

Blessing the celebrant's table

descends from the blessing of bread from the vigil. Blessing is done by a priest or, if there isn't a priest, by the head of the family or a respectable guest. The entire guests rise, put off their hats, the host incense the candle, icon, himself and the guests, and then all of them say a prayer. Only the host says a prayer aloud while the others whisper. When they finish the prayer, they bow at the icon and to each other, and then sit, while the food starts to come to the table.

Making or drinking a toast is the most festive part of the slava. In some places, this ritual is done at the same time with bread cutting, and in some it is not. The host and the guests drink wine saying prayers and making toasts. During making a toast, all present are bareheaded and the doors are closed. The bread, candle, wheat, host, members of the household and all guests are incensed. "Dolibaša" – a special guest who takes care that everyone has a full glass of wine says a prayer with the glass of wine in his right hand, he crosses, takes a sip of wine and salutes to the person to his right side and hands the glass to him. The latter crosses, salutes to the host, take a sip and pass the glass to the host. The host does the same and passes the glass to the man standing across, and the ritual continues until all take their turn. Then all take little amount of wheat and perform the glass ceremony and the ritual continues with prayers and other toasts. The content of the toasts is different, but they all can be divided into two types: ones are prayers to God and the patron saint, and the others express good luck and prosperity wishes to the host, members of the household, family, neighbors, godparents and friends.

Cutting or breaking the bread is

the most common in Serbian people. It varies from region to region, but everywhere it is custom that bread is cut during dinner time on saint's day eve. A priest first incenses the celebrant's house, makes holy water and sprinkles all people in the house, and then sings TROPARION and KON-TAKION to the saint and says a prayer above "koljivo". He takes the bread, turns it upside down and cuts in the shape of cross and three times pour wine on it. The priest and host start turning the bread around while singing songs (Slava Tebje Hriste Bože ...).
** After that they break the bread into two pieces, then put it together on the lower side so that they don't face each other, they both kiss each other and salute to each other saying "Hristos posredje nas i Jest i budet".***

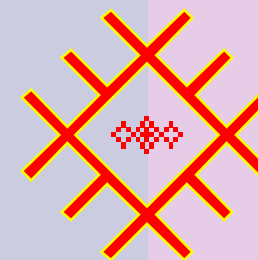
The priest holds the bread in his left hand, pours wine on it again and prays to God to bless the year with prosperity, and then again both kiss the bread and each other and the priest raises the bread above his forehead saying „Veličaj Bože domaćina i njegov dom na mnogaja ljeta“**** The same ritual can be performed without a priest and in that case the bread is cut by the most prominent guest, and it is broke by four people in the shape of cross into four pieces.

All these rituals are performed at the table where the head of the table faces east, so that "dolibaša" who sits at the head is turned east and the rest of the guests left and right around the table. The responsibility of the host is to arrange the seats for the guests and to decide who "dolibaša" will be and who will break the bread. Slava used to last for three or even seven days, and there was supposed to be enough food and drink during all days.

** Praise Thee O God

*** Christ is among us, he is and will be

**** God praise the host and his home for many years



KOZARA ETHNO

Krsna slava

In the Serbian tradition it is a celebration of a family's patron saint, it is celebrated annually on the patron saint's feast day.

Piskavica

Banja Luka

Krsna slava

“Krsna Slava” is an ancient folk custom of the celebration to the honor of one’s own patron saint. He has often been personified as an ancestor whose friendly ghost was keeping the house safe from evil spirits and helped family in their everyday life. All Slavs and even Indo-Europeans (Thracians, Greeks, Dacians, Illyrians, and Romans) have kept this custom until recently, but today it exists only among Serbian people. After they had accepted Christianity, the churches wanted to eradicate the polytheistic beliefs and practices, but the first Serbian Archbishop Sava, with the reforms of St. Sava church in 13th century, entrusted the clergy with keeping the beliefs and practices by assigning them Christian attributes. With introduction of some Christian and monotheistic elements into polytheistic beliefs and practices, as well as merging of several related customs into one, there occurred some differences in celebration of pre-Christian customs, therefore in “Krsna Slava” as well. Old Serbian Church accepted “Krsna Slava” as a commemoration of ancestors and in this sense it made the oldest prayer for blessing of slava cake and wheat. Thanks to that, the customs and ceremonies of “Krsna Slava” managed to remain and they are best preserved by Serbian people.

