

POLISH CULINARY PATHS

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**This book, i.e.
Polish Culinary Paths
was granted the following awards:**



DIAMOND CUISINE AWARD

in the prestigious contest organized by the
culinary platform Xinzhuoyi (China)



**PRIX DE LA LITTÉRATURE
GASTRONOMIQUE**

awarded by the Académie
Internationale de la Gastronomie



**GOURMAND WORLD
COOKBOOK AWARDS 2017**

Grand Prix in the category
DIPLOMATIC GASTRONOMY



**GOURMAND WORLD
COOKBOOK AWARDS 2017**

Grand Prix in the category
EASTERN EUROPE CUISINE



MAGELLAN AWARD

in the category “culinary guide” in the contest
“The best travel publications in 2016”

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*Magdalena
Tomaszewska-Bolałek*



Hanami
Warszawa 2018



Hańczowskie Mountains, Lower Beskid





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INTRODUCTION

Poland lies in the very heart of Europe. In the north, it fronts the cold Baltic Sea and to the south, it is separated from its neighbours by mountain ranges. For centuries the land's many rivers with plentiful fish, fertile soils producing abundant crops and forests full of game, berries and mushrooms have provided people with food and shaped the country's culinary heritage. However, these were not the only important factors in the making of Polish cuisine. What also played an important role were the relations with its neighbouring countries — sometimes warm, sometimes not so much — as well as contacts with inhabitants of other parts of the world. In both historical and contemporary Polish dishes we can trace the influence of other Slavic countries, as well as the influence of German, French, Italian, Jewish, Tatar, Arabic or even Chinese cuisine. And even though today in Polish cities one can choose from places serving food from any part of the globe, having undertaken their culinary journeys, Poles tend to come back to traditional, homemade recipes.

- Polish cuisine is evolving as dynamically as the country itself. Young chefs, who gain their experience in world-renowned restaurants, present traditional Polish dishes with finesse and in attractive new forms. By using modern techniques and creative serving methods, they surprise gourmets and bring out the taste, which is the essence of any culinary experience — taste that is based on tradition, good quality ingredients and respect for the guest who sits at the table.

- How does Poland taste? It is salty like pickles, herring and salt from the Wieliczka Salt Mine, sour like fresh apples, bitter like offal, black tea and herbs, and spicy like horseradish. You will find the *umami* taste in meat, fish and mushroom dishes and taste sweetness in delicious treats, aromatic honey and Polish hospitality. This book is an invitation to a journey through the Polish culinary paths.



TRZEBIATÓW
SZCZECIN

GDAŃSK

TORUŃ

GRODZISK
WIELKOPOLSKI

POZNAŃ

ŁÓDZ

KALISZ

ZIELONA
GÓRA

WROCLAW

JELENIA
GÓRA



KWIDZYN



OLSZTYN



KORYCIN



ŻELAZOWA WOLA



WARSZAWA



KAZIMIERZ DOLNY



LUBLIN



BIŁGORAJ



KRAKÓW



WIELICZKA





GULF OF SILVANIA

DANTZICK

LITHUANIA

W I A

Danzick

Königsberg
Brandenburg

Vilkomer
Knowne
Troki
T. P. Wilna
Cymiana

REGALIA
Bern
Pr

DUCAL PRUSSIA

Lida
Niemen
Grodno
Novogrodeck

LOW

OF

THE

MAZOVIA

na

Wladislaw
Gnesna
Brest

Dobrzyn
Plock

Bielstok

P O L

Kalish

Lencici

WARSAW
Czersk

Drobiez
Bresse
or
Bressici

Pinsk

GREAT POLAND

Lublin

LITTLE

O I

PROPER

Cracow

Taroslaw
Belz

Wolodomirtz
Krzemenec

POLAND

RUSSIA

PRE

Olmuts

Zator
Sandec

Premislaw
Sanock

Trembowla
Bär

LITTLE

LEMBERG

Camniec
Mochylan

POLAND

Halicz
Sniatin

WALACHIA

VIENNA

Leopolstat
Prosburg

Esperie
Caschaw

Tockay
Zatmar

Soczow

NEWHAUSEL

Neumark

Cronstat

GRAND

Clausenburg

Torgoro

BUDAPEST

Weissenburg

HERMANSTAT

PER

HERMANSTAT

HERMANSTAT

LOW

HERMANSTAT

HERMANSTAT



Map of Central Europe ca. 1600–1700

HISTORY OF POLISH CUISINE

Although the area of Poland as it is today had been inhabited much earlier, what shaped the local cuisine and culture to the greatest extent was the expansion of the Slavs, an Indo-European group, at the turn of the 6th century A.D. At that time, the Baltic Sea region was characterised by a very unfavourable, rather cold and humid climate. However, the 8th century brought a warming that resulted in the dynamic development of agriculture.

