

Trifon Zarezan (St. Trifon the Pruner)

The Bulgarian holiday of vine-growers and wine-makers Trifon Zarezan is so popular that it is celebrated both in accordance with the old and the new holiday calendar, i.e. at present it is celebrated on February 1st, but many people prefer to repeat it on February 14.



The festivities on the Day of Trifon Zarezan mark the dividing line between the ending winter and the nearing spring. The transition between the two seasons stirs the most fierce conflict in the annual natural cycle - it is the transition between the dead winter season and the invigorating powers of the following seasons. This period rituals are performed to strengthen and ensure a triumph of vitality and fruitfulness. Women knead special round loaves - a symbol of the fertile field, and generously hand them out to neighbours and relatives. The men go to the fruit-trees which did not bear fruit in the winter and threaten them, ritually, they will hew them off. Then another participant in the ritual promises that in the next spring the trees will once again be fruitful and so, they should be spared. The man in the home picks up 3 live coals from the hearth which symbolise the invigorating power of the fire and the sun. Looking at the coals, people try to foretell which crops will yield the most abundant harvest in the new season.

The most triumphant for the natural forces ritual is called Trifon Zarezan because all vine-growers perform the first pruning of the vineyards. In this, the men are accompanied by the women, the young and the kids. They all go together to their piece of land to show their respect to it and inspire it for a new life with the first agricultural ritual during the new year- with festive songs and dances, with a ritual table laid among the vineyards. The first pruned vine sticks will be wreathed into a crown for the best vine-grower in the village. He will be proclaimed the "Vine King" of the year. The men carry the vine king on their hands or are harnessed in the cart and drive him around. Everyone wants to be blessed by him and treat him with their wine. The more wine is poured on that day, the more generous the next harvest will be.

He is most popular as Trifon Zarezan or Trifon the Pruner because it is on his day that the pruning starts and it is one of the most important jobs to do. Even the icons present St. Zarezan a pruning shear in hand showing that he is honoured as a patron of vine-yards and they are one of the main symbols of fertility in the Bulgarian folklore culture.



St. Valentine's day

Originally, St. Valentine's Day hadn't been celebrated in the Czech Republic and many Czech people have regarded St. Valentine's Day as a "foreign" product. A lot of Czech people prefer to celebrate 1st May – so-called time of love. It does not matter if the people celebrate love holiday in February or in May, but most of us do not know exactly who St. Valentine actually was.

Valentine was a bishop in the city of Terni, Southern Italian city, during the reign of Emperor Claudius, during this period Christians were persecuted a lot. Courageous Valentine preached the gospel to the squares and streets and he invited people to come to him. All young couples who visited him, got a small flowers from his monastic garden. He wanted to make them happy. Once he strongly advised to all men to stay with their women and children, instead, to go voluntarily to the war. Therefore he was brought before the Emperor and in the year 269 Valentine was executed.

In year 2002 Czech restorers were surprised by their discover of the remains of (specifically scoop) St. Valentine in Prague. So-called autentika, a sort of sign which says that founded remains are really remains of St. Valentine, was also found. Allegedly it was brought by Czech King Charles IV. In the Czech Republic the lovers may worship the remains. Annually, on 14th February we can see the remains in the Basilica of St. Peter and Paul Vyšehrad charter house in Prague.

An old saying says that the girl will marry a man who she will see first in the morning on 14th February. So, when a boy had fell in love with a girl, he was waiting until the morning light under the windows of her house, so that she saw him first.

ITALIY

Valentine's Day in Italy

Romantic Festival of Valentine's Day is celebrated with enthusiasm in the beautiful country of Italy. Lovers take opportunity of the day to express love and affection for their beloved. Loads of Valentine's Day gifts are exchanged and everyone enjoys the day to the hilt.

History of Valentine's Day in Italy

Valentine's Day was initially celebrated as a Spring Festival in Italy. Celebration for the day was held in the open air. Young people would gather in tree arbors or ornamental gardens and enjoy listening to music and reading of poetry. Later they would stroll off with their Valentine into

February 14th

the gardens. The custom steadily ceased over the course of years and has not been celebrated for centuries.

Early Valentine's Day Tradition in Italy

In the Italian City of Turin, betrothed couple used to announce their engagement on the Valentine's Day. Several days ahead of February 14, stores were decorated and loaded with a huge variety of bon-bon. Some even sold china baskets and cups filled with delectable Valentine's Day candies and tied with a ribbon. These were to be presented as gifts to Valentine.

Another interesting Valentine's Day tradition followed in Italy and Britain made unmarried girls to wake up before sunrise. People strongly believed that the first man an unmarried girl sees on Valentine's Day, or someone who looks like him would marry her within a year. Girls therefore used to wake up early on Valentine's Day and stand by their window to watch a man pass.

Valentine's Day Celebration in Italy

People of Italy see Valentine's Day as a holiday imported from US, just like Halloween and Mother's Day. For the love and lovers country of Italy, the major day for celebration of love is **il giorno della festa degli innamorati**. As lovers' exclusively celebrate this day family members and friends do not exchange gifts.

In recent times however, lovers in Italy celebrate Valentine's Day by expressing their love to sweethearts. Couples usually go out for dinners at pizzeria or ristorante. Just as in several other countries, the festival has been commercialized to a great extent. There is a strong tradition to exchange gifts like rose, perfume, chocolates and diamonds depending on the age and taste of person. Another popular Valentine's Day gift in Italy is Baci Perugina - a small, chocolate-covered hazelnuts containing a small slip of paper with a romantic poetic quote in four languages.



SPAIN

Saint Valentines' Day

Saint Valentine's day, on the 14th February, is a tradition by which, lovers, couples, brides and grooms tell each other their love. In some countries it is known as the "lovers' day" in others, as "the day of love and friendship"

On this day, many things may be given as a present: a model heart, some red roses, some jewel.....