



Back In Time

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AUSTRIA



Celebrating Easter in our Region, the Lavanttal

Easter is one of the most important events in the year for Christianity. On this occasion, Catholics (who are the majority of our population) commemorate Jesus Christ's suffering, death and his resurrection. Lent, which is a fasting period where people abstain from different things, starts on Ash Wednesday and lasts 40 days. It is regarded as a sort of preparation for the most important event of the year, ending with the Holy Thursday.

Lenten veils

Lent also includes various customs. Shrouding the altars in churches behind Lenten veils during the Lent season has been a tradition since the Late Middle Ages. Numerous colorful and precious old shrouds, some of which are even over 500 years old, are still preserved in Carinthia.



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The Cross of Ashes

During mass on Ash Wednesday, an ash cross is made on people's foreheads, which has been a tradition for approximately 1,000 years. The ash used in this mass usually consists of burnt palm (a bunch of branches from the tree called great willow) that was taken to church in the previous year. The Cross of Ashes signals finite and momentary nature of the human being. Furthermore, it is seen as a symbol of purification.



Ways of the Cross

A lot of people in Carinthia follow the numerous so-called Ways of the Cross, which are a sort of procession. During these, participants reflect on life, death, fundamental questions of existence and Jesus Christ's resurrection. These processions are quite popular in our region.

The Holy Week starts with Palm Sunday

Liturgically, the Holy Week starts with Palm Sunday. The mass on Palm Sunday, which is another wide-spread rite, is usually held in all parishes in Carinthia. With this tradition, Catholics commemorate Jesus Christ's arrival in Jerusalem.



The so-called palms, which were mentioned earlier, are a sort of decorated bouquet consisting of branches.

“Christ, the Light”

The highlight of the Christian year is the commemoration of suffering, death and resurrection on the Three Holy Days, namely Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. On the eve of Easter, people bring an Easter candle in their hands to the darkened church and say “Christ, the light” three times.

Easter ham and Easter Bonfire

Another - maybe even the most popular - tradition in the Lavanttal region is eating consecrated meat (ham) combined with a special kind of white bread, either the “Osterpinze” or the “Reindling”, which is a



sweet bread with raisins, sugar and cinnamon in it. The most widespread drink among adults that accompanies the Easter meal is “Most”, a type of fermented apple wine. Before the family gatherings

At night, people in our region light big outdoor fires; this is a great spectacle for both the older and younger generations. Hundreds of these bonfires are usually lit in the Lavanttal. This religious tradition is not only fun, but also has a secular history: during the time of the Turkish sieges in Carinthia in the 15th century, many fires were lit in order to trick the Turks into believing a big army was nearby.

On Easter Sunday, children can look forward to an Easter egg hunt, as well as chocolate bunnies and other small gifts, which are traditionally hidden by the “Easter bunny” outdoors.



CROATIA



Traditional Neretva Cuisine

What people used to eat in the Neretva Valley? Everything they found in the nature or they could grow on the narrow, fertile belt along the Neretva Delta - the fish and birds they hunted in the Neretva, in the sea and the swamps, the animal meat they were breeding. They were producing cheese, milk, eggs, cereals, vegetables... However, if we wanted to highlight one of our traditional dishes, it would certainly be *brudet* (fish stew) made of eels and frogs, that people of the Neretva are especially proud of. No matter what fish we use, it is one of the most famous Neretva's traditional dishes. The Neretva cuisine is certainly considered special and different. It is a famous cuisine recognizable for strong flavours such as chilli peppers. No matter if we are talking about *brudet*, greens, meat prepared in various ways, vegetable salads... it is always equally delicious. As well as the salty, the sweet dishes are also very tasty and specific, but not so lavish in choice. Some of them are plum and fig marmalade, dried figs, *kotonjata* (quince sweet). Each of us would definitely find something special and attractive in the Neretva cuisine.

The Neretva's frog-and-eel brudet

Ingredients: Eel - 3 kg; Frogs - 20 pieces; Olive oil – 1 dl; 1 onion; Tomato concentrate - 1 tbsp; Chilli pepper; 1 tomato; Vinegar – 3 tbsp; Salt to taste; 1 small bundle of fennel.

