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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Enjoy a taste of tradition at the National Hellenic Museum

Join in the traditional cutting of the Vasilopita on Jan. 7

CHICAGO, IL - The National Hellenic Museum is celebrating the New Year with the annual blessing and cutting of the Vasilopita, a popular tradition in Greek and Greek American homes.

Join us at 1:30 p.m. on Jan. 7 to experience this special holiday event. Find the hidden coin for good luck and a surprise gift.

This year, the Museum will feature traditional Greek folk songs and New Year's carols by two musicians from the ODEION School of Music. Eftihia Papageorgiou is a vocalist, pianist, and director of ODEION. She is also a lecturer of Music at Wright College. Petros Dragoumis plays bass and guitar, teaches music at ODEION, and is the author of several music books.

The music is sponsored by the Hellenic American Women's Council (HAWC), a nationwide non-profit organization whose mission is to identify and harness the tremendous talents of Hellenic American Women. HAWC encourages awareness of public policy issues and promotes women who wish to play leadership roles in their communities, the nation and their professional fields of endeavor.

The tradition of baking and cutting a special cake to celebrate the New Year dates back to the fourth century when St. Basil, known in the Orthodox church as the father of philanthropy, wanted to distribute money to the poor without handing them the money directly. He commissioned the baking of a sweetened bread, in which he placed a gold coin. The bread was then handed out to the poor, who considered themselves blessed to receive such a gift.

Today, the New Year tradition of Vasilopita, or St. Basil's Bread, continues in Greek homes and churches. The cake, flavored with orange and cinnamon to symbolize the sweetness of life, is baked with a coin or trinket inside, with the first piece, generally cut by the oldest member of the family, handed to the youngest child in the family. The person who finds the coin or trinket is considered blessed for the New Year.

"This is a popular New Year tradition that continues to be passed from one generation to the next," Dimitra Georgouses, the National Hellenic Museum's education and public programs manager. "We're pleased to be able to share these wonderful traditions with the larger community."

This family-friendly event is free with museum admission and no RSVP is required.

Photo 1:

Vasilopita at the National Hellenic Museum.



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Located in Chicago's Greektown, the sleek 40,000-square-foot National Hellenic Museum at 333. S. Halsted St. is both contemporary and timeless, connecting all generations—past, present and future—to the rich heritage of Greek history, culture, art and the Greek American experience. The National Hellenic Museum, previously known as the Hellenic Museum and Cultural Center, has been fulfilling this mission since 1983.

For more information, visit <http://www.nationalhellenicmuseum.org> or call 312-655-1234.

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