



"Martisor"

A celebration of Spring

With the traditional martisor celebration, for all Romanians. For nine days as of now, people offer each other little spring tokens.

The "martisor" tradition dates back from old times and it is in fact the holiday at the beginning of spring. It is said that "martisor" given in the morning of the first day of March was worn until the first tree would blossom, announcing the coming of spring. The jewel was then hanged on the trees branches, so the one wearing the "martisor" would have a good year.

In old ages the "martisor" was made of gold, which symbolizes wealth hanged on a string of silk made of red and white threads, symbolizing a face as white as a flower and as red as a rose.

Meanwhile here is some history of this Romanian tradition. Even if now, all over the country, "martisor" is represented through all kinds of images tied with a string made of two colors (red and white), which we wear on our chest, our grandparents marked the arrival of spring in another way. Like other feasts, the "martisor" traditions differ from one region to another.

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For example, in Bihor people collected rain water on the first day of March or in the days of the so called "old women"-the days from the 1st of March to the 9th of March. They believed this water would make them more beautiful and healthier. In the same way, girls in Banat, went into the woods and gathered the drops of early-morning rain or snow from the leaves of the trees to wash their faces. While they washed their faces, they spoke the verses of the "dragobete" about love: "Flower of (fraga) /Of the

month of March/To be loved by everyone." Here is what happens in Dobrogea . Just like in some areas the "martisor" was worn until the first blossomed tree was seen, here the superstition persists. The inhabitants of Dobrogea wore it until the coming of the birds, then they threw it in the sky thinking that their luck would be great. In Transylvania, people from the villages hanged the "martisor" made of threads of red and white wool on their gates, windows, the horns of their animals and the buckets. In this way, they said, they removed all curses, evil spirits and celebrated life, the regenerating power.

