



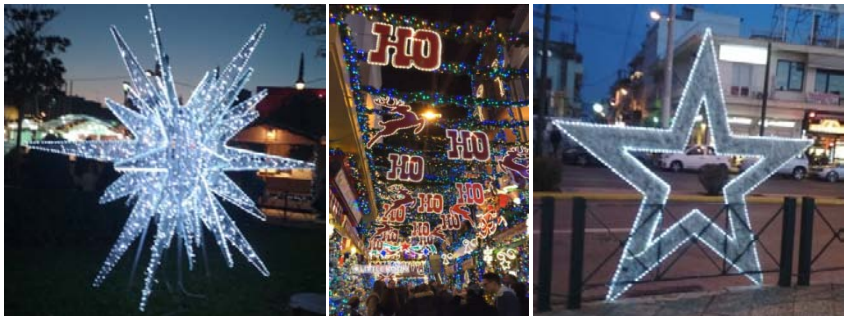
***Erasmus+ Project (KA229),  
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„Change your lifestyle!“***



**CHRISTMAS ACTIVITY  
December 2019**

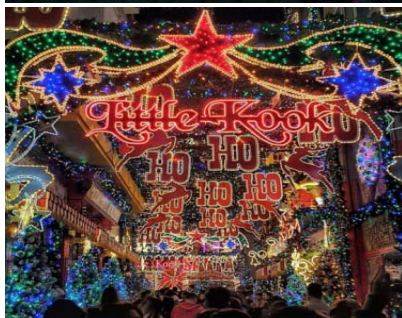
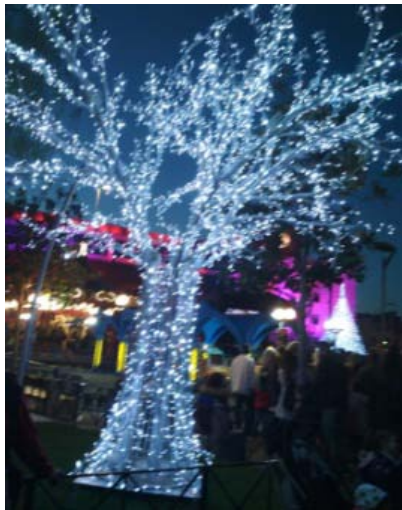
## **Greek Christmas traditions**

Christmas Customs in Greece are many, as this holiday is vividly celebrated. Most of these customs and traditions date from the early Christian times or they are even continuations of ancient Greek customs. For pupils the Christmas festivity starts on 24<sup>st</sup> of December and lasts until 7<sup>th</sup> of January. A walk in the towns and villages of Greece during Christmas will bring you to decorated squares, streets, shops and houses.



## **Christmas tree**

The Christmas tree is a foreign custom for Greece and it was brought by Otto, the first king of the country, who was of Bavarian origin. Over the years, the Christmas tree was integrated into the local culture and now the Greeks decorate fir trees in their homes and in squares of mountainous towns.



In school teachers and pupils also decorate classrooms with Christmas creations!☺



Further, smaller classes prepare theatrical plays on Christmas, while the school choir sings Christmas Carols.



## **Christmas boat or... sailing to Christmas!**

During the Festive Season all around Greece you will find Christmas boats (karavakia) decorated with lights and ornaments, which are very traditional and symbolic. The Karavaki symbolises sailing towards the new life that follows the birth of Jesus Christ, it's a similar meaning with the symbol of the Christmas star. Being a maritime nation, Greece has a long naval heritage and the illuminated boat also symbolises a love and respect for the sea, as well as the anticipation of reuniting with seafaring relatives and welcoming loved ones home. This custom survives today in seaside towns and islands, where people decorate Christmas boats in the central squares.



## Nativity Scenes



The Feast of the Nativity of Jesus is one of the most joyful days of the Greek Orthodox Church. The Greek twelve days of Christmas begins at Christmas and continues until January 6th, which is known as the Feast of Epiphany.



Natural cave



Made from kourabiedes (cookies)



Woodcut



## Hobgoblins

According to the Greek folk tradition, from Christmas Day until the Epiphany Day, hobgoblins that live underground come up to the Earth to tease and play pranks with people. These hobgoblins (*kallikantzari* in Greek) are little monsters with bandy legs and arms, hunched backs, large ears, strange eyes and all kinds of deformities. All over the year, the hobgoblins live under the ground and saw the tree of the year. Around Christmas, when their sawing is nearly done, they go up to the world. On Epiphany Day, the village priest goes from house to house around the village and sprinkles with blessed water the rooms of the houses so that the hobgoblins return underground.



