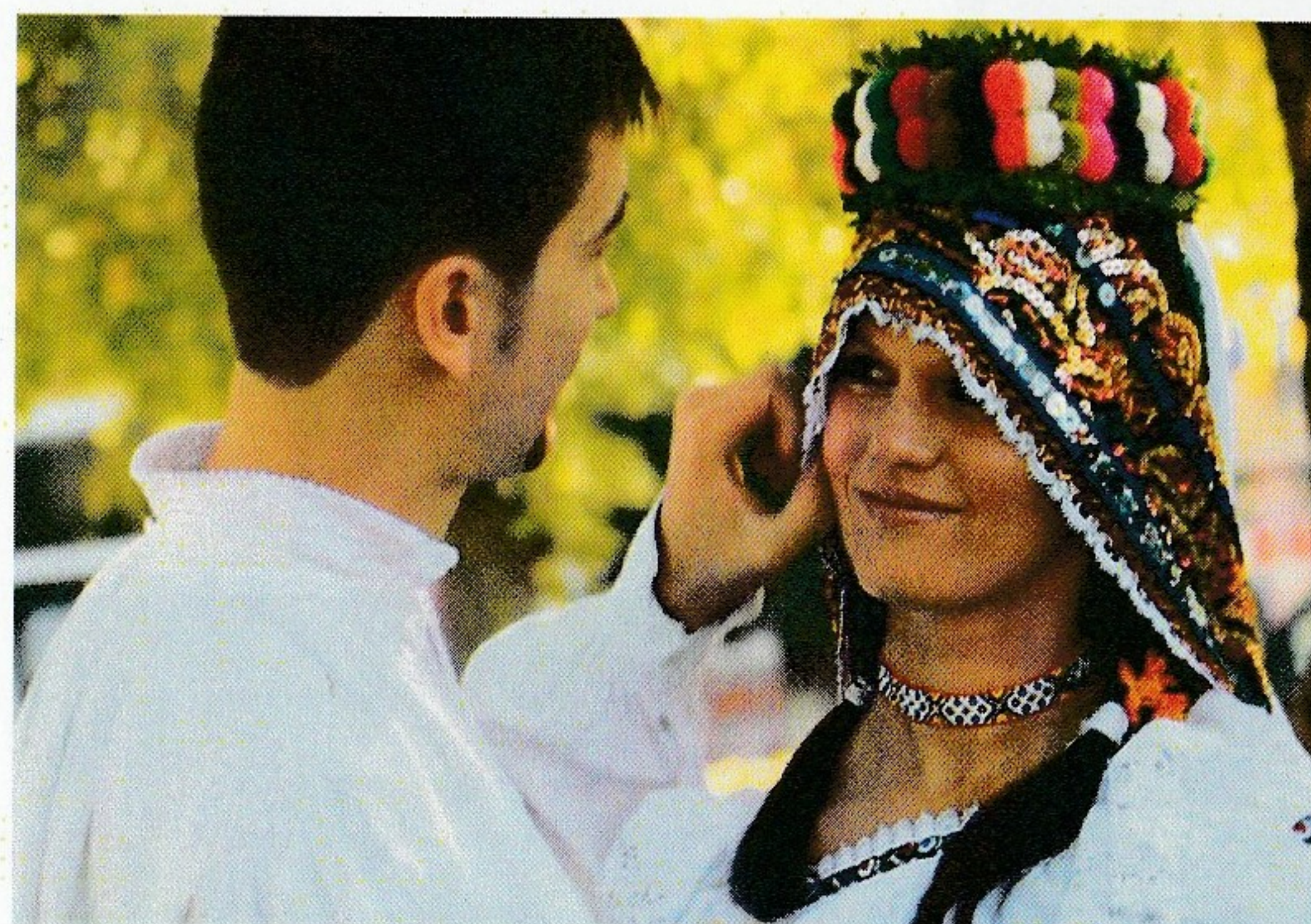
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ȘEȘCA MOLODOI [BRIDE'S BREAD RING]

