

Customs and traditions in Georgia which are essential for celebrating Easter.

Fast prior to Easter

Those Georgians who are religious fast for 40 days prior to the holiday, and for almost two months they don't eat meat, dairy, fish, or eggs.

Grow Easter grass

Locals start to grow Easter grass one week before Easter Sunday, i.e. on Palm Sunday. Grass is another essential attribute to the Georgian Easter table – jejili – newly grown grass, which is a symbol of new life and renewal.



For jejili, any crockery of any shape and size can be used. More often, simple plates are used. You should put a 4-5-centimetre-thick cotton wool layer on a plate, moisten it with warm water and put a 1 centimeter thick wheat seed layer over it. The plate should be put in a warm and bright place. Don't forget to water it in the morning and evening so as not to let the cotton wool dry out.

That's all. Fresh green wheat grass will grow in a week in your home, after which Easter eggs can be put in the grass and placed on a table.

Christians believe that green grass symbolizes the new life Christ gave us with his resurrection.

Dye eggs red

Red Friday is the day when every household dyes eggs red before the sunset. Madder roots (Endro in Georgian) or red onion peels are the main ingredients and boiling them produces a red color. However, sometimes if the peels or roots are not of good quality, the eggs turn out a different color than blood red. It's believed that eggs symbolize the rebirth of Christ and eternal life.

Endro roots are thoroughly washed and then crushed or finely chopped (You can buy endro in powder form, though some people are rather suspicious of it). Then, the roots are placed in a pot with water, several onion peels and salt, and simmered for 20 minutes.

Then it should be removed from the heat and allowed to cool. Only after this,



should the eggs be placed inside.

Do not put more than 20 eggs in if you are using a big pot, as the eggs will break. Boil the eggs on medium heat for 20-25 minutes, then carefully take the eggs out, let them cool down a little bit and place them in cold water so that the shell can be easily removed later.

One more thing to keep in mind – do not boil the eggs in your favorite pot – it will get stained. Good housewives usually keep a separate pot for this tradition.

Crack the eggs

Cracking those red-colored eggs is another custom with which Georgians start the day. We choose some of the strongest eggs from the batch by slightly rapping it on their teeth. Those eggs that make a clear sound tend to be the strongest. Each member of the household chooses their strongest egg and starts to crack it by tapping both sides of eggs on each other. Whoever has the fewest broken eggs is the winner.

Buy or Bake Easter Cake – Paska

The requirements are tough. Cakes which are too dry, not heavy enough, has a bad flavor or do not have enough raisins simply do not make the cut.



So, what does a good paska actually look like, and how could you distinguish it from a bad one by a single glance? If it is light and airy like a bun, then immediately apologize to the seller and leave. Even small children in Georgia know that real paska should be heavy and damp, yellowish-orange and under no circumstances be bright white! However, the appearance is only half the battle won.

Paska should have enough fat, moderate sweetness and most importantly a very unique flavor. The flavors of nutmeg, saffron, cloves, cinnamon and other spices are delicately mixed with each other in a good paska. Everything depends on the skills of the baker. Then, why so much hysteria, you ask? Can't you just go and bake paska at home?

Sure you can. Moreover, nothing is better than home-baked cakes. However, making it is not for the faint of heart – you will need a few days vacation, hard work, skill and good nerves. If you have all of these, you can bake Easter cakes.

Attend a church ceremony

The most significant part of the celebration is the miraculous appearance of the Holy Fire in Jerusalem a day before Easter Sunday. Thus, religious Georgians go to church in the evening to participate in the celebratory service and ritual called Litonioba. We pray, listen to the Catholicos-Patriarch and wait for the delegation to bring the Holy Fire. The whole process lasts until the early morning.

Congratulate everyone

On Easter Sunday, before Georgians say “hello” to each other, it is customary to say “Christ has Risen!” The response “Indeed He has Risen!” is then given before continuing the conversation.

The main tradition – visiting cemeteries

On the second day of Easter – on Monday, it is tradition in Georgia to visit the cemetery, remember the deceased, as well as roll the red Easter eggs on a grave. Easter cakes, eggs and wine are necessary for visiting a gravesite. There are those who lay tables with traditional Georgian dishes and drinks at the gravesite, and even invite guests there.