

What's a Ukrainian wedding without a "korovai"?

The Ukrainian Museum holds workshop in "Baking Traditional Wedding Breads"

by Romana Labrosse
with Myrosia Cap

NEW YORK – Whether they walked over from just a few blocks away in Manhattan's East Village, traveled for hours from another state or flew thousands of miles from across the continent, everyone who attended The Ukrainian Museum's first workshop in "Baking Traditional Wedding Breads" on May 10 had the same goal: to learn how to bake and decorate a "korovai" (wedding bread) and create a "hiltse" (wedding tree).

And learn they did. Lubow Wolynetz, curator of the museum's folk art collection, organizer of the workshop, and noted folklorist and educator, began the session by explaining the importance of bread in Ukrainian traditions. Because Ukraine has been an agrarian society since ancient times, she said, bread has always played a central role in every important event.

"Ukrainians have consistently maintained that, as long as they have bread, they will not go hungry," she added. "Every important event in a person's life, every change of season, and, in time, every holy day – all these milestones

were accompanied by rituals that included bread." Today, the best-known ritual breads are the Easter "paska," the Christmas "kolach" and, of course, the wedding korovai.

In ancient times, before the introduction of religious and civil weddings, marriages were legitimized by following prescribed rituals, one of which was the communal consumption of a korovai. "A korovai was baked to celebrate the union of a man and a woman," Ms. Wolynetz explained. "The korovai had to be round (the shape of the sun), ringed with a braid (symbolizing everlasting love, an unbreakable bond, a tightly knit family), and decorated with symbols made of dough." The decorations were for good luck, and the entire korovai was considered essential for good luck in the marriage.

Even after the introduction of Christianity, couples in Ukraine celebrated both a church wedding and a folk wedding. In fact, until the 19th century, a marriage was not considered consummated until the folk wedding had taken place.

As with all ritual breads, a great number of "magical" rites were associated



Luda Lozowy

The traditional korovai takes on a slightly different look in each region of Ukraine. Some of these regional variations, baked and decorated by instructor Larysa Zielyk, were on display during the museum's "Baking Traditional Wedding Breads" workshop.

with the baking of the korovai – all of them intended to imbue the wedding bread with special powers and to bring happiness, prosperity and fertility to those who consumed it. Perhaps foremost among these rites was the need for the women baking the korovai to think only positive, happy thoughts as they prepared it.

Judging by the enormously successful results of the museum's workshop, positive energy abounded among the 28 participants.

After master baker Larysa Zielyk had reviewed the ingredients used for korovai dough and demonstrated the technique required to prepare the wedding bread, the all-important braid and a variety of dough decorations, the workshop participants had an opportunity to acquire hands-on training by baking an individual korovai. Each attendee received a miniature mold and enough dough to form the bread and various decorations – birds,

representing love, joy and faithfulness; pine cones, representing fertility; and sun, moon and star symbols (remnants of pagan times), representing the light, warmth and fire so necessary for a productive and happy life. Under Ms. Zielyk's watchful eye and careful tutelage, the results were truly impressive.

"The great thing about learning from a master," noted Cheryl Andrichuk, the editor of Solovei magazine in Burnaby, British Columbia, who was accompanied to the workshop by her husband, Paul, "is that you get all those little tips that she has learned over the years." The workshop's hands-on approach was also highly praised. "Having each of us make our own little wedding breads was extremely helpful."

In addition to the instruction they received from Ms. Zielyk and Ms. Wolynetz, each participant took home a booklet chock-full of information, photo-

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Luda Lozowy

Master baker Larysa Zielyk (left) demonstrated the art of baking and decorating traditional Ukrainian wedding breads at The Ukrainian Museum's workshop and provided hands-on instruction to the 28 participants. Lubow Wolynetz (right), curator of the museum's folk art collection, organized the immensely popular workshop.



The Milinichik sisters (from left) Marysa, April and Stephanie surprised their sister Cynthia by baking and decorating a traditional Ukrainian wedding bread – korovai – for her June 21 wedding to Cory Staats. The wedding took place at St. Mary's Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Protection of the Holy Theotokos) in Allentown, Pa., followed by a reception at the Ukrainian Homestead in Lehigh, Pa.

A surprise for a sister-bride

NEW YORK – When sisters April, Stephanie and Marysa Milinichik heard about The Ukrainian Museum's "Baking Traditional Wedding Breads" workshop, they knew immediately that they wanted to attend. Their mission: to surprise their sister Cynthia by baking a korovai for her upcoming wedding.

In the end, the sisters surprised not only Cynthia, their parents, their friends and themselves, but also the 150 guests at the wedding. They produced a beautiful, exquisitely decorated korovai and traditional wedding favors for all the guests.

