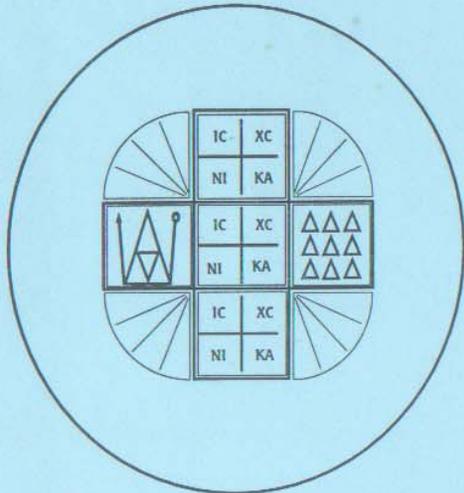


THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN TRADITION OF THE PROSFORA

The Orthodox Christian of the Prosfora is an ancient tradition passed down from the first century. The Prosfora is a special bread that is baked and offered to the Church. This special bread is used in the preparation of the Holy Communion, the Eucharist, the "bread of life".

The word PROSFORA is derived from the Greek word "prosero" (pronounced pros-FE-ro) which means "I offer". The bread is a labor of love that we bake and offer to the Church so that it can be used in the Divine Liturgy and become the Body and Blood of Christ.



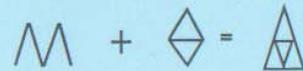
In the ancient tradition of making bread in general, a portion of the previous uncooked batch was kept and put aside in order to ferment the next batch. In today's practice, most people use yeast to add to the flour and water in making the prosfora.

The diagram shows what a prosfora looks like from the top view. Just before the dough is placed into the oven to bake, it is imprinted with a special seal. This seal is imprinted on every prosfora offered to the church for the Divine Liturgy.

The symbols that make up the special seal on the prosfora symbolize the Lord, His holy Mother, and all the saints. The symbol of the cross is seen all over the seal as the cross is the central symbol of the Orthodox Christian Faith. The center square is called the LAMB, and it is cut out of the prosfora in order to be used as the Body of Christ during the Divine Liturgy. The image of Christ as a lamb is prominent throughout the New Testament, and it parallels with the sacrificial lamb offered to God from the Old Testament practice of blood and burnt offerings.

The lettering on the top of the LAMB represents the abbreviations for JESUS (IC), CHRIST (XC), CONQUERS (NIKA).

On the right side of the LAMB is a group of triangles that are actually two Greek letters superimposed on top of one another - M and Θ.



The "M" is the first letter in the Greek word for "Mother" (Μητηρ), and the Θ is the first letter in the Greek word for "of God" (Θεου). The symbol overall represents Mary the Virgin Mother of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ who sits at His right hand in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy.

The nine triangles to the left of the LAMB represent the nine orders of the saints who are commemorated at the Divine Liturgy

The first triangle is in remembrance of Archangels Michael and Gabriel and all the orders of the bodiless heavenly powers: Cherubim, Seraphim, Thrones, Dominion, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Angels, and Archangels.

The second triangle is in remembrance of Saint John the Prophet and Forerunner of our Lord, as well as all the Prophets and Prophetesses.

The third triangle is for all the Disciples and Apostles of our Lord and those who are equal-to-the-apostles.

The fourth triangle is for the holy fathers among the saints such as Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Basil the great, and Saint Gregory the theologian.

The fifth triangle is for the great-martyrs: Saint George the trophy-bearer, Saint Demetrios the exuder of myrrh, and all the martyrs

The sixth triangle is for the holy women martyrs: Saint Katherine the all-wise, Saint Barbara, Saint Anastasia, ... and many others.

The seventh triangle is for the men and women enlightened through ascetic struggle, such as Saint Anthony the great, Saint Efthymios, Saint Mary of Egypt, and others.

The eighth triangle is for the holy unmercenaries, such as Saints Kosmas and Damian, and many others.

The ninth triangle is for the hierarch whose liturgy we celebrate, for instance, Saint John Chrysostom or Saint Basil the great.

The triangles remind us of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The saints represented in the prosfora lived their lives in accordance with God's will and glorified God with their life and with their death. It is fitting therefore that the symbol of the triangle representing the Holy Trinity, be used in commemorating all the orders of the saints.

