# Greek customs of Spring

## "Martaki"

Martaki is the name given to the custom in which a bracelet made of red and white rope or threads that have been twisted or braided is worn on March 1 in Greece, Bulgaria (Bulgarian: мартеница, Мартеница), Romania (Romanian: mărțișor, Марцисёр), North Macedonia (Macedonian: мартинка, Мартинка), Albania (Verore), Moldova (Марцисёр) and in Cyprus (Martui or Martis).

From March 1 to 31, children wear a bracelet on their wrist, made of twisted white and red thread, on March or Martias. According to popular tradition, Martis protects children's faces from the first sun of Spring, so that they do not burn. They make it on the last day of February and wear it on the first day of March, before leaving the house.

**"Swallows"**

An old custom associated with the arrival of swallows, our migratory birds that return to our homeland to build their nests, lay and hatch their eggs. School-age children used to make a wooden effigy of a swallow, with which they would go from house to house, asking for kisses and singing the "swallow". Housewives would give them money, oil, wine, flour, wheat, which they dedicated to the church. This custom continued until modern times, in many regions of Greece. The swallow figurine they held was a stick, on the end of which they fixed a wooden swallow with bells around its neck, and as they went from house to house, they would wave their stick and sing the "swallow songs" (spring carols). Also, in many areas, the figurine was supported on a basket, which was a symbol of vegetation.

**"April Fool's Day"**

On April 1st, it is customary to tell well-intentioned lies due to custom. April Fool's Day lies are a custom that came to us from Europe and was differentiated by acquiring a Greek connotation. The basic idea, however, remained the same. We tell innocent lies in order to deceive our "victim". In some areas, it is believed that whoever manages to trick the other person will have good luck for the rest of the year. In others, it is believed that the "offender" will have a good harvest in his crops. Also, some believe that the rainwater of April Fool's Day has healing properties. As for the "victim", it is believed that, unlike the "offender", he will have a good time for the rest of the year.

**"May Day"**

On May 1st (May Day) in Greece they celebrate spring and the rebirth of nature, mainly by knitting and hanging the May Day wreath, excursions to the countryside, and picnics. The wreath of wildflowers symbolizes health and good luck, and is often left on the door until June 23. The May Day Wreath is the most widespread custom. It is made from wildflowers, daisies and branches, and is hung on the front door of the house to bring euphoria and spring into the home. May 1st is traditionally a picnic day, as people go out into nature to welcome the month and collect flowers to make their May Day wreath. The May Day wreath is often

burned in the bonfires of Agios Ioannis of Klidonas on June 23. Customs on May 1st have their roots in antiquity (e.g. Anthesphoria) and celebrated the rebirth of nature, a tradition that continues to this day.