The road to success was not entirely uneventful. "On our first attempt, we used a pot that was too small, and the bread ended up overflowing the pot," explained Marysa. "The second time, the dough never rose because we forgot to add the sugar to the yeast. But the third time our korovai was perfect."

The sisters also weren't entirely successful in keeping their plan under wraps. "We kept it a secret as long as we could," Stephanie said, "but we couldn't keep Cynthia out of the kitchen, so she actually saw the korovai several hours before the wedding."

The enormity of their effort was not lost on the bride and groom, however. "My husband Cory and I were delighted and surprised by the beautiful korovai that my sisters made for us." (After all, noted Marysa, "none of us had ever baked bread before.")

The wedding guests were equally impressed by the numerous baked dough birds, perched on skewers, made by Stephanie, her boyfriend, Roman Milan, and Marysa as wedding favors and to adorn the korovai. Stephanie also made several "shyshky" (pine cones) and branches as korovai decorations.

The traditional presentation of the korovai to the bride and groom at the wedding reception was an emotional moment for Cynthia's parents, Walt and Janice. "It was very special," said Mr. Milinichik, "both as a beautiful Ukrainian tradition and as a personal family bonding event between us and the newlyweds."

Just as meaningful to Marysa, April and Stephanie (who had initially proposed attending the museum's workshop) was the preparation of the korovai.

"The making of the korovai is a tradition I'll cherish for a lifetime," said Marysa. Added April: "We're grateful to Larysa [Zielyk], Lubow [Wolynetz] and The Ukrainian Museum for teaching us this wonderful skill – one that we plan to use many times in the future."

Indeed. With the possibility of four more weddings in the family (the Milinichiks also have a son, Andrew), the sisters' expertise is sure to grow.

– Romana Labrosse with Myrosia Cap



A traditional Ukrainian "wedding tree" (hiltse) on the left, and bird decorations on a korovai on the right..

What's a Ukrainian...

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graphs and recipes, including Ms. Zielyk's recipe for the dough used during the workshop.

Both Ms. Zielyk and Ms. Wolynetz were delighted with the turnout for the workshop (the class was sold out) and with the participants' enthusiasm and interest in preserving what Ms. Andrichuk referred to as "this very precious cultural knowledge."

It is a knowledge that at one time was in danger of being lost. In the 1950s and 1960s, noted Ms. Zielyk, as the huge influx of post-World War II immigrants attempted to integrate into U.S. society, many ancient Ukrainian traditions, such as the korovai, were shunned in favor of American norms, such as the multi-tiered white wedding cake. By the 1970s, however, a desire to make the marriage ceremony more meaningful resulted in a rebirth of interest in Ukrainian wedding traditions, and the korovai was once again included in the wedding celebration.

"I'm thrilled to see so many young participants in our workshop," said Ms. Zielyk. "It's comforting for those of us

who have worked for years to preserve Ukraine's beautiful culture to know that our successors respect their heritage and honor it by carrying on these traditions. I couldn't ask for more."

The workshop concluded with another magical Ukrainian tradition: the preparation of the "wedding tree" (hiltse).

Representative of the start of a new family, the hiltse is a large branch decorated by family members with various herbs and colorful ribbons, each of them a wish for the newlyweds' happiness, Ms. Wolynetz explained. "According to Ukrainian folklore," she said, "herbs have the magical power to bring luck, prosperity and happiness – precisely what everyone wishes for the bride and groom." The museum's hiltse was decorated by the workshop participants, each of whom in turn made a wish while tying an herb bouquet to the tree.

"That was a lot of fun," said Ms. Andrichuk, "and the perfect ending to this great workshop. This was definitely the highlight of my trip to New York."

Award-winning Ukrainian Canadian documentary filmmaker Yuriy Luhovy, assisted by his daughter Adriana, a communications student at Montreal's Concordia University, was on hand to



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Larysa Zielyk makes decorations for a korovai.

film the workshop and his subsequent interviews with Ms. Wolynetz and Ms. Zielyk. The film serves both as a record for posterity and as the basis for a possible future documentary on Ukrainian traditions in which the iconic korovai would be featured prominently.

For information about The Ukrainian Museum's fall session of folk art courses and workshops, visit the museum's website, www.ukrainianmuseum.org, or call 212-228-0110.

Askold Lozynskyj...

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"It was dismissed because the court is concerned with minority, not majority, rights," Mr. Lozynskyj said. "Nevertheless, much has happened in Luhansk in furtherance of the Ukrainian language as a result."

On behalf of Yuriy Shukhevych, the UWC wanted to sue former Vice Prime Minister for Humanitarian Affairs Dmytro Tabachnyk for slandering Ukrainian Insurgent Army Commander-in-Chief Roman Shukhevych by alleging he "received two Iron Crosses from the hands of Hitler."

