

NOROUZ (New Day Feast, Yeni Gün Bayrami)

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The name Norouz originates from Persia, which is a combined name of Nev (new) and Ruz (day), meaning New Day and it is a mythological day. Norouz day is celebrated as "New Day" by Azerbaijani Turks in Iran, Turkmen of Syria, Turkmen of Iraq "Turkmeneli", Iranians, Northern Iraq, Georgia, Afghanistan, Albania, and as well as in the former Soviet Republics of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan and Norouz is also celebrated by Karapapakhs, Western Thrace Turks, Macedonians and Kosovo Turks.

"Norouz day" corresponds to 22 March on the Gregorian calendar and 9 March on the Julian calendar when the day and the night are equal. Norouz has been celebrated for at least 3000 years and is deeply rooted in the ritual and tradition of the Zoroastrian religion. It is also celebrated by the Zoroastrians in India and is a public holiday in Turkey, where it is called Bayram. Norouz is a day for happiness and joy for the Turkish nation and it is a traditional Turkish festival for the first day of beginning spring season.

Nevruz goes by many names: the new year, the spring equinox, the day when night and day are approximately the same length of time, the first day of spring, a day of ancient rites from pagan times. Norouz is a sign for trees starting to blossom and new branches shoot up and plants commence to poke their heads out of the ground. Norouz is celebrated on or near the 21st of March, on this day the sun rays beam more directly toward the Southern hemisphere and in this day the brightness of the night and day become approximately equal. On this day, some communities who are living in the northern hemisphere accept Norouz as a waking up call for resurrection and creation day.

Norouz day for the Turks is considered as a symbol of nature's release from winter and arrival of plenty and abundance. In addition to it is regarded as a day for reflection of the vitalities, beginnings and turning points in the lives of societies. The Turkish nation perceived Norouz day as a salvation day, liberation from oppression as expressed in a legend and commented in connection with Ergenekon or the Bozkurt (Grey Wolf) legend who led the people through the Ergenekon Mountain to freedom.

Norouz has been accepted as the beginning of the New Year by Turks and has survived until the present day with its festive celebrations. Some Turks consider Norouz as a day of liberation from oppression as expressed in a legend about the evil king Dehaq being overcome by the Blacksmith Kawa who led the people through Ergenekon Mountain to freedom. **[[1]]**

Norouz has been celebrated in Anatolia with lively traditions starting from Seljuk's period, continuing with Ottomans and reaching today. Ottoman Sultans gave special consideration to Norouz. On Norouz, days Sultans were greeted by epitomized poems called "Nevruziye". On this day, the chief astrologer would present the new calendar to the Sultan and the tips

he received on this occasion was called Baksheesh of Nevruziye a traditional sweet and pastries were made of various spices by the chef of the palace and this would be presented to the sultan families, the dignitaries and high ranki peoples this was known as a Nevruziye food.

The Ottoman Turks celebrated Norouz around the tomb of Ertuğrul Gazi and held a feast there on 21 March; later the Ottoman sultan would hold celebrations marking this event. Nevruz is also a common cult among Turkish and Persian communities based on a legendary source. According to the Persian Mythology God created the world, the sun and human beings on Norouz Day and Cemsid, legendary Sultan, who is the symbol of magnificence of Iran, came to the throne and announced this day as a feast.

Turkic states of Central Asia that have been celebrating Norouz for centuries and the Turkish republic traditionally celebrates this spring festival in the eastern and southeastern Anatolian regions, Norouz is a joyful day for millions of people in the Turkic world. In fact, Norouz has nothing to do with a Kurdish PKK terrorist's celebration. The PKK's terrorists have been utilizing this day for their political propaganda and objective. The Kurds of Turkey have not been interested in Norouz until recently.

The people in Iğdır **[[2]]** do not remember Kurdish residents celebrating the holiday until few years ago. Kurdish residents of Iğdır, who were a distant from Norouz, are now burning car tires to fuel the festive Norouz bonfires and introducing pollution the air whereas the objective of this day is celebration of the arrival of the spring season as this was stated by an Azeri resident in Iğdır rightly expresses, "You don't make Norouz fires with a Goodyear tire."

Norouz Nevruz goes by many names by the Turks such as Nevruz, Navruz, Novruz, Sultan-I, Nevruz, Sultan-I, Ulu, Kün, Bozkurt, Çağan, Babu Marta, Kürklü Marta, İlkyaz, Yortusu, Yeni Gün, Yengi Kün, Yeni Yıl, Mart Dokuzu, Mereke, Meyram, Nartukan, Nartavan, Isıakh Bayramı, Altay Ködürgeni, Bahar Bayramı, Ulustın, Ulu, Küni, Ulusun, Ulu, Günü Ergenekon, Nevris, Navris Oyx, Nevruz, Noruz and Yörük Bayramı.