For the wedding there were prepared many types of bakery products, from which we mention: *șișche* (little bread loaves for the guests, that were given with a towel before the gift is announced; they were played by the steward), *șeșca molodoi* (the bride's bread ring, eaten by the couple after the wedding), *corovoi* or *lejăi* (long bread rings which were served soaked in sweet red wine, the day after the wedding, as *proscură* [special blessed bread]), then the guests arrived at the party. There were also made large bread rings, two for each: *nanașca* (godmother), *nanașu* (godfather), *mama hrescena* (nana), *tatu hreșcenâi* (nan).



There are two types of the bride's bread ring: *calac molodoi* – with a hole in the middle (a jar was put in the middle during the baking so that the bride could wear it on her hand); *șeșca molodoi* without a hole, actually a larger and richly adorned *șișcă* [bread]. *Șeșca molodoi* had to be braided of all the prepared dough, without wastes remaining, thus it was considered that the marriage would be more lasting. The first one was baked then it was followed by *lejăi* or *corovoi* [other types of bread rings]. All the bread rings were adorned, flowered, decorated with birds. On Thursday all these bakery products were made. They would start with the bride's bread ring and then with the *lejăi*.



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Ingredients:

Flour, yeast, salt, oil, water.

Preparation method:

Knead a piece of leavened dough, add a spoon of oil at a kilo of flour so that it becomes thicker. Break in several pieces and make rolls of dough. The whole secret lies in their interweaving, some with the tips upwards and others with the tips downwards, and for the support surround it with a band on the edge. Bake in the tray, then oil with egg to become shiny.





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PROȚAP UCRAINEAN DIN CRAP [UKRAINIAN CARP IN THE OVEN]

For the Ukrainians from the Dobrogea region, living by the water (Mahmudia, Murighiol, Dunăvățul de Sus, Dunăvățul de Jos, Sfântu Gheorghe, Letea, Crișan, Caraorman etc.), the fish was and still is an aliment that comes in handy. It is prepared in various ways: baked, roasted, salted, marinated, in soups, in fishermen borsches, stews, balls, or in the oven. It is cooked for holidays or in the days when the religion allows them to eat fish.

During the winter holidays “holodeț” is prepared. A dish for which the fat fish with few bones is used, the fish is well boiled, it is laid in large vessels, left to cool until its juice gets hard.

It is served cold.

In the spring, when the carp “is struggling” near the bank, they make proțap [in the oven].

Also, there is no Easter without fish. In the same period there is the time of the mackerel. It is fried on the stove, with salt or it is marinated.

On the night of the Resurrection they go to church to bless: fish, meat, cheese, sweet bread, eggs, Easter filled sweet bread. The blessed food is carefully eaten (without dropping even a little piece) by all the family members.

The old women remember that, in the time when the medicine had not reached the countryside, the fish bones, the eggs shells and the crumbs were put inside a clean cloth and were kept near the divine icon. If a member of the family or an animal from their courtyard would get ill, these remains were burnt for the sick person/animal to breathe in the resulted smoke.



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Ingredients:

A large carp, over 5 kilograms, tomatoes, green peppers, pepper, thyme, tomatoes/red peppers pasta, garlic, potatoes (sometimes), parsley and white wine (recently).

Preparation method:

The fish is cleaned, washed and salted, split in two on the back.

The vegetables are washed and sliced. Then they are laid uniformly in a tray, and on them the carp is put. The tray, arranged in such a manner, is put in the oven to bake. When the fish gets a crust, add the tomatoes pasta, the garlic and other spices.





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Greek Dishes

CURBAN [LAMB WITH ONION]

The Greeks community from the Izvoarele village begin the pastoral year on the Saint Gheorghe's day (6th of May - in the old style) with the custom named Curban.

The custom is practiced by the Orthodox Christian, animal breeders from the Balkan region (Bulgaria, Greece, Albania and the countries of the former Yugoslavia).

