

Bulgarian Easter

Get ready to have fun – Bulgarians love this holiday probably more than they love Christmas, and it's a national pride together with Martenitsa and Bulgarian alphabet, from painting the eggs, eating delicious food, Easter salad, and eggs battles on Holy Sunday!

Easter has all the components to have a great time, a mix of Christian and pagan rituals, delicious thematic food, and four days off at the beginning of the spring. Easter in Bulgaria is usually during a different time than the rest of the world. This year 2020, the celebration begins on the 17th of April and ends on the 20th of April, the difference in the dates with most of the other Christian countries is that Bulgaria celebrates Easter according to the Julian calendar instead of the Gregorian calendar.

Easter eggs are dyed on Maundy (Holy) Thursday or Holy Saturday. The first red egg dyed on Holy Thursday is a symbol of health and good fortune for the family and is set aside to be kept until next Easter. The egg is a symbol of rebirth, adopted by early Christians as a symbol of the resurrection of Jesus at Easter. Then when the family gathers together, starts the all-important “egg Tapping” or choukane s yaitsa takes place. Opponents smash their eggs into each other. The person with the egg left unbroken is proclaimed the winner or borak. The winning egg is kept until next Easter and is a sign of good luck. This is a medieval tradition, egg tapping was practiced in Europe. The practice was mentioned to have played an important part in the 14th century in the Easter festival.



Good Friday is the anniversary of the Crucifixion and the day when a table is set up in churches representing Christ's coffin the faithful climb underneath in the hopes of having a year full of health and fertility.



Holy Saturday services begin at 11 p.m. Families and friends attend church together, carrying their colored eggs with them. When the clock strikes midnight, they greet each other with the words Hristos Vozkrese (Christ has risen). The response is Voistina Vozkrese (Indeed, He has risen). The priest and the faithful then walk around the church three times with lit candles in hand. The belief is that the candle of anyone who has been a good Christian will not go out no matter how strong the wind blows.

On Easter Sunday, after 46 days of fast and abstinence, a feast of all the prohibited food is spread on the table, with the kozunak (a delicious sweet bread), symbolizing the body of Christ, taking center stage. Lamb, representing the Paschal Lamb, is always served.

