

## HOLY BREAD FOR EUCHARIST



### Overview:

In the ancient Tradition of the Orthodox Church, Holy Mystery of Communion is carried out through the mediums of wine and leavened bread. The bread is specially baked for the purpose of communion, and it is called "Prospkhora" (meaning "that which is offered" in Greek.) Before baking, each prospkhora loaf is stamped with a seal usually bearing the image of a cross with the Greek letters IC XC NIKA ("Jesus Christ conquers") around the arms of the cross. This impression is baked into the bread and serves as a guide for the Priest who will be cutting it in the Proskomedie service.

### This document provides instructions for:

1. Spiritual preparation and practice for baking prospkhora.
  2. Mixing, baking, and packaging the prospkhora.
  3. Symbolic meaning of the seal and how the Priest cuts the prospkhora for use in communion
- Allow approximately 3 hours to complete the whole process of preparing, baking and packaging the bread for delivery to the church.

### Spiritual Preparation and Practice for Baking Prospkhora:

1. Women should refrain from making prospkhora when menstruating.
2. Ensure hands are free of open and or bleeding cuts.
3. Pray before, during and after baking prospkhora; in short, maintain an attitude of prayer through the entire process. Listening to sacred music, a spiritual podcast or audiobook is appropriate. Read from the lives of the Saints and or Scripture. On the Protection of the Holy Virgin website ([orthodoxclarksville.org](http://orthodoxclarksville.org)) there is a link for lives of the Saints and for Scripture. Light a candle and set a favorite icon in your kitchen or work area during your baking time.

### Prayers before:

Glory to Thee, O God, glory to Thee.

O heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who art everywhere present and fillest all things. Treasury of blessings and Giver of life: Come and abide in us and cleanse us from every impurity and save our souls, O Good One.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (thrice)

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

All-holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, cleanse us from our sins. Master, pardon our transgressions. Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for Thy name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. (thrice)

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.

O Lord our God, good and merciful, I acknowledge all my sins which I have committed every day of my life, in thought, word and deed, in body and soul alike. I am heartily sorry that I have ever offended thee, O Lord: of Thy mercy forgive me all my past transgressions and absolve me from them. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy Grace, to amend my way of life and to sin no more, that I may walk in the way of righteousness and offer praise and glory in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Almighty God, our Help and Refuge, Fountain of Wisdom, and Tower of Strength, who knows that I can do nothing without Thy guidance and help; assist me, I pray Thee, and direct me to divine wisdom and power, that I may prepare this prosthophora, faithfully and diligently, according to Thy will, so that it may be profitable to myself and others, and to the glory of Thy Holy Name. Amen.

**Prayer during:**

Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner (said repeatedly for the duration inasmuch as one is able).

**Prayers after Baking the Prosthophora:**

Dear Lord, this bread that I have baked contains each member of my family and each member of Thy Church. I offer myself to Thee, my very life, in humble obedience and complete commitment. I place myself on Thy holy altar through this bread to be used by Thee to enlarge Thy kingdom. Accept my gift and make me worthy to receive the greater gift of Thyself in the consecrated bread, Thy Body.

**Bless the finished prosthophora with the sign of the Cross:**

For with my whole heart, I offer Thee thanks, to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Through the prayers of our holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.

For the one who baked and now offers the prosthophora, it is appropriate to submit a list of names for which prayer is requested for the health of the Servants of God NN (Orthodox & non-Orthodox) and eternal memory for the departed Servants of God NN (Orthodox & non-Orthodox) to the Priest.

## Mixing, baking, and packaging the prosphora

### Ingredients:

1. 2 c. white all-purpose flour
2. 3/4 c. warm water
3. 1 pkg. dry yeast (2 1/4 tsp)
4. 1 1/2 tsp. salt
5. Have ready:
6. Stamp of seal
7. Measuring cup and spoons
8. Large mixing bowl
9. Rolling pin
10. Mixer that can knead dough if you have one
11. Toothpick
12. Cloths to cover rising dough
13. Waxed paper or parchment paper
14. Cooling racks
15. 1 cookie sheet or round pan
16. 1 gallon size Ziploc type plastic bag

### Directions:

In a large mixing bowl, dissolve yeast in warm water (approximately 110°F) Note: Yeast will be activated in water between 75-138 °; above 138°F yeast will be killed. Mix salt in with 1 cup of flour and add to yeast mixture. Combine adding flour, 1 cup at a time, mixing well after each addition. Knead for 7 minutes, adding flour to work surface as needed to prevent dough from sticking. Dough should be "stiff," not at all sticky. Rest dough in bowl for 20 minutes. (Cover bowl with cloth.)

Line pan with waxed or parchment paper to accommodate dough into a ball by flattening it to fit the pan and smoothing the top and sides. (Note: Do this on work surface, not in the pan.) Roll it and shape it until the air is punched out and it is smooth and flat; approximately 6" round and 1" thick. Flour stamp lightly before pressing, but make sure no flour is clogged in seal. Lay the pressed-out dough in the pan and press the seal firmly into the center of the dough. Push it just enough to impress the seal clearly and prick around the edges with a wooden toothpick to release any air pockets. Hold it there for a few seconds, then lift it carefully. Let loaves rise in warm place for about 1 hour or until the dough is about doubled in size. Cover rising dough with cloth.

About 10 minutes before baking, preheat oven to 350°. Bake loaves for approximately 25 minutes until lightly browned. If using convection oven, bake at 330° for 18 minutes.) Remove loaves from pan and cool on racks (several hours) before wrapping. (Bread should be thoroughly cooled.) Wrap the loaf in plastic wrap or use a 1-gallon plastic Ziploc type bag. Take the loaves of bread to Vespers on Saturday evening and give to the Priest.

## Symbolic Meaning Of The Seal And How The Priest Prepares The Prosphora For Use In Communion

A religious holy bread seal stamps a special design on the prosphora before baking. A seal is provided in the prosphora bag for use. The seal has 2 sides; the top has a small seal to be used for small commemorative loafs, (IC, XC, NIKA, which is Greek for "Jesus Christ Conquers."); the bottom has indents in the form of a cross with distinct meanings, see below. Use the bottom seal for the prosphora being made for divine liturgy.



In the Proskomedia, service for preparation of the bread and wine, the Priest cuts out the center of the stamped design that says "IC, XC, NIKA (Jesus Christ Conquers). We call this the "lamb," and it will become for us the Body of Christ. Then the large triangle in which there is carved the letter "M" in honor of the Virgin Mary is cut out and placed on the paten to the left of the "lamb." The nine small triangles are cut out to commemorate the Holy Prophet, Forerunner and Baptizer of our Lord, John, the Holy Prophets, the Holy Apostles, Holy Fathers and Hierarchs, the Holy Martyrs, the venerable and God-bearing Fathers and Mothers, the Holy Unmercenaries, the Holy and Righteous Ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna, the Saint(s) for the day, the Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Vladimir and Saints Cyril and Methodius, and for the either St. John Chrysostom or St. Basil the Great determined by whose Divine Liturgy we serve. The last particles cut out are taken for the health of the Servants of God and for the eternal memory of Departed Servants of God.