

# Greek Easter bread ties in with religious rites

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On Holy Saturday (Easter eve) the Book of Acts is read at a simulated grave of Our Lord. The churches are packed with the faithful. At midnight, the lights are lowered and the priest enters with a flickering candle.

The light of love and hope is passed from one faithful to another, illuminating the entire church. The light of love signifies the end of the fasting as the priest offers red eggs — the color symbolizing the blood of Christ, the egg itself symbolizing the Resurrection.

The lighted candles are taken home, guarded from the wind to help celebrate the breaking of the fast, and then a traditional Greek Easter feast is served.

Many churches celebrate the feast immediately following the services. Bowls of mayerlissa, a dill-flavored soup made of the entrails of lamb, begin the dinner. This special soup signifies the need for man to prepare his stomach for the feast after 40 days of fasting.

Traditional recipes use lamb that has never eaten off the earth, solely fed on milk. Then come platters filled with roast lamb, spinach pie, feta cheese, olives, salad, baklava and the traditional Easter bread.

**THE BREAD** is braided and then baked with red colored eggs. When it is served and passed, each person breaks off a chunk of the bread containing an egg. It is tradition to have family and friends tap the tip of each other's eggs, exchanging the traditional verse "Xristos Anesti!" — "Christ Has Risen."

John Logas, the owner of the Hellenic Bakery and Grocery, bakes some 1,000 loaves of bread daily. He also stocks a wide variety of specialty Greek items, including Greek wines.

It's a trip back to the old country observing him scoop out imported olives and feta cheese into containers while offering youngsters anise-flavored crispy cookies.

Logas said he will bake almost 2,000 loaves of the specialty Easter bread with the traditional red eggs for this holiday, in addition to fresh roasted lamb and specialty Greek desserts.

Hellenic Bakery is at 33308 Seven Mile, just east of Farmington Road in Livonia. Toula Patsalis and her husband, Chris, owners of Kitchen Glamour Inc., with locations in Redford, West Bloomfield and Rochester, are active members in the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral just off Greentown behind St. Mary's. There are numerous suburban Greek Orthodox churches but St. Mary's and Annunciation are two of the oldest in the area.

Of course, what would a stop in this famed Greek neighborhood be

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without an ouzo at the New Hellas Restaurant, or a view of some authentic Greek entertainment at the Bouzouki, both within walking distance?

HERE'S A recipe from Toula Patsalis for the traditional Greek Easter bread, complete with red eggs. If you plan to bake the bread with the colored eggs, make sure the eggs are hard-boiled and cooled before inserting them in the dough to be baked. Failure to do this could cause an egg-spllosion in your oven.

## AUTHENTIC GREEK EASTER BREAD

- 1 cup milk (heated to about 110 degrees F)
- 1 stick butter (½ cup)
- 2 packages dry active yeast
- ½ cup sugar
- 3 large eggs, slightly beaten
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 4 tablespoons orange juice
- 2 tablespoons grated orange zest
- 2 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 ½ teaspoons salt
- 2 cups high gluten flour
- ¼ teaspoon Mahelli (available at Greek grocery, optional)
- 4 uncooked red colored eggs

### Making the sponge:

In a large bowl pour warm milk, 1 ½ cup all-purpose flour, sugar and yeast. Mix and allow to stand covered until it begins to bubble, about 20 minutes.

Using a heavy duty mixer, pour sponge into the bowl and start machine. Add three large eggs slowly and mix until well incorporated. Add another cup of all-purpose flour and salt and beat until well mixed. Add orange rind, orange juice and vanilla. Mix until well incorporated.

Begin adding high gluten flour, ½ cup at a time, and mix until almost all the flour has been incorporated. Dough should be firm yet sticky enough to barely stick to your hand. Do not make it too dry or stiff.

Add butter, a little at a time until well mixed. Knead the dough by machine for three to four minutes or by hand for 10 minutes. Add Mahelli, if desired. Mix well.

### Making the bread:

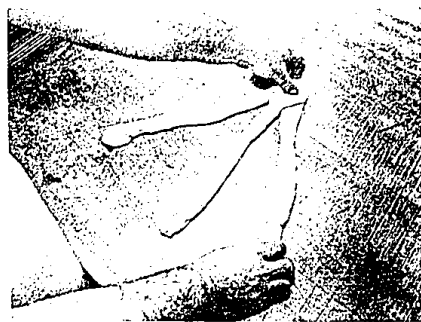
Place the dough into a large glass or ceramic bowl that has been oiled or buttered. Lay the dough into the bowl, slide it around, then turn upside down. This will completely grease the top and sides of the dough. Cover the dough with a warm, damp towel and allow it to sit



First step in braiding the Easter bread is to roll out three individual strips of dough. Second step is to fasten the strips together.



Step three is to braid the joined sections, overlapping them. Finally, here's how the finished braid looks.



STEVE FECHT/staff photographer

undisturbed for one hour.

Punch the dough down, releasing all the air, and divide into three equal parts. Roll each part into a long rope about 24 inches long. Braid the rope together. Pinch the ends so they are sealed. Lay on a long cooking sheet covered with baking parchment paper, cover and allow to set until doubled in bulk, about one hour.

Gently lay the four red eggs in the braided bread, heavy side down, points up. Bake at 375 degrees for 15 minutes. Then, brush with glaze.

Glaze:

- 1 egg, beaten
- 2 tablespoons water
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 tablespoon sesame seed

Mix egg with water and sugar. Mix well. Brush over entire surface of bread and around the sides. Sprinkle with sesame seed. Place bread back in the 375-degree oven for 10 minutes. Place a sheet of foil over bread. Continue baking 15 minutes, then remove.

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