

# CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS IN GREECE

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# THE “MARRYING OF FIRE”



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## THE MARRYING OF FIRE [1/5]

On Christmas Eve in many parts of Greece, they "marry" the fire. They used to take a wood that symbolized the housewife and had to be from a tree that had a male name, eg. an oak tree, a shadow, or a cedar, ... took a second that symbolized the housewife (it had to be from a tree that had a female name, eg almond, cherry tree, fig tree ...) and put them "crucified" in the fireplace.





## THE MARRYING OF FIRE [2/5]

The housewife had taken care of the fireplace in order to be clean, and when the housekeeper came in, he put the woods in the fire. The fire had to burn all night. So the wood they put were big logs, tumbrouks. Of course, whenever needed, others were added, keeping the flame all night long.



## THE MARRYING OF FIRE [3/5]

In many places, they threw plants into the fire, which made noise. Also, while they "crucified" the fire three times, they were throwing red wine and oil on it. It was also important who would first come in contact with this sacred fire. Many chose a child of the family they considered lucky and gave him a long stick to mix it. At the time he was stirring it, he was saying a wish that represented the farmers' hope: for goats, lambs, wheat, oil, oats, money, etc.





## THE MARRYING OF FIRE [4/5]

In many places, the housekeeper, brought in the house the share and the plow and placed them by the fire of Christmas. Then he put on the share coals of grill and incense, and holding it in his hands, he pampered the house, the warehouses and the stables.





## THE MARRYING OF FIRE [5/5]

"Marrying of fire" is a variant of Christoxylo and their difference lies in the number of woods used for fire. In many places, from Christmas to Fota Day, they put 12 spidles in the fireplace, for the guilders to see and not get off the chimney.



CHRISTOXYLO



Marrying of fire

# **THE CHRISTMAS FIRES IN FLORINA**

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## THE CUSTOM

In Florina, at midnight on December 23, the citizens set fires in various neighborhoods of the city, with the main focus on Heroes Square, next to the river of the city, Sakuleva. The setting of the fires is made of cedar wood, as this type of wood, when burned, makes heavy noise. According to the custom, evil is being purified in this way. Each neighborhood lights its own fire within a "competitive" climate for the nomination of the best one. A big feast takes place around the fires accompanied by tsipouro, wine and bean soup.



## CHRISTMAS FIRES IN FLORINA [1/2]

This specific tradition is considered to be pagan and it is rooted in antiquity, when they lit fires on December 21 (the smallest day of the year) to "leave behind " the small days and bring the biggest ones. In this way they were trying to please the Sun God, Apollo. Later in Christian times the custom is related to the fire that the shepherds lit to warm up the newborn Christ. So, the whole city set fires to heat up the Christ and the Virgin Mary.





## CHRISTMAS FIRES IN FLORINA [2/2]

The custom attracts hundreds of tourists in the city. The locals expect it all the time, with the older ones remembering their childhood and the younger ones learning from them. Every year, the city council is contributing more and more to the promotion of this custom.



2<sup>ND</sup> HIGH SCHOOL OF HORTIATIS

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