The Slavs were closely bound to the world of nature. For them, mountains, forests and fields were not only sources of food, they believed that nature contained a divine element. The cuisine of these people, who lived in harmony with nature, was based largely on cereals. They sowed millet, rye, barley, oats and wheat. Harvested grains were usually stored in clay pots. Like in many other parts of the world, cereals were very valuable and thus treated with respect. They were used to make groats (i.e. hulled kernels of various cereal grains, either kept as whole grains or crushed) and flours. Groats, in turn, were used to make mash, a dish that resembled gruel made of over-cooked cereal grains, flavoured with butter, salt, oils, vegetables and legumes. Sometimes groats were served cooked al dente. Flour was used to bake flatbread and to fry thick pancakes, as well as to make a special type of pasta — most often small ball — or chunk-shaped pieces boiled in water and served with different extra ingredients.

Many Slavic deities were prayed to for a prolific harvest. However, it was *Marzanna* that was considered the most important representation of Mother Earth. She was especially cherished in the current territories of Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. She was presented as a beautiful young girl wearing a wedding dress. Her attributes included a golden apple, ears of wheat and a key to the afterworld, with which she could call on the spring and wake the earth up from its winter sleep.

Polish Culinary Paths

The diet of the ancient Slavs also included plenty of legumes such as peas, lentils, beans, broad beans and vegetables. Most probably people were already familiar with pickling methods by then. Meat wasn't served very often and came mainly from farming. In villages people kept pigs, hens, ducks and geese, whereas local rivers supplied plenty of fish. The villagers' diet was supplemented with fresh and dried apples, pears, raspberries and plums. Local forests served as a pantry full of berries, herbs, edible wild plants and game. Since most people liked the sweet taste, many dishes were flavoured with honey. Food was consumed with hands or wooden spoons and served with beverages such as water, milk, beer and mead (an alcoholic beverage made by fermenting honey and water).

As food was considered extremely valuable, it was also offered in sacrifice to gods, spirits and demons in order to express gratitude for their kindness as well as to appease all hostile spirits and ensure protection from all evil. It was particularly important to win the favour of friendly guardian spirits that took care of the household and animals. These spirits were offered a sacrifice in the form of various tasty treats.

Today, the Slavic culture is back in favour and continues to inspire the world of literature, music, video games and culinary art. In Poland, there are numerous historical reenactment societies that popularise old traditions, cuisine and crafts. There are annual thematic festivals, e.g. Festival of Slavs and Vikings in Wolin, Stado — Slavic Culture Festival, and events organised by the Archaeological Museum in Biskupin.

In the 10th century, Mieszko I (922–992), a prince from the Piast dynasty, was baptised and thus incorporated Poland into the Christian culture. This event had a considerable impact on the development of various spheres of life, including the local cuisine. One of the key issues in this respect was fasting — abstinence from eating meat and reducing portions of food during certain periods throughout the year. It is worth mentioning that the concept of Christian fasting was established on the basis of the culinary aspect of humorism in the 3rd and 4th century A.D. The concept of humorism recommended balancing hot meals, the consumption of which led to over-excitement and bad behaviour. The products considered good for consumption were fish, frogs, snails, crayfish, turtles, all vegetables, sugar, sweets and spices.

Poland was one of those countries where periods of fasting were strictly obeyed for centuries. And since these restrictions applied to over half of the year, cooks had to really use their creativity in order to serve meals that were not only tasty but also in line with the strict rules. In consequence, the prohibition of eating meat contributed to the development of fish dishes.

In the late Middle Ages, kings and aristocrats could savour fresh bread and rolls. Bread made with fine white flour was mostly sought after. The wealthier classes of society had access to exotic oriental spices such as pepper, ginger, cinnamon, cardamom, saffron and nutmeg. From the 14th century, courts and wealthy mansions were supplied with raisins, figs, citrus fruit and almonds. In terms of meat, serving it on a roasting-spit was considered the most sophisticated manner. Unfortunately, everyday food for ordinary people was far from exquisite. The diet of those less privileged was based on fresh and pickled vegetables. Cabbage, which has been cultivated on the Polish land since the 10–11th century, caught on well. The area also abounded with beetroots, parsnips, turnips and carrots. People relished dairy products. Meat and groats were seasoned with melted butter. People ate cheeses, which were dried at that time and thus were very hard. Beer remained the main alcoholic beverage. Mead and wine (which was flavoured with honey) were seasoned with spices or fruit. They were kept for special occasions, even among the wealthiest class. Even though feasting required a lot of products and substantial financial resources, on special occasions even the poorest indulged themselves in moments of fun and joy. They celebrated mostly during religious feasts and weddings, which — even in peasant families — lasted at least two days.

