

The traditions of the Sumalak - the thirty angels - on the night of Nowruz

(From the customs of the nomadic tribes)

The Sumalak is a widespread tradition among the Turkic tribes of Central Asia. This is the delicacy eaten on the Nowruz holiday, heralding the beginning of spring. The philologist Mahmoud Kashkari, who lived in the 15th century, explained that '*suma*' means sprouted wheat and is of Turkish origin. The wheat is soaked in water until it germinates. After that, it is dried and bread is made from it. The bread is eaten with food called '*Ugra Oshi*'. The preparation of Sumalak is done by women. They stand next to the huge pot, talking, dancing, telling stories and singing as they stir the pulp. Related traditions and beliefs in Sumalak:

The explanation for placing 7 stones in the pot is that the stones that absorb the heat prevent the dish from burning. It is said that brides eat the Sumalak as a virtue for getting pregnant; They make earrings from the pulp to increase fertility. A single woman who prays while stirring the Sumalak to seven planets will find a partner. Old women plant a new tree during the ceremony together with an unmarried girl and the young woman will soon have a partner. As a virtue for fertility, an old woman puts a baby on the lap of the young bride.

How to prepare Sumalak:

Ingredients: 1 kg wheat; 900 g oil; 4 kg white flour; 7 small stones, 3 buckets of clean water.

Method of preparation: 7-10 days before the Sumalak holiday, wash the wheat and soak it in water on a tray and let it absorb the water for two to three days. Separate the seeds and cover them with cheesecloth. Water is added daily. The wheat must be in a dark place at a temperature of 16-18 degrees Celsius. Light can change the color of wheat. If the temperature is low the wheat will germinate more slowly. At high temperature it will rot. After the wheat has sprouted, remove the gauze. The sprouts must be at a height of no more than 5 cm. If they grow more, they will taste bitter when cooked. In a long cooking process that lasts 13-14 hours of stirring, the stew is ready. Before serving it, a

chapter from the Koran is read and a man and a woman taste the Nowruz stew whose role is to bring hearts together.

A legend about Sumala:

Many years ago lived a poor widow who could not give food to her children who were hungry for bread. Her children howled with hunger and she thought of what to do to satisfy their hunger. She turned to her neighbor and got some wheat from her, which she put in an iron pot and added 7 stones, pure water and mixed everything with flour and put the pot on the fire. The children who heard a noise were sure that their mother was cooking them a delicacy, they relaxed, closed their eyes and fell asleep. After a short time, the mother also fell asleep. When she woke up early in the morning, she was surprised to see 30 angels around the vessel. She rubbed her eyes in amazement and when she opened them again she saw that the angels were licking their fingers. The play gave her great pleasure and she woke up her children who quickly ran to the pot and devoured it with great appetite. Since then the children have not known hunger. She called the delicacy Sumalak, which in Uzbek means: '30 angels'.