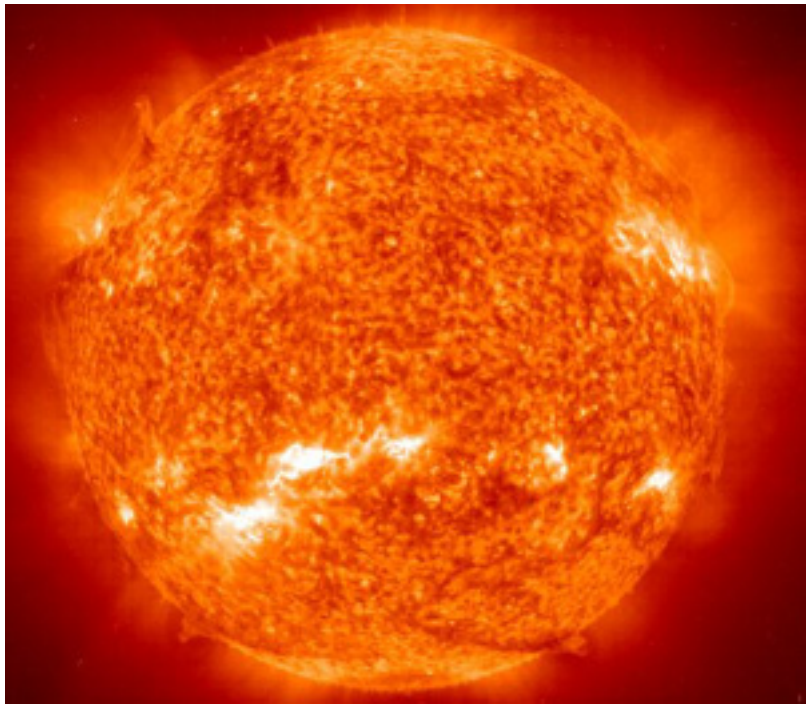
Winter holydays in Bulgaria

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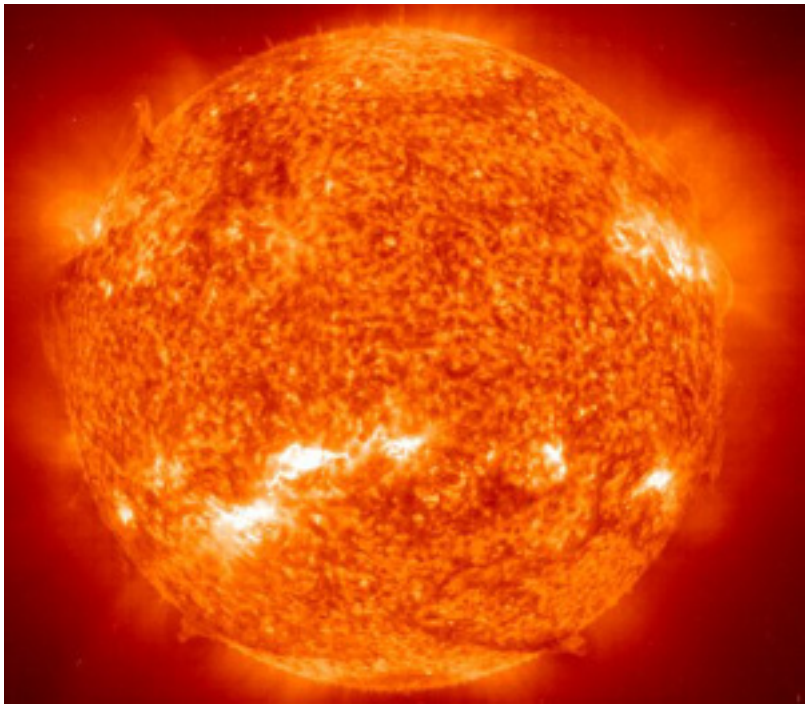
VIDIN

Like most ancient people our slav ancestors divided the year according to the movement of the Sun and the Moon.





The Sun which gives light and warmth and influences nature and man in a crucial way served for measuring time.



Bulgarian people consider winter as lasting from Dimitrovden to Gergyovden and spring from Gergyovden to Dimitrovden.

Nikulden:





Nikulden is one of the greatest winter holidays which is definitely family – cetered.