Preparation: Clean the frogs and the eels, then cut the eels into slices. Make the vegetable stock for the *brudet* in a wider pot:

Chop the onions into small cubes, sauté them till they release their



juice and get a golden colour, add hot pepper, tomato and tomato concentrate melted in a couple of table-spoons of water and vinegar, and finally mix it all together. Sort the eels and put the frogs between. Salt it, cover

the fish with cold water and boil it on the high heat for 40 minutes. Shake the dish frequently to avoid burning.

Sautéed greens with olive oil

Ingredients: Greens – 1.5 kg; Potatoes – ½ kg; 1 onion; 1 bundle of fennel; Olive oil; Sea salt.

Preparation: Wash and chop the greens, cut the potatoes into bigger cubes, wash the fennel and add it in



full. Pour about three litres of water into the pot, add some oil in the cold water and salt it. Leave it to boil, add the greens and keep on stirring it for 20 minutes. Then add potatoes, onion and fennel, stir until everything softens.

Fig marmalade

Ingredients: Figs – 3 kg; Sugar – 1.5 kg; 1 lemon.

Preparation: Clean the figs, but do not peel them. Put sugar in a pot and place figs onto it. Then add lemon sliced into thin twists. Cook it in low flame, stirring in-between, till the marmalade gets thick.



MARATON LAĐA

Traditional Vessel Racing

Neretva Boat Marathon is an amateur boat racing competition. It is being held once a year, on the second Saturday of August. The race starts in Metković and ends 22.5 kilometers away in Ploče.



The first Boat Marathon was held on September 13th 1998. It is one of the biggest competitions in Croatia considering the number of the participants. On average, there are 35 crews with 12 members each, which gives a number of over 400 participants



each year. It is a big spectacle and a big tourist attraction. It is estimated that tens of thousands of spectators watch it live along the banks of river Neretva, from a special organized train and aboard private and tourist boats.

The most impressive and the most attractive moment is the start of the race in Metković when all the rowers are tightly packed and are starting to race toward the finish line in Ploče. First three crews that finish the race are given the awards in the shape of medals, winner shields and money. The start positions are designated after the speed races held in Opuzen a week before the Marathon.



The boats which are used are called *lada* [ladza]. *Lada* is a wooden, hand built vessel. The rowers sit along the sides of it and use hand built paddles to row. There are a few experts in building these vessels left. One of them is Marko Markota, who in a period of 5 years has built 20 boats *lada* and 300 paddles. In the past people used to use these boats for a lot of things, but mostly to transport agricultural goods using a network of channels spread all over Neretva valley. These days the boats are mostly powered by small engines and are used as tourist attractions. The oldest *lada* that is still operational was built in 1895



CYPRUS

Cypriot Folk Dances



The people of Cyprus strongly feel the need to externalize their emotions, vibrating from senior religious and patriotic stirrings. Influenced by a number of historical facts, they express their deep patriotism and admiration of their brave feats with municipal songs and dances.



Cyprus suffered many disasters and conquests for many centuries, such as the gradual change in lifestyle from the beginning of our century to the second world war, the independence in 1960 and the Turkish invasion in 1974, which split the island in two.

Dances and songs are encountered in all social and festive events, mainly rural, including local festivals family celebrations (christenings, namedays, birthdays, engagements, weddings) as well as national and religious celebrations.



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Perhaps the major feature of the Cypriot dances is that men dance separately to women, perhaps a unique feature worldwide. There are only a few mixed dances. This was due to the strict morals that prevailed during that era.

Cypriot dances are mainly of the type performed by a confronted pair, invariably two men or two women, or men's solo dances displaying virtuosity and often performed with a hand-held object, either a sickle, knife or sieve.

In their steps and general characteristics, such as the movement of the body and limbs, they have common features with dances of the historic Greek island area.

The masculine dances are cheerful and lively, unlike the women's, which are timid and shy. While in the men dances the hands are off and stretched sideways with vigorous movement, in women dances they are leveled approximately at shoulder height with rhythmic and graceful movements, compensating balance.



Traditional Cyprus Grape Juice “SOUTZOUKOS”

Soutzoukos is a traditional, chewy sweet made from grape juice that has a unique appearance (it looks similar to a candle!), and is popular at traditional festivals.