In the 16th century Polish cuisine became heavily influenced by foreign culinary traditions. This was thanks to Bona Sforza, the Italian-born wife of the Polish king Sigismund I the Old (1467–1548). Bona brought a lot of new flavours and products to local tables. Italian chefs showed their Polish peers how to eat lettuce, asparagus and capers. They taught how to season turkey and patés — dishes made of minced meat baked with vegetables, spices, eggs and sometimes flour. People also started to appreciate more the appearance of dishes and dining tables. Sauces, thick mixtures based on various products with characteristic flavours, were given particular attention and were served especially in combination with meat. Fish was usually served with wine sauces, with a sweet and spicy touch. Everything was seasoned with spices, citrus fruit, vinegar, pistachios, almonds and local specialties, such as dried fruit or horseradish. Not everyone liked such culinary novelties, the Polish landed gentry often ridiculed foreign aristocratic tastes and favoured simple, local food instead. Guests from abroad were surprised with Polish cuisine — with its archaic oriental taste which combined spices with sour ingredients and unusual components, such as beaver tail, which was treated as a fasting product due to its appearance.

The 17th century saw a rise in nutritional inequality among different social classes. The poor ate mainly vegetables and groats, combined with legumes.





Interiors of a cottage reconstructed by the Museum of the Kielce Village — Ethnographic Park in Tokarnia



Meat and fish were served less often than in previous centuries. In terms of alcohol, strong distilled spirits (*gorzałka*) were gaining popularity. On the other hand, the nobility (a higher social class originating from the knights) and other wealthy people lived well beyond their means following the old Polish saying *Zastaw się, a postaw się*, which could be translated as “Throw a feast, even if you have to get a loan.” Parties organised in manors were incredibly lavish and the abundance of served delicacies was breathtaking. The skill of organising parties and the virtue of hospitality were much appreciated, which resulted in a huge pressure connected with establishing one’s social position. The nobility would emphasise the uniqueness of Polish culinary traditions. Their cuisine was described as exquisite and opulent. With the aim of preserving local culinary traditions and leaving it for future generations, Stanisław Czerniecki, a soldier, a patriot and a king’s chef for the Lubomirski royal family, created the first Polish cookbook entitled *Compendium ferculorum or collection of dishes*. The book, published in 1682 in Krakow, comprised 333 recipes combining all the best flavours of the old-Polish cuisine, including a variety of fish dishes and poultry dishes (in particular capons — castrated and fattened roosters) though not so many recipes for sweets, even though they were already quite common in Poland along with sugar itself. There were many recipes for dishes that reflected the Baroque culture, where the key elements were decorativeness, an original form and an element of surprise. An example of a Baroque dish was a capon in a bottle (i.e. the whole rooster served in a bottle). In order to surprise guests seated at the table, the cook had to carefully remove the bird’s skin, put it into a glass bottle and then pour a mixture of eggs, milk and spices inside. The remaining space was filled with salted water, and then the whole bottle was cooked in a huge pan filled with boiling water. In the high temperature, the mixture swelled giving all guests an impression of a real bird enclosed in the bottle!

In the 18th century beer was very common. It was brewed in municipal breweries and on the estates of the landed gentry. Wealthy citizens could pick and choose not only from a vast range of Polish alcoholic beverages, but also beers imported from England and from the Czech lands. Homemade stronger distilled spirits were also popular. Vodkas from Gdańsk or Goldwasser — a herbal liqueur with strong anise notes and small flakes of 22 karat gold suspended in it — were highly acclaimed both in Poland and abroad. In wealthy houses people drank spirits with their breakfast, right after tea. Less affluent citizens consumed homemade vodkas with the addition of marmalades or gingerbread. At the same time, light wines from abroad were becoming increasingly popular.







Other commonly drunk beverages included tea and coffee. Interestingly, there is a Polish contribution to the world's history of coffee. After the siege of Vienna in 1683 and fighting off the Turkish invasion of Europe, Jerzy Franciszek Kulczycki (1640–1694), a soldier and a diplomat, chose bags with coffee grains as his war trophy and decided to open the first coffee shop in Vienna. He is also believed to have created a recipe for coffee sweetened with honey and served with milk or cream. In Poland, coffee gained popularity at the turn of the 18th century. Citizens of Gdańsk were among the first to appreciate it. At the beginning, drinking coffee was a privilege of the wealthiest classes but soon the landed gentry also added coffee to their diet. Polish-style coffee was very strong and served with thick cream. Black tea arrived in Poland a bit later, around the 1750s (and green tea is not that popular even today). New beverages required new ways of serving. Silver and cheaper tin tableware were being replaced with porcelain and faience. The way of serving main courses also evolved — deep bowls gave way to flat and smaller serving plates.

