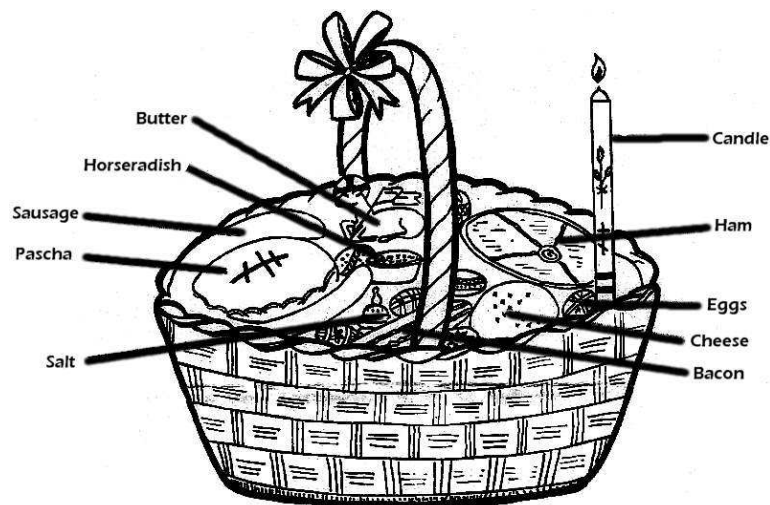


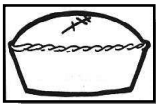


THE PASCHA BASKET

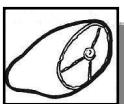
After the midnight Paschal Liturgy, we all gather together to bless the Pascha baskets. These baskets have been carefully prepared with many of the foods from which we've been fasting during Great Lent. A decorated candle is placed in the basket and is lit at the time of blessing. A linen cover usually embroidered with a picture of the Risen Christ or symbol with the words "Christ is Risen" is placed over the foods when brought to the church. Each basket often contains an icon of the Resurrection. These articles are placed in a wicker basket and a ribbon or bow is tied to the handle. Each of the foods in the Pascha basket have rich meaning, as does everything in Orthodoxy. There are several foods traditionally included in the basket. These are a yeast bread, a bitter herb, wine, cheese, meat,



butter, salt, and eggs. Each has symbolic significance:



Bread: The Easter Bread (pascha or paska pronounced paska) also called Kulich, a cylindrically-shaped Russian Paschal sweet-bread or Tsourekia as the traditional Greek braided bread. The paska is a rich, egg-based bread, sweetened with raisins, representing the "Bread of Life", Christ who is our True Bread as well as a symbol of the New Covenant. It is usually baked as a round loaf with a golden crust decorated with some symbol indicative of Christ, such as a braided cross, a lamb or something similar. Sometimes a cross of dough is placed on top, and the entire loaf rimmed with a braided plait of dough giving it a crowned effect. Sometimes the abbreviation XB is used (in Cyrillic writing - XB "cha veh," the initials for "Christos Voskrese!" - "Christ is Risen!"). The braided form of this bread is a display of the Trinity.



Ham: (Sunka - pronounced shoon-ka) The flesh meat popular with Slavs as the main dish because of its richness and symbolic of the great joy and abundance of Easter. Some may prefer lamb or veal. This is usually well roasted or cooked as well as other meats prepared in advance so that the festivity of the day will not be burdened with preparation and all may enjoy the Feast. Meat is included in remembrance of the sacrifice of the Old Testament Passover, which has been replaced by Christ, the New Passover and Lamb of God. This is directly from the prayers said, we see that the meats represent our Lord Jesus Christ as the Lamb of

sacrifice, obeying the will of the Father, as did Abraham who was ready to offer his only son to the command of God.



Sausage: (Kolbasi - pronounced kol-bus-i) A spicy, garlic sausage of pork products, indicative of God's favor and generosity, produced as smoked or fresh meat.



Soft cheese: (Hrudka or Sirets, pronounced - hrood-ka or si-rets) A custard-type cheese or a cream cheese-based cheese, shaped into a ball. It is placed in a small dish and decorated with symbols made of cloves or pepper balls. Russian Easter Cheese (pascha) is delicate, sweet, and creamy pyramid-shaped candied-cheese, decorated with cherries and almonds to add "XB" (initials for "Christ is Risen"). *kulichi* [cylindrically-shaped Russian Paschal sweet-breads], *pascha* [delicate, sweet, and creamy pyramid-shaped "candied-cheese"]



Salt: (Sol - pronounced sol') A condiment necessary for flavor reminding the Christian of his duty to others as well as a reminder that we are "the salt of the earth."



Butter: (Maslo - pronounced ma-slo) This favorite dairy product is shaped into the figure of a lamb or small cross and decorated as the cheese. This reminds us of the goodness of Christ that we should have toward all things.



Eggs: (decorated / colored red): (Pysanky - pronounced - pi-sun-ki) Hard boiled eggs brightly decorated with symbols and markings made with beeswax. Indicative of new life and resurrection. As the egg is sealed, but holds life in itself, and that life in the shell breaks it open and comes out as a new life, so was the grave of Christ sealed, but it contained life eternal which burst its seals and gave to us a new eternal life. This is because of the miracle of new life which comes from the egg, just as Christ miraculously came forth from the tomb. Each basket also contains a red egg which is likened to the tomb or sepulchre from which Christ arose. The red coloring of the egg recalls to us that by the blood of Jesus upon the Cross we were freed from sin and death. Tradition also says that Mary Magdalene gave the first egg to the Roman emperor Tiberius, when she was brought before him and accused of being a Christian. She took the egg and by it demonstrated the belief of Christians in eternal life, and by her presentation, was able to persuade the emperor to stop the persecution of Christians. Many Churches bless red eggs during the Paschal Divine Liturgy and distribute them to the faithful.



Horseradish: (Chrin - pronounced - khrin) Horseradish mixed with grated red beets. This bitter herb ultimately serves as a reminder of the first Passover (horseradish is eaten as a traditional part of the original Passover meal) and of the bitter sufferings which Christ endured for our sake. Sometimes the herb is colored red with beets, symbolizing the Blood of Christ. The bitter herb is also to bring to mind the Jews' forty years of wandering in the wilderness.



Wine: figurative of all the good things of life, wine reminds us of the earthly gifts that come from God.

Christ is Risen!