Each Serbian home has its own “Krsna Slava” dedicated to its patron saint that is celebrated. Slava is inherited by generations, i.e. from the ancestors through the male line. After father deceases, brothers continue to celebrate their patron saint’s day together, and after they separate each of them do it individually. It is a custom when “Krsna Slava” is celebrated that there is abundance of drinks and good and tasty food in a household, so that the guest are hosted in a best possible way. There wasn’t a possibility for a host to anticipate the exact number of guests, since the guests were not invited to

Slava. It is known that cousins, godfathers and friends will come, but also some unpredictable passers-by as well, and on that day, the household is open for everyone who comes. For the guests in “Krsna Slava” that is during fasting, such are e.g. St. Nicholas – on December 19th and St. Ignatius – on January 2nd, prepared food was meatless, and for the guests of Slava of St. Archdeacon Steven – on January 9th, St. John the Baptist – on January 20th, St. George – on May 6th and other, the prepared food was with meat.

The most important ceremonial items

Before the “Krsna Slava” starts, the celebrant has to prepare all the necessary: holy water, Slava bread, “koljivo” (boiled wheat), wine, candle, incense and oil.

Holy water is blessed by the priest in the celebrant’s home on the saint’s day eve, in order to cleanse the home and banish evil from it. The Slava cake is made with that water, and the head of the family and all the members of the household are sprinkled with the basil sprig dipped into holy water.

Slava cake is made of pure wheat flour with yeast and it is mixed with holy water. It is the responsibility of the wife and she is trying to decorate it as well as possible. The cake is a typical bread sacrifice that descends from pre-Christian times. It is a sacrifice expressing the gratitude to the deity.

Koljivo is wheat boiled on the “Krsna Slava’s” eve. The purest white wheat is used and some nuts, almonds, fruit, sugar and honey are mixed in it as well. The wheat is cleansed with burning incense and sprinkled with wine and all members of a household should take a little of it for luck. Wheat is a pagan sacrifice, older than cake and it is related to the cult of deceased ancestors and home protectors.

Wine is the one of the main symbols in Christianity. Wine has been the most important part of sacrificing dating from pre-Christian times. During the ceremony, a small amount of wine is poured to the ground, which symbolizes the sacrifice to the underworld gods and deceased ancestors.

Candle is an item that “Krsna Slava” can’t be celebrated without. The ones made of beeswax are more pleasant (bee – a holy and blesses animal). The candle should be lighted by the head of the family during cake cutting and raising it in honor. The wine should be poured on it to put it out. The candle is a substitute for a fire during sacrificing. It is a symbol of home fireplace and sunlight. United with the fire, it cleanses all impurities and dispels the darkness and evil spirits.

Incense is used for cleansing during the ceremony and cutting the cake. Cleansing with incense is inherited from pre-Christianity and its smoke banishes evil demons.

Celebrants keep icons in their homes. They should be painted in accordance with strict canons.

How “Krsna Slava” is celebrated

Slava is a religious holiday that has been celebrated since 13th century – the reforms of the St. Sava Church. It is celebrated in accordance with rules and the one who celebrates it that way receives the help from the patron saint. Slava shouldn’t be changed unless a family experiences a tragedy – mostly the death of a child. In that case the wife makes several cakes where each one is intended for a particular saint, and depending on which cake the only child chooses, that one is taken to be a saint’s day of the family.

There are three types of celebration rituals and today all of them have church attributes:

- Blessing of the celebrant’s table,
- Making or drinking a toast,
- Cutting or breaking the cake.