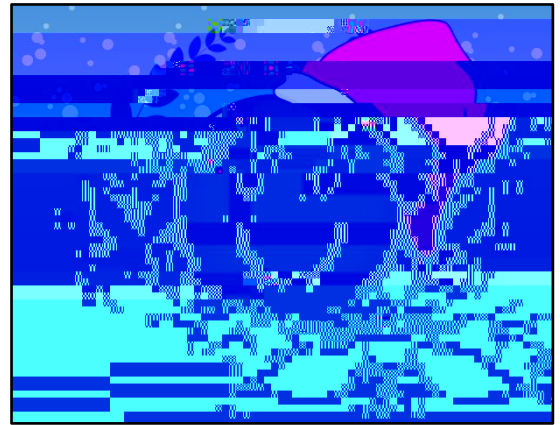


From the Co-Chairs of the Friends of Hellenic Studies

and Word," presented by Margaret Malamud, **Ph.D.**,

From the Co-Chairs of the Friends of Hellenic Studies, continued

In addition to our Student and Faculty Voices, other article in this Holiday Issue of *The Hellenic Voice* will spotlight some of the ways our community celebrates traditions: Christmas and New Year's festivities. This year, the pandemic has altered many of these rituals, but we continue to be joyful and hopeful for the future, one which looks promising.



Happy Holidays!

Cathy, Marieaand Katherine
Co-chairs, Friends of Hellenic Studies



Student Voices: Reflections on Recent Lectures

The Forgotten Heroes of the Balkan Wars: Greek-Americans and Philhellenes 1912-1913



Community Notes

Greek Christmas Traditions

By Mariea Kazantzis

Christmas came and with them memories of Mom's *ourambiedes* big white crescent moons covered with powdered sugar placed in a large round baking pan. But the problem was that the baking pan was not accessible as it was placed high at the top of the pantry closet and one had to figure out a whole strategic plan to reach them. The

Prose and Poetry

Holidays in Greece

By Cathy Karathanasis

January 1st isn't just New Year's Day in Greece but also St. Basil's Day. Agios Vasilis, or St. Basil, is the Greek Santa Claus. After the celebrations of Christmas, Greek children impatiently await the New Year because that's when St. Basil delivers their gifts. In Greece it is the custom to exchange gifts at the New Year instead of on Christmas Day.

These are some of the most popular New Year's traditions in Greece:

At the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve, fireworks shows light up the night skies across the country in many cities and villages throughout Greece. As one can imagine, nothing beats watching the fireworks which light up the Parthenon on Acropolis of Athens. It must be the ultimate experience to celebrate the beginning of a new year in the place where modern civilization really began.

On New Year's Day people across Greece cut the *vasilopita*, a traditional orange-flavored pound cake containing a hidden coin. Greeks bake a coin inside the cake which is then sliced up and served to celebrate the feast day of St. Basil. The first slice goes to Jesus and the rest is cut and served to the entire family. The person who gets the slice with the coin is the lucky one for the rest of the year.

Vasilopita from Constantinople

Ingredients:

½ cup butter 4 large eggs 1-1/4 cups sugar
4 cups self-rising flour 2-3 Tbsp. brandy
The juice from 3 large oranges The zest of one orange
½ tsp. baking soda 1 tsp. baking powder
Confectioners sugar Cinnamon

Directions:

All the ingredients must be at room temperature.

1. Divide the egg whites and egg yolks. Beat the butter until white and in a separate bowl the egg yolks with the sugar until the grains are melted. Add the brandy to the egg mixture.
2. Add the mixture to the butter and continue mixing.
3. Dissolve the baking soda in the orange juice and after it foams add it to the butter mixture.
4. Beat the egg whites until firm and slowly add them to the butter mixture using a spatula.
5. Add the orange zest and then the flour and baking powder after they have been sifted. Continue mixing with the spatula.
6. Grease a round pan and pour in the dough and a coin wrapped in foil.
7. Bake at 180 degrees C. in a preheated oven for 50 minutes.
8. After the cake has cooled down, cover it with the confectioners sugar and decorate with the powdered cinnamon.

