Maslenitsa
What does “Maslenitsa” mean?

- Butter Week
- Carnival
- Pancake Week
- Shrovetide

History of Maslenitsa

• It is the oldest surviving Russian holiday, and dates back to the 2C AD.
• Originally was a pagan holiday to say goodbye to winter.
• It took place around the vernal equinox.
• Often took place in a carnivalesque atmosphere.
• Became a Christian holiday and was moved to just before the Lent fast (Великий пост).
What is “Maslenitsa”?  

- Historically people ate and drank to excess during this time to bring forth bounty in the coming year.
- Since the introduction of Christianity, Maslenitsa has taken place during a meatless fast preceding the even more strict fast of Lent, when dairy products are also forbidden.
- People stuff themselves with heavy foods and drink before the long period of abstention.

Picture source: http://www.segodnya.ua/img/forall/a/141134/66.jpg
Why Pancakes?

- This was originally a pagan holiday which said goodbye to winter and called for the coming of spring.
- Round, hot pancakes represented the sun, which they wanted to return and warm the land.
- There are other symbols of the sun during Maslenitsa, like round dances (khorovody), bonfires, circling the village on horseback with a torch, and pushing a wheel with a flaming torch around the village.

Picture source: http://www.interesniy.kiev.ua/imglib/_newimage/old/population/obychai/24/11opt.jpg
• Straw effigy called “Maslenitsa” represents spring mother goddess.
• The sun is her child.
• She is burned like a sacrifice at the end of the week to chase away winter and bring the sun and spring.
• Fires (burning of Maslenitsa and bonfires) represents
  – the ancient cult of the sun
  – Rites of purification by the destruction of evil spirits which could jeopardize the harvest

7 Days of Maslenitsa

Traditionally each day had a different theme.

- Day 2: Start of Merriment. Sledding.
- Day 3: Day of Sweets.
- Day 4: Day of Revelry.
- Day 5: Mother-in-law Day. Invite her over and feed her pancakes.
- Day 6: Sisters-in-law invited to parties/Remember parents.
- Day 7: Day of Forgiveness/Farewell to Winter.

Maslenitsa Week Festivities

- Eating blini
- Singing songs
- Round dances (khorovody)
- Sledding
- Sleigh Rides
- Swings
- Fist fights
- Bears
- Plays

Picture source: http://www.liveinternet.ru/users/icecoffin969/post97236544/
How to Make Blini

• Beat 2 eggs until you can no longer see any yellow from the yolks.
• Add a pinch of salt and 1 T of sugar (more can be added, if you wish).
• 2-1/2 to 3 cups whole milk.
• Add flour until the batter reaches the consistency of thin sour cream.
• You can add some melted butter or oil to the batter.
• Fry until cooked underneath in a non-stick pan in canola oil, sunflower oil, or other light oil.
• Flip and fry until the second half is done.
How to Eat Blini

• Eat immediately after making
• Serve with:
  – sour cream
  – jam/preserves
  – sweetened condensed milk
  – caviar
  – smoked salmon

Picture source: http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_zzw8w3yiwE4/Saq48Gvf85I/AAAAAAAAAdM/D991m0wm8gE/s400/RussianBlini6.jpg
How to Make Filled Blini

- Fill with meat, cheese, etc., then fold into a square. Can be fried before serving.
- Filling 1: Fried meat and onions: fry finely ground beef with onions, salt and pepper. Then fold into blini and fry on both sides. Top with sour cream.
- Farmer’s cheese
  - 10.5 oz farmer’s cheese or tvorog
  - 2 tbsp sugar
  - 2 tbsp sour cream
  - 2 egg yolks
  - 1 tsp grated lemon zest
  - Salt
  - Cream curd and sugar together; add egg yolks, sour cream, grated lemon zest and mix well. Fill blini, fold into squares, and fry on both sides.
  - Top with sour cream or jam.

Recipe and picture from: http://www.russlandjournal.de/en/recipes/main-dishes/pancakes-bliny/
Масленицей!