

KOLIVA



Jesus answered them saying, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."

Gospel of John 12:24

Why Pray for the Dead?

Prayer for the dead is an important part of the life as Orthodox Christians. When we remember our deceased family members and friends in prayer, we act on our belief in God's promise of resurrection and eternal life for them and for us. In **James 5:16** we read: "Pray for one another... The prayer of a righteous man has great power." Is this prayer only for the living? Given that death does not disrupt the unity of Christ's body, that is, those of us still struggling in this world and those who have already received their reward in the next, the answer is "No." Do we not believe that during the Divine Liturgy the entire Body of Christ participates? Orthodox Christians who are dead can be remembered during the preparation of the Gifts for the Divine Liturgy. As the priest reads their names he places small particles of the bread on the paten below the large square that represents our Lord. Confer with your parish priest regarding how to remember non-Orthodox Christians. There is a wide variance on how this is done among the different Orthodox traditions.

The prayer of the righteous can help to obtain forgiveness for a sinner, even if he is already dead. By praying for the dead we hope that God will be merciful and grant them pardon of their sins. In **II Maccabees 12:44-45** we read about a sin offering made by Judas Maccabeus on behalf of his dead soldiers: "For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin."

Praying for the dead instructs us, the living, reminding us of our own mortality and need to prepare for our own passage from this life to the next. It reminds us of our connection with our deceased family members. In addition those fallen asleep in the Lord continue to pray for us. We pray for one another! It can be very comforting for our children to remember their beloved grandparents in prayer, and to know that their grandparents continue to pray for them. When my mother-in-law was still living and our daughters visited her, they knew that Baba Mary would pray on her knees twice a day, for an hour each time. She had her "list" of people to pray for tucked into her worn prayer book that was held together with duct tape. It was an image that the girls will always remember.

How Do We Do This?

One way is to include the names of the dead on our list of prayer intentions, either in our icon corner or prayer book. This way we can remember them by name often.

Another way is to offer Memorial Services in the Church. These are traditionally done on the third, ninth, and fortieth days after their repose, then on the year's anniversary. Some people keep the year's anniversary annually; others on the five-year multiples.

According to St. Simeon of Thessalonika, *"the Third Day service is celebrated for the reason that the reposed one received his being through the Trinity."* It also reminds us that Jesus was

resurrected on the third day. Often, the burial takes place on the third day. The **Ninth Day** says St. Simeon, is kept in remembrance of the nine choirs of angels: "*...that the spirits of the deceased dwell together with the holy spirits, the angels, being unmaterial (sic) and naturally similar to them.*" The **Fortieth Day** service dates back to the Old Testament. Joseph mourned his father Jacob for forty days, as did the Israelites for Moses. Jesus remained on earth for forty days after His resurrection before ascending to heaven. The **Year Anniversary**, according to St. Simeon, "*is celebrated because it is the consummation, and our God, the Trinity, is the life of all and the cause of being and shall be the restoration of all the renewal of human nature.*" On these occasions we contact the priest to serve the Memorial Service which can also become a special family gathering. If the family member is buried nearby, the priest can be asked to conduct the Memorial Service at the cemetery.

Although Saturday is the day traditionally set apart for prayers for the dead, some Orthodox Churches offer the Memorial Service at the end of Liturgy on the Sunday closest to the anniversary of the person's death. Even though this may be considered a "matter of convenience," it does afford the entire parish, including the children, the opportunity to participate and be reminded of this responsibility. Among those churches that maintain Sunday as strictly the day of the Lord's Resurrection, memorials are held either on Saturday or a weekday.

When can we pray for the dead?

The Church sets aside certain days as "Saturday of the Souls." In the Greek tradition: the two Saturdays before and the first Saturday of the Great Fast. In the Slav tradition: the Saturday of Meatfare, the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Saturdays of the Great Fast, and the Saturday before St. Demetrios (October 26/November 8). In both traditions: the Saturday before Pentecost. The Slavic tradition also includes prayers for the dead on the Tuesday after St. Thomas Sunday, and for those fallen in battle, on the Beheading of St. John the Baptist (August 29/September 11).

