

## St. George volunteers bake traditional loaves of bread

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(Photo: Douglas Collier/The Times)

The smell of freshly baked bread recently filled the air around St. George Greek Orthodox Church in Shreveport.



The Ladies Philoptochos Society of St. George Greek Orthodox Church have started baking for their annual Greek Easter Bread sale. Douglas Collier

Once inside the church's kitchen, the source of the aroma is soon revealed as several pans of Greek Easter bread are removed from the oven.

It's that time of year again when volunteers with the Ladies Philoptochos Society of St. George Greek Orthodox Church bakes their traditional loaves of bread for the Greek Easter bread sale.

Inside the kitchen, a well-organized group of women go about the different tasks of preparing more bread for the oven.

Lily Mijalis pours ingredients for the dough into a large mixer while Fani Cosse and other volunteers roll the dough and braid it before putting it into the pans. However, before going into the oven, the bread is moved to a room to allow the yeast to rise.

Mitzi Theo, Mijalis and Patrice Gaydos are the fundraising chairwomen.

Theo, a member of St. George Greek Orthodox Church for more than 40 years, has been helping with the Greek Easter bread sale for 16 years.

"We've been in charge for 10 years," she said. "We're very organized after doing this for so long."

Gaydos said seven or eight women usually help prepare the bread.

And, Theo said, they got the job done in 11 days.

"We made about 800 loaves," Gaydos said. "So far, we've had about 100 orders, and we usually get about 250."

Eggs that are dyed red traditionally adorn the tsourekis. But the bread can be ordered with or without the egg.

"The egg represents the steel tomb containing Christ," Mijalis explained. "The red dye signifies the color of the blood that he sacrificed for us."

Mijalis said they don't do colored eggs such as blue, yellow or pink.

In addition to tsourekis, baklava and koulourakia also are available for the Greek Easter bread sale.

"We have the tsourekis bread and then we have the koulourakia, which is the butter cookie," Mijalis said. "That's our in-house cookie."

Mijalis said they prepare a lighter version of the baklava in the spring.

"We do it with pistachios and in the fall we do the traditional baklava, which is with the pecans and walnuts," she said.

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▯ **tsoureki** ▯ **Greek** ▯ **aster** ▯ **read** ▯

*The Ladies Philoptochos Society of St. George Greek Orthodox Church keeps its Greek Easter bread recipe secret. However, here's a tsoureki recipe that was shared on cooks.com.*

▯ **kg.** ▯ **yeast dissolved in** ▯ **cup** ▯ **lukewarm** ▯ **water** ▯ ▯ ▯ ▯ ▯ ▯

▯ **cup** ▯ **milk**

▯ **cup** ▯ **butter**

▯ **teaspoon** ▯ **pure vanilla**

▯ **tablespoon** ▯ **freshly grated orange zest** ▯ **or a few drops of pure orange oil**

▯ **tablespoon** ▯ **anise liqueur**

▯ **teaspoon** ▯ **drops anise oil**

▯ **teaspoon** ▯ **salt**

▯ **to** ▯ **cup** ▯ **all-purpose flour**

▯ **cup** ▯ **honey** ▯ **or agave nectar**

▯ **large eggs** ▯ **well beaten**

▯ **egg yolk** ▯ **reserve the white for egg wash for toasting**

▯ **hard-boiled eggs** ▯ **diced red onion for each person**

For the milk, use reconstituted non-fat dry milk or scalded fresh milk.

To dye the hard-boiled eggs, add a tablespoon of cider vinegar to the liquid from a can of sliced beets in a small stainless steel pan. Add the eggs with enough water to cover and boil for 1 or 2 minutes, cover and let stand for 15 minutes, then cool. The eggs may also be dyed red using food colorings if you prefer a brighter color.

To prepare the dough, dissolve the yeast and set aside for 5 minutes. Heat the milk to scald, melt the butter add the honey and cool for about 15 minutes before adding to the yeast about 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

In a stand mixer, add 2 cups flour and remaining ingredients except flour and beat for 2- minutes. Add the remaining flour a small amount at a time, until the dough forms a ball and begins to leave the side of the bowl.

With the dough hook attachment, knead for 6-8 minutes. move to a floured surface and knead by hand until smooth and elastic. Put into an oiled bowl and turn to coat with oil on all sides. Cover and let rise in a warm, draft free place until nearly doubled. Punch down, divide dough into two ropes twist the two together, then form a ring or a wreath and pinch the ends together tuck them under to hide. Let rise, again for about 0-40 minutes.

Tuck a colored egg at even intervals around the wreath by spreading a rope twist to fit around the egg. Cover and let rise another 20-0 minutes or so.

Fifteen minutes before baking, preheat the oven to 5 degrees Fahrenheit.

To make an egg wash, beat the saved egg white with a tablespoon of water and brush it over the top. Don't allow the egg to pool in the valleys and leave the boiled eggs without brushing. Sprinkle sesame seeds over the bread.

Bake for about 25-0 minutes, or until the internal temperature of the bread reads 10 degrees Fahrenheit on an instant-read thermometer. Cool on a

wire rack.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ **G** ☐

☐ ☐ **at** ☐ Ladies Philoptochos Society Greek Easter Bread Sale.

☐ ☐ **en** ☐ Pickup is from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. April 2. St. George Greek Orthodox Church Activities Center, 542 Wichita, Shreveport.

**info** ☐ 18 4 ☐ -448. Order forms are available online at [www.gosaintgeorge.org](http://www.gosaintgeorge.org).

☐ ☐ **e** ☐ **read**

☐ **ista** ☐ ☐ **io baklava**

☐ ☐ **at** ☐ Paper-thin pastry layered with a pistachio nut mixture and honey syrup.

☐ **ost** ☐ 1.50 each.

☐ **oulourakia**

☐ ☐ **at** ☐ Butter tea cookies.

☐ **ost** ☐ 4.50 a dozen or 4.5 with ☐ sprinkles.

☐ **soureki**

☐ ☐ **at** ☐ Loaves of sweet bread made with butter and eggs.

☐ **ost** ☐ Braided loaf 8 braided round loaf with one red egg .50.

Advance orders are recommended. Proceeds from the sale fund the organization's many charitable activities, including Providence House, Salvation Army, Oakwood Home for Women, Deaf Action Center, Caddo Council on Aging, Alzheimer's Association, Gingerbread House and Food Bank of Northwest Louisiana.

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