## Pomegranate



Since ancient times, the pomegranate has been the symbol of good fortune, youth, and fertility. In many Greek villages, on New Year's Day, the householder stands outside the front door and breaks a pomegranate hitting it hard on the floor so that the seeds spread everywhere and bring happiness, good health, and abundance to the members of the family.



## Carols

On Christmas and New Year's Eve, children in groups go from one house door to the other to sing the carols. Every region has different Christmas carols but everywhere the lyrics are joyful and wish luck and prosperity to the family members. When signing, children usually hold little metal triangles and drums. Clicking on the links below you can watch:

- ★ Pupils from the 5th class singing “Vive le vent”, under the guidance of our English teacher Angeliki (eTwinning Project “**Shakespeare on Stage**”):

<https://vimeo.com/378602588>

- ★ Pupils from the 6th class singing and dancing traditional Greek Carols from different regions, under the guidance of our PE teacher Maria (Erasmus+ Project “**Changing your lifestyle!**”).

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/y7vchc6mv0le83a/kalanta-14-12-19.mp4?dl=0>



## **Epiphany**

People in Greece also celebrate Epiphany on the 6th January. In the Greek Orthodox Church, Epiphany celebrates Jesus's baptism when he was a man. It's also known as 'The Blessing of the Waters'. There are many events throughout the country where young men dive into really cold lakes, rivers and the sea to try to be first to get a cross which has been blessed by a priest and thrown into the water. Whoever gets the cross first is meant to have good luck during the coming year. Epiphany festivals also include blessings of boats & ships, music, dancing and lots of food.



## Typical meals and cookies

The main Christmas meal is often lamb or pork, roasted in an oven or over an open spit. It's often served with a spinach and cheese pie and various salads and vegetables.

A traditional table decoration are loaves of '**Christopsomo**' (**Christ's Bread or Christmas bread**). It's a round sweet bread which is flavored with cinnamon, orange and cloves. The top is decorated with a cross. The bread is made on Christmas Eve ready to be eaten on Christmas Day.



On New Year's Eve families share wishes for the new year. **St Basil's Cake** is prepared for the dinner of New Year's Eve. Some families in the villages cut the cake after lunch on January 1st, but most families cut it right after the coming of the New Year at midnight. This cake, called *vasilopita* in Greek, is dedicated to Saint Basil, who is the Santa Claus in the Greek tradition and brings the gifts to children that first night of the year.

Traditionally St Basil's Cake has a golden coin inside. The person who finds this coin in his piece is considered lucky for all the coming year. After midnight on New Year's Eve, the family and friends gather around the table and the householder or housewife starts cutting the pieces. The first piece is for Christ, the second for the Virgin Mary, the third for the house and then the householder cuts pieces for the members of the table by order of age. In the villages of mainland Greece, the householder cuts a piece for the livestock and the fields of the family, if they have any. In the islands, they cut a piece for the boat or the mill, if they own one.

## **Melomakarona, kourabiedes and other sweets**

Other traditional Christmas sweets are melomakarona, kourabiedes, and diples. Melomakarona has their roots in the Byzantine times, while kourabiedes have an Ottoman origin. These two are the most characteristic sweets of Christmas that all housewives prepare. Diples are also prepared in various regions.

### **GREEK CHRISTMAS HONEY COOKIES – MELOMAKARONA**



*These amazingly aromatic little cakes are a traditional Greek Christmas sweet called "**Melomakarona**". Your house will be filled with aromas of orange, honey, cinnamon, and cloves.*

### **What about the name?**

**Melomakarona** seem to be derived from a very ancient, Greek custom. Makaria (also the name of the goddess of blessed death, variously described as a daughter of Hercules or of Hades), was the meal, the dinner of the dead, served after a funeral in ancient Greece. Small oval breads, perhaps the forerunners of melomakarona and shaped like them, were also eaten then. As you may surmise, "**makaron**", whose root means a doughy substance, found its way to a much more common food, **macaroni or pasta**, too. Nowadays, with the prefix "melo" meaning "honey", these biscuits, which are often dipped in honey syrup, have lost all connotation of mourning and sadness and rightfully claim their place at the festive table. These cookies by any other names would taste as sweet, but maybe knowing more about their origins will add to the pleasure of that first bite.