Norouz has also given names such as Norouz-I Sultan, Sultan Norouz, Navruz, Mart Dokuzu in Anatolia, which corresponds to the birthday of Hazreti Ali also the birthday of Hazreti Hussein, the date of his marriage with Fatima and the date when Hazreti Mohammed returned from his last Pilgrimage and designated Hazreti Ali as his caliph. This day is celebrated by Anatolian Alevi and Bektashi people. **[[3]]**

In **Turkey**, the 21st of March is considered as an official Norouz Holiday and on this occasion, everybody puts on new clothes and spruces up, people visit the graves of their beloved ones. On this day, food is prepared such as pastry with spinach, eggs dyed with onionskins; Sarı_burma sweets, roasted chickpeas and Turkish delight are among the dishes and food eaten on the Norouz day. Meanwhile, close relatives and neighbours commence visiting each other's and on this, music and folk songs are played. In Turkish town of Diyarbakir, people go to picnics and recreation areas on the Norouz day to celebrate and the Norouz night is sacred for the people of Eastern Anatolia. They believe that beings, animate or inanimate, bow to God on this night. On that day, the yearlong fate of each person is determined. Everyone puts on nice and new clothes and prepares for the New Year. Various types of food are prepared at the houses and families visits each other's. **[[4]][[5]]**

Norouz tradition is celebrated with a great enthusiasm among the Turkmen in Turkmeneli, Gagauz, Afghan, Tatar, Karacay-Malgar, Uyghur, Balkan Turks and Anatolian Turks. Moreover, is celebrated by the Azeri, Kazak, Kyrgyz, Türkmen, Uzbek and Uygur Turks in Central Asia.

In **Kazakhstan**, the 21st of March in Kazakhstan considered as an official holiday for Norouz day and is called as the first day of the year as a Nation Day. The Kazakhstanis believe on this day cold and dark night's end, bright and warm days commence. The day is seen by the Kazakhs as the day of goodness, fruitiness and prosperity that arrived to the world. The houses are given a thorough cleaning. During the Norouz celebrations, the people jump over fire. They believe that jumping over the fire will eliminate evil and sickness from the body and enter the new word full of prosperity and good health.

On the morning of this day, the Kazakh put their newest clothes on and climb up the nearest high hill to welcome the sunrise. They greet the sun by bending towards it and saying, "How are you mother sun". The Kazakh also believe that the abundance commences on this day and if the New Year begins well, it will end well.

A special Norouz dish called "Norouz Koje" is prepared and is be made of seven different ingredients sucuk a kind of sausage made of horse meat, milk, flour, rice, wheat, oil, onion. The Kazaksh call the meal they cook for Norouz "Norouz Köcö". They also prepare another dish called Norouz soup "lapa" and this is distributed to the neighbours on that day.

In **Uzbekistan**, the Norouz day on the 21st March considered an official holiday. For all nations, spring is the time of nature revival and renovation, expectations and hope for peace between people, for bumper harvest in the fields and gardens and good increase in livestock, for love and content in family. These expectations are embodied in a spring festival Norouz and preparations for this ceremony commence one week in advance. Traditionally people tidy up their homes, wash rugs and draperies and decorate with flowers. They put on their new clothes and go to the nearest green fields for celebration. The children enjoy the holiday because they often get presents of money, as well as blessings, from their elders. The Uzbek believe that jumping over the fire will eliminate their sins.

The Uzbek prepares their traditional foods known as Halim, Samsa, Soup, Pilaf and Sümelek, which is a symbolic and special Norouz dish made from wheat, made green after a wetting process. The prepared food would be shared among the public. After eating their foods a various traditional Uzbekistan game are played as well as music and dancing are performed.

In Samarkand, Buhara and Andican regions of Uzbekistan, Norouz celebrations commence on Norouz day and continue for a week. The people call these Norouz festivities "Seyil Festivities". Seyil sites are filled with carrouseles, musicians, "Beççe"s and vendors. On the first day of Norouz, people move from one tent to another and greet each other. Food is offered on this occasion called Aş in addition to this dish, a tea and various fruits are also served during this day.