Yuriy Shukhevych, the son of the legendary UPA commander, declined to support the lawsuit.

The ability to travel the globe, finance lawsuits and establish monuments was enhanced by Mr. Lozynskyj's success in balancing the UWC's annual budget, which averaged \$250,000 in dues and investment income, and building its asset base.

When he took over the UWC's reins, its assets totaled about \$40,000, which he magnified to \$1.5 million in a decade's time. These assets now consist of certificates of deposit, cash, stocks and Canadian bonds.

"A good portion came from testamentary dispositions, people leaving money in their will," he said. "In 10 years as president – I take particular pride in this – we never had a single year in which there was a deficit. We had at least a \$20,000 balance at the end of operations each year."

Such financial success led board directors of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America to approach Mr. Lozynskyj with

the request that he serve as the president of the organization, which he believes is fairing poorly financially and needs overhaul.

"I was approached but so far I'm not inclined," he said. "I simply do not have the drive."

Instead, he said he will devote his time to joining his wife, Roksolana, in raising their two children, as well as writing and working for foundations.

Meanwhile, UCCA President Michael Sawkiw Jr.'s second, four-year term is set to conclude at the 10th Congress of Ukrainians in America on October 17 to 19 in Cleveland.

Though Ukraine gained a patriotic president in 2005, Mr. Lozynskyj said he's seen minimal progress in government support for the diaspora.

In Tomsk, Mr. Lozynskyj visited a school with a Polish and Ukrainian subclass. The Polish class had 20 computers subsidized by the Polish government, while the Ukrainian class had none.

"An area where we failed is we have not gotten Ukraine to comprehend that they have certain obligations regarding the diaspora community – the Russian community and the Uzbek community," he said.

Meanwhile, the diaspora in Przemyśl (Peremyshl), Poland still hasn't been able to reclaim the Ukrainian Home in its city.

"Whenever Ukraine deals with the diaspora, its mindset is what can you get from the diaspora, rather than how can we help the diaspora," Mr. Lozynskyj said. "The problem is Ukraine doesn't see the diaspora as part of a Ukrainian nation. And nothing has changed since the Orange Revolution."

Businessman...

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port for cultural initiatives, such as funding The Gryphon Trio's world premiere of Christos Hatzis' "Constantinople" and supporting Pavlo Hunka's art song project, support for academia such as the University of Ottawa Chair of Ukrainian Studies; and significant support for democratizing initiatives in Ukraine. In 2005 he headed fund-raising for the UCC project to send observers to the presidential elections in Ukraine. He is also chairman of the board of the Kyiv Mohyla Business School.

But Mr. Temerty's No. 1 interest at this time is the Royal Ontario Museum, where he has been chairman of the board for six years. In 2001 he spearheaded the "Legacy in Gold: Scythian Treasures from Ancient Ukraine" exhibit at the ROM and is now heavily involved in bringing to the ROM the exhibit "Mysteries of Ancient Ukraine: The Remarkable Trypillian Culture (5400 – 2700 BC)."

For this project, Mr. Temerty has been the lead person in facilitating relations with Ukraine – conceptualizing, organizing and getting the cooperation of institutions needed in Ukraine and then following up on agreements. He said he has received good cooperation from Ukraine, except for one issue – there has been strong resistance from the Institute of Archaeology in having privately owned artifacts at the exhibit.

As Mr. Temerty very much wanted to

have artifacts from President Viktor Yushchenko's Tripilian collection, he proposed that Mr. Yushchenko's collection be examined by experts from the Institute of Archaeology and only those the institute approved would be included in the exhibit. Thus, most of the 250 artifacts coming to the exhibit from Ukraine are from institutions and only a few have been selected from private collections.

Mr. Temerty commented: "I have had my eye on Trypillia from the time Anna Trojan was planning the 'Treasures of Ukraine' exhibit seven years ago (which never took place at the ROM). In 2003 I took part in a symposium on Trypillia in Kyiv, to which I took the ROM curator Krzys Ciuk, who curated the Scythian Gold exhibit and is now working on the Trypillian one. The exhibit became concrete when I met with President Yushchenko after his inauguration and he asked me to bring a Trypillian exhibit to the ROM."

The concept was evaluated by museum professionals and received the support of the governors and the director and CEO. The Trypillian exhibit will open to the public on November 29 of this year; it will be preceded by a gala opening and special preview on November 27, which has already been sold out.

Mr. Temerty, who is married to Louise Arcand Temerty and has two daughters, Melissa and Leah, will be presented with the Order of Canada at an award ceremony at the governor-general's residence in Ottawa sometime in the new year.