The day starts with the "ritual washing" of the participants. Some tools are prepared: censer, a bowl with bran, one with salt and another with water. Then they choose "male" lambs and without any defects. In the past the sacrificial lamb was adorned with a wreath of plants, and on the right horn they used to put the Easter candle. Prior to the sacrifice they would cut a little fleece from the animal, and that piece was burned with a little incense.

The lamb is put to sit on his knees, people pray for it and it is given the bran and a little salt to eat and water to drink. Then they pray for it again, three times, surround it clockwise with incense. The housewife uses the blood from the sacrificed lamb to anoint the children's foreheads and the door frames by making the sign of the cross.

The one making the sacrifice was the oldest man in the family or a man named Gheorghe, dressed in new or at least clean clothes. The place where the lamb was sacrificed was carefully chosen: the eastern wall of the house, inside, near the fireplace, beside a river, in the churchyard, under a fruit tree, near the sheepfold or in special places dedicated to Saint Gheorghe.

The next steps are the preparation and the baking of the curban, by bringing together an odd number of neighbouring families, the food blessing, then eating it, not prior to giving part of it for the dead.



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Ingredients:

Lamb, rice (in the past bulgur was used), onion, bran, flour, garden patience, salt, paprika.

Preparation method:

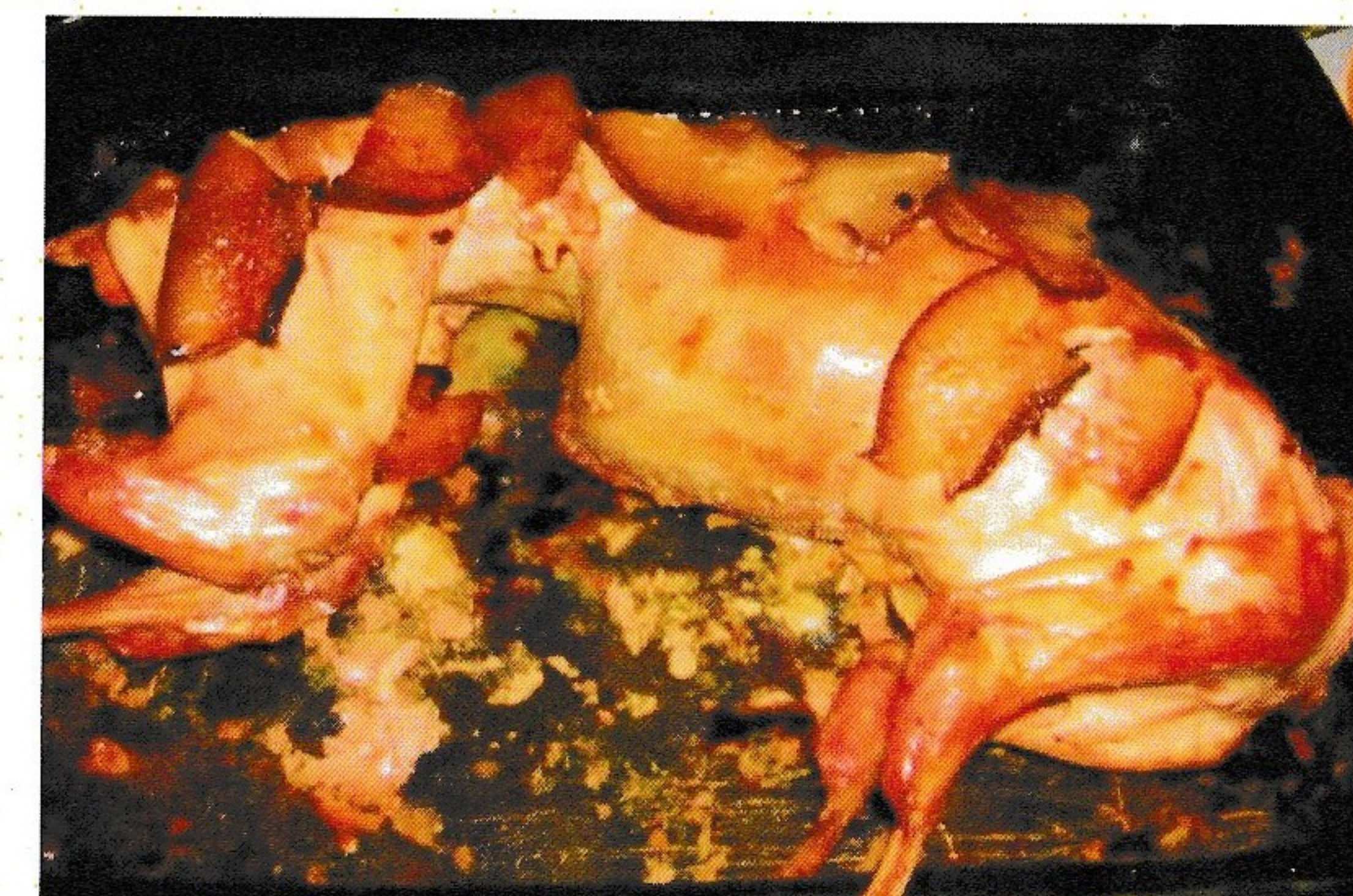
The lamb is sacrificed and skinned.