On the first Saturday of the Great Fast we remember the miracle of **St. Theodore of Tyre** in 362 AD with koliva. The Emperor, Julian the Apostate, had the food in the market sprinkled with the blood of animals sacrificed to pagan gods in order to defile the first week of the Great Fast. Patriarch Aphdioxios of Constantinople appeared to the saint in a dream warning him of the emperor's scheme. St. Theodore told the people to cook the wheat they had at home rather than grinding all of it into flour. Thus, they did not buy anything in the market and avoided the tainted food.

There are certain days when Memorial Services are not permitted. They include Feast Days, between Christmas and Theophany, and between Palm Sunday and St. Thomas Sunday (the Sunday after Pascha/Easter).

In many places it is the custom to visit the cemetery during Bright Week to place flowers, newly dyed Pascha eggs, and burning candles by the graves. If it is a parish cemetery, as is the case in my parish, the priest and the faithful, adults and children, visit on St. Thomas Sunday to pray and to sing "Christ is Risen!" to all those departed this life.

KOLIVA

INGREDIENTS:

Whole Wheat
Water

Assortment of options for additions:

Raisins, walnuts, pomegranate, cinnamon, sesame seeds,
Almonds, dried cranberries, powdered sugar

Directions:

Wash the whole wheat, add to a pot with enough water to cover the wheat about 3 inches above. Boil the wheat adding water if necessary until soft. Check by using a fork till it goes into the wheat. When fully cooked, drain and rinse with cold water. Lay a towel on a counter or table and spread the wheat, till it is mostly single layered. Let dry over night. Next day, collect the wheat, place in the bowl that you will bring to church adding any of the ingredients you would like to use. Mix together. If adding powdered sugar cover the whole top about 1/2 to 1 inch deep, then place any ingredients you would like to use to make a cross.

Remember to pray for the servant of God that you are making the Koliva for.

Greek Style Koliva Debbie Starr

Just so you know this recipe is for a large platter. This recipe comes from Tony Spirounias. I cut this recipe back because my platter is too small for this amount, however I will give you the recipe the way it was given to me.

3 Lbs Wheat - boiled and dried
1 ½ Lbs White Sesame - toasted
2 Boxes Zwieback – ground (I now use a Gerber toddler cookie)
1 Box Golden Raisins
1 Box Dark Raisins
2 Lbs Walnuts – ground
1 Lb Powdered Sugar – sifted
2 TBS Cinnamon
White Koufeta – Jordan Almonds – enough to go around the wheat.

- Boil wheat day before you need koliva. Dry on a towel and cover with a towel or cotton sheeting. On the morning of scrape the wheat off the top and bottom towels and put in a large bowl.
- Have ready the walnuts, finely ground, and sesame seeds toasted. Toast them in a large fry pan stirring constantly. They toast quickly and can burn quickly. As soon as they begin to turn color (darker) remove them from the heat and pour them into a bowl. Do not leave them in the fry pan to cool for they will keep cooking and could burn. You will need to stir them in the bowl a couple of times for them to cool. Take half of the sesame seeds and grind to a powder consistency. Be sure the seeds have cooled before grinding. Grind up cookies into a powder consistency also.
- Add to the wheat in a large bowl the walnuts, whole toasted sesame seeds, both boxes of raisins and the cinnamon.

At this point have your tray ready and lined with wax paper and decorative paper doilies. Using a large spoon make a cross with the wheat on the center of your platter. Say a prayer for the person or persons you are making the koliva for. Continue to mound the rest of the wheat mixture onto the platter making a high mound. Using your hand press the wheat carefully and try to pack it together. Then take the finely ground remaining sesame and make a layer over the wheat mound, pat it down. Take the finely ground cookies and put a layer over the sesame and pat down. This creates a barrier under the powder sugar so the moisture from the wheat does not bleed through. Now take the powder sugar and sift it over the entire mound. This becomes a very thick layer. It is probably an inch thick before you pat this down also. When patting down the powder sugar use wax paper or saran wrap and with no wrinkles in the paper use your hands and press gently across the sugar to make a nice smooth pack of sugar.

Once the sugar is smooth use a pastry brush and carefully brush off the sugar that got on the platter. Now take the koufeta (Jordan Almonds) and make a connected ring around the outside of the mound. You can now place the cross and letters on the center side of the mound. The cross goes in the center and the letter of the first name is to the left of the cross and the letter of the last name goes to the right of the cross.