It is customary to offer the prosfora to the Church along with a list of names of family members for the priest to remember in prayer. One list is for the health, salvation, visitation of those family members who are living. Another list, with a cross on top, is prepared with the names of those who have "fallen asleep in the Lord".

GENERAL RECIPE FOR PROSFORA:

The recipe for making the Prosfora is very simple. It is good to remember that this offering of bread to the Church will become the very Body and Blood of Christ, and will become a part of the Eucharist given to the faithful. It is important to be clean mentally, physically, and spiritually before we begin. Spend some time in prayer and meditation in advance. Make sure that the countertop and all utensils are clean and free from any and all cooking odors. It is a good idea to light some incense and keep an icon and a vigil lamp near the place where you will make the prosfora.

After having prepared yourself and the area where the bread will be made, it is time to gather all ingredients and utensils. The prosfora is made from flour, water, and yeast. There is no need to add any other ingredients to this recipe. (In place of yeast, some people keep a small amount of uncooked dough from the previous batch). This recipe will include the use of dry yeast.

INGREDIENTS:

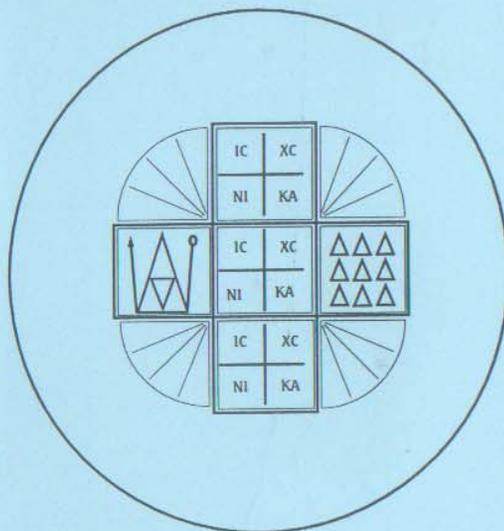
3-4 cups of flour
1 packet of dry yeast
About 2 cups of hot water

In a large bowl, add the yeast to the hot water and stir. Add a few tablespoons of flour to the dissolved yeast to help it become active. As the yeast activates it will create a froth. Once the yeast has been activated, add the remaining flour. Using your hands, mix the flour, water, and yeast until a doughball begins to form. If the doughball is too dry, add a little more warm water. If the doughball is too moist (sticky), add more flour until the dough does not stick to your hands.

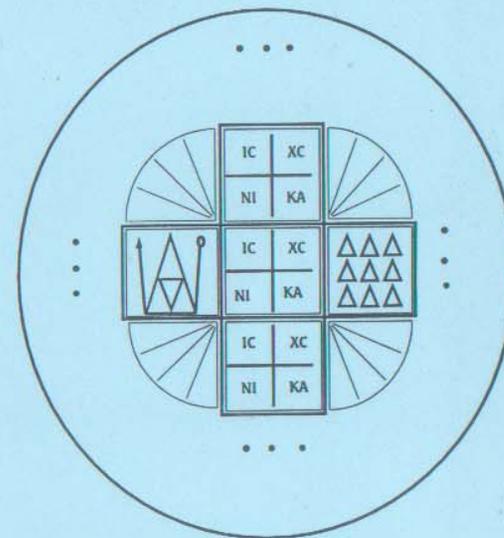
Take the dough out of the bowl, and knead for about ten minutes on the clean countertop. When you are certain that all the ingredients are mixed

well and the dough is smooth, return it to the bowl and cover it for about an hour. The dough should rise and double its size. The room should be warm but not drafty while the dough rises.

When the dough has doubled its size, take it out of the bowl and knead it for a few minutes to work some of the air out of it. Work the dough into a smooth ball. Place a little flour in a 9" round cooking pan, and place the dough ball into the pan. Flatten the dough out so that it almost touches the edges of the pan. Spread a little flour on the top of the dough, and then place the seal on the top of the dough. Press down hard! Lift the seal off the dough slowly. Take a poker and poke holes into all the corners of the seal. This will prevent an air bubble from forming under the seal. Poke a few extra holes around the seal as shown in the diagram. Cover the pan, and let the dough rise again for about an hour. After the dough is risen, pre-heat your oven for 350-375 degrees. Place the pan in the middle of the oven and bake for about 45-60 minutes, until the bread is golden brown. Remove from the oven. Remove the bread from the pan and allow to cool.



THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN TRADITION OF THE PROSFORA



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