

How to Prepare a Traditional Pascha Basket



In many Orthodox countries, it is the custom to bring foods in a basket to be blessed at Pascha. The foods traditionally brought in the basket have special significance, but many people will add the foods they've missed the most during the Fast. The basket is usually covered with a white cloth embroidered with the words, "Christ is Risen." It is also customary to have a blessed candle in it to light at the Blessing, which takes place at church following the Resurrection services.

At St Philip's, it is our custom for parishioners to prepare a table in the Great Room on Holy Saturday where we place our baskets in preparation for the Blessing and our Paschal Meal together following the services. If there are visitors, please invite them to join you.

What goes into the Pascha basket?



SWEET BREAD—Called Kulich or Paska by some, many "old country" traditions and recipes exist. This is a sweet yeast bread, rich in eggs, butter, milk, etc., sometimes with raisins, and perhaps baked with a red egg or decorated with Christian symbols. The Pascha bread is symbolic of Christ Himself, who is our Living Bread, and who has come down from heaven to give eternal life in the Eucharist. Just as bread is the "staff of life," Christ is our spiritual nourishment for eternal life.



EGGS—Hardboiled & decorated, eggs are always considered a symbol of the resurrection, the emergence of new life. At Pascha, our Savior came forth from the tomb as a chick breaks forth from its shell.



BUTTER—Traditionally shaped in the form of a lamb (can be just a stick), butter represents the Lamb of God who was offered on the altar of the cross for the life of the world.



MEATS—Lamb, Ham, Sausage, Veal, etc. A portion of any or all of these meats are put in the basket. The meat products symbolize the sacrificial animals of the Old Testament, foreshadowing the true sacrifice of our Savior, who became for us "the Lamb of God, taking away the sins of the world." As we learn from the prayer of blessing, the meat products also symbolize the fattened calf prepared for the Prodigal Son on his return to his Heavenly Father. Thus at Pascha we celebrate our return to God and our joyous participation in the blessings of our Savior, who promised to be our "true food."

SALT—Salt is necessary for flavor, and reminds the Christian of his duty to others. As salt preserves food, we are to be as salt in the world.



HORSERADISH—In some traditions mixed with grated red beets, this is symbolic of the Passion of Christ still in our minds, but sweetened with sugar because of the Resurrection. A bitter-sweet red mixture reminds us of the sufferings of Christ.



CHEESE—A custard-type cheese shaped into a ball having a rather bland but sweet taste indicative of the moderation that Christians should have in all things. Also, creamed cheese is placed in a small dish and decorated with Christian symbols.

SPECIAL ITEMS—Chocolate, candy, wine, and other food items extend the joy of the Resurrection. The Church takes ordinary food and blesses it as an aid in making us holy. God's blessing changes us from children of natural descent into sons and daughters of the Kingdom of God.