- Sweets were gaining increasingly more attention. Tables were full of crispy treats with sesame, marzipan and Turkish delight. People indulged in eating soufflés, cakes and ice-cream, along with all French dishes.

- The wealthiest mansions had their chefs who were brought over from France. King Stanisław August Poniatowski (1732–1798), who was above all praised for his contribution to the world of art and culture, decided to change the eating habits of the Polish nobility. He was an advocate of light cooking and moderate alcohol consumption, which was partly due to his stomach problems. For instance, he would drink spring water. Paul Tremo (1733–1810), the court chef of king Stanisław August Poniatowski, born in Berlin to a French family, became well-known around Europe. Not only did he manage to delight the court with French delicacies, but he also created recipes for lighter versions of Polish specialties which became a foundation for modern culinary art. While Tremo was responsible for the taste, the setting of meals and the provision of a joyful atmosphere was in the hands of Franciszek Rzewuski.

- King Stanisław August Poniatowski was very happy to invite guests to his court and established the tradition of the famous Thursday Dinners. They were banquets gathering many representatives of the world of culture, art, science and politics. Jan Szyttler (1763–1850), Tremo's apprentice at the court, continued his master's legacy and also contributed to shaping Polish cuisine that combined local culinary traditions with French, Lithuanian and Belarusian influences. Szyttler was not only an excellent chef but also the author of dozens of books on culinary art. At that time, a preference for lighter dishes was not only



the result of the expansion of foreign cultures but also it also reflected a pursuit of slimness.

The end of the 18th century saw a rise in fashion for English culture. In the world of food and cooking, it translated into a huge popularity of English breakfasts, pastries eaten with 5 o'clock tea and a liking for punch — an alcoholic beverage made of tea, wine, fruit and sugar. Unfortunately the last decades of the 18th century were also the beginning of turbulent times in Polish history. Between 1772 and 1795 the country underwent three partitions, during which Poland was divided and its territories seized by Russia, Prussia and Austria. As a result, until 11 November 1918, which is the day of the establishment of the Second Polish Republic, Poland disappeared from the map of the world. However, even then, and despite all odds, the spirit of unity helped the Polish nation save its culture and cuisine from oblivion.

Gentry manors were surrounded by vegetable cultivation lands, orchards and bee-gardens. All harvested products were then made into preserves for winter. Well-stocked cellars were always full of pickled vegetables, meat, aromatic fruit juices and marmalades, as well as homemade cordials and liqueurs. The best products were kept for special occasions and holidays. Luxury and foreign products, such as citrus fruit, could be bought in cities.

The nobility kept their cooks despite the difficult political and economic situation. However, at the same time, financial reasons forced many ladies to participate in kitchen management and even in meal preparations. The economic factor contributed to an increased popularity of published self-help books with guidelines concerning economic household management and recommendations on good and cheap ways of feeding the whole family. The most famous and often quoted cookbook author of that time was Lucyna Ćwierczakiewiczowa (1829–1901), a columnist, an author of articles in female magazines and an activist for women's emancipation. Her biggest bestseller was entitled *365 obiadów za pięć złotych* (*365 dinner for a fiver*), published in 1858. Her other books were also very popular, many of them being reprinted numerous times while she was still alive and reaching sales of over 100,000 copies — a huge success in those times. The fact that her recipes are still utilised, and modified versions of her books are widely available in bookshops today, just shows how strongly she influenced the Polish culinary world.

Household management and skilful menu planning were both important matters at the beginning of the 20th century. In their search for culinary knowledge, young and inexperienced housewives read not only popular cookbooks but also magazines and newspapers.

zebra na dół. Rozbiera ją, krawce się najpierw przy kości od A do B i oddziela się przez to mięso od kości. Następnie krawce się plastry poprzeczne, jak rysunek pokazuje, poszczególnie je się, cieniując od C do D przerywną, tak każdy plaster z osobna lubi masła. Drugi sposobem strone tej pieczeni rozbióra się tak samo.

Cyber cielęcy.



Na rysunku pokazano sło, jak pieczeni taką na pół misce ubijają, a litery A, B, jak i w jakim kierunku je przecinają. Następnie krawce w plastry poszczególnie od litery A na dół do C i jak plaster na plasterem cieniują a przez całą pieczeni wzdłuż, potrzebny. Plastry sąbrane ubijają na kocioł w osobie. Tak samo rozbióra się także pieczeni skopową i wioprawa.