Games and sports such as Köpkari, wrestling, horse races and cockfights are displayed and organized. Plays inspired by Norouz celebrations are staged. This ancient festival has gained a new sense after independence and people from all nationalities celebrate Norouz with genuine enthusiasm, while the guests of their country participate in the festival with utmost interest.

The Republic of **Turkmenistan** regards the 21st of March as an Official Holiday for the as Norouz day celebration. The preparations for the Norouz feast day in Turkmenistan commences a week earlier. On this day, the people of Turkmenistan wear their best clothes to express their happiness and joy. Turkmen families begin house cleaning and prepare it for receiving visitors five days before Norouz day arrive.

On this day, traditional Turkmen foods and dishes are displayed such as Türkmen pastry, Türkmen Petir, Külçe, Greasy Börek, Şekşeke, Koko, Bovursak and Turkmen Pilaf. It is believed that preparing many different kinds of food will bring good luck for the following year. Semeni is the special food made during Nevroz; many families come together and prepare the food in a big cauldron by adding flour and sugar to wheat. Semeni is cooked the day before it is to be eaten, and is readied for the morning of March 21.

In Turkmenistan, on the eve of Norouz, an unmarried young man eats half of a pastry and goes to bed without drinking water. It is believed that he will marry the girl who offers him water in his dream. There is also a common belief that those who swing on swings on Norouz day will eliminate their sins.

During Norouz holidays a game called Gkbri is played in Turkmenistan which is the chief game played in this country. Horse races, wrestling and other contests also take place. Norouz Bayram, combined with "Day of Turkmen Woman" and transformed into National Spring Holiday, has a new meaning. Turkmen celebrate this day in a new fashion, widely and solemnly.

The National Spring Holiday, being part of spiritual values that were brought back to the people, inspires people to new great deeds, makes people believe in good and gives birth to new hope.

In **Kyrgyzstan**, Norouz is celebrated in spring and 21 March is the national New Year in Kyrgyzstan. In this day, it is a common practice for people wears light colour clothes on Norouz, which is celebrated as the feast of welcoming spring.

In addition, the tradition that rich people giving almsman to poor people still exist and another common practice is that of jumping over a fire for a healthy body. In Kyrgyzstan, special Norouz dishes "Sömülük" and "Çön Köcö" is prepared. The Kyrgyz call the first day of the New Year Norouz. They eat a special dish on that day called Norouz Köcö.

Köce is type of Tirit gravy soaked bread to which cracked wheat. Auz Köcö is also one of the special dishes of this day. People cook Kyrgyz national cuisines, which include Mantah, Borsak, Katma, and Beshbarmark. Beshbarmark is the national food in Kyrgyzstan and is the combination of meat and spaghetti. The food is distributed free among the people. There are a number of contests going on during Norouz holidays as well. Norouz is one of the most amazing holidays Kyrgyz people celebrate each spring.

On Norouz, people go outside to see the New Year show and this takes place at the National Square. It starts early in the morning and ends late in the evening and during that time, people walk, talk, eat, play, and just enjoy the holiday. On this day, the people dress up and sing, dance, and play national instruments. The national dance of the country called dance of the Flowers. In addition, the boys play a national instrument called Komuz.

On this day, the people go to different parks or places to celebrate this occasion. The New Year show is one of the most exciting and amazing things that happen during Norouz. People also

invite their friends and neighbors for dinner. Norouz is also known as a time for sharing and it is a time when people share their dreams, thoughts and hopes.

For the **Azeri** Turks, Norouz signifies the arrival of spring. It also has roots in Zoroastrianism, the religion of most Persians and Azeris before Islam. Many rituals of their old beliefs were integrated to their new religion when the Azeris adopted Islam. For them, fire has huge cultural meaning. Azeris also take Norouz to be the day when Adam was created, just like many other communities. In Azerbaijan, 22nd of March considered as Norouz Holiday. Norouz is celebrated as the first day of the year. For Azerbaijan people Norouz is the symbol of resurrection. It is believed that human being who created on that day. A special food is prepared for this occasion. Houses are cleaned up and tidied; trees are planted on Norouz Day. Children are dressed in new clothes.

In Azerbaijan, Norouz celebration lasts for three days. It is celebrated with big ceremonies during 21 to 23 March every year. The most important day after Norouz is the last Wednesday "Ahir Çərşenbe". Norouz is considered by the Turkmen of Iraq a "Turkmeneli sign for prosperity, joy and beginning of the spring season and known among the Iraqi Türkmen as Bahar Bayramı. The Norouz fire is also believed to rid illness or pain away from the person jumping over the fire. It is a day for love and reconciliation.