

Celebration of Grandfather's Night

General guide based on Belarusian tradition

1. Visit your ancestors' graves. Tie a rushnik or a ribbon on the monument (that's usually done on Radunitsa). Do not forget to also bring some food for them.
2. Clean your house, pay attention to the windows
3. An access to a good banya may be a problem in urban environment. Hot shower will do. You can also leave a piece of soap, in case one of your Grandfathers makes it to the bath.
4. Serve every dish on two plates. Do not forget about a spoon for your ancestors. Koliva is a required dish on the table. The mistress of the house can leave some of the first dish at the window so your ancestors come sooner.
5. At the end, you should say goodbye to your ancestors. For example, sprinkle the water three times around the table and say: "**Holy Grandfathers, you flew here, drank and ate, fly to your house now**"

"Святых Дзяды, вы сюды прыляцелі, пілі і елі, ляціце ж цяпер да сябе".

Leave some food on the table overnight. In the morning give the leftovers to animals or birds. During the dinner it's worth to talk about your ancestors, remember them and what they've done. Grandfathers are formed by the living and the dead, invite your relatives over, show your ancestors that the family they built is as strong as ever.

Belarusian ethnographic notes

People would leave some water and besoms in banya for their ancestors. Grandfathers should be cheered up and amused during their stay; after the meal, people would dance and sing for the same purpose. The candle would be used to walk around the table with it three times. At the end it would be put out with bread

crust or a pancake. Coal from house's stove could be brought to the each grave in pots (to warm Grandfathers).

General ethnographic notes

- Number of dishes should be uneven
- No forks/knives should be put on the table
- Every person at the table should try every dish at least once
- Plates sometimes would be left overnight on the table
- Dishes should not be salted (salt is known to be a charm against the otherworldly; in the past salt would be put on a table in a separate container)
- Dishes should be steamy (traditional beliefs talk about spirits consuming steam coming from food instead of the food itself)
- Traditionally, in the past, koliva, syta (honey dissolved in water) and kanun (malt less beer sweetened with honey) were required during commemoration
- First pancake can also be torn into pieces and put at all windows around the house

In the next part of the article we will be discussing an exemplary attempt to conduct a ritual using Eastern European ethnographic sources, which concern themes such as traditional rituals, pagan symbolism and spells.

Time to start the ritual

The ideal time to start this ritual is the night of a new moon or full moon after the disappearance of green grass and / or leaf foliage.

Things you need

You will need a candle, two plates and cups, one for the ancestors and one for domovoy.

Ritual food

Pancakes, koliva and kissel were traditionally prepared.

Before the start the ritual, you should clean around your house and, especially, around the altar, if you have one. The following is a description of a ritual involving one person. If Grandfather's Night is celebrated by a family, the rite is conducted by the head of the family, changing the words according to the situation (in particular, replacing "me" with "us" and "me" with "we"). The texts are given as an example and can be altered if you wish to do so.

The course of the ritual

Sacrifice to a domovoy

Traditionally, treats for a domovoy are left under the floor or around the stove, but in city apartments one has to choose other places. When you bring food for him (it must be put on a rather small plate), call him: **"Good day to you, the master of the house. Guard me from all evil."**

«Добрый день тебе, домовый хозяин. Охраняй меня от всякого зла»

Driving away evil spirits

Our ancestors' houses were a fortress full of various charms, which is far from an average modern city dweller's apartment. Therefore, it's worth to also drive away evil spirits from the place where the ritual is held with the help of the following spell: **"King Thunder struck, Queen Lightning brought the flame, lightning lit up all around, all sorts of evil spirits skipped away, ran away!"**

«Царь Гром грянул, царица Молния пламя спустила, молния осветила, разскакались, разбежались всякие нечистые духи!»

Then we'll use fire as a charm.

Lighting the Fire

At the altar, or a table if you don't have one, light up a candle. At the same time, a prayer to Fire is to be said: **"Father Tsar-Fire! You are king to all kings, fire to all fires. Be you meek be you merciful! How hot and ardent you are, how you burn and sting grass and herbs around the field, forests and thickets, underground roots of the damp oak, and so I pray to you, Father Tsar-Fire,**

burn away all sorts of misfortunes and diseases from me, tolls and evil spells, fears and bad luck! ”

«Батюшка ты Царь-Огонь! Всем ты царям царь, всем ты огням огонь. Будь ты кроток, будь ты милостив! Как ты жарок и пылок, как ты жжёшь и палишь в чистом поле травы и муравы, чащи и трущобы, у сырого дуба подземельные корни, так же и я молюсь и корюсь тебе, Батюшка ты Царь-Огонь, сожги и спали с меня всякие скорби и болезни, уроки и призоры, страхи и переполохи!»

Summoning the Ancestors

Traditional words: **“Holy Grandfathers, we call upon you! Holy Grandfathers, come before us!”**

«Святые Деды, зовём вас! Святые Деды, идите до нас!»

It will also be good to call each one of your deceased relatives by name if you remember them.

Dinner

Before eating, put a mug or a glass cup with drink for your ancestors on a windowsill. During the meal, the first piece of each dish is placed on a plate for the Ancestors, which is also located on the windowsill.

Sendoff of the Ancestors

After dinner, you should get up from the table and say goodbye to the Ancestors: **“Holy Grandfathers! You came here, you have drunk and ate, now return to your home! ”**

«Святые Деды! Вы сюда прилетели, пили и ели, летите ж теперь к себе!»

Completion of the ritual

The ritual ends with the correction of possible mistakes: **“Be my words unsaid, over said, all are spoken to the full!”**

*«Будьте мои слова недоговорены, переговорены, все сполна
говорены!»*

And a closure: **“To those my words (that have been said), Sky is the key, Earth is the lock!”**

«Тем моим словам Небо – ключ, Земля – замок!»

A candle is put out with fingers (a revering way to put out the Fire). The next morning, food brought for ancestors and domovoy should be left outside (under a tree).

Sources

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