Pieczeni skopowa, ćwiartka.



Pieczeni się najpierw wzdłuż aż do kości, a potem się w poprzek aż do kości plastry cieniują, które cieniują wzdłuż przy kości oddziela, je łąka już cieniowaniem przy kości oddziela, je łąka już nie do wzięcia na talerz. Tak samo postępuje się z drugą stroną czyli połową.

Ogonowa pieczeni wołowa.



Układa się na półmisek, jak na rysunku. Obeznają wszelki tłuszcz, przecinają wzdłuż na połowę i krawce cieniują poprzeczne, jak widać z rysunku.

Polęgwiwa wołowa.



Literami A i B oznaczone są na rysunku końce polęgwiwy, cieni i grubość. Te części oddziela się i odkłada jak mało soczyste. Następnie krawce się skosnie jaknajcieńsze plastry od cienikiego ku grubemu końcowi, jak to na rysunku literkami oznaczone.

Pieczeni zajęcza.



Zając ma silne i twarde kości. Najlepiej rozbiórać go w kuchni na desce. Ostрым i mocnym nożem kuchennym oddziela się najpierw skoki od ciała. Robi się to w ten sposób, że się noż w należyte miejsce zapuszcza, a następnie czołm czołżem noż wbija, aż kość przecięta. Skoki przecina się podobnie na 3 lub i kawałki, a potem

w których zostały zastudzone. Można jednak zastudzać we blaszanych, karbowanych, w dużych i małych. Wtedy z tych form wyjąć, w tym celu przed podaniem obeznają wierzchu ścieraczką zmączaną w gorącej wodzie, przystole krem, odwrócić formę, i krem łatwo wyjdzie. Ładnie wyłożyć w środku w dużej formie, a po boku z małych foremek.

LEKIE KREM I BEZ ŻELATYNY.

Biła śmietana z cukrem.

$\frac{1}{2}$ l. śmietany 1 proszek waniliowy, 12 dkg. cukru

ważną śmietanę ubijać w zimnie, aż zacznie gęstnieć, dawać po trosze cukier, zapach i ubijać dalej, dopóki żąnkach, względnie spodeczkach. Można ją zabarwić i uluczonym.

Biła śmietana z owocami.

przez owoc $\frac{1}{2}$ l. śmietany 12 dkg. cukru, el. likieru lub araku proszek wanilji.

żkami, poziomkami, lub wiśniami bez pestek, Owocem razem z owocami i ułożyć w kształcie stożka, przez sito owoce, np. porzeczkę, agrest, wymieszać cukrem. złożyć salaterkę do połowy kompotem, a na mietanę, lanej salaterki dać tarte biszkopty, a na to kompotem biszkopty nasiąkły. Na wierzchu dać bitą śmie-

Krem czyli pianka z białek,

3 jajek 4 białka, 1 łyżki cukru

KREM, KNEDLE I MASŁO.



