

## Pilgrimage tourism initiative by Russia, Greece

Promotion of pilgrimage tourism between Russia and Greece through the establishment of a joint coordinating committee was decided here during a meeting between Patriarch Kyrill of Moscow and All Russia and visiting Greek Tourism Development Minister Costas Markopoulos.

Markopoulos, the first Greek government minister to be received by the new Patriarch of Russia, stated that the committee will be comprised of three Russian Church members, Church of Greece representatives as well as a Greek tourism ministry official. He also stated that the initiative reaffirms that the Patriarch of Moscow will contribute to the strengthening of bilateral relations through pilgrimage tourism.



Markopoulos underlined the Russian Patriarch's positive response to the initiative and stated that the Greek side's intention is to make Russia an attractive tourist destination for the Greeks adding, at the same time, that more Russians are expected to visit Greece this year.

Welcoming Markopoulos, the Russian Patriarch stated that the number of Russian tourists visiting Greece is smaller than desired and pointed out that Greece offers countless attractive destinations expressing the wish that bilateral relations in the sector of tourism and pilgrimage visits will be further improved. Patriarch Cyril also referred to the unavoidable consequences of the economic crisis.

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In statements he made after the meeting at the Patriarchal residence, Markopoulos stated that the Patriarch referred to his "warm relation" with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, adding that "all indications show that we are entering a new phase in the history of the two Churches and Patriarchates," characterizing it as a positive development.

Markopoulos had meetings with the local government in the Russian capital to discuss the promotion of Greece's tourist campaign in the greater Moscow region and attended the first screening of the film "El Greco" in Russian cinemas. Later in the evening, he will be present in an event held for the promotion of Evros Prefecture, in northeast Greece, as a tourism destination.

### The brand new KALYMNOS MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY officially opened

For the first time the breathtaking collection of Kalymnos marble statues found in 2001 will be on public show, along with the magnificent bronze figure of the 'Lady of Kalymnos' trawled up from the sea bed by a Kalymnian fisherman. Other exhibits represent all periods of Ancient Greece, from Paleolithic and Neolithic to Minoan, Mycaenean, Archaic, Classical, Hellenistic and Roman.

This museum contains displays of far greater importance than would normally be found on an island of this size and tells a new story of the significance of Kalymnos in both the ancient and modern world.

For more information about the museum, statues and especially the unique Archaic kouros, visit [www.kourosgreece.org](http://www.kourosgreece.org).

## The importance of koliva

*A Los Angeles Times report on Greek cuisine features – among others - a special dish with ritual meaning called koliva, made of wheat berries studded with toasted nuts and dried fruit and blanketed with a drift of powdered sugar. It is an Eastern Orthodox ritual dish associated with the circle of life and death. Wheat, which is planted in the earth and rises in new life, symbolises the hope of resurrection. According to the Orthodox ritual, koliva is served after memorial services but also during one Saturday per year set aside for commemorating the dead. Saturday is a traditional day for praying for the departed, because Christ laid dead in the tomb on Saturday.*

**K**oliva is a heavenly dessert: earthy wheat berries studded with toasted nuts and dried fruit and blanketed with a drift of powdered sugar, with just a spoonful of lightly whipped cream for richness. But to many traditional Greeks, that very sentence is appalling, even heretical.

That's because in the Greek Orthodox religion, koliva is a dish that is heavy with ritual significance. It's more metaphor than food, really, symbolizing the circle of death and rebirth. The wheat berries represent the promise of everlasting life, the raisins the sweetness of life, and the spices are symbols of plenty. The dish is traditionally served only in a few specific circumstances, including



the beginning of Lent, and during memorial services. To me, this is a particularly lovely part of the tradition – each family prepares its own koliva in memory of those they've lost, and then they share it with the congregation.

For some, including Elaine Panousis, who generously taught me to make the dish, the idea of eating koliva just for dining pleasure is unthinkable. And so was my including a recipe for it in a cooking story (with whipped cream, no less!).

Reader Marcella Cuonzo-Hadjipapas was certainly irate: "I was taken back by the disrespect given to a dish that is hardly regarded as a 'dessert.' Orthodox Christians consider koliva to be symbolic of death and resurrection, it is prepared during requiem and memorial services for the departed, and not as the end of a stuffing feast topped with whipped cream! What's next? Dinner at a cemetery? Rolling dough at the altar? If my Greek grandmother would read the column she would shake her head in disbelief."

It was certainly never my intent to give offense. I just wanted to share a dish I really liked (and, in my defense, similar dishes are served around the eastern Mediterranean without the religious ties). But maybe I was guilty of being too modern. It's hard for some of us to remember that food can be appreciated for more than simple deliciousness.

So many of our foods once had religious or ritual significance, but by and large those ties have been forgotten along the way. We serve lamb at Easter and hunt for eggs without giving a thought to what they once symbolized. We greedily tuck into sweet tamales completely oblivious to their role in Day of the Dead ceremonies – so similar to koliva itself.

We're obviously richer for being able to enjoy all these wonderful foods from so many different parts of the world, but in a way, maybe we're a little poorer for having lost the meaning that can accompany them. Particularly at this time of year, it's good to be reminded of that.

### Aussie father on the run ready for US jail

LOS Angeles detectives have told George Betsis he will be arrested and faces jail when he hands son Tomas back to the boy's mum, celebrity "baby listener" Priscilla Dunstan.

But the Sydney advertising executive, who has been on the run after he was accused of abducting his son from a school in Los Angeles 10 days ago, said yesterday it was worth it.

"I came over here to see my son. It's not like it was an illegal act to see him but it escalated," Mr Betsis, 49, told The Daily Telegraph from a secret location in California.

This photograph, taken at the weekend, shows Tomas, 10, and his father in the apartment where they have been hiding, spending a lot of time indoors since the LA Police Department issued a child abduction alert on April 3.

They have worked their way through Tomas' latest love - the entire series of Star War movies - and played Scrabble.

In between, Tomas has been talking over the internet to his step-mother, actress Mary Coustas, and the rest of his family and friends in Australia, who he has not seen since moving to the US with Ms Dunstan seven months ago.

"I'm cooking breakfast for him and I cook lunch and dinner, things we have missed doing together," Mr Betsis said yesterday.

"We are just catching up."

He has been in touch with the FBI and the LAPD to let them know he and Tomas are safe.

