

Nazdrave!

This Bulgarian version of "Cheers!" is often heard at this time of year. Mid-February marks Trifon Zarezan, the Bulgarian holiday of the vine-grower – and cause for celebration in the country's wine-producing regions. The entire community will gather at the vineyards for the blessing of the vines. Ritual songs and dances are performed, and the vines are pruned and made into wreaths that the young women wear around their necks, in order that the fields may be fertile. Everyone then moves together back to the town centre for a fabulous meal and, of course, wine!



My friend Dinko provided this traditional recipe for Trifon Zarezan, saying, "It goes very well with red wine." Don't be put off by its name, which translates as "Artificial Rabbit."

Falshiv Zaek

- 1 kg beef or veal, cut into pieces
- 1 kg small onions
- 250 g butter
- 2 or 3 bay leaves
- 1 cup white wine
- ½ cup water
- salt and black pepper to taste

Place the meat into a large dutch oven. Add the onions on top of the meat, followed by the rest of the ingredients. Cover and bake at 300 degrees for 2-3 hours, until the meat is very tender.

For a true Bulgarian flavour, try this meal with one of the Blue Ridge wines, from Dinko's hometown of Sliven. Nazdrave!

By: Susan Eckerle Curwood