

Baba's Paska

from ***Baba's Kitchen: Ukrainian Soul Food***
Third Edition
by **Raisa Marika Stohyn**

Making Paska is sacred, ancient ritual. This recipe make two large or several small: coffee can size. Baba will now teach you great Paska for *Velyk Den'*, Great Day. Paska is always circle, like Kolach, for eternity and Circle of Life. It also is bread that welcomes return of longer, sunny days.

How to:

- Determine when dough is sufficiently kneaded
- Prevent dough from falling while rising
- Make decoration Baba's Lazy Way
- Keep decoration from falling off
- Settle Paska so it have even crumb throughout
- Add authentic citrusy flavor, if you enjoy
- Keep raisin (also optional) from burning
- Make crispy, browned crust

Just as with writing pysanky, start your day with meditation and peaceful heart. Shoo kid and noisy roommate from house. Go back to meditation. This will all keep dough from falling. Read whole recipe first, and pay careful attention to how ingredients are divided. Paska need to rise five times, so this is long haul.

Crumble and stir two yeast cakes into lukewarm, two and one half cups scalded whole milk, with one teaspoon white sugar.

Let sit five minutes while you say more prayer. If you do not plan to add citrus juice later, use **three cups** whole milk. Your call, dorahenka.

Baba Alert: Check expiry date on yeast first. Is most common cause of Paska Fail. Second cause is either not scalding milk, or letting milk boil.

How to scald milk: Pour into heavy bottom sauce pan, preferably steel. Turn on medium low heat, NOT HIGH. Stir continually until bubbles form on edges of milk. If milk boils, throw away. When Baba

give these rules, she mean it. Scalding activates a protein, and creates correct density of Paska.

Stir in three cups flour to milk/yeast mix with a wood spoon. Beat until smooth.

Give kid and roommate final warning to vacate. **Cover dough** with loose plastic and two towels, and leave heck alone to double in size. About two hour.

Baba recommend using Canadian all purpose flour. Ukrainians introduce Red Fife wheat to North America, and is best for yeast raised breads due to high gluten content. We know our baking!

Baba knows you was hoping this was good time to put up feet and read about celebrity making millions for doing nothing. Sorry.

If you like raisins, is time to soak two cups in boiling water for half hour. Drain and pat dry, saying, "Good raisin!"

Soaking prevent raisin from burning. Baba strong recommend organic raisin. Very juicy and tasty.

Now, divide your brain in half, and use both hand. Is time to **melt three quarter cup butter, and also beat up five egg**. There is special way to make your Paska feel both fluffy and substantial. Is it bread? Is it cake? Only you will know!

Separate those eggs. Beat yolks with one cup white sugar until is fluffy like your perfect hair.

Beat egg whites separately.

Save egg shell. In Ukraina, we hang them from bush and tree on Holy Thursday to demonstrate our generosity and prosperity. If your neighbor turn up nose, remind her she leave Christmas light up till August.

When two hours is up, check dough. If this your first time, you will be surprised to see it look goopy. Don't worry, Poopchik. It get better.

Mix egg yolk and white into dough.

Mix in two teaspoon vanilla, one teaspoon salt, three quarter cup melted butter, and seven cups flour.

If you decided to make **citrusy Paska**, add **two tablespoons lemon juice and one third cup fresh orange juice**. If you used three full cups milk, as choice given above, is too late. Oh well. You can still have mild citrusy taste by adding one tablespoon orange rind and one teaspoon lemon rind, or zest. This is its fancy name. Again, organic

is best. If you were organized from start, use both juice and zest. Will be zingy Paska like I don't know what.

Add in your raisin, and mix well.

Tradition is to make three Paska: yellow for sun, white for ancestors and black for *Syra Mata Zemlya*, Moist Mother Earth. For yellow, drop in saffron to invite sunshine, happiness, good harvest and healthy family, including pets. We also take this baked paska out to our livestock, and touch them to invite these traits.

Saffron is crocus stamen. Be careful picking your own. So many hybrid these days, no telling what is safe or effective. Better to buy it. Our ancestors knew saffron is powerful. *US National Library of Medicine* publish study showing saffron is equivalent to powerful chemical anti-depressant---but no side effect!