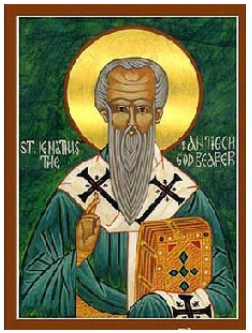
It is on 6th December and is an Orthodox celebration of Saint Nikola – the patron of sailors, travellers

and bakers

Different kinds of fish dishes are served on the festive table but the most traditional of all is a stuffed carp



Ignazden



On 20th December we celebrate Ignazden. It is a winter holiday preceding Christmas.

The days from Ignazden to Christmas are known as “Machnici”(Labour Days). The name is connected with the days of labour pains of the God Mother. The superstition goes that women shouldn’t work during these days.

Ignazden is also called “Polazvane” because it is believed that the good or bad character of the first guest to enter the house that day determines how good or bad

the next year will be. That day honours the memory of Saint Ignatij.

Christmas Eve:

Christmas Eve is on 24th December and is one of the most important family holidays. It is dedicated to the home and the fireside and in some parts of Bulgaria is also known as the “Small Christmas”.



Christmas Eve:

The tradition has it that before the festive table is laid on Christmas Eve, the householder should said a special log called “Badnik” on fire and should say special wishes while doing that: “The more sparks in the fire, the more chickens, lambs and calves in this home”.



Christmas Eve:

Only meatless dishes are served on the festive table that day and their number has to be no less than 7, 9 or 12. A small round bread(called “pitka”) is also prepared with a coin hidden in it which will bring luck to the one who is the first to find it.





Christmas Eve:

The special dishes are left on the festive table the whole night not to scare luck away. It is believed that when the whole family falls asleep, its deceased mambers come to have dinner.





Christmas Eve:

At midnigth on Christmas Eve Christ is born and carol-singers will come to every house. Traditionally the carol-singers are young lads who are old enough to be married. They are led by the so-called “Stanenik”.



Christmas Eve:

Dressed in their best clothes, covered up with a special cloak called “jamurluk”, with fur caps on their heads decorated with box-tree braces, popcorn on red strings, dried plums and figs the carol-singers visit every house in the village. Their leader (the stanenik) pronounces blessings on the family and the house, then the whole band sings songs for each family member. The householders give a lot of presants to the Christmas band – special ritual breads(called “kolaci”), small change, meat, bacon, flour, beans, onion, wine and walnuts.

Christmas Day

In the morning, after the Carollers had already visited all the houses, people gather and go on a divine service. After that they play typical ring dances which have ritual character and symbolize long life.





The Christmas dinner is richer than the Christmas Eve dinner because there you can find meat. The most typical kind of meat is the pork. There is also a cake with a coin. It is believed that if you have the coin in your slice the luck will be with you the whole year. With that coin the person has to go to church A[illegible] BUY A

CANDLE







There is a superstition which says that at night on Christmas you can see the sky "opened" and if you wish for something at that moment there is no doubt you will have it.



New Year:



The New Year is welcomed and celebrated on 31st December. Decorated cornel-tree sticks called “survaknici” are prepared for the children.

New Year:



The housewife makes the traditional “banica” (cheese pasty) with cornel-tree buds and a coin in it. At midnight the oldest member of the family spins round the banica and everyone gets a share of it with a bud or the coin as special lucks.







New Year:

The first of January is celebrated as the first day of the new year. The most important custom is “survakaneto” and that is why that day is called “Survaki”.





New Year:

The children visit all houses with their survaknici and say special wishes and blessings- “May this house be full of children, may your purse be full of money, may your shed be full of cattle”.



Vasiliovden:

The first of January is also a Religious Holiday: Saint Vasilii the Great and that is why the day is known as Vasiliovden.

On that day a special custom called “Laduvane”(rings dipping) is performed. The rings of the maids are dipped into a white copper filled with the so-called “malchana voda” – it means water which the maids have fetched from a spring or a river without saying a word. Then the copper is covered with a red cloth and is left in the garden during the night before Vasiliovden.

On the first of January a little girl takes out the rings singing blessings for happiness and marriage.



