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## Exhibition “Pinca – The Istrian Easter Cake”

The exhibition “...*san spekla pinču*” (“...I made a *pinca* cake”) by Mirjana Margetić and Tanja Kocković was opened in Gračišće near Pazin on the April 12, 2004, on the occasion of the Second Festival of the Wines of Central Istria. As the festival was opened on Easter Monday, the theme of the exhibition fittingly marked the Easter period. The exhibition was dedicated to *pinca*, a traditional Istrian Easter cake.

There used to be six or seven bread ovens in Gračišće, used jointly by families to bake bread and cakes for special occasions. The bread and cake baking tradition started to vanish in the mid-twentieth century. Thanks to the cooperativeness of women from Gračišće, this exhibition reminded of a time not so long ago, when the *pinca* baking custom was a very important part of Easter festivities. Even though it is still an indispensable part of the Easter ceremonies, there are less and less households where home-made *pinca* is baked.

The exhibition was situated in an old *konoba*<sup>1</sup> which had been out of use for a long time. In developing the exhibition concept, we decided to make a combination of objects collected and photographs taken in our field research. Most of the exhibits were borrowed from the holdings of the Ethnographic Museum of Istria, since barely nothing can be found in the area<sup>2</sup> any more. The photographs made it possible to illustrate the steps in the preparation of this Easter cake as clearly as possible.

The introductory part of the exhibition consisted of general texts dealing with Easter and associated customs in order to familiarize the visitors with the theme of the exhibition. This was followed by a chronological description of the *pinca* making process – from stocking flour to carrying the baked *pinca* cakes from the bread ovens.

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<sup>1</sup> Cellar space used, among other things, for preserving wine in barrels.

<sup>2</sup> The objects used for making the *pinca* cakes and carrying them to the bread oven were wooden, which is why they were not preserved or were used for other purposes.

The first exhibit was the *kasela*<sup>3</sup> containing flour bags purchased in today's shops. In this way, a parallel was drawn between the past and the present, linking the flour storing methods of before and now.

The preparations for *pinca* baking started in the Holy Week. On Wednesday or Maundy Thursday, the ovens used for baking bread and *pinca* cakes were cleaned and prepared. Since several families used one bread oven, they had to agree on a baking schedule. The *pinca* baking started on Good Friday afternoon and ended on Holy Saturday.

The part of the exhibition illustrating the *pinca* making process was marked by a butter churn to emphasize the difference in recipes used: Some landladies prefer lard to butter (made specifically for this occasion), as it made the dough prove better. Some mix the ingredients cold ("na mrzlo"), while others mix them over steam ("steple na pari"). A special wall panel showed an old recipe found during field research.

In the left corner of the *konoba* we placed an old table with a kneading board and some flour and a dough knife on the board. Women used to hand-knead the dough for the *pinca* on boards like the ones sold on markets nowadays. After the dough proved, it was incised by a knife to give the Easter Bread its specific shape: the lovely cracked crust after the baking. Women used what was left from the dough to make braided rolls for children (*sotoriči*). They would put an egg covered with a dough cross on top of each roll and bake them together with the *Pinca*.

The *Pinca* cakes were carried to the oven arranged on a wooden board and covered with a white cloth. If they were skilful, women would carry the board on the head. The owner of the oven would take care of the baking and the women would pass the *Pinca* baking time by chatting. In return for the baking service, a bundle of wood would be brought to the oven owner a day earlier. The baking process was illustrated at the exhibition by a wooden shovel (*lopar*) used to take the bread out of the oven, a bundle of twigs and photographs of bread ovens.

The exhibition was accompanied by an associated info leaflet. Thanks to the sponsorship of a bakery from Pazin, we displayed baked *pinca* and *sotoriči* cakes.

Translated by Sanja Novak

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<sup>3</sup> Wooden chest used to store flour.