The sweet is made using the surplus of grapes after the grape harvest, which is why it is commonly made in the wine producing villages of the Troodos and Pafos regions.

To make Soutzoukos, the hot mixture known as ‘moustalevria’ (a combination of the Greek words ‘must’ and ‘flour’) is used.

“Moustalevia” is placed in a large bronze cauldron (called chartzin or kazani) and heated slowly. A small amount of a special white earth called asproi is added to the boiling must and causes impurities to rise to the surface where they are collected and removed. It is possible to substitute asproi, when not available, with lager beer, which has a similar result.



Once the cleansing process is complete the must is left to cool. Next, flour is added while stirring and heating the mixture. When it gets to the right consistency, judging from the rate of steam bubbles and the fluency of the mixture, it is removed from the heat. The mix, called palouzes, is now ready for dipping the almond strings and make soutzoukos.

The next step is the making of soutzoukos involves the creation of strings of almonds (or walnuts), which are dipped in the palouzes mixture and are then left to dry. First, the nuts are shelled and dipped into water in order to become softer. Once soft enough, they are strung onto 2-3 meter-long threads. The strings are dipped in the palouzes mixture until completely covered. This process is repeated several times (usually three to five times) until soutzoukos has the desired thickness. Soutzoukos strings are then left to dry for 5–6 days. It then ready for consumption or storage, even though some people like to eat soutzoukos fresh.

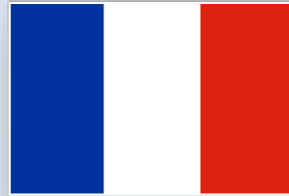


When served, it is chopped into slices with a nutty center and chewy texture, often as an accompaniment to Zivania (a strong local spirit).



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FRANCE



MARSEILLE

In Marseille we have several “**culinary traditions**” or typical dish like “Soupe au pistou” (*a delicious fish soup*), “pieds paquets” (*lamb of-fal*), “aioli” (*a sauce made of olive oil and a lot of garlic*), “bouillabaisse” (*a kind of stew made with fish*), “panisse” (*it is made of chickpea and fried*), “navettes” (*dry biscuits perfumed with orange blossom*).



Our **traditional sports** are pétanque and soccer, The soccer team is l'Olympique De Marseille, It's the best team in France. It's the French champion's league team.



We play pétanque in summer, it is a form of boules where the goal is to toss or roll hollow steel balls as close as possible to a small wooden ball called a *cochonnet* (literally "piglet") or jack, while standing inside a circle with both feet on the ground. The game is normally played on hard dirt or gravel.



Marseille's soap is a really popular thing, it is a traditional hard soap made from vegetable oils that has been produced around Marseille, France, for about 600 years.



Santons are really popular too, we buy them at the Santons Fair for the Nativity scene at Christmas.



“Les 13 desserts de Noel” or “The thirteen Christmas desserts” is a typical religious tradition in Provence.

The thirteen desserts include: nuts, dried figs, dried grape, dates, (quince) fruit jelly, candied fruits, “fougasse” (local typical type of bread), white, black and red nougat, oranges, clementine or mandarin, “Calissons d’Aix” (*a marvellous sweet Provence confection*), watermelon.

They are displayed on three tablecloths in the middle of three candles or three candlesticks symbolizing the Christ and the twelve apostles.



POLAND



A quick guide to Polish St. Andrew's Day (Polish Andrzejki) future predicting customs

At the weekend which is the closest to 29th of November, in Poland there are St. Andrew's parties. You will not only dance or drink there, but also you will have your future foretold.

Predictions of the future using wax – the most well-known divination technique based on pouring wax. You have to melt wax and then pour into cold water. It is not so easy, because the wax must go through the hole in a key. At the end you take the wax figure (or something you just created) and look at the shadow of it, as it is a prophecy for the next year.





Shoes race – everyone in a group take off their shoes. Your next task is to go to the furthest wall from the doors and by putting one shoe at a time in front of each other in the direction of the door. The first shoe which crosses the doorstep belongs to the person who will soon change their marital status.



Śmigus-Dyngus, Easter Monday in Poland

In Poland, Easter Monday is known as Wet Easter Monday or Lany Poniedziałek and is celebrated as Śmigus-Dyngus Day.

