

PROSPHORO

Prosporo (meaning "offering" in Greek) is the altar bread which is leavened and prepared with pure wheat flour to be used for the Eucharist. It is round and stamped on the top with a special seal (*sphragis* or *Panagiari*). It is made in two layers (which are connected) symbolizing the two natures of Christ (Human and Divine) and the Church Triumphant



(Heaven) and the Church Militant (we here on Earth). The inscribed parts of the top are used for the Eucharist, and the rest of it is cut into small pieces to be distributed - either to be consumed by the priest and the family who baked the Prosporo or distributed to the faithful, Antidoron (meaning "Instead of gifts" in Greek). It is offered immediately after one partakes of communion and should be the first piece of food that touches our mouths after the Sacrament. Often the prosporo makers give the bread in dedication or remembrance of an event or activity, such as family health, the anniversary of a loved one's death, or a celebration of a birth or Church event. This form should be included with your Prosporo offering. The method of making prosporo is an ancient one, and is done with prayer and dedication.

The Prosporo Seal



The center of the seal has the letters ICXC and NIKA which stand for "Jesus Christ Conquers." This section of the bread will be removed by the priest and changed into the Body of Christ during the Divine Liturgy. This section of the bread is called the "Lamb of God."

The left section of the seal (large triangle) represents the Virgin Mary.

The right section featuring the nine small triangles commemorate the angels, prophets, apostles and saints of the church.

During a service prior to the liturgy, the priest breaks the bread and the seal and prays for those represented by the seal: the Theotokos, the prophets, angels, etc. The priest also prays for all the living and the dead who have been submitted to him.

Baking with a Prayer

Preparing the prosporo for Divine Liturgy is the ancient and meaningful Orthodox Church tradition. It is a great privilege and requires a blessing from the priest.

By reflecting on the bread's use, the baking of it becomes a prayerful and solemn undertaking. Needless to say, before one begins the baking process, prayers are in order. After the bread has been baked, the prayer may be said by the family. During the baking of the bread there should also be present in the kitchen an icon and lit candle or votive lamp.

RECIPE

Ingredients

1 teaspoon Salt
2 ¼ teaspoon Active Dry Yeast
2 ¾ cups warm Water (divided)
7 cups Bread Flour (all white flour)
2 – 9" round pans (with at least a 2 inch rim to ensure that the bread is at least 3-4 inches high after baking)



Directions

1. **Prayer before, during and after baking.**
2. Dissolve yeast in glass bowl, using ¾ cup warm Water (do not stir), for 10 minutes
3. Cut Parchment Paper to fit pans or lightly flour bottom
4. Mix 7 cups Flour and 1 teaspoon Salt together in large glass bowl. Make a “well” in flour mixture for yeast and 2 cups warm Water. Mix thorough
5. Knead till dough is not sticky adding small amounts of additional flour if necessary (about 10 minutes)
6. Cut dough in half Knead each half again (about 15 minutes each) till dough begins to feel “silky” Shape dough into disks to fit pan (not allowing them to touch sides)
7. Dip Seal into flour & shake slightly. Make sign of the Cross with Seal (x3). Press seal FIRMLY into dough. Remove seal slowly. Toothpick dough at joints & several times around side of bread
8. Cover with double towels, and let rise (about 30 minutes)
9. Toothpick again in same spots before baking. Bake @ 350 degrees (about 45 minutes) until a golden brown.
10. Check after 10 minutes – poking holes along sides where the prosporo starts to separate around the edges.
11. Remove from Oven – Let cool completely.
12. End with prayer.

For all your Church Service supplies, Koliva, Prosfora, Artoklasia, Vasilopita, Tsourekia, Please contact Astoria Pastry Shop at (313) 963-9603, Hellenic Bakery at (248) 476-2080 or Effie Tsopeles at 586-786-6774.