Make a stuffing: the lamb organs and guts are washed, scalded and finely chopped. The onion is slightly fried, the rice slightly boiled and mixed with the condiments and the organs.

The lamb is coated with lard and paprika. After it is stuffed, the lamb's belly is sewn.

It is laid in a pot also coated with lard. Fill in with water and wine.

Braid a vine wreath and put on the lamb. Cover with a loaf made of bran and flour. On the loaf put garden patience leaves. Bake in the bread oven.





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TURTĂ CU PRAZ [FLAT BREAD WITH LEEKS]

The custom called Lăzărel [feast of Lazarus] is practiced in the morning, in the Saturday before the Palm Sunday (Saint Lazăr). Groups of girls, dressed in traditional costumes, sing and dance a shattered, undulating shindy dance, in the householders' courtyard, singing a text about Lăzărică who fell out of a tree and died and being transformed into vegetation. The pre-Christian element coincides with the Christian one – the Raising of Lazăr performed by Jesus in the Palm Saturday.

The dance is repeated in the neighbours' courtyard and for the relatives of either of the girls, the text having versions in Romanian, Greek and Bulgarian languages: I got up this morning, Marluianis chiianakis, Imalai. The chain of girls aged from 3 to 6 years old is arranged in descending order, lead by the tallest one, called "buianciu" who leads the dance and receives gifts: money, flour and eggs.

At the end, they all gather up at the buianciu's house, share the gifts and eat a meal with fasting dishes for the participants. One of the most common dishes is the flat bread with leeks.