138. Wyłożyć formę biszkoptami.



139. Krem gotowy.



137. Wlać do formy krem.



140. Zawijanie śliwek do ciasta.



138. Po ostudzeniu wyrzucić.



141. Masło z foremki ściąga się.

Y. Cappiello
1926



CZEKOLADA

E. Wedel

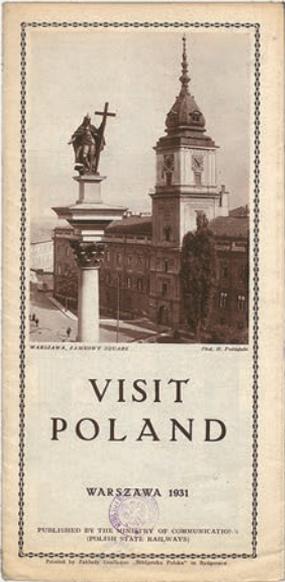
WARSZAWA

LES NOUVELLES AFFICHES CAPPIELLO - DEVAMBEZ - Société Anonyme PARIS

Between WWI and WWII (1918–1939) Polish cuisine was based largely on meat, even though it was relatively expensive. Beef and mutton were most sought after, with offal and poultry also being quite popular. Fish was served not only during fasting periods. The season for crayfish, the biggest delicacy, started in spring, an important dish was crayfish boiled in water or water with wine, eaten without cutlery. The wealthiest gourmets also ate more sophisticated specialties such as a French-style crayfish soup or a cardinal sauce with crayfish butter. Delis and exotic shops offered a wide variety of products such as coffee, chocolate, tea, alcohol and hams, which were sliced on demand. By the end of the 19th century, with the arrival of professional coffee roasting shops, coffee enthusiasts could also enjoy their favourite drink at home. Even earlier, in 1851, Poland saw the opening of the first chocolate factory by Karol Wedel. The company sold chocolate and candies, as well as the Polish ever-lasting delicacy called *Ptasie Mleczko* (literally “bird’s milk”) — a soft milk soufflé covered with chocolate, and *Torcik Wedlowski* (Wedel torte) — wafer cakes with layers of peanut cream, covered with chocolate. City restaurants and cafés were the centres of social life. Poets, writers, actors, singers and ordinary citizens all met there to have a snack and a coffee among a cheerful crowd. English culture was on the rise again. People drank 5 o’clock tea and organised bridge evenings, which were combined with dinners. Small snacks, finger food and treats were served while playing bridge — the specificity of the game meant the food couldn’t be too absorbing.

At the beginning of the 20th century, technical novelties arrived in Poland, which made working in the kitchen easier. Cookers were already standard equipment but *remoskas* (a *prodige* in French — a metal electric mini-oven used for baking cakes and roasting meat), fridges and freezers were more expensive. The way people ate in cities and in villages differed, which was partly the reason for the development of tourism at that time. In the 1930s the first guest houses were established in the provinces. City dwellers wanted to get away from the noise to relax and enjoy the simple pleasures of life and traditional food — sometimes even based on peasant cuisine. By inviting city dwellers to their mansions and organising attractions such as forest walks, mushroom picking and sleigh rides, impoverished mansion owners in villages could repair their budgets.

The outbreak of WWII resulted in problems with food supply. Even a few years after the war (until 1948 to be exact) food was still rationed. Nevertheless, Polish cuisine managed to survive even that. In many places people installed street food stalls that served simple dishes. People worked hard to rebuild the



FROM THE TOP:

Eat sugar! If you work hard, you need to eat a lot of sugar.

Sugar strengthens bones, gives strength and health!

Drink Franck coffee with a mill!

Eat fish and you will be healthy!

The best chocolate is Turin style chocolate!



country demolished by war, so caloric value together with good value for money mattered much more than sophisticated flavours. Later, street food stalls appeared in the vicinity of markets as well.

- The 1950s saw a slow rebirth of the restaurant market, even if in a form that was nowhere near the pre-war standards. Due to continuous problems with product supplies, a special institute was created, whose task was to prepare menus for mass catering facilities based on available food products. Cheap food was served in milk bars that were open to everyone. Some milk bars have survived the era of the Polish People's Republic (the official name of Poland used between 1952 and 1989) and still remain popular among large crowds of city dwellers. Somewhere around the 1940s and 1950s, a recipe for one of the most popular cakes in Warsaw was developed — the famous W-Z cake, made of cocoa sponge layered with jam and whipped cream. Some claim that the cake was named after the Warsaw W-Z Route (W stands for *wschód* [east] and Z for *zachód* [west] in Polish), next to which the first cake shop selling this delicacy was located.
- Continuous shortages in supplies resulted in the boom in the illegal trade of meat, alcohol and luxury goods. Demand always rose before Christmas, when people searched for foreign dried fruit, nuts and, above all, aromatic citrus fruit that was given as Christmas presents together with chocolate (or chocolate-like products).
- In the 1960s cookbooks came back into fashion again. Recipes and tips for household management were also published in the daily press and magazines. Authors who created recipes and wrote about cooking had a difficult task — coming up with culinary ideas based on a very limited number of products required extensive creativity. Again — just like a few hundred years earlier — the concept itself and an element of surprise played a key role. Preparing a dish made with simple ingredients so that it resembled a much more sophisticated meal was considered a culinary achievement.
- The 1970s were a decade that saw a slight improvement in living conditions in Poland. It coincided with the period when Edward Gierek (1913–2001) was in power. Some novelties appeared on the market such as hot-dogs, hamburgers and Polo cockta — a drink produced from the 1970s until the beginning of the 1990s — the Polish answer to Coca Cola. Recently polo cockta reappeared on shop shelves but the drink doesn't have much in common with its original version.
- Street food stalls were selling the legendary *zapiekanka* — i.e. halves of bread à la baguette cut lengthwise with mushrooms, onions and cheese on top, baked in the oven. Another very popular delicacy was Prince Polo, a crispy wafer covered with chocolate, which was first produced in 1955 and is still produced



History of Polish Cuisine

today. In Pewex and Baltona shop chains, where products were bought with the foreign currency, above all American dollars, one could buy toys, jeans, cosmetics, as well as alcohols and food products, otherwise unavailable on the market.