It is a tradition in which people use bucket pails or water guns to soak each other with water.

This is a wonderful day of fun. It was traditionally the day when boys tried to drench girls buckets of water. The more a girl is sprayed with water, the higher her chances are that she will get married.



There is conflicting information as to the origin of this tradition. Some say it was a pagan ritual and that the pouring of water symbolized springtime to cleanse and purify. There are others who think that Dyngus represented renewal of the sacrament of baptism after Christ had risen. Another theory suggests that Wet Monday is connected with Polish ruler Prince Mieszko I who was baptized in 966 on Easter Monday.

Blessing of the Easter Food Baskets

In Poland the blessing of the baskets is known as *święcenie pokarmów wielkanocnych*, a practice dating to the 15th century or earlier, and one which is still maintained by most families in Poland on Holy Saturday.

The basket is traditionally lined with a white linen or lace napkin and decorated with sprigs of boxwood, the typical Easter evergreen. Inside the basket there are: eggs, sausage, bread, lamb, horseradish, salt and pepper.



PORTUGAL



Fado

The true "lisboeta" (person from Lisbon) soul is to be found truly and deeply in Fado. Love, fate, sadness, nostalgia... feelings whispered on a strong, but gentle, voice that can never be explained but only felt... Who never heard of Amália, Lisbon's queen of fado? Fado is the narrow old quarters, is its people... past, present and future... From the old days, voices like Maria da Fé, Maria Severa, Carlos do Carmo and Cidália Pereira came together with new talents and new forms of expression brought by Camané, Mísia, Mariza and Mafalda Arnauth, among many others.

Although its origins remain a mystery, it's thought that fado originated in sailor's bars in Lisboa towards the end of the 18th century. The pain of those who watched their loved ones depart for the discoveries, without knowing if they would see them again, could have been the starting point for this sentimental song genre. Its name comes from the Latin 'fatum', meaning fate. From the last quarter of the 19th century it was adopted by the aristocrats to express their romantic feelings using the words of great Portuguese poets and writers and became linked to the word "saudade" (a longing for home and familiar places). In the fado, the singer - the fadista - stands dressed in black in front of the audience and behind the fadista are the musicians playing the wonderful "guitarra portuguesa" (portuguese guitar). They sing of their loves, of their city, or the miseries of life, critical of society and its politicians. When the fadista sings a hush falls over the room and no food is served.



Those who love the fado have an almost worshipful relationship with it. The old and the new, but always Fado, is to be listened to in silence, while you taste a Caldo Verde and nibble at a slice of chouriço on a chunk of cornbread.



“Saudade” is proudly defined by the Portuguese as a rooted feeling that rarely abandons the soul of those who left their homeland. Fado also sings about love, the longing for those who have left, the sea, the misfortunes of life, and refers many times to the lives of fishermen and sailors. Sang with a shawl, a guitar, and one voice, whether it’s a man or a woman, Fado never lacks in emotion. A performance is good, when the crowd is brought to tears. It is one of the oldest urban folk music in the world, and increasingly admired, respected and liked throughout the whole world.

The face of Fado
Amália Rodrigues



“Compasso Pascal” and “Folar”

The “Compasso Pascal” is a Portuguese Christian tradition that consists on the visit of the house of a parish (those who want to receive it) of the Crucifix of Christ, on Easter day or the following weeks, to celebrate his Resurrection.

A small group of paroquianos (people from the congregation) , with or without its priest, led by one crucifix that represents the presence of alive Jesus , covers some houses of other paroquianos that reveal its will to receive the visit from Jesus revived on Easter Day. In each one of the houses, after an initial blessing, the inhabitants of the visited house kiss the cross of Christ as demonstration of worship.

In this tradition, different forms had associated to receive this visit. It is seen as a form of celebration of the members of the parochial community with offers of food of this season or only some minutes of rest for the moving group. It is also common to be used to advantage of offers of pecuniary donations to the parish (for payment of eventual parochial rights).

It is also a popular tradition to offer one gift to the godsons. The godfathers and godmothers use to offer a “folar” to the godsons (a cake, almonds or money), that in return they must deliver in the Sunday of Branches, a branch of Oliveira to the godfather or a branch of violets to the godmother. This tradition can also be extended to other special relatives and friends.



