

## A story of Mărțișor



**Mărțișor** (pron. martzishor) is the traditional celebration of the beginning of the spring in Romania and Moldova, on the 1st of March. The day's name is the diminutive of March (in Romanian *Martie*), and thus means something like "little" or "dear March".

Nowadays, men offer women a talisman object also called *Mărțișor*, consisting of a jewel or a small decoration like a flower, an animal or a heart, tied to a red and white string. However, giving a little nickel tied to a red and white string is an old custom and was originally designated for both men and women.

It was believed that the one who wears the red and white string will be **lucky, powerful and healthy** for the year to come. The decoration is a symbol of the coming spring. A woman wears it pinned to her blouse on this day and up to two weeks after.

The story dates back to the time of the Roman occupation of Dacia (current Romanian territory) when an ogre kidnapped and imprisoned the Sun. People were sad, birds would not chirp any more, children weren't happy, and rivers stopped flowing. Still, nobody dared to face the ogre until one day when a brave warrior stepped forward and, after gathering strength from all the people, went to challenge the ogre.

He searched for the ogre for three seasons (summer, fall and winter) until he found its castle. They fought for many days until the ogre was destroyed. The exhausted hero, with almost no strength left, freed the Sun which immediately started to shine up in the sky, thus bringing Spring again into the world. Unfortunately the warrior died before he could see the nature coming back to life. His blood flowed onto the white snow until the last drop and where the drops fell beautiful snowdrop flowers appeared.

From that moment on, every year in spring people would twist white and red strings and offer Martisoare (the plural in Romanian) as lucky charms to the most important persons in their lives. The red color reminds of the warrior's blood and the white string is a symbol of health and purity. Together, they bring luck. The snowdrop is believed to be the first flower of spring.

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**Get your lucky Martisor & join your Romanian friends for an informal MARTISOR EVENING on Mon, March 1<sup>st</sup> 6PM at the Carnegie Mellon University UC (University Center), McConomy Auditorium.**

There will be a limited number of free Martisoare but don't worry if you get there after they are all gone - we'll show you how to make one – either way, you are lucky. **Expect nothing and get the most** of it – maybe you'll like the music, maybe you'll enjoy the photos ... some food ... learn some Romanian words ... maybe some dance steps ... make some new friends ... **we'll see** ... YOU THERE! ☺