- An integral part of the landscape of the People's Republic of Poland were tremendously long queues. Queuing intensified particularly in the 1980s, when, due to considerable product shortages, the government introduced ration stamps (vouchers that entitled a person to purchase certain products in state shops).
- Despite severe product shortages, some people are still nostalgic about the People's Republic of Poland. They evoke it in jokes, anecdotes and even in design. Some young designers allude to objects and mottos characteristic for that period of Polish history.
- The political transition that resulted in the overthrow of communism in 1989 was followed by economic changes. A free market economy was introduced and reprivatisation of state-owned enterprises began. Shops, restaurants and catering companies popped up in Poland. It became easy to import food products from different parts of the world, which increased the number of restaurants and bars serving foreign dishes. Italian and Vietnamese cuisine, as well as fast-food and sushi, seemed to be doing especially well.
- The 21st century witnesses the development of modern Polish cuisine. After many years of experimenting with ingredients and tools that had been unavailable earlier, the time has come for fusion and Polish cuisine. Chefs who learned their profession both in Poland and abroad, have begun to create their own menus that reflect Polish tradition. The dynamics and creative efforts in the development of the Polish cuisine were crowned by the awarding of the first Michelin star in Poland, won in 2013 by a Warsaw-based restaurant Atelier Amaro, run by chef Wojciech Modest Amaro. Today, young chefs and confectioners are just as good. They treat their guests to delicious food served in line with top world trends. On the streets of big cities one can find food trucks that sell burgers, Tex-Mex cuisine, dim sums and vegetarian and vegan dishes. Pop-up restaurants keep appearing in most unusual places.
- The 21st century is not only the time of restaurant and confectionery sector revival. Social changes, involving eating habits, have also resulted in Poles paying more attention to food quality, nutritional properties and production methods. We have more and more culinary initiatives such as festivals, purchase co-ops that deal with organic food distribution and local food markets. The Poles have fallen in love with cooking, which is reflected in the establishment of different culinary studios in many parts of Poland. Together with



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a growing interest in cuisine and cooking, more books are being published, more blogs are appearing, and more courses and studies promoting knowledge about food are being organised. This in turn has resulted in an increasing number of initiatives combining cuisine and art. One interesting example of such an original approach to food is the Food Think Tank Foundation from Wrocław. It is a group of specialists from various industries — cooks, potters, scientists and artists — who develop culinary experiences revolving around different topics. The most recent initiative of the Food Think Tank is an installation called “Forest,” which ends with a grand dinner that combines elements of nature and new technologies.

Nowadays, when visiting Poland, not only does one have the opportunity to spend a pleasant time appreciating beautiful landscapes and monuments — there are also plenty of offers for foodies: food trips, culinary routes, Polish cooking classes, grape harvesting and breakfast served at a shared table and other numerous culinary initiatives and private dining events.











GROATS, BREAD AND FLOUR PRODUCTS

For centuries, groats — hulled kernels of various cereal grains, either kept as whole grains or crushed — were an integral part of diet of the inhabitants of Polish lands. They were used for thickening soups and as a side dish or an addition to meat dishes. The Slavs often ate millet, which today is eaten mainly as millet groats. Unfortunately, in the 16th century all types of groats began to be associated with simple, peasant cuisine. The good thing was that, despite such a negative perception, groats hadn't disappeared completely from the diet of the wealthier classes. It was the introduction of potato cultivation that worsened the groats consumption, as potatoes quickly replaced cereals on the menu. Today, a big comeback of groats can be observed due to their healthy properties. Yellow fine millet groats (*kasza jaglana*) are easily digestible, gluten-free, have anti-viral features and are rich in both lecithin and vitamin E. The larger barley groat (*kasza jęczmienna*) is light grey. Due to the level of fineness, the following are distinguished: hulled barley (*peczak*) — whole grains of barley without hull, and pearl barley (*kasza perlowa*) — i.e. grains cut into pieces. Barley is a source of folic acid and B-group vitamins. It also supports circulatory system and lowers the level of cholesterol. Buckwheat is another tasty and healthy type of groat. It is a gluten-free source of protein, rich in antioxidants. It is a bit spicier and has a more distinctive flavour than than millet or barley groats. In the past, farina — fine wheat groats — used to be popular and was served with milk to kids or as an ingredient of desserts.

Every summer Trzebiatów, a village in northern Poland, celebrates Groats Day. The event commemorates a day from the history of the village. Long ago Trzebiatów engaged in a dispute with the nearby village called Gryfice. The dispute concerned rights to navigate on the Rega, a river which flowed into the Baltic Sea. Those who controlled the river could trade goods and fish in the sea.



