

SUMALAK SAYLI (SUMALAK FESTIVAL)

Sumalak Festival is the ceremony that is massively conducted in the initial days of spring. It consists of several customs, associated with the main dish-sumalak. According to some sources, sumalak has more than 3000 years of history. It is the only dish, which is prepared without adding salt. Sumalak is a very nutritious, delicious meal which is abundant of vitamins. For preparing sumalak red wheat is cleaned and washed in cold water. Then it is put to stainless dish and soaked for three days. When the wheat flashes, it is placed on a clean floor 1–1.5 cm thick and placed in a light but not under direct sunshine. Until the wheat grows, it is watered every day. When the wheat grass is in the pin (about 3–4 cm), it is cut into pieces and separated from the wood.

The grass is minced or squashed and mixed with water and its juice is passed through gauze. In this way the juice is taken three times and it is kept in separate vessels. Cotton oil is spotted in the pot and cooled. Next, flour and the juice are mixed and boiled in a strong fire.

Then, the secondly separated juice is added, once it is boiled, the third separated juice is added and the boiling process is continued. To prevent sumalak's burning out, nuts or small, smooth stones of nut-size are added and mixed with a wooden ladle non-stop. It is the longest to prepare meal and it is regularly mixed during 22–24 hours so that it did not burn from the bottom, and stones and

nuts are added. Once sumalak gets ready, its fire is extinguished and it is simmered in covered pot. Ready sumalak will be of brown color, thick like a slack and tastes sweet.

Expenses of wheat and other ingredients used in sumalak are covered by gathering money from households. Mainly women participate in sumalak cooking. The woman who is cooking sumalak should not only be a nice chef, but also should know ancient customs and traditions, songs and lapars, and should be honest in all spheres. Assistants of the chef should also be honest people. Because, there is such view that, while cooking sumalak, dishonest people's faces and eyes should not see it. Sumalak festivals are organized in steppes, gardens, small town squares, *registans*, markets, holy sites and *makhallas* (people's community) and last from one week to one month.

Sumalak is the king of the meals and constituted as delicious and tasty meal. It is prepared with participation of the entire makhalla. Before trying sumalak people, thankful of the fact that they survived until spring, prayed and asked for the good, successful and abundant year.

As a rule, various performances, feasts and songs accompanied sumalak festival. According to tradition, each person with a good intention had to stir sumalak that was boiling in the pot. Those, who were not lucky to do so, felt a bit upset.



In recent years, the habit of organizing sumalak festival with their neighbors and relatives by those people who has some desire, originated. The organizer is the person who has a desire of having a child, conduct a wedding, going to a long vocation and others, in the New Year.

On the eve of the Navruz, while cooking sumalak people forgot about their offences, quarreled people reconciled and it was believed that such a good deeds are happening because of Navruz and Sumalak. It bears mentioning that the traditions, customs and rituals associated with sumalak festival continue to be observed among the people of the present.