The first time making this be sure to allow yourself plenty of time until you see how the whole process goes. It does take a bit of time.

Romanian Koliva

Cristina Popescu

Ingredients :

2 lbs wheat
13 cups water
3 cups sugar
1 1/2 lbs walnuts
lemon zest
rum extract
vanilla extract
Graham Cracker Crumbs

Preparation

1. Wash the wheat draining water and refilling 6-9 times, and let it soak overnight
2. Drain & rinse it well
3. Fill a pot with water and bring it to boil, when the water boils add the wheat and continue to boil it until the water is fully absorbed and the wheat is tender (2-4hours) add water as need it.
4. Once the water is fully absorbed add 3 cups of sugar, lemon zest, rum and vanilla extract and continue to boil it (This step is better to be done in a double boiler.) and stir continuously until all the "juice" (formed by the sugar) is entirely absorbed.
Test; a wooden spoon must stay straight in the pot. (approx 1 hour)
5. Add the walnut and let to rest until cool covered with an wet towel.
6. Arrange it on a round/oval platter - put layers of koliva and press it firmly. Cover the top part (surface) with a layer of walnut finely ground and press down firmly, top off in a similar way with a layer of Graham Crackers Crumbs and top it with sifted confectioners sugar.
7. Press the top with a clean paper until smooth
8. Trace a cross with almonds, walnuts, dragees or cacao

The Meaning of Koliva Ingredients



The word koliva comes from the Ancient Greek work “kollivos” which means kernel.

In the past, families of the deceased would prepare and offer koliva on silver trays for the memorial services (“**mnimosyno**” which means “memory”), which in Greece take place on the 40th day, during the third, sixth and ninth months, and in the year. Back then, koliva were served straight from the tray after the service. Today, they are offered in small paper bags accompanied by a plastic spoon and napkin. The idea behind the offering is “with **memory to embrace** the loved ones we’ve lost”.

The practice of making koliva **dates back to ancient Greece** to what was called “**panspermia**”, which means “a mixture of wheat seeds and nuts”. Besides being offered in memory of departed souls, it was also prepared to **celebrate major life occasions** such as marriage or **harvest**. Very similar to Greece’s celebratory **embroidered breads**.

Made with kernels of wheat, nuts and pomegranate, “panspermia” was prepared and offered during fertility festivals, and particularly during the three-day “**Anthestia**” held in Athens to welcome spring and in **honor of Dionysus**, the god of wine and the **divine mediator** on earth between the living and the dead. In this way, “panspermia” was considered a **tribute to the cycle of life, death and rebirth**.

Spiritually, koliva also stands for our **coming to terms with** the idea of death and understanding that we too are a part – albeit very small – of the **eternal cycle** of death and rebirth like as the wheat seed which ‘dies’ before it can bear a plant from which we harvest one of the planet’s basic staples.

Koliva is not just a mixture of wheat, fruit and nuts. From start to finish, every single **ingredient** and **preparation step** carries a **special meaning** that goes back thousands of years.

You start by soaking and then boiling the wheat kernels just enough to be soft but not mush. On some Greek islands or in mountain villages, the wheat was taken to church to be **blessed** before preparation. For me the **hardest part** of making koliva is the **drying** of the boiled wheat kernels which takes all night, and of course, the **decoration**.

Greek tradition has it that the basic ingredients for koliva should be nine, representing the Nine Ranks of Angels who watch over us.

▶ As a basic staple symbolizing the earth, **wheat** represents the body of the deceased and is a symbol of hope and resurrection. According to **Apostle Paul** in the First Epistle (letter) to the Corinthians, a grain of wheat must drop to the ground and die before it returns to bear life. Very much as in the case of human life which too, according to the Orthodox faith, is part of the **dynamic cycle** of death, resurrection, and eternal life. Ready-made patterns for koliva decoration.

▶ The **nuts**: we use walnuts and sesame seeds symbolize **fertility** and reproduction of life.

▶ The **almonds** white like the color of our bones represent our **common fate** as humans. **Death is equal to all**. As is the chance for resurrection and the eternal life.

▶ The **wonderful spices** cinnamon, nutmeg and cumin epitomize the richness and aromas of a well lived life, of appreciation, fulfillment and contentment.