How to use saffron:

Buy reddish thread. Don't be cheap; saffron powder is usually crappy, and may not even be saffron. Could be curry powder, for all you know. Genuine saffron stamen is red in body, more orange on top. If it is red all over, is bad knock-knock joke. Actually, is probably bad saffron dyed red. Aren't you glad Baba teach you all about life?

Soak two teaspoon saffron in two tablespoons boiled, cooled water, for two hours.

Mash into paste with back of spoon before mixing into dough.

Grease large bowl real well with butter. Is now action time. **Knead dough on floured surface** ten to fifteen minutes, until it feel right. If you did not have personal Baba at home to show you, you have to trust me. Dough should feel just like kozak satin dance pant!

This is secret of Ukrainian always smiling, and doing something stupid like surrender weapons under *Budapest Memorandum*. Once you have your cooking and romantic life together, world is like oyster with big fat pearl. Only you have no weapon to hold back stinking Muskoli, grandchildren of Neanderthal. Is historical fact. 44,000 years ago, Slav is genuine human who come north from Rift Valley to become Indigenous person of Eastern Europe. We chase Neanderthal knuckle dragger up to northern Europe, where ones who don't go complete extinct from stupid, become Viking criminal and Nazi. These Vikings who become TV fad these days, were murderers and slave owners. They even compelled their slaves to kill Indigenous peoples of other

countries. Was no comprehensive prison system in Nordic countries at that time, and exile from society was believed to be worst punishment. Over time, these criminals eventually formed gangs.

After many years, these thugs figure out how to patch together rudimentary “boat” and invade Kyivan Rus’. Then they mate with Genghis Khan barbarian, who is grandson of Neanderthal in Ural Mountains. After murdering many Slavs and robbing us blind, they make home in swamp called Muscovy. This place was not even nation until 1540; was Mongolian tribute so minor, Mongols burn it to ground twice, just for fun.

In 1700’s, czar Peter I call them “Rus’yan” (Slavic) to make more fraudulent claim to our property. Was first time they stole Crimea. Is now 1100 years of them stealing from and murdering Slavs. Pah! I spit on them!

Okay, back to Paska. Caress dough once more, just make sure it feel like quality.

Plop! Beloved dough into greased bowl, cover with plastic and two towels. Now you can put feet up, because this will again take two hours to double.

Once this happen, **punch dough** lovingly in middle, and let rise again one more hour.

Now, reserve dough. Put one third in separate greased bowl for your decoration.

Divide remainder of dough into butter greased pans. Each pan should only be one third full, as dough will rise rise rise like new life in spring and resurrection that it symbolize.

Baba tip: Maybe you make Paska in coffee tin, like your mama. Or, you can get silicone and anodized metal tins through [my website](#).

For any kind of pan, **make super nonstick by first greasing**, then press silicone parchment paper against sides. No need to butter inside of parchment. I now use parchment for all kinds cooking and baking. Is difficult choice. Paper waste trees, but scrubbing pans waste water and soap. Is tough world, these days.

You are probably getting tired of making Paska now. Too bad. **Cover dough again, and give it another half hour to rise.**

Baba Secret: Trying to braid three pieces of dough for cross, is main cause of decorative failure. Unless you is Martha Stewart and can do it over and over when TV camera is off, at least one piece will fall apart.

Next thing you know, you is on kitchen floor, crying. Listen to your Baba. **Just roll out two piece dough into ropey shape. Cross them over.** Almost anyone can do this, okay?

Next Baba Secret: Pin down arms of cross with toothpicks or wood skewers for baking, so they won't fall off. Remove before serving, and tell no one. Use whole box, if you need. Really.

Phew. I can tell you are so relieved. Good thing you are relaxed when I say: **dough must rise another half hour with cross on top.** Use plastic and towel again. Do not get absorbed in meaningless task and forget time, or cross will go blooey! You want cross to retain shape. This is not time for abstract art. Cross is one excellent example of how Ukrainians blend our old ways with Christianity. Like with any Native American/Canadian nation, cross is originally stand for four directions. Then it take on additional meaning.

