

Prosforo Bakers

If you are interested in baking Prosfora as an offering for use in the Divine Liturgy, please contact Fr Demetrios Gardikes.

How to Bake Prosfora (There are other ways to bake prosfora. This is one way)

Ingredients:

- *6 cups country or all purpose flour*
- *1 teaspoon salt*
- *2 cups tepid water (100 °F)*
- *1 recipe, Traditional Sourdough Starter {not reproduced here} or*
- *1 oz fresh yeast or*
- *2 teaspoons dry yeast*

Procedure:

If using sourdough starter, reactivate it the night before. Otherwise, dissolve the yeast in one half cup of the tepid water. Add 3-4 tablespoons flour and mix well. Let it stand for about 10 minutes or until doubled in bulk. Meanwhile sift the flour with the salt into a kneading basin and make a well in the center. Pour in the sour-dough starter or the yeast mixture and the remaining tepid water. Gradually incorporate flour from the sides of the well into the water until all the flour is moist, and knead until a smooth and elastic dough is formed. Cover the dough with plastic wrap, and let it rise in a warm place until doubled in bulk, about 2 hours. Knead the dough again for about 5 minutes and divide into 4 equal parts. Shape each part into a ball. Slightly flatten the balls into rounds, pressing with your palms, and flour them generously. Put the two rounds, one on top of the other, in a well-floured baking pan. Dip the religious seal in flour, shake off the excess and press it firmly onto the floured surface. Let the seal remain on dough for about 5 minutes and carefully remove it. Place the other two rounds, the same way, onto a separate pan. Cover and leave in a warm place to rise until doubled in bulk. Just before baking, prick inside and outside corners of cross with a wooden skewer to attain a flat-top appearance of the breads. Bake in a 400 °F oven for 15-20 minutes, taking care not to burn them. As soon as they are removed from the oven, brush them with a little water, using a pastry brush. Cover the altar breads with a cotton towel and leave them to cool on a rack.

Learn about Prosfora

[\(http://www.prosphora.org/\)](http://www.prosphora.org/)

[\(http://orthodoxwiki.org/Proskomedie\)](http://orthodoxwiki.org/Proskomedie)

Prosphora (Greek for "offering") is bread prepared for use in the [Divine Liturgy](#). A portion of it, known as the *lamb* (or *amnon*) is cut out during the [proskomedie](#) which is consecrated during the Divine Liturgy to be the [Eucharist](#), while the rest is cut up for the [antidoron](#), the blessed bread distributed at the end of the liturgy.

During its preparation, prosphora is stamped with an image usually including **IC XC NIKA** ("Jesus Christ conquers"), which is maintained during baking and then serves as a guide for cutting out the lamb during the proskomedie. Prosphora can vary in size and stamp in different traditions. Generally, the Slavic traditions use smaller prosphora with a simpler stamp, while the Byzantine ones use larger ones with a more complex stamp.

The **asterisk** is a [cross](#)-shaped object which is placed on the [paten](#), or diskos, during the [Proskomedie](#) and supports the covering. Historically, the asterisk represented the heavens, while the [paten](#) represented the earth. More recently the asterisk has also come to symbolize the star of the [Magi](#). As a result, it is often called "the star." The priest now prays, "And the star came to rest over the place where the Young Child was" as he puts it on the diskos over the Lamb. The **Proskomedie** (sometimes referred to as *prothesis* or *proskomide*) is the **Office of Oblation** celebrated by the [priest](#) prior to the [Divine Liturgy](#) during which the bread and wine are prepared for the [Eucharist](#). The Proskomedie is a prerequisite for the Divine Liturgy. The priest conducts the Office of Oblation behind the [Iconostasis](#) at the [Table of oblation](#) or **Table of Preparation** (also **Prothesis**, or sometime Proskomide) that is located to the left of the [Altar](#) Table. Proskomedie, when translated to English, means "preparation."



The Prothesis (Table of Oblation) represents the cave of Bethlehem where our Lord and Savior was born. Originally, the Prothesis was located in the same room as the altar table, being simply a smaller table placed against the eastern wall to the north of the altar table. During the reign of the Emperor [Justin II](#), the Prothesis came to occupy its own separate chamber to the north of the altar, in a separate apse, and joined to the altar by a door way. Another apse was added on the south side for the [Diaconicon](#). From this time on many large Orthodox churches were built with three apses on the eastern end of the church building. However, most smaller churches continued to be built having only one apse containing the altar, the Prothesis and the Diaconicon.



The Chalice with the Diskos and Star

The bread and wine are prepared for the liturgy on the Prothesis. The [chalice](#), a cup that contains pure sweet grape wine, and a round plate on a stand called the diskos or paten, that holds the bread that is made of pure wheat flour, are kept on this table. Usually, there are five loaves representing our Lord's miracle of feeding the *five thousand men besides women and children* with only five loaves of bread (Matt. 14:17-21). These vessels are normally decorated with iconographic engravings, Christian symbols, and the sign of the cross. The top of each loaf is impressed with a seal bearing the sign of the cross.

Also on this table is a special liturgical knife, symbolically called the [spear](#), that is used for cutting the eucharistic bread ([prosphora](#)) and a liturgical [spoon](#) for administering holy communion to the people. There are also special covers for the chalice and diskos and a cruciform piece of metal called the [asterisk](#) or star that holds the cover over the eucharistic bread on the diskos. A sponge and cloths for drying the chalice after the liturgy are also usually kept here. The Prothesis is decorated in a manner similar to that of the altar table. Above the Prothesis may be found various [icons](#), often one of Christ praying in Gethsemene: "Let this cup pass..."