Jordanovden:



Jordanovden also called Bogoiavlenie is another holiday connected with the well-known belief that the previous night “the sky opens” and whatever you wish will come true.

It is on 6th January and a special water dedication ceremony is performed

After the church service the priest throws the cross in the river and it is taken out by young lads. It is believed that the first one to do that will be happy and healthy. He goes round the village with the cross and everyone give him presents.

There is superstition that if the cross freezes, the year will be healthy and fertile

Ivanovden:

7th January.

That holiday is dedicated to John the Baptist.

In Bulgaria the customs on Ivanovden are connected with the power of the sanctified water.

It is celebrated on 7th January and everyone turn their eyes to the future wishing good health, fertility and happiness.

Babinden:

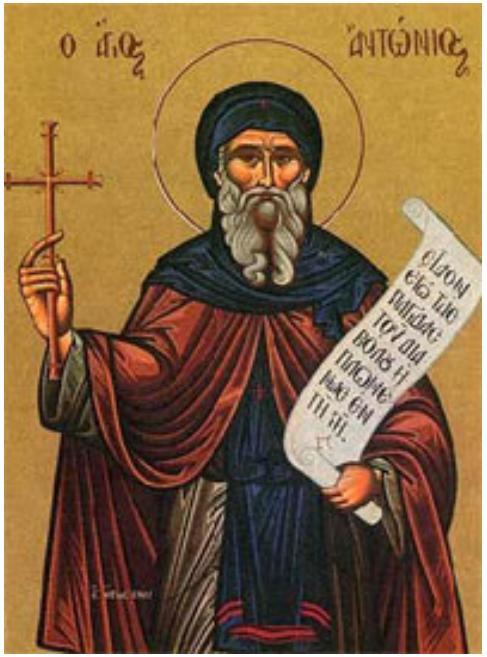
In the Bulgarian customs calendar the after Ivanovden is dedicated to the “babata”(the granny who is the village midwife), the children and the young mothers.

“Babinden” is celebrated on 8th January and “babata” has to visit all houses where there is a new born baby, give the babies a bath and wash and spread some honey and butter on the faces of the older kids.



Antonovden:

The Orthodox Church also honors the memory of the Reverend Antonii the Great and 17th January is known as Antonovden. It is celebrated as a way of protection against diseases. Special small round soda breads are given away to relatives and neighbours with wishing for good health.

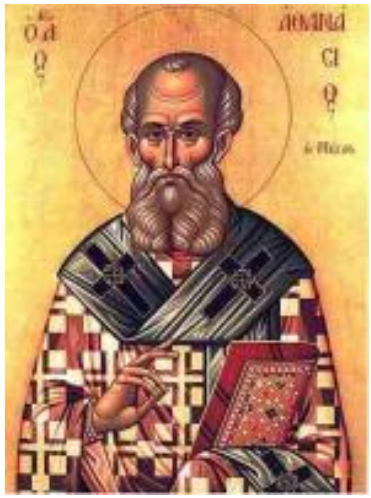


Atanasovden:

Church honors the memory of Saint Atanasii and Cyril Alexandriisky but in the folk believes Saint Atanasii is presented as the Master of snow and ice.

The holiday is celebrated on 18th January when it is believed that Saint Atanasii, dressed in a silk shirt, goes to the mountain on his white horse and calls out: “Go away, winter. Come here Summer”. That is why the holiday is also known as

“Sredi zima”(Midwinter).



Trifon Zarezan:

Saint Trifon is considered the guardian of vineyards and his memory is honored on 1st February. The day is known as “Trifon Zarezan” and is famous for its ritual cutting of vineyards which reminds of the coming spring and the beginning of agricultural work.



Baba Marta:

The first of March is the day when, as the ancient Bulgarian custom demands, we welcome symbolically spring and “Baba Marta”(Granny Marta) who visits peoples and crops dressed in a red tunic called “sukman”, with a red head cloth (zabradka) and a res woolen socks.

Baba Marta:

The white wool in the typically Bulgarian “martenica” promises long life and the red one- health and strength. Martenica is carried in the end of winter when life forces are running low.



Traditional Bulgarian martenica.

Baba Marta:

The tradition goes that you have to carry your “martenica” until you see a swallow, a stork or a blossoming fruit tree where you have to hang it.