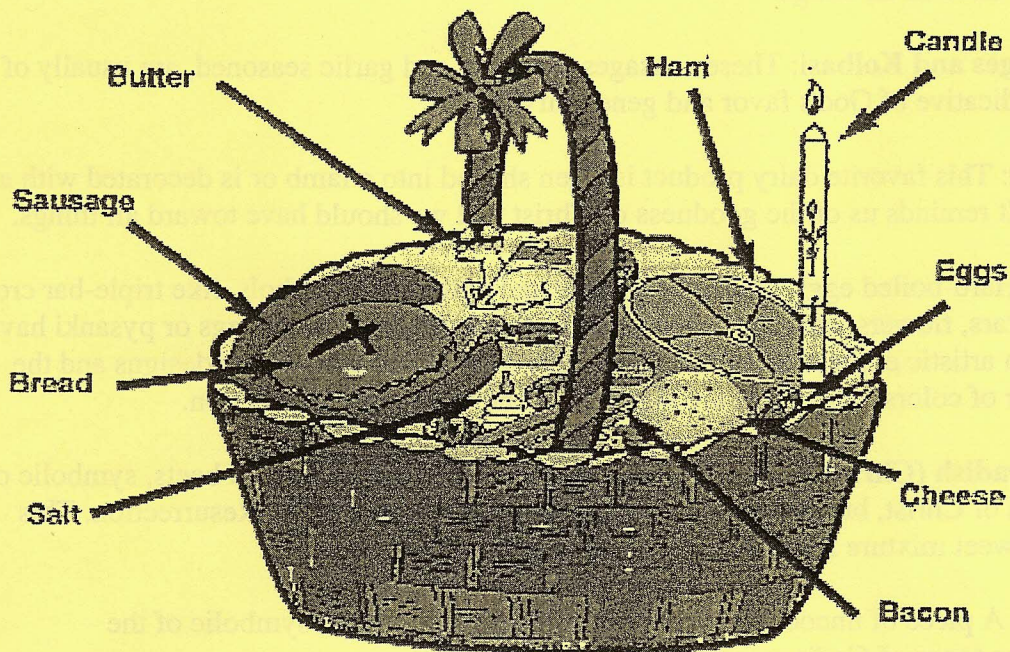


TRADITIONAL EASTER BASKET



A venerable tradition in the Byzantine Church is the blessing of Easter Baskets. It is a very symbolic and tasty custom. These baskets of food are brought to the church to be blessed after the Resurrection matins Service. The foods represent the foods abstained from during Lent: eggs, meat, butter, rich breads and more. All meals on Easter Sunday are eaten from the basket, so that no one need be busy with preparation of additional food on such a solemn Holy Day.

Each basket is covered with a cloth usually embroidered with the words "Christ is Risen" and containing a lighted candle, which is also usually decorated. The traditional basket contains the Easter bread called Pascha, Ham, Hrudka or Siret egg cheese), sausages, kolbasi, butter, hard-boiled decorated eggs (Pysanki), horseradish and beet mixture (Chrin), bacon, and salt. The contents of the basket vary from family to family in terms of additional meats, wine, pastries, candy and other treats. The traditional foods all have symbolic meaning which are briefly summarized as follows:

Pascha: The Easter bread - a sweet, rich egg bread decorated with braids, crosses, or plaits looking like a crown. It is usually round and is symbolic of Christ who is our true Bread of Life.

Ham: This meat is popular for its richness and symbolic of the great joy and abundance of Easter. Some people may also have lamb or veal.

