

Dimitrovden – International Day of Mavrud and Beginning of the Winter Months

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Date: 26.10.2023 *Issue:* 10/2023



Nearly 100 years ago, on Dimitrovden, when most winemakers take the wine out of the pomace, the master of Stanimaška Malaga, Aristii Chorbadzhakov – Chorbadzhaka, would begin the grape harvest. His precision in caring for the vineyards and his craftsmanship in winemaking are to this day an example of quality and dedication to the craft. That is why Dimitrovden, 26 October, was chosen to be the feast of Bulgarian wine and the International Day of Mavrud. In the folk calendar, Dimitrovden also marks the beginning of the winter and colder months. It is time for red wine, shared with family and friends.

According to folk beliefs, winter begins on Dimitrovden; a folk saying goes: “Georgi brings summer, Dimitar – winter.” According to legend, St. Dimitar is the patron of winter and cold and is the elder brother of St. George.

He rides a red horse, and from his long white beard fall the first snowflakes – “When Dimitar comes, the snow comes too.” On Dimitrovden, the ploughs are put away in a dry place, the firewood for the winter is stacked, and the first snowfalls are expected. Also characteristic are the three days after Dimitrovden, the so-called Mouse Days.

In the Balkan Mountain regions, they observe that if the moon is full on the eve of the feast, the bees will swarm and the beehives will be full of honey, and the sheepfolds will be full of lambs.

According to old custom, on a name day one visits without being invited and brings white flowers for the celebrant so that the winter will be mild. The flowers are wrapped with a scarlet thread so that the name day celebrants will be healthy. On Dimitrovden, a kurban or stew of mutton and chicken ragout is prepared for the festive table – from a rooster if the celebrant is a man, and from a hen if it is a woman. Vegetables are served as well. Boiled corn, fruit leather, an apple pie or baked apples, grape must jam, and pumpkin are also placed on the table.

Happy Name Day to: Dimitar, Dimislava, Dimitrina, Dimitria, Demetra, Demira, Demba, Dima, Dimka, Dimo, Dimana, Mitko, Mitra, Mitka, Mitrana, Mita, Diyan/a, Dian/a, Deyan/a, Drago.