If you are fortunate enough to be the first guest at someone's home on New Year's Day, you are considered to be very lucky. Since New Year's Day is considered to be a day of good fortune, many Greeks try their luck at card games. From Greece's biggest cities to tiny, snowy hillside villages, you will see people both young and old playing cards as they ring in the new year. The betting sums are usually kept low, so as to offer a friend a diversion without upsetting the losers.

Caroling is part of the holiday tradition. A carol is called *Kalanda* in Greek. The word *kalanda* derives from the Latin *calendae* which means the first day of the month. In Ancient Greece

It wouldn't be Christmas without traditional Greek Christmas sweets, which are so very delicious! The traditional sweets one simply must have at this time of year include *kyourambiedes* which are Greek Christmas cookies filled with almonds and drenched in powdered sugar; and *melomakarona*, which are sticky-sweet cookies soaked in honey, with a spicy hint of cloves. Below are the recipes for both, along with a video link:

Kourambiedes (Greek Butter Cookies)

These melt-in-your-mouth packages of delight are light, flaky and slightly sweetened:

Ingredients:

4 sticks unsalted butter, softened (1 lb.) ● 1 egg
 3-1/4 tsp. pure almond extract
 1/2 cup powdered sugar/icing sugar plus 1 cup for coating
 1/8 tsp. baking soda ● 4-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
 pinch of salt ● 1/4 cup chopped almonds (optional)

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Prepare baking pans with parchment paper
2. Using a stand mixer, beat butter on medium-high for 10 minutes. Butter will become fluffy and a very pale yellow color.
3. While butter is beating, sift powdered sugar in a small bowl. In a separate large bowl, sift together flour, salt and baking soda. Set aside.
4. After butter is finished, add egg and almond extract and mix well.
5. Turn mixer to low and slowly add powdered sugar to the egg mixture. After incorporated, turn to medium-high and blend for an additional 5 minutes.
6. Turn the mixer back to a low speed, then in batches slowly add in the flour mixture until well combined. If the dough is too sticky, add flour a few tablespoons at a time until desired consistency is reached.
7. If additional almond flavor and texture is wanted, add in the chopped almonds and mix well.
8. To form the cookies, take approximately 1 tablespoon of dough and form into a ball or crescent shape.
9. Place on cookie sheet 2 inches apart and bake 20-25 minutes until cookies are very lightly browned on edges
10. Cool the cookies slightly, and while still warm, coat them in powdered sugar and serve immediately.

Melomakarona (Christmas Honey Cookies)

This recipe comes from Akis Petretzikis and has been converted to US measuring amounts. Please visit his website via the link below for more information.

Ingredients:

For the Syrup

about 2 cups water ● about 4 cups gran. sugar ● 1/2 cup honey
 3 stick (s) cinnamon ● 3 clove ● 1 orange, cut in half

1st Mixture

1 3/4 cups orange juice ● 1 3/4 cups seed oil ● 6.3 oz. olive oil
 1.75 oz. icing sugar ● 1/2 tsp clove ● 3/8 tsp cinnamon
 1/4 tsp nutmeg ● 1 tsp baking soda ● Orange zest, of 2 oranges

2nd Mixture

8 cups all-purpose flour ● 1 3/4 cups semolina, fine

To Serve

honey ● walnuts

Directions for the Syrup

1. Boil all of the ingredients for the syrup, apart from the honey, until the sugar melts. Remove from heat. Add the honey and mix till combined.
2. Let the syrup cool for 34 hours. It must be cold by the time the cookies come out from the oven.
3. You can prepare the syrup from the day before.

Directions for the Cookies:

1. Preheat the oven to (370°F) set to fan.
2. To make the cookies, you need to prepare 2 separate mixtures.
3. For the first mixture, add all of the ingredients in a large bowl. Mix, using a hand whisk.
4. In a separate bowl, add all of the ingredients for the second mixture. Combine the first and second mixture.
5. Mix by hand, very gently and for a very short time (10 seconds at the most). If you mix longer the mixture will split or curdle.
6. Mold cookie dough into oval shapes, 34 cm in length, 30 g each. Try to keep them as similar as possible.
7. Bake for about 20-25 minutes, until they are crunchy and golden brown. As soon as you remove them from the oven, soak the hot cookies in the syrup for 10 seconds
8. Allow them to drain on a wire rack. Drizzle with honey and chopped walnuts.

[Click here to visit the recipe on Akis' website!](#)