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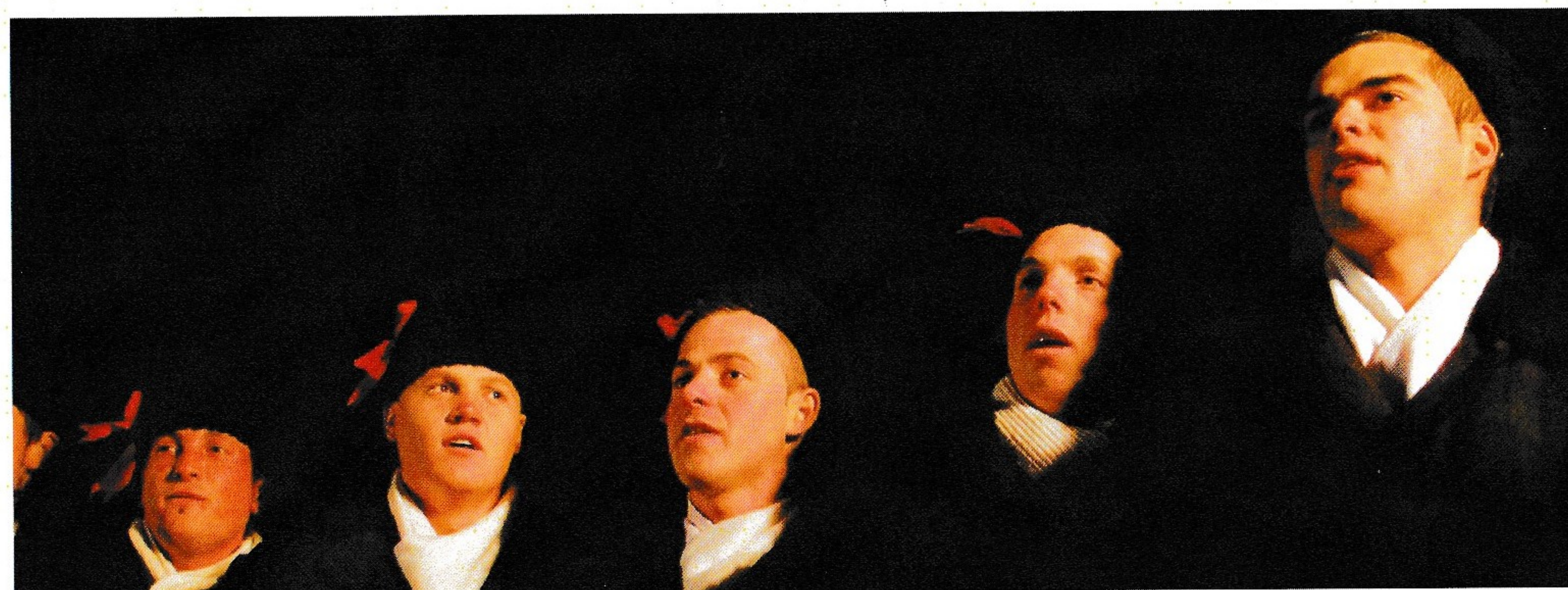
KORI (the girl's cake) [CAKE WITH JAM FILLING]

On Christmas Eve (6th of January on the old style) the Greek lads from Izvoarele village, walk around the village with Drăgumanu [a feast for fertility]. They wear a beautifully adorned hat (with beads and red ribbon) and an aba (cloak) of wool.

In the carollers' group repertoire the traditional lyrics are still kept. They sing Koran ghi mași – an announcing song sang on their way; Eras kalos palikarus – song for the unmarried lad; Deșpina Kori – for the girl ready to get married, etc.

They go from house to house, singing for the families with girls and boys ready to get married, for the recently married families and for the oldest families. They would wait for the carollers with bread rings, biscuits and wine.

The Christmas and the New Year meals were rich, predominantly with pork dishes, pies and various sweets. After the year 2000 some members of the community left to Greece, so it is explained that in the today's community there are prepared a number of dishes such as: suflachea [Greek souvlaki], pastichio [Greek Pastitsio], Pitam karido [walnut cake], kori (girl's cake).



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Ingredients:

Eggs, sugar, flour, apricots or peaches jam, apricots or peaches compote, baking powder, oil, milk.

Preparation method:

Separate the eggs yolk from the glair, stir the yoke with sugar. Add baking powder, lemon rind, nuts. Bake.

The baked dough is softened with compote juice then put a layer of jam and the fruit from the compote. The glairs are stirred until they become foam then sugar is added, pour on top of the dough and bake a little more (until the glair becomes golden). Decorate with fruit.





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Italian Dishes

PASTA ȘUTA [DRY PASTA WITH MEAT SAUCE]

One of the important holidays of the Italian community from Greci village is Santa Lucia. Celebrated every year on the 13th of December, it is known as the protector of the eyes and it represents the feast of the Catholic Church from the village.

It is said that Santa Lucia is the patron saint of the stonemasons (one of the traditional occupations of the Italians from Greci village). The legend tells about the daughter of a wealthy man who was very religious, sold her fortune and gave everything to the poor. When a Roman with a high rank fell in love with her saying he wanted her for her beautiful eyes, she refused him, preferred to claw her eyes out and gave them on a golden plate to the man in love, thus keeping her faith.

On the feast of Santa Lucia people go to church in the morning. Then there is thrown a party with different dishes amongst which pasta

șuta (a dish always present at the festive meals), with songs from old times: "Santa Lucia", "Piemontessina bella", "O bella ciao" etc.

On holidays, on Sunday evening, the men gathered to play boce (a game with balls) or contillio (game of cards).



Ingredients:

Flour, eggs and salt, pork, onion, grated cheese or dry cheese, garlic cloves, oil, tomatoes juice, salt, pepper, sage, basil (or pesto [basil and garlic sauce], oregano (recently).

Preparation method:

Put the meat to fry, continuously stirring, and when it becomes white, add the finely chopped onion and water from time to time, put the spices, the finely chopped garlic and the tomatoes juice. Boil well until the fat comes to the surface.

Boil the pasta and take them out in a bowl. Put the sauce over them. Season with the grated cheese (or dry cheese).





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FRITELLE DI RISO [RICE DOUGHNUTS]

Another celebration that the Italians today are happy to remember was L'ultimo di Carnevale (The last day of carnival).

It was the last spring party, because the next day the Great Lent would start, preceding the great celebration of the Lord's Resurrection – La Pasqua [Easter].

Mainly the young people dressed in various costumes which they made themselves, as merry as possible, often in disguise, as for masquerade. All the Italian families were visited and they were welcomed with sweets (e.g. frittelle di riso [rice doughnuts], pann de fritze [salty little doughnuts], crostoli [deep fried ribbons]).



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Ingredients:

Rice, milk, water, eggs, butter, sugar, rum, lemon rind, orange rind, salt, oil.

Preparation method:

In a pot put milk, water, half of the butter and sugar quantities, salt, rice, lemon and orange rind. Boil until the water is absorbed, add the remaining sugar and butter. Let to cool (it can be made from one day to another), so that this composition becomes hard. Add: eggs, beaten yolks, glairs (separately beaten to become foam), rum essence. Use two tablespoons to form the doughnuts which are fried in hot oil. Pass through powdered sugar.





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CROSTOLI [DEEP FRIED RIBBONS]

Another celebration that the Italians today are happy to remember was L'ultimo di Carnevale (The last day of carnival).

Along with other sweets crostoli is prepared for:

- the carollers on the Christmas Eve,
- the masked procession from L'ultimo di Carnevale,
- the guests that participated to the party offered by the groom's parents, at their house, after the religious ceremony of marriage,
- the members of the family, on Sundays, on the holidays or festive days.

Ingredients:

Eggs, melted lard, sugar, alcohol, flour, lemon rind, oil for frying.

Preparation method:

Make dough and roll a thin sheet, as for noodles, cut with a rosette wheel, make a cut in the middle, pass one end through the gash, then fry in oil. Pass through powdered sugar.



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Turkish and Tatar Dishes

CULAC CIURBASI [MINCED MUTTON SOUP]

Famous at the events from the Turks and Tatars community life were the soups (culac ciurbasi [minced mutton soup], bureki ciurbasi [filled dumplings soup], cuş-cuş [couscous], pilaf [or pilau], şuberek [mutton fried pie], ghiudem [dry salami], kurban [lamb with onion], kazi, stuffed vine leaves rolls, pies with cheese or meat, milk with semolina or rice, baclavale [baklavas], saraili [Baklava filled with cheese].

The main religious feasts of the Muslims from Dobrogea region are: Ramazan Bayram [Feast of Breaking the Fast], Kurban Bayram [Feast of the Sacrifice], Hîdîrlez [Feast of the Prophets Al-Khidr and Elijah Meeting on Earth].

Ramazan Bayram – celebration with variable date – celebrated at the end of the fasting of 30 days of the ramazan month. In the morning, the men go to the mosques, where they thank Allah for giving them the power to keep the Fasting and to overcome the temptations during the Ramazan and they pray for wealthy days. Afterwards, they go to the cemetery to honour their dead.

