

# If the weather is cloudy on Ignazhden, the harvest will be good and there will be abundance in the beehives

*Author(s):* Растителна защита

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One of the much-loved winter holidays in the folk calendar is Ignazhden (Idinazhden, Idinak, Young Year, Young Day, New Day – in Eastern Bulgaria; Ignat and Ignatovden – in Western and Southern Bulgaria), which symbolizes the transition between the old and the new year. The ritual practices of the holiday suggest a beginning, and the feast is associated with a pre-Christian myth about the birth of the new Sun, the Young God, and with the day of the winter solstice (22 December).

According to folk beliefs, the weather during the following 12 days of the month – from 20 to 31 December – shows the weather during the 12 months of the coming year. 20 December determines what the weather will be like in January.

### **Rituals in the different regions of Bulgaria**

On the evening before Ignazhden in Eastern Bulgaria, the first Christmas Eve dinner is held; the table is entirely meatless. Meatless dishes are prepared, raw wheat or millet, whole walnuts, onions, pickles. A round loaf or flatbread is baked from fresh dough without decoration, and a candle is stuck into it or into the wheat. The table is censed with incense, and wishes for fertility are made at the dinner. People believe in the protective power of the ash from the censing, the unburnt candle, the wheat and the walnuts, and they are kept and used later for rituals. In Western Bulgaria special ritual breads are prepared, and small ring-shaped breads are made for the children. In the Sofia region the first Ignazhden kolak is kept for Christmas Eve. In Southwestern Bulgaria, on the eve of Ignazhden, a “koladnik” is lit in the hearth – a specially cut pear or oak log, which must burn until Epiphany (Yordanovden). In the Rhodope region, the day is observed for protection against fire.

The most characteristic custom of the holiday is “polyazvane”, which has also given rise to some of the names of the feast – Polyaz, Polyazovden. From the person who first enters the house on Ignazhden, people foretell what the next year will be like. The first to come into the home is called “poleznik” (spolyaznik, spohodnyak, poožnyak, polaznik). If he has a good “polez” – is a good person, lucky or well-off – then the year will be good, healthy and fruitful for the family.

### **Folk beliefs associated with the holiday**

- If the weather is clear on Ignazhden, there will be drought in April.
- If it rains, there will be rains and fertility in April.
- It is good if it snows on Ignazhden, as well as at Christmas.
- If the weather is cloudy on Ignazhden, the harvest will be good and the beehives will be abundant.
- The weather during the following 12 days of the month – from 20 to 31 December – shows the weather during the 12 months of the coming year. 20 December determines what the weather will be like in January.
- Nothing should be taken out of the house – especially fire, embers or salt – so that the abundance does not leave.
- Beans must not be cooked, so that hail does not strike.

- Beehives must not be moved, otherwise the bees will flee.
- Nothing should be lent out, in order to preserve the fertility in the family.

## **Name day celebrants**

Today celebrate Ignat, Ignata and their derivatives: Ignatiy, Igno, Ignyo, Igo, Igon, Iga, Ina, Inna, Ignatka, Igne, Iskra, Iskren, Ignasiya, Ignasio, Agna, Ognyan, Ogn yana, Plamen, Plamena.