

Let the wine flow as the Danube flows

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Today we celebrate Trifon Zarezan – the Day of Vine Growers and Wine. For centuries, on 14 February in all parts of Bulgaria, the vineyards are pruned and special festive tables are prepared in honor of the saint. All vine growers, innkeepers and gardeners celebrate.

In mid-February is the calendar period when we bid farewell to winter and welcome spring and the revival of life. We also associate this period with the feast of Trifon Zarezan – a wonderful custom connected with the first farming activities carried out on the vines and dedicated to Saint Trifon, the patron of vine growers and winemakers. Growing grapes and making wine is not only a centuries-old tradition on Bulgarian soil, but also an art devoted to the love for this agricultural crop.

Tradition dictates

On this day, women must bake fresh bread, decorated with dough figures in the shape of a vine leaf or a bunch of grapes, and cook a hen stuffed with rice or bulgur. With appetizers in their bags and robust wine in their flasks, young and old alike set off for the vineyards to carry out pruning with the vine knife, which has been previously cleaned and well sharpened. Interesting is also the practice with the vine shoots which, together with the pruning, the pouring of wine and the blessings, are an important attribute of the feast. They are usually left in the vineyard so that the „abundance does not depart“ from it. In Northern Bulgaria, in the villages along the Danube, the shoots are thrown into the river so that the wine may flow as the Danube flows. One of the shoots is always woven into a wreath, which is placed on the cap, around the waist or over the shoulder. The „crown“ of the Vine-Growers' King is also made from vine shoots.

After the pruning ritual, the vines are sprinkled and those present treat each other with the wine they have brought. With wreaths of vine twigs and songs on their lips, they return to their homes and continue to rejoice in the feast.

The full ritual with which Trifon Zarezan is celebrated is observed only in the regions where viticulture is developed. Nevertheless, the custom has become a traditional February feast, eagerly awaited by all, in order to enjoy the good wine and to look forward to a healthy agricultural year.

Trifon Zarezan is also the day on which we wish for a good harvest during the year, fertility, and we bless the vineyards with: "Let there be abundance! May it overflow over the thresholds!"