▶ The **green parsley** or **mint** depending on regional traditions is a wish “*Efchi*” for a **peaceful rest** as is mentioned during the sermon: “**eternal rest in a place of light, richness, freshness; where there is no pain, no sorrow, and no sadness**”.

▶ The **raisins** go back to the Greek god of wine, Dionysus, and carry through to the time of Christ. They signify the pleasantness of life and the sweet blood of Christ.

▶ To represent the “lightness of the soil”, we use **bread crumbs** or chick pea flour.

▶ For an **afterlife** in brilliance and wealth, Greeks add **pomegranate seeds** to the koliva. I should remind you that Hades, the god of the dead, used a pomegranate to **lure Persephone**, the goddess of spring and prized daughter of Demetra to the underworld, where she became his wife.

▶ Lastly, the **fine powdered sugar** symbolizes the **uplifting** sweet welcome into **paradise**.

So as you can see, taboo aside, koliva is a wonderful blend of all of the earth’s prized products and the best life has to offer.

Prosforo Orthodox Offering Bread

Prosforo, pronounced PROHS-foh-roh, means "offering" and is made by members of the Orthodox faith as altar bread for celebrations of the Divine Liturgy. The [bread](#) consists of two loaves baked together, one placed on top of the other. The double loaf represents the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ, and each loaf is stamped with a special seal. Traditional Greek homes reserve a pan that is used only for making *prosforo* (in Greek: πρόσφορο).



First things...

According to our faith, the definition of HOLY is "set aside for God".

All the items and utensils we use for the preparation of prosphoro are 'set aside' to be used only for this holy purpose. We try to never use these utensils for general cooking or anything else. It is best if possible to store them in a separate container, to be brought out only when preparing prosphoro. This includes towels.

The traditional way people set about this work, is as follows:

Firstly, the kitchen is cleaned thoroughly.

We bathe and put on clean clothes, an apron and headscarf or covering before commencing.

All the while, from the beginning of the preparations, a mindful and prayerful attitude should prevail.

Once the utensils are set out ready to start, a candle is lit and incense is burned while [prayers](#) are recited or read out, or a recording of a prayer service is played. In monasteries, one of the monastics reads or chants prayers or psalms or the supplicatory canon to the Theotokos. Alternatively, the Jesus prayer is recited continuously.

"Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me"

Dough for prosphoro is very different to most bread doughs. It needs to have a much lower hydration, for better stamping and to lessen the development of large air cells.

Recipe:

5 cups Durum Wheat Flour

2 cups All purpose flour

4 tsp. salt

3 tsp. yeast

3 cups lukewarm water

Note: we never use oil or pan sprays when making Prosphora. Use melted bees wax to coat the pans only

Recipe using starter:

800 grams Durum Wheat flour

8 grams salt

400 mls lukewarm water

40-80 grams of starter made with all-purpose flour

<https://www.prosphoro.com>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zalvWaBei6M> (in Greek but good visual process)

PRAYERS FOR PREPARATION OF PROSPHORA

PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

O Lord our God, good and merciful, I acknowledge all my sins which I have committed everyday of my life, in thought, word and deed, in body and soul alike. I am heartily sorry that I have ever offended thee, O Lord: of thy mercy forgive me all my past transgressions and absolve me from them. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy Grace, to amend my way of life and to sin no more, that I may walk in the way of the name of righteousness and offer praise and glory in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

PRAYER BEFORE MAKING THE PROSPHORA:

Almighty God, our Help and Refuge, Fountain of Wisdom and Tower of Strength, who knows that I can do nothing without Your guidance and help: assist me, I pray Thee, and direct me to divine wisdom and power, that I may prepare this prosphora, faithfully and diligently, according to Thy will, so that it may be profitable to myself and others, and to the glory of Thy Holy Name. For thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

PRAYER AFTER THE BREAD IS BAKED:

Dear Lord, this bread that I have baked represents each one in my family and in my congregation. I am offering myself to You, my very life, in humble obedience and total commitment to You. I place myself on Your holy altar through this bread to be used by You in any way that You feel will help enlarge Your kingdom. Accept my gift and make me worthy to receive the greater gift that You will give me when You consecrate this bread and give it back to me as Your Precious Body. Amen.