



MODULE 6

Cultural traditions

Austria

Around Easter time in Austria, Catholics celebrate Palm Sunday (when Jesus came to Jerusalem) by making a **“Palmbuschen”**.

The Palmbuschen is made from a wooden pole, which can be up to 2,5 metres tall, to which people attach twigs from willow (before it flowers), and evergreen trees like yew, juniper and boxwood. The Palmbuschen is then decorated with pretzels, apples and coloured ribbons.



After the Palmbuschen has been completed, people take it to a church so that it is blessed. They then take them around the fields, which are thought to bring good luck for harvests.

People display their Palmbuschen in front of their houses or next to where they keep their crucifix in the house, which is meant to protect the family against thunderstorms or disease. If a thunderstorm happens, they break a piece of the Palmbuschen and burn it in the house, for protection.



Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, children celebrate New Year by making decorated sticks from the dogwood tree called “**survachka**”.

The dogwood tree is the first tree to bloom in spring and the last tree to ripen its fruits and so symbolises wisdom, health and long-life, for these reasons it appears frequently in Bulgarian culture and traditions. Its bark and leaves have been used for treating leather and dyeing textiles. The fruit of the dogwood tree is edible, with a pleasant taste and smell. It has also been used in folk medicine.

The “survachka” is used by children to tap people on the back and wish them a Healthy New Year. It is made from a dogwood stick, decorated with dried fruit, popcorn, peppers, red thread, colourful paper, ribbons, apples and anything that symbolizes health, long life, good employment and the festive spirit. Children visit other people’s houses and tap people on the back with their “survachka” while saying the following blessing:



Healthy New Year,
Jolly year!
Golden spikes in the corn fields,
Lots of grapes in the vineyard,
Yellow corn on fences,
Red apples in gardens,
Houses full of silk,
Be healthy in the New Year,
In the New Year and forever!

Children also wish: 'a house full of children, a purse full of money and a cattle-shed full of cattle'. Wherever they go children are given ring-shaped buns, fruit, walnuts, pocket money and some presents.

Italy

One year long weather forecast.

A popular tradition in Northern Italy says that the weather of a whole year can be forecasted using salt and an onion. The onion is divided into 12 pieces, representing the 12 months of the year. Each piece is placed in a cup and then covered with salt. It is then left out of the window on



Saint's Paul eve (which is the night of January the 24th) and examined the following morning. The cups where the salt dissolved correspond to rainy months, the others to dry months. This tradition dates back to medieval times and is connected to the worship of Saint Paul who is considered the saint that reveals divine signs.

Great Britain



In the UK they make **Mayday garlands** which are willow branches that have been bent into hoops and decorated with flowers, greenery and coloured ribbons.

Traditionally mayday is celebrated on the first of May, with children making garlands and performing country dances such as the maypole dance (traditionally a dance around a newly felled young tree), to celebrate the beginning of summer. Early in the morning people would decorate their homes with

flowers and greenery to bring good fortune. Young girls would wash their faces with dew to make them beautiful. Many villages crown a May queen, with a headdress of flowers. The origin of May Day lies in the Roman festival of flora.