Tradition of Grape Harvest

The Grape Harvest usually takes place in September, after the decision of winemakers, who, since previous August, analyze samples to control the ripeness of grapes as well as the acidity, weight and colour. It's crucial to reach the indicated acidity degree,



since, as time goes by, these acids turn into sugars, increasing alcohol.

Grape Harvest is the act of picking up grapes for the production of wine, when these reach the ideal degree of ripeness. Then, grapes are sent to wineries, where the production of different types of wine starts. To obtain a good quality of wine it's crucial to determine the exact date to start the harvest. It's up to producers, according to each grape variety, to deter-



mine the most suitable time, in order to produce the type of wine they desire. Later, the transportation of grapes must be done under the best conditions, since, due to the usual warm weather, smashed grapes start fermenting earlier. It's also possible to predict time for the harvest through the popular method, which consists in checking when the

SPAIN



Gofio: the most emblematic Canarian food

Gofio is the name of a traditional food, consumed in the Canary Islands even before the conquest of the archipelago by the Castellians (1402 - 1496). It is a



kind of flour made from toasted cereals (nowadays mainly corn or wheat). Its colour can vary from yellow to brown, depending on its exact composition and the degree of toasting.

History

Gofio was consumed by the people of Berber origin who lived in the islands before the Castilian conquest as basic element in their diet. The aborigines made different varieties of gofio, using barley, wheat, lentils and even ferns. Later, new ingredients were added (specially corn, which was introduced from America).

For many years, and specially during periods of poverty and famine like the Spanish civil war (1936 – 1939), it was the basic food of the Canarian population due to its high caloric content. In boats which carried illegal immigrants from Canarias to America, gofio was the essential provision, since it could be conserved for a long time provided it was kept away from humidity.

Elaboration

Traditionally, the corn or the wheat were toasted and stirred manually in a metal container, and then the toasted grains were crushed in manual stone mills. Nowadays, all this process has been manufactured in most cases.



Consumption

The way of consuming this food has changed since ancient times. Before the Castillian conquest, Canarian aborigines consumed gofio by mixing it with water and salt or using dried fruit and nuts. This mixture was usually made in a “zurrón”, a kind of bag made with the skin of animals like goats. Nowadays it is consumed in a similar way, although it is also used in modern meals like mousses and ice-creams. It is frequently mixed with banana as well. Gofio is usually eaten mixed with milk or with vegetable soup, alone or as accompaniment to other meals.



The Canarian knife

The Canarian knife is a valuable piece of craftsmanship, but it also has been an essential tool for the Canary farmers and peasants for many years (specially in the north of Gran Canaria). Totally handmade, it is characterized by a beautiful and complex handle made of materials such as gold, silver, alpaca



(an alloy of copper, zinc and nickel), ram's horn, ebony and ivory with geometrical or flower shapes. Its blade, forged by a blacksmith, is made of gold, silver, alpaca or stainless steel.

History

On the origin and history of the Canarian knife several theories exist. Located chronologically by some researchers in the thirteenth century, others say that its presence in the Canary Islands does not go beyond the middle of the nineteenth century, associated with the beginning of massive banana plantations. Popularly known as “Naife”, from the English word “knife”, this name could lead to the theory that it was the British who brought it to the islands and yet the peculiar characteristics of the handle suggest a North African origin. Finally, after many studies, some researchers point out that the origin of the Canarian knife is in those mainland territories where Arabs remained after the Reconquest finished (concretely Toledo and Albacete).

Recent history and present

The geographic location of its manufacturers has always been related to the crop of the banana (mainly in the north of Gran Canaria, but also in Tenerife). For many years, the canarian knife has been an essential tool for peasants and farmers, but it was also used for many other purposes, such as cutting cheese or bread, etc. For this reason, the canary knife with its leather sheath was a very important item in the typical canary costume of men.

In spite of the decay of agriculture in the islands, local craftsmen keep alive in the 21st century this ancestral tradition and the Canarian knife is still one of the most important symbols of identity and popular culture in the Canary Islands. Just as a proof of this fact, we can find the Monument to the Canarian Knife, in Guía (Gran Canaria), which has always been considered the quintessential land of this traditional tool.





