

## New Year Traditions

# Armenian New Year

The ancient Armenians had been celebrating the coming of the New Year on the 21st of March. That date is not only the first day of spring, but also the birthday of the mythical god Vahagn, in whom believed the pagan Armenians about 10 thousand years ago. On this day the Armenians prepared huge feasts to welcome and celebrate the sweet season of spring.

During the 18th Century, January 1st was accepted as a beginning of the New Year. In spite of this change, Armenians in many regions of the country, like Sunik, Artzah and Udik, continued to celebrate New Year on March 21st. Gradually at the end of the 20th century all Armenians adopted the January 1<sup>st</sup> as the official first day of the New Year.

In Armenia it was a custom that on New Year's Eve, children gathered in-groups and went around their village, singing songs and greeting the New Year by singing to their neighbors. They usually received lots of fruits and nuts as presents. Decorating a New Year's tree was not one of the customs in the past.

Within the family, it was a custom for the family members to exchange presents. A wife, however, never received a present from her husband, as this was considered a disgrace. Children in the family, the youngest ones following the elderly, would go to their father, who had the presents hidden in his coat. After kissing their father's hand, everyone would receive their presents.

The traditional New Year's meal would consist of various dried fruits, raisins, and different kinds of nuts, all of which would have been previously prepared. But the pastries, cakes and "Harisa" would be prepared on the 30th of December.

The most important among the pastries was the "Darin", which was representative of welcoming the New Year. Darin is a big flat bread which has a coin hidden in it. Armenian women would bake "Darin" for their families. The bread is kneaded with luck and good wishes, all of which is pressed into the dough before it is baked. The person who found the piece with the coin in it was considered the "lucky" member of the family for the New Year.

Furthermore, New Years could not be celebrated without "Kata", which is made of wheat flour, butter, milk and sugar, as well as "Anoush Abur," which is a sweet soup made of wheat, kernels and dried fruits.

Finally, the most remarkable meal is the "Dolma", which is prepared with rice and grape leaves.