## THE RECIPE

### Ingredients

#### For the syrup

- 500 g water
- 800 g granulated sugar
- 150 g honey
- 3 sticks cinnamon
- 3 cloves
- 1 orange, cut in half



#### 1st mixture

- 400 g orange juice
- 400 g seed oil
- 180 g olive oil
- 50 g icing sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon cloves
- 2-3 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- zest of 2 oranges



#### 2nd mixture

- 1 kilo all-purpose flour
- 200 g semolina, fine

#### To serve

- honey
- walnuts

## **Method**

### **For the syrup**

- Boil all of the ingredients for the syrup, apart from honey, until sugar melts.
- Remove from heat.
- Add the honey and mix till combined.
- Let syrup cool for 3-4 hours. It must be cold by the time the cookies come out from the oven.
- You can prepare the syrup from the day before...



### **For the cookies**

- Preheat the oven to 190\* C Fan.
- To make the cookies, you need to prepare 2 separate mixtures.
- For the first mixture, add all of the ingredients in a large bowl. Mix, using a hand whisk.
- In a separate bowl, add all of the ingredients for the second mixture.
- Combine the first and second mixture. Mix by hand, very gently and for a very short time (10 seconds at the most). If you mix longer the mixture will split or curdle.
- Mold cookie dough into oval shapes, 3-4 cm in length, about 30 g each. Try to keep them as similar as possible.
- Bake for about 20-25 minutes, until they are crunchy and dark golden brown.
- As soon as you remove them from the oven, soak the hot cookies in the syrup for 10 seconds.
- Allow them to drain on a wire rack.
- Drizzle with honey and chopped walnuts.

*Each bite is so deliciously Christmassy...*

**EN...JOY!!**

## GREEK ALMOND SNOW BALLS – KOURABIEDES



*This is a delicious, melt in your mouth, traditional Greek sweet called “Kourabiedes”. Sweet and crumbly, with crunchy toasted almonds.*

### What about the name?

This sweet is found all over the Middle East and the Balkans. Thought to originate from Tabriz, Iran. Some sources say that Gurabiah as they are called in Arabic, comes from the word “gharib”, which means “to miss or yearn for”, or even “to swoon,” so that they are often heart-shaped and referred to as “Lovers’ shortbread.” Others say that the Turkish “kurabiye” comes from two words meaning “dry” and “biscuit.” One thing all versions have in common is that they are offered as favours during weddings and christenings and served at holidays.

**Kourabiedes from Greece are on the list of the world’s 10 best biscuits** the Insider magazine wrote.

These crunchy “bites” own their special taste to almond but whoever tastes them has a “difficult time” because of the plenty amount of icing sugar they are covered off!!!

### THE RECIPE

#### Ingredients

- 900 g all-purpose flour
- 500 g sheep butter
- 220 g icing sugar
- 2 sticks vanilla powder
- 1 teaspoon bitter almond liqueur
- 200 g almond slivers, blanched slivered, toasted
- 1 teaspoon rosewater

## To serve

- 300 g icing sugar
- 1 tablespoon rosewater

## Method

- Remove the butter from the refrigerator about 2-3 hours before using, so that it can soften at room temperature.
- Preheat the oven to 180\* C Fan.
- In the mixer using the whisk attachment, beat the butter for 5-6 minutes on high speed until it turns white.
- Add the icing sugar and vanilla. Continue beating for another 5-7 min. As soon as the sugar is added, the volume of the butter may lessen but it will rise again. It will be ready when it looks like whipped cream.
- Remove the mixing bowl and add the flour in batches. Gently fold in with a spatula and then add the almonds. The mixture should be soft but not that soft that it will stick to your hands.
- Mold into balls the size of walnuts about 25 g. Place them in rows, on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Make a small indentation on top of every little ball of dough with your finger. This way it will it can hold on to more icing sugar.
- Bake for 20-25 minutes, until they turn light golden.
- Remove from oven. Carefully move them from the baking sheet and place them on to a wire rack to cool.
- When cool, spray them with some rose water.
- Put some icing sugar in a sieve and dust.



*They look so Christmassy!!*

**SO ... LET IT SNOW!!**



More Christmas recipes here: <https://akispetretzikis.com/en>



The 3rd Primary School of Dionysos wishes you:



Mutlu yıllar!

An nou fericit!

Feliz año nuevo!

Srečno novo leto!

Καλή πρωτοχρονιά!

