

Midsummer's Night /Kupala's Night or St John's Night in Australia



Slavic people around the world still share some traditions with its Slavic and Scandinavian brothers which seem to have some roots in old pagan traditions.

The best example of that is probably Kupala Night (Noc Kupały) which is celebrated on the shortest night of the year on Northern hemisphere, generally the night of June 21/22.



The night is dedicated to the elements of fire and water, the moon, the sun, love and fertility while the occasion is also a day for prospective lovers to celebrate. While the origins of the name are unclear it is thought to have come from either the Russian word to 'bathe', the Slavic goddess of fertility Kupala, or possibly the Indo-European word kump meaning group or community.

Whatever its origins, many younger people take the opportunity to celebrate by organizing bonfires with dancing and partying into the night. One tradition sees people jumping over flames to cleanse and protect against evil and bad fortune. The most famous part of the evening however is when young women go down to the river and set wreaths with candles afloat. If the wreath is picked out by a bachelor, it signifies imminent marriage. Young women, followed by young men, also head into the woods and forests (on the pretence) of searching for the fern flower a legendary flower which supposedly only blooms on this one night in the year. Anyone who finds it will enjoy good fortune, power, wisdom and wealth. If the young man comes out of the forest wearing the young lady's wreath this is a sign that the two are joined in love.

Kupala's Night is often mixed up with or celebrated jointly with St. John's Day Eve (Noc Świętojańska) which is celebrated on the evening before the Christian St. John's Day (June 23/24). It is thought that this holy day originates from the time that the Christians tried to assimilate some pagan celebrations into the Christian calendar. It is believed that as St John made baptism with water so on this evening water would be consecrated to protect against evil and St. John became the celebration's patron.

Nowadays, in many Australian cities, huge events are organised on St. John's Eve (June 23) where these traditions meet and include the region where we live.

Float Your Boat – Lake Macquarie is one of the traditional competitions for boat owners to dress their boats with lights and taking parts in a flotilla parade. Held on our beautiful Lake Macquarie, spectators line the shores to watch boats passing all our suburbs around. In meantime there are a lot of activities taking places which include: live music, roaming illuminated performances, entertainment, or children's activities.





Photos: Danuta and Boguslaw Piotrowski and Public Domain

Not far away from the Lake Macquarie in Polish Club in Newcastle the Polish Song and Dance Ensemble Rzeszowiacy of Newcastle and Polish Song and Dance Ensemble Lajkonik of Sydney were performing in Sobotki Midsummer Night's Eve Celebration.





Photos: Polish Song and Dance Ensemble Rzeszowiacy of Newcastle

Author:



Danuta Piotrowska