CHRISTOS RAZDAJETSJA!
SLAVITE JEHO!

CHRIST IS BORN
GLORIFY HIM!

Holy Supper is a traditional meat and dairy free meal served on the Eve of the Nativity of Our Lord (Christmas Eve). It is one of the most joyous occasions among the Byzantine Catholics, Slavic Ruthenians and other Eastern Europeans. Holy Supper is prepared on Christmas Eve at the end of the Philipovka Fast, which begins after the Feast of St. Philip, November 15. During this fast we are reminded to reflect and prepare ourselves spiritually for the celebration of the Nativity.

On Christmas Eve, family and friends gather to share a special meal. A strict fast is observed to remind us of the hardships and privations of Mary and Joseph before the Nativity. Historically, each region, village or family had its own variations in customs and foods served at the meal. As we gather together as a family, embrace the symbolism of each course and adjust the recipes and foods which your family will enjoy. Whether you are starting new Holy Supper traditions or continuing your family's traditions, preparing for the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord is an enriching celebration.

Holy Supper begins at twilight with the appearance of the first star in the sky, and everyone gathers around the table to honor the Holy Child. The table is covered with a white tablecloth, symbolic of the swaddling clothes of the baby Jesus. Hay or straw is placed on the table, under the tablecloth or on the floor as a reminder of the manger and the poverty of the place where Christ was born. A large round bread as the centerpiece symbolizes Christ as the bread of life. A white candle is placed in the center of the bread and recalls the star of Bethlehem which led men to worship the true Light of the World. An empty chair with a full place setting at the table reminds us that even though there was no place for Jesus, Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem's inn, we extend hospitality to all and welcome anyone who might come to the door. This empty place at the table is also a reminder of any family or friends who couldn't be with us this special night and is also symbolic of all who have left this earth but remain with us in spirit.

Christmas Eve Holy Supper generally consists of 12 different foods, symbolic of the 12 apostles. The meat and dairy free dishes are of great variety and abundance reminding us of the abundance of God's blessings and grace; meat and dairy free to express humility and poverty which surround the birth of Christ.

As everyone gathers at the table, prayers and hymns are sung. The first foods to be eaten are bread, garlic and salt as the symbol of sharing life with Jesus; He is the Bread of Life; honey is the symbol of God's blessings and the sweetness of life; garlic represents the bitterness of life. Dipping the garlic in the honey symbolizes that the bitterness is overcome by the blessings of God, just as the garlic becomes coated with honey. Following this bittersweet beginning, a variety of typical Slavic food is served. A hearty soup of sauerkraut and mushrooms may be the next course. The food served in the Slavic tradition, is generally what would have been available during the winter months. Dried peas are gently simmered and added to garnish the soup. Stewed dried fruits are served since fresh fruit would not have been available. Bobalki, which are small rounds of bread are coated in honey and poppy seeds. Today, we eat fresh white fish such as tilapia, but in Eastern Europe smoked or salted fish, carp, along with pickled or creamed herring would serve as the main course. Pierogis are the Eastern European version of ravioli most commonly filled with potatoes, cabbage, sauerkraut or prunes.

As American customs merged, many additional foods have been added or substituted to contribute to the 12 courses. Kutya, Cherry Soup, Fish Soup (Cioppino), Sour Cabbage Soup, Borscht, Meatless Stuffed Cabbage, other fresh vegetable and fruit dishes have become new traditions to the humble Slavic food. As you prepare your food to observe Holy Supper, reflect on the significance of the traditions and symbols each course represents with the knowledge that for centuries people have been partaking of the same variety and abundance of foods, prayers, and hymns.

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RECIPES

Kutya

2 cups wheat berries
1/2 cup honey
1/4 cup toasted sesame seeds
3/4 cup toasted walnuts
1/2 cup toasted sliced almonds
1/2 cup raisins
1/2 cup dried cranberries
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg

Simmer wheat berries, covered, in enough water to cover plus an inch until just tender, approximately two hours for hard berries. Drain for three hours to ensure dryness. Add the remaining ingredients; mix well and serve. Note: If softer berries are used, reduce cooking time accordingly.

