



### Needlework and Croatian Foodways

Tereza Tesvich, the youngest of six daughters, was born in 1932, in the Dalmatian town of Sucuraj. In 1954, she met her husband Ante Tesvich, a Croatian-born oyster fisherman who had lived in Louisiana. Mr. Ante returned to Dalmatia to visit his parents when he met Tereza and married her when she was almost twenty-three.

Five months later, Mrs. Tesvich moved to Louisiana to be with her husband. They moved into his fishing camp on Bayou Robinson. Mrs. Tesvich, like many Croatian women, resumed her traditional role of gardener. She planted many vegetables that are typically grown in Dalmatian gardens including collard greens, cabbage, tomatoes, and green beans. She also had peach trees, fig trees, and an arbor with grapevines. Later the family moved to Port Sulphur, where she had many of the same type vegetables in her garden.

Tereza is also proficient in the traditional skill of needlework, which most all Croatia women. As a girl, she learned from her older sisters and her mother to card and spin wool with a hand-held spindle. She learned to knit with cotton and wool thread, to cross stitch, embroider, and to do fine handwork like cutwork, and drawn-work. Tereza especially enjoys knitting and cutwork altar cloths and tablecloths with traditional white-on-white embroidery, as well as knitted bed throws, table runners, embroidered pillows, and other pieces.

Now widowed, Mrs. Tesvich lives in Port Sulphur, and her family still gets together on Sundays for dinner. She is an excellent cook and is well known for her krustula (traditional cookies) and other Croatian pastries. Krustula are pastries made of eggs, shortening, flour, milk, sugar, baking powder, and lemon peel. The dough is cut into strips, tied into knots, fried, and dusted with powdered sugar.

Mrs. Tesvich has presented at the New Orleans Jazz Festival and at the St. Anthony's Day celebration at St. Patrick's Church in Port Sulphur, Louisiana.