For this reason, both villages used to attack each other on a regular basis. One evening, in the 15th century, one of the guards protecting the city walls, while climbing a 14-metre tower, accidentally dropped a bowl with containing hot groats. It fell on warriors from Gryfice, who — as it turned out — were trying to secretly come close to the walls of Trzebiatów. Burnt, the soldiers started screaming so loud that they woke up the entire village. In the end, the enemy ran away and the tower from which the bowl fell was named the Groats Tower.

Throughout the centuries, apart from groats, bread was also an important staple food in Poland. Bread has a very long history around the world. It was eaten in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece and ancient Rome. The Slavs inhabiting the Polish lands used to make a special type of flatbread, made of flour, water and salt, sometimes with spices and herbs. Breads as we know them today were first baked in Poland in the Middle Ages. The first bakers' cooperative was established in Krakow in the 1250s but convents and monasteries also largely contributed to the Polish culture of bread baking. It is connected with Christian symbolism, in which the body of Christ is described as "bread," and his blood as "wine."

Each Polish region is famous for its own oven-baked specialties. First accounts of *Prądnicki bread* baked in the south of Poland appeared in 1421. It is a traditional dark bread made with sourdough (a small amount of dough from previous bread-making process that contains bacteria and yeast), with a characteristic thick and crispy crust. *Cebularz lubelski* — Lublin onion bread — is a flatbread topped with a mixture of onion, salt, poppy seeds and oil. This specialty was first prepared by Jews from the Lublin area in the 19th century. The Pomeranian province is famous for various types of pumpernickel — heavy dark bread sweetened with a bit of honey, whereas in Łódź one will come across buckwheat bread made of mixed flour and buckwheat groats. Today's bakeries offer a wide range of breads and rolls. Tasty flour products can also be found at culinary festivals and making bread at home is becoming increasingly popular.

Bread not only compliments meals but also constitutes a very important element of the traditional Polish culture. It has always been respected, which was reflected in the way people handled it. In the past, bread wasn't cut with a knife but broken with hands and the very act of sharing it with others created interpersonal ties. If someone sought reconciliation and reached out a hand with a piece of bread in it, they had to be forgiven. Bread was a symbol of luck, wealth and was considered a gift from God so it was forbidden to throw it away. It also accompanied a lot of important festivities. The Slavs used to make a specialty called *korowaj*, which was decorated with plant or animal



motives and served during wedding celebrations. This old Slavic tradition has survived until today, although in a slightly different form: now young couples are greeted by their parents with bread and salt when they arrive at their wedding reception. Moreover, bread has been mentioned in many legends and tales. Long ago, famine came to the city of Gdańsk. The monastery in Oliwa — the Cistercians abbey that was established in Oliwa (currently a part of Gdańsk) in 1188 — was giving out its provisions to the poor in an act of generosity. Among those queuing for bread was a local rich man who had everything he needed. When he was walking back home feeling very pleased with himself, he met an old man who asked him for a piece of the nice smelling bread. The greedy rich man told the pauper that he didn't have any bread in his bag, only a stone. So the old man walked away to search for food elsewhere. The mean rich man was severely punished for his bad deed as the bread he had been carrying on his back turned into a heavy stone.

Other symbolic forms of bread include the Christmas wafer — a thin, usually white wafer that people share on Christmas Eve. In Poland, the whole of Christmas time is family-oriented. People prepare Christmas dishes at home with their loved ones. According to the tradition, on the Christmas Eve table there should be twelve dishes, which symbolise the twelve Apostles that accompanied Jesus Christ. Table setting and decoration is also very important: hay is put under the white tablecloth to symbolise Jesus having been born in a stable. On the table, there is always an additional empty plate — for the spirits of ancestors and for an unexpected guest. The tradition says that if someone unknown or poor knocks at your door on Christmas Eve, you should invite them to your table. The Christmas Eve dinner starts when the first star appears in the sky. Delicious food, a Christmas tree that smells of the forest, singing carols and going to the Midnight Mass — a special mass that takes place at midnight on the 24th December — are some of the key elements of a Polish Christmas.

What always accompanies bread is butter. A slice of fresh, still warm bread served with butter and sprinkled with salt or covered with thick cream and sprinkled with sugar are the taste of childhood that many Poles enjoy invoking. In the 1970s, two American historians of medicine created a myth that continues to live its own life even today. They came up with a theory that the habit of spreading butter on bread had originated in Poland. They attributed this revolutionary culinary concept to none other than Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543). Apart from observing the sky, this outstanding astronomer, cleric, doctor and the author of *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*, also worked



on the research concerning the spreading of diseases. He allegedly discovered that bread was the main source of germs. