



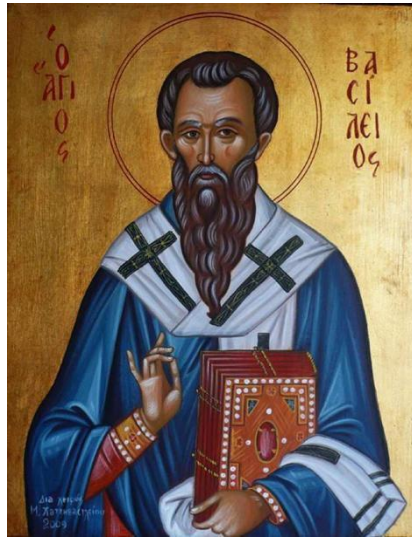
CHRISTMAS



IN GREECE

24th Primary School of Patras

Agios Vassilis



Greek Father Christmas is not Saint Nicholas, but **Saint Basil (or Vasilis)**, being Greek and true to form, he arrives late, a week late; on New Year's Eve.

Saint Vassilis, or Agios Vassilis, has much in common with Saint Nicholas.

Both are known for their compassion, kind heartedness and their commitment to helping the unfortunate, both bring gifts around Christmastime, one, just a little later than the other.

The Nativity scene under the Christmas tree



Christmas trees were introduced to Greece in the 1830s by King Otto, but didn't really become popular until about the 1940s.

Instead of presents under the tree, there is an elaborate nativity scene, with a stable and a manger model, figurines of Joseph, Maria and baby Jesus, animals like sheep and oxen and the three Magi.

The Christmas boat



The Greek equivalent of the Christmas tree, is the **Christmas boat** because we have always had ties to the sea, since ancient times.

Also, many adults and children worked on their the ships to bring money and bread to symbolized families, even on holidays . The boat not only the children's anticipation of reuniting with their relatives, but also their own love for the sea.

At the same time, small boats had the role of an honorary welcome for the Greek sailors who were returning to their homes and families, as well as food to keep them safe in the "wild waves".

Often the children who went to sing carols carried a miniature - decorated boat.

Ta Kalanda (Carol singing)



Children are up and about, bright and early
on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve and go
from house to house, singing the kalanda,
Greek Christmas Carols, usually only the one,
same song, accompanied by a triangle.

Pomegranate smashing



A pomegranate, an ancient symbol of prosperity and good luck, is hung above the door throughout Christmas.

At midnight, on New Year's Eve, the lights are turned out and the pomegranate is then hurled to the floor, or at the door, where it smashes, spilling out its seeds, the more seeds the better!

This helps ensure luck, health, happiness and prosperity for the coming year.

Kalo Podariko (First footing)



Right foot first for good luck

At the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve , someone considered lucky, or a child, due to the fact they are pure and innocent, are sent outside and ordered to re-enter, right foot first, to bring good luck for the following year.

Vassilopita, the Greek New Year's cake



Every Greek family has its vassilopita, the New Year's cake, concealing a lucky coin.

After midnight, the Vassilopita is sliced and handed round by the head of the family.

A cross is scored over the surface, the first slice is for Jesus Christ, the second for The Virgin Mary, the third for Saint Vassilis, the fourth for the house and then, for each member of the family, starting with the oldest.

Whoever finds the lucky coin has good luck and good fortune for the rest of the year.

Vassilopita recipe

300 gr. butter at room temperature, (should be quite soft)

300 gr. powdered sugar (and extra for sprinkling)

6 eggs

300 gr. all purpose flour

1 Mr. c. baking powder

In a bowl, put the butter together with the powdered sugar and mix with an egg beater until it becomes a soft mixture like an ointment.

Implementation

Add the eggs one by one, mixing well with the egg beater (at this stage the mixture looks "cut", but it will "layer" once the flour is added).

In another bowl, sift the flour together with the baking powder, pour them into the previous mixture and mix with a silicone spatula until they are homogeneous. Finally, add the orange zest. Butter and flour a round form (or a pan) with a diameter of 24 cm.

Pour the mixture into it and bake it in a preheated oven, at 180° C, in the air, for 50 minutes and at 170° C for another 10 minutes.

Test if it is cooked by dipping a knife or toothpick into the center of the cake - if it comes out dirty and wet, continue baking for a little longer and test again.

Let the cake cool down, take it out of the mold, turn it over and insert the glitter (coin) vertically at a point. Then sprinkle the cake with powdered sugar.

Traditional Greek Christmas sweets

1. Kourabiethes

Snowy cookies, filled with almonds and drenched in icing sugar.



250 gr. goat butter at room temperature
40 gr. powdered sugar
500 gr. all purpose flour
1/4 tsp baking powder
150 gr. white almond roasted at 160° C for 10min.

Implementation

In the bowl of the mixer, beat the goat butter with the powdered sugar. It will take about 20 minutes of beating on medium speed. Add the flour and baking powder.

In the mortar, break the almond. When the mixture is homogeneous, add the broken almond and mix.

We put on gloves suitable for cooking and shape the kourabiedes into the shape and size of our liking.

Place them on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper and bake in a preheated oven at 180°C, in the air, on the middle rack, for about 20 minutes.

When they are baked, before they cool, dip them in plenty of powdered sugar until they are well covered

2. Melomakarana

Sticky sweet and soaked in honey, with a tang of spicy cloves.



1 kilo of all-purpose flour
1 cup of sugar
1 tsp. sweet baking powder
1 tsp. sweet cinnamon
sharp tsp. sweet clove
zest of 1 whole orange
zest of 1/2 a lemon
1 tsp. baking soda
1 cup orange juice, freshly squeezed
1/2 kilo of light olive oil
1 shot of cognac
200 gr. walnuts, chopped, for sprinkling

Syrup

500 gr. Sugar
500 gr. Honey
500 gr. water
zest of 1/2 an orange, without seeds
juice of 1/2 lemon

Implementation

Preheat the oven to 170° C, fan, and line a large baking sheet with parchment paper. Mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, cinnamon, cloves and scrapings in a large bowl. Dissolve the soda in the juice and pour it into the mixture in the bowl. Add the olive oil and cognac and knead lightly. Form small melomakarona of the same size and spread them on the baking sheet. We make the characteristic "grid" pattern on their surface with a fork. Bake them in the air for 20 minutes. When we take them out, let them cool for at least 30 minutes.

Syrup

Boil all the ingredients together, on medium heat, for 4-5 minutes from the moment of stirring. Peel and remove from the heat.

Syruping + serving

Dip the cold melomakarona in the hot syrup for 30 seconds. We use a slotted spoon. Arrange the melomakarona on a large plate and sprinkle with the chopped walnuts.

3. Diples

Thin strips of dough,
folded and fried, sprinkled
with chopped nuts and honey.



40 Pieces

500 gr. all purpose flour
5 large eggs
1 pinch of salt
1/4 tsp. sweet cinnamon or 2 vanilla pods
2 sharp spoons olive oil soup of
1 shot water
3 sharp spoons tablespoons of sugar
corn oil, for frying
For serving
1 pint. Honey
1/2 fl. walnuts,
chopped
tsp. 1/2 fl. rose sticks (optional)
(optional) 1/2

First put all the ingredients (except the corn oil) in the mixer and knead them with the hook, at medium speed, until they are homogeneous.

Make the tight dough into a ball and wrap it with cling film. Leave it in the fridge for 3-4 hours.

Flour a work surface well.

Leave the dough for 10 minutes at room temperature.

Then, roll it out with the rolling pin into a sheet about 1 cm thick.

Cut the sheet into irregular shapes.

Put plenty of corn oil in a large pan, which we place on medium heat.

Once the oil is very hot, fry the pieces of dough in batches.

Take out the diples with a slotted spoon and place them on kitchen paper to drain. Then we transfer them to a plate to garnish them.

Syruping

Heat 1 kg of honey with 200 ml of water in a wide saucepan, over a very low heat, until the honey is just slightly diluted.

As soon as we take the diples out of the pan, dip them in the honey for 30 seconds.

Take them out with a slotted spoon and stack them on a plate, dousing each layer with honey and sprinkling with walnuts.

Kallikantzaroi



There is a story about some magical creatures which are called Kallikantzaroi and are coming to Greece during Christmas time. They are supposed to come from the middle of the earth and get into people's house through the chimney! The kallikantzaroi do things like putting out fires and making milk go off. Having a fire burning through the twelve days of Christmas is also meant to keep the kallikantzaroi away.

Christmas bread(Christopsomo)



The Christmas bread is a round ,aromatic, savory bread that is ceremonially kneaded, often with small prayer. From this dough we make two strips and place them on the bread in the shape of a cross, as well as the other designs that everyone wants in the four quarters of the cross.

We place whole walnuts in different parts of Christopsomo and sprinkle with sesame seeds. The father of the family blesses the bread before it is shared with everyone at the Christmas table.

Epiphany



Christmas celebrations come to an end on January 6th otherwise known as Epiphany. This celebrates Jesus was baptisism and is also known as 'Blessings of the Water' .

Throughout Greece, men gather around waters edges, like the sea, river or lakes and jump in to find the Cross in which a Priest has just blessed. The first one to find the

cross will have good luck for the coming year.