Traditionally, the people greet each other as such: Bayramınız Kutlu Olsun (May your Bayram be celebrated), Mutlu Bayramlar (Happy Bayram) or Bayramınız Mübarek Olsun (May your Bayram be holy).

The first day of the Bairam is one spent in the family. The young people go to the elder relatives, kiss their right hand and wish them health and wealth.

In the past, children used to go carolling. The little ones, from one house to another, carried adorned trees branches. They used to sing: Eşkişik - Căprița [little goat], Sehru-remzem - Luna Ramazan [Ramazan Month], Şuval-çuval - Sacul şi Siyildama [The Sack and Siyildama] - The song. They would receive sweets and fruit.



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Ingredients:

Mutton, eggs, yoghurt, sour cream, lemon salt, noodles, parsley.

Preparation method:

The meat is minced, well-fried, put meat gravy juice. Beat the eggs, mix with the yoghurt, the sour cream, the lemon salt. Boil everything. When almost done add the noodles and the chopped parsley.



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ȘUBEREK [MUTTON FRIED PIE]

The feast of the sacrifice – named Kurban Bayram – is the celebration of the tradition from Ibrahim/Avraam. When Allah/God wanted to tempt him and asked him to sacrifice his only son, Ibrahim was willing to do it, as a sign of his devotion towards the Creator. Impressed by his faith, Allah stopped the sacrifice of his son at the last moment, in the 12th month of the Muslim Calendar and was satisfied only with the sacrifice of a ram.

Kurban Bayram follows 70 days after the Ramazan Bayram.

According to the tradition, the faithful people sacrifice a wether, a sheep or a cow. It is very important that the animal's blood would drain into the ground, in specially made holes and would not be scattered or trampled by those participating to the sacrifice.

The ritual of the sacrifice specifies that the animals can be sacrificed for 7 people at most and after they divide the meat into 3 equal parts, the Muslims must give it to the neighbours and those in need but they must keep for the family too (a third). The meat is directly boiled without being washed, and the bones must not be broken.





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Ingredients:

Flour, oil, sugar, beef mixed with minced chicken, onion, pepper, salt.

Preparation method:

Knead some soft dough out of flour, water and salt.

The dough is divided into smaller pieces from which balls are made. They are rolled into round and thin sheets.

For the filling, very finely chop onion, mix with the minced meat, the pepper and the salt.

On half of the rolled dough sheet, spread a spoonful of meat, and the second half is folded on the first half. At about a centimetre from the edge, the dough is pressed with the tip of the fingers. They are fried in hot oil.



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BACLAVALE [BAKLAVAS]

The pre-Islamic feast, Hîdîrlez (6th of May) is celebrated from ancient times from Anatolia to Macedonia. The name comes from Hizir – one of the oldest gods, being the pre-Islamic, pre-Christian, pre-Roman, pre-Greek – god of vegetation and water.

The day of May 6th signifies the beginning of summer, according to the old Turkish calendar (who divided the year into two seasons).

In all the Turkish and Tatar communities from Dobrogea region, on the occasion of this feast lambs are sacrificed, traditional dishes are prepared, people say legends, proverbs, sayings, sing and dance on traditional music. On this occasion, the women prepare meals with lamb borsch, cheese or meat pies, flat bread loafs made of unleavened dough, baklavas, etc. They clean the graves, seed flowers, read prayers and give alms to the poor.

A custom says that on the Hîdîrlez feast, the unmarried girls must fill a bucket of holy water in which golden jewelleries are thrown and that girl's future is predicted.





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Ingredients:

Flour, oil, sugar, yoghurt, eggs, lemon, nuts.

Preparation method:

Make a piece of soft dough and leave it a little to “rest”. Make nut-sized balls out of which roll thin sheets and oil them. While folding them lay the nuts. Obtain a triangle pastry. Spray with a syrup made of water, sugar and lemon. Bake.



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