Family celebrations in Ukraine

Masnytsia

One of the best-loved holidays in Ukraine is a spring holiday, called Maslyana or Masnytsia. It lasts a whole week. Although it is celebrated before the Great Lent, which is a Christian holiday, it originates from the pagan times and the pagan celebration of welcoming the advent of spring.

At that time our ancestors worshipped the Sun as a God and welcomed longer days that meant revival and the start of a new life cycle after the long winter. Within the week people were not allowed to eat meat but they could still enjoy dairy products: milk, butter, sour cream, cheese etc. It is then that Ukrainians baked round cakes, and later pancakes, that reminded of the Sun. It was believed that those who have tasted such a cake is blessed with the sun's warmth and light. Some people cooked varenyky, dumplings with cottage cheese filling, a traditional Ukrainian meal that according to our ancestors reminded of the crescent.

This holiday is full of fun, joy and optimism: such sports as fistfights, a pancake eating contest, climbing the pole for a prize were especially popular among youngsters in the villages. On the last day of the holiday week, it was customary to burn a straw man that symbolized winter.

Though this holiday is not a national holiday in modern Ukraine, many people enjoy it nowadays: families cook pancakes and varenyky and spend time in a family circle.

International Children's Day

International Children's Day, known as Children Protection Day in Ukraine, serves as a dedicated occasion to raise awareness about children's issues such as famine, rights violations, and abuse. Established in Paris in November 1949 by the Council of the International Democratic Federation of Women, this annual event takes place on June 1st. First celebrated in 1950 across 51 countries, the UN endorsed and prioritized the protection of children's rights, life, and health.Globally, families embrace the day, strengthening their bonds through shared experiences. In Ukraine, vibrant festivals and contests unfold in city squares, offering diverse activities like sand figure exhibitions and hands-on masterclasses for crafting miniature sand monuments. Sports contests further unite parents and children in friendly competitions showcasing speed, agility, and wit. As the day progresses, families often choose to explore parks, capping off the celebration with a delightful family dinner at a local cafe.

1 Look at the pictures. Can you guess what holidays are depicted there?

2 a Work with a partner.

Student A Read the text about Masnytsia.

Student B Read the text about Children's Day.

b Ask and answer the questions. Put the questions to 3 of your classmates and write down their answers.

1 What is your favourite holiday?
2 What is your favorite holiday food or dish?
3 What are your favourite holiday clothes or accessory?
4 What is the best present you ever got?
5 Who would you like to spend holidays with?
6 Where would you like to spend holidays?

3 Over to you! Would you like to have more or fewer holidays? What interesting or unusual holidays in the world do you know? Would you like any of them to become a state holiday in Ukraine? How do you usually celebrate holidays in your family? Do you keep to any family traditions?

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