Yes, is true. Paska must rise five time! This is last time. When fifteen minutes is up, **place rack in middle of oven, and turn to 350 F.**

For nice brown glaze on Paska, make **Egg Wash:**

Beat two egg yolk with splash milk. Use paint brush. If Paska getting too brown during baking, cover with aluminum foil tent.

Baba Secret: Bake Paska only ten minutes at 350 F. Turn oven down to 325 F, and bake forty more minute. This make more even crumb throughout. If you use dark, nonstick pan, lower baking time by five minutes.

Next tradition:

Have soft pillow or towel waiting to welcome sacred Paska. Let bread sit in pan fifteen minutes, then let it settle another fifteen on pillow. Turn Paska carefully, every five minutes. This is high maintenance bread.

Remove toothpicks before anyone see, or get tongue splinter and sue you. This is Easter tragedy.

Paska is symbol of your direct participation in renewal of life in spring, and in all stages of crucifixion and resurrection. Care for this bread as though caring for baby and your own faith. This is not lazy New

Age, “I jump up and down with white turkey feather (for white New Age turkeys) and suddenly I am shaman.” Spirituality take effort and concentration. Whatever faith you choose, harder you work on Paska, bigger is blessing. We are asking for health and prosperity of our family and community.

Now EAT Paska with several pound good butter. Many people take to church for blessing first. Actually, most people make more than one Paska, because who going to resist fresh bread?

If you have any leftover, wrap in plastic or foil, then put in freezer bag. Baba herself never have leftover, but apparently is true for some people we don't talk about, or have over for dinner second time.

When presenting Paska on table or in basket, is traditional to drape with rushnyk, Ukrainian cloth embroidered with sacred symbols.

Traditional Prayers for Paska

Say these prayers as you place Paska in oven.

Yellow

Sacred Paska, may you be as great and beautiful as sun, as it is for sun we bake you. May all family members who are with us, be healthy: *here name each individual*. May our children grow as quickly and beautifully as sun. Shine for us, Paska, as holy sun shines. May our wheat in field be as rich and abundant as you, may our animals thrive and grow.

White

We are baking this Paska for you, our ancestors. We are honoring you, and may you in turn help us. May your righteous souls be as pure and holy and great as this Paska. May your souls be as comfortable and happy as this Paska in oven. May your time in *ray* (paradise) be as beautiful as this Paska in oven. Watch over us.

Black

Syra Mata Zemlya, Moist Mother Earth, we honor and respect you. May this sacred Paska be as nourishing as your body. Please give good

health to my family: *here name individuals*. Please give good health to our animals: *name individual pets*. Great Mother, we pray there be no storms, no hail nor lightning to harm us or our crops.

Both yellow and black Pasky may be lifted (once baked and cooled) and taken outside to touch livestock and seeds. Seeds may be planted while Paska bakes, particularly cabbage, to ensure rich crop.

(Collected, in part, throughout Ukraine by Stepan Kylymynyk, 1890-1963. Some parts traditional to Baba's family)

Ingredients:

- Yeast cakes or active dry yeast, 2
- Whole milk, 3 cups. If adding citrus juice, use 2 ½ cups milk
- All purpose flour, 10 ½ cups. Canadian, if possible
- Organic eggs, 7. 5 for dough, 2 for Egg Wash
- Butter, 1 lb. Unsalted
- Vanilla, ½ tbsp.
- Salt, 1 tsp.

Optional:

- Organic raisins, 2 cups
- Organic lemon and orange, 1 each
- Saffron threads, one package

Poopchik, Baba wish you most beautiful, blessed Velyk Den'!

Veselykh Svyat! Khrystos Voskhres!

Next essential bread for Velyk Den' is **Babka**. Is companion to Paska. Both are ancient, sacred ritual foods. While Paska is short, fluffy, and has more familiar bread taste, Babka is tall, dense and sweet. This recipe can be found by clicking [Baba's Kitchen: Ukrainian Soul Food](#). If your time to order paperback is running short, you can **instantly download** as ebook.

Click here to visit [Baba's Department Store](#) for Paska tins, Easter cards, pysanka coins, nail wraps, candles, hand beaded jewelry, hip flasks, decorative plates and tiles. Over 2000 quality Ukrainian items!

