

There are many books by leading Orthodox theologians and scholars on all aspects of the Orthodox Church and this leaflet series provides some basic information in the hope that it might prompt further enquiry.

**LEAFLETS IN THIS INTRODUCTION TO
ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY SERIES:**

ANGELS
BUILDINGS
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
CALENDAR
CHRISMATION
CHURCH AND STATE
DIVINE LITURGY
DYING, DEATH AND BEREAVEMENT
ECUMENICAL COUNCILS
ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH
ESPERINOS
FASTING
GLOSSARY
GREAT, HOLY WEEK AND PASCHA
HOLY ANOINTING
HOLY BAPTISM
HOLY COMMUNION
HOLY ICONS
HOLY MATRIMONY
HOLY ORDERS
HOLY SCRIPTURES
IN THE UK
"IT'S ALL GREEK TO ME!"
LITURGICAL YEAR
MONKS AND NUNS
MUSIC OF LITURGIES
ORTHROS
OTHER CHRISTIAN CONFESSIONS
PRAYER AND WORSHIP
RELIGIONS
REPENTANCE AND CONFESSION
SAINTS
SOCIAL MEDIA
SOME FOODS
VESTMENTS
WHEN WE COME TO CHURCH
WHAT'S HAPPENED TO OUR SUNDAYS?
WORLDWIDE FAMILY

All text in these leaflets is mine except where indicated, therefore any errors of fact or in grammar are mine. I should be grateful to have those errors pointed out so that corrections can be made.

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"The Orthodox Church.....has preserved unadulterated the first and most ancient ecclesiastical tradition and teaching, has avoided innovations and personal interpretations of the Holy Scriptures and dogmas of the faith, and is administered according to the ancient synodical system under local bishops in collaboration with the faithful and successive groups of both local and broader episcopal synods, of which the highest is the Ecumenical Synod, that of the Orthodox worldwide. The basic administrative canons, the details of which are regulated according to local needs, have been determined by the seven ecumenical synods. The Church is not managed by regional states in which it resides, although it collaborates in good works when asked to do so.

Within the entire Orthodox Church there is absolute cooperation in goodwill and mutual respect. Perchance minor human problems are addressed successfully through the application of the evangelical spirit."

*Bartholomew, Patriarch of Constantinople, from
"Encountering the Mystery."*

Orthodox Community of Archangel Michael
and Holy Piran, Cornwall.
www.orthodoxincornwall.org.uk

In the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain.
Exarchate of Western Europe and Ireland.
www.thyateira.org.uk

Ecumenical Patriarchate.
Οικουμενικόν Πατριαρχεῖον.
www.ec.org



Agia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) Constantinople.

Introduction to Orthodox Christianity: Some Foods.



This leaflet is not about foods and recipes of different cultures but rather some foods found in connection with Orthodox services and on particular dates in the year. The illustration above shows a prosphoron (plural prosphora), the leavened loaf or loaves baked by members of the congregation for used in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy - Eucharist.

The following are those found especially but not exclusively within the Greek tradition.

PROSPHORA

Offering.

"The Lamb of God is broken and distributed, broken yet not divided, ever eaten yet never consumed, but sanctifying those who partake."

These are the breads baked by members of the congregation to be prepared together with wine and water by the priest before the Divine Liturgy. The bread will have a seal impressed on it, the central portion of which – the Lamb – will be used for Holy Communion. The greater part of the remainder will become the **antidoron** ('instead of the gifts') to be distributed to all present after the close of the Liturgy. The loaves will be brought with names of living and departed to be prayed for along with others the priest has in his list for remembering at the Preparation. **Prospora** are plain leavened white loaves without any flavouring.

VASILOPITA

Saint Basil's Cakes.

"Hear who pray to you on this holy day upon our entrance into the New Year of your goodness and bless this loaf/cake"



The Blessing of **Vasilopita** – takes place on or near January 1st, the feast day of Saint Basil the Great (379), Archbishop of Caesaria in Cappadocia. Similar to a sponge or a yeasted glazed bread with spices, marked with the new year date and sometimes further decorated, they are brought by members of the congregation and blessed in prayer for the New Year. They are then cut and distributed to those present. A coin is hidden in the cake rather like the tradition with Christmas puddings.

BLESSING OF EGGS

At Holy Pascha (Easter).

"O Lord our God, who created the animals and birds to provide food for man, bless these eggs,"



At Holy Pascha the Blessing of **Eggs** – usually coloured red – is a feature. There are a number of suggestions as to the significance of blessing eggs at Pascha. Other traditional foods are served at this great Christian festival in the various Orthodox Churches.

BLESSING OF GRAPES

August 6th – feast of the Transfiguration.

"Bless, O Lord, this new crop of the fruit of the vine,"



The Blessing of **Grapes** on August 6th signifies the First Fruits of the harvest. Orthodoxy does not have "harvest festival" services such as those begun in the 19th century and found among many Protestants.

PHANOUIROPITA

Saint Phanourios Cake.



"A heavenly song of praise is brightly sung on earth....."

Saint **Phanourios** (feast day 27th August) Cake is known as "the cake for lost things." They can be brought to be blessed and prayers offered not only on the Saint's feast day but at any time of the year, being ideal for fast periods because it contains neither eggs nor butter.

ARTOKLASIA

"Breaking of bread"

"Lord, Jesus Christ, our God, who blessed the five loaves in the desert, and from them fed five thousand, bless these loaves also,"



The **Artoklasia** is a short service during which five loaves together with wheat, wine and oil are blessed. In thanksgiving at important family celebrations, saints days and festivals, this service may take place at Vespers, Matins or after Divine Liturgy. The loaves are similar in consistency to prospora but may be larger, glazed and with some flavouring. After blessing they are cut and distributed, usually by the family who brought them.

KOLIVA

".....bless these seeds, mixed with different fruits, and make holy those who partake of them....."



Koliva – a mix of boiled wheat, seeds, dried fruit and nuts – prepared for the memorial services for the departed. Usually a specially baked loaf of bread will also be brought, a bottle of wine suitable to use for the Divine Liturgy and a bottle of olive oil for lamps. After the memorial the koliva is mixed and given with a piece of the bread to those present. Koliva may also be brought in honour of and for the commemoration of a saint.