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Greek New Years Day

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Myself
Logan, Utah
November 27, 2018

Title: Greek New Years
Genre: Custom

Informant: I am a sophomore at Utah State that is studying for a marketing major. I live in West Jordan Utah, when I'm not up at school, and have my whole life. My dad owns a grocery store in Kearns Utah called "Stan's Market" that a marketing degree I hope will help me run later in life. I went to Bingham High School and graduated in 2017.

Context:

This is a tradition that I have been doing ever since I could remember, and usually at the same place too, except for maybe a couple of exceptions. This tradition is also carried out by many of the people that go to my church, which is of the Greek Orthodox faith. I believe that the people of the Greek Orthodox faith have been doing for almost as long as they have been around also, so a very deep rooted tradition. It was always just the plan on New Year's day to go over to my grandparents to have dinner and complete this tradition. It would be my dad and all of my family, with my uncle and his family, and sometimes my aunt and her family. She lives in Mexico with her family, so they are there from time to time but not every time. The bread that is used is also my favorite bread to ever exist. Sometimes my aunt cooks it but most of the time we buy it from one of the ladies at my church who make it. Around the holiday times there are plenty of people who make it and it very easy to obtain in the greek community. It is a sweet bread and can come in all shapes and sizes. The traditional way is to make it kind of in a twist look and put dyed red eggs in it. Nobody ever eats the eggs though they are more for decoration. We usually never use a bread that looks like that though and have one that is a circle shape just with sesame seeds on top. There is a quarter baked into it and whoever gets the quarter is to said to have good luck all year, I have gotten the quarter a couple of times before and been pretty excited about it. I've also almost chipped many of my teeth biting into a quarter on leftover bread that my grandma usually gives me throughout the holiday season.

Text:

Every year on New Year's day, after I sleep in late from staying up late the night before to see the ball drop, I go over to my grandparents house on my dad's side (they live right next door so it is very convenient) and have dinner and cut what is called the "vasilopita". The vasilopita is a sweet bread that we buy some years and make others. It is a circular loaf that is pretty good sized. What's interesting about this bread though is that it has a quarter baked into it.

The quarter is supposed to symbolize good luck for the year and whoever gets the piece of bread with it in it then they get all of the luck. After we eat a dinner of both greek and non greek food and are all super full we bring out the vasilopita. Then we have to head of the house, who in this case is my grandpa, cut the bread. There is a specific order that you are supposed to cut it. You cut the first one for God and put it on a plate, the next one is for the Virgin Mary, then the next is for the church I believe. Then you start with the the oldest sibling, which is my Uncle Mark, and his family. Then the second oldest and there family, then finally the youngest, who is my dad, and our family. My grandpa eventually makes a slice for everyone that is there and we sit down and eat the bread and praise the person who got the quarter. We then usually talk and have fun just for an hour or so more then everyone disperses and we do it all again next year.

Texture:

When we are doing this tradition, there is always laughter in the air and everyone is having a good time enjoying each others company. There are times of the year when my grandparents and all my family are together, but this family gathering seems like one of the most that sticks out every year. It is something that my whole family looks forward to. There is usually football on in the background and the people who are interested in the game are sitting by the T.V. talking and watching while everyone else stays at the dinner table. Dinner is always some sort of roast or prime rib along with really good sides and delicious desserts. Everyone always looks forward to the food. When we are cutting the vasilopita there is always excitement while everyone is looking for the piece that has the quarter. Usually right after a piece is cut everybody makes a noise of anticipation like “oooohhh” and if there is not a quarter there is a sigh like “ahhhhh”. When the quarter is finally found we usually stop cutting and focus on the person who got the quarter and congratulate them half sarcastically. After that the tone of the party turns to more a tired kind of tone as family members start to break away and head home.

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Utah State University
Introduction to Folklore
Dr. McNeil
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