

DESFOLHADA



“Desfolhada” is a tradition that is suffering changes with the development of agricultural technology, but there are some organized events that try to maintain alive these rituals.

DESFOLHADA



1st step: Preparing the land (April / May)

Plow the land : The oxen pull a manufactured instrument used to plow the land, which had already been fertilized.



Gradate the land: traditional method that intends to soften and stabilize the land, after being revolved before.

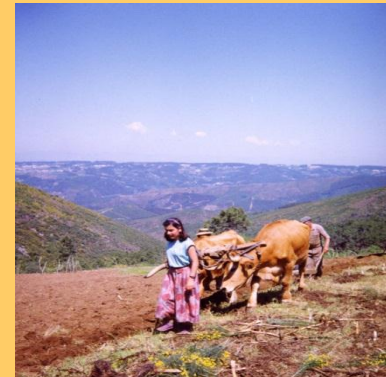


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2nd Step: Sow the corn (May / June)

Sow the corn: This work can be handmade or pulled by oxen, in which the person who sows leaves the corn seed separated a few inches from each other on a small trench.



Pare the corn: Men and women dig around the small corn stem, removing herbs and other smaller stems which are conditioning the corn from growing healthy and big. This job is done three or four time, before the harvest.

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3rd Step: harvest the corn (October) / Desfolhada

People cut the stems of the corn, which is later transported to a threshing floor, where people will gather to do the “desfolhada”.



Threshing floor

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This tradition is a community one, in the sense that neighbours help the family that has a “desfolhada”. All people help on the threshing floor, and they defoliate the corn cobs while women mainly sing popular songs, some of them are “challenging songs”, which are typical songs sang by women and men alternately.



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The main interest of the “desfolhada” is the hope that the participants have to find the King Corn, a type of corn cob that is red. Finding this kind of corn gives young men the right to give hugs to all participants and conquer a kiss or from a girlfriend or some girl he is secretly in love with.



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After all the work, people continue and make a party. They eat, drink, sing and dance. It is an autumnal party, the celebration of the harvest and life and it is a joyful moment.



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The corn cobs are stored in small buildings called “espigueiros” (granaries). Later it will be transformed in flour or used to feed animals (chickens, oxes, etc).



Espigueiros



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Some curiosities about the corn:

- ✓ People use the corn beard (in the top part of the corncob) to make tea. They say it is good for bladder problems;
- ✓ One of our most famous gastronomic product is made from corn flour: corn bread (“broa”);
- ✓ Some people use the corn cobs still unseasoned and bake it in the oven, with butter;
- ✓ We also have some sweets made of corn flour: biscuits, cakes and a type of cream.

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Some proverbs about the corn cycle:

(Abril frio e molhado enche o celeiro e farta o gado.)

Cold and wet April fills the barn and satiates the cattle.

(Em Agosto deve o milho ferver o carolo.)

In August must the corn boil the cob.

(O primeiro milho é para os pardais.)

The first corn is for the sparrows.

(Quem passarinhos receia, milho não semeia.)

Who is afraid of birds doesn't sow corn.

(Pela palha se conhece a espiga.)

By the haulm you know the cob.

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Some proverbs about the corn cycle:

(Maio jardineiro, enche o celeiro.)

May gardener, fill the barn.

(Água de Maio, pão para todo ano.)

Water of May, bread every year.

(Maio frio, Junho quente bom pão, vinho valente.)

Cold May, warm June, good bread, great wine.

(Quando em Maio troa (troveja), não é ano de broa.)

When it thunders in May, it isn't a year of corn bread.

(Em Outubro, sê prudente, guarda a semente.)

Be prudent in October, keep the seed.

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This song is a traditional song, not about “desfolhada” itself, but an elegy to the corn as a mean to conquer the loved woman.

It is sang by a very famous Portuguese intervention singer, José Afonso, who lived during “Estado Novo” times. He died some years ago.

Nowadays, when Portuguese people celebrate the 25th April, his songs are the most heard ones by the Portuguese.