Cold Sour (Tart) Cherry Soup
Serves 6

2 or 3 - 14.5 or 15 ounce cans sour (tart) cherries, drained, juices reserved
Water and drained cherry juice to make 3 cups liquid
1 cup sugar
1 teaspoon grated orange rind
1 cinnamon stick
4 cups drained canned sour (tart) cherries
1 tablespoon cornstarch

Optional:
1/4 cup heavy cream, chilled.
1/4 to 1 cup dry red wine, chilled.

In a 2-quart saucepan, combine cherry juice, water, sugar, orange rind, and cinnamon stick. Bring to a boil and add the cherries. Partially cover and simmer over low heat for 10 minutes. Remove the cinnamon stick. Mix the cornstarch and 2 tablespoons of cold water into a paste; then beat into the cherry soup. Stirring constantly, bring the soup almost to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer about 2 minutes, or until clear and slightly thickened. May be served hot or cold. Depending on fasting, heavy cream and wine can be stirred in before serving.

Holy Supper Matching Game:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KoWBh3elhfVnWeYZq89Br98JaOdEAQwQA7FZuBy0gD8/edit

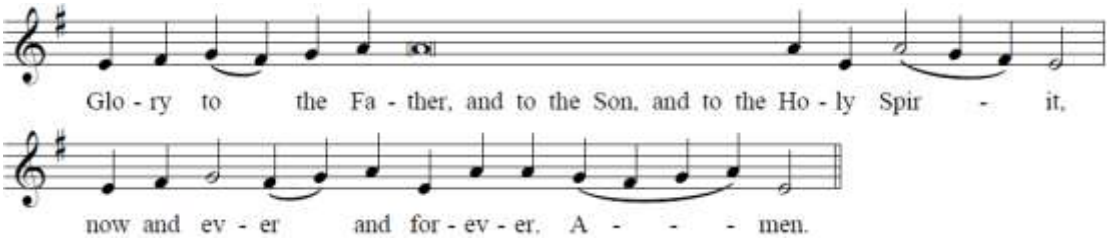
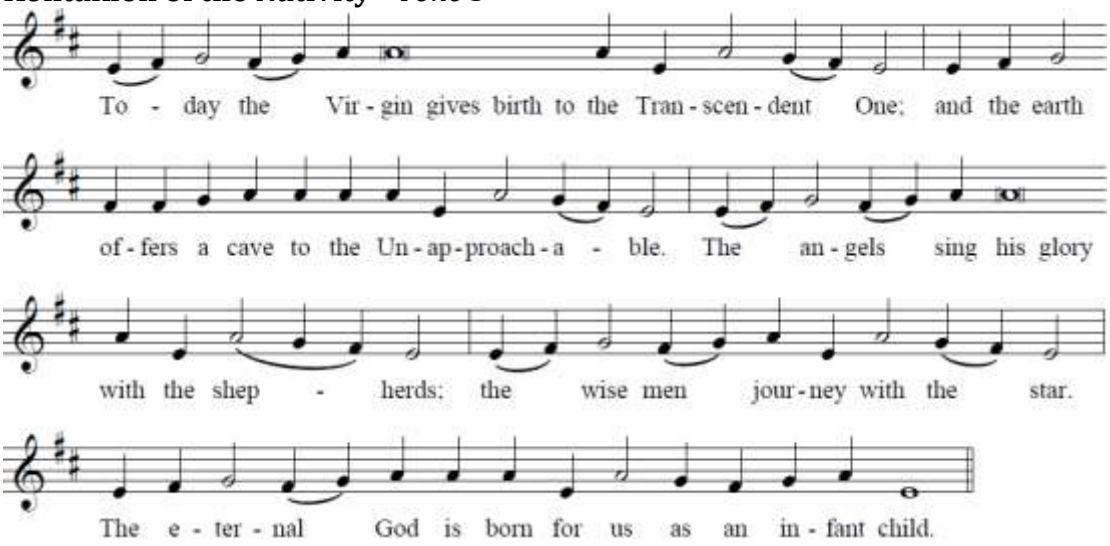
Additional recipe ideas:
https://www.thespruceeats.com/ukrainian-christmas-eve-recipes-1137471

https://www.thespruceeats.com/russian-christmas-eve-recipes-1135522

http://orthodoxtraditions.blogspot.com/2013/12/russian-christmas-eve-supper-holy-supper.html

Troparion of the Nativity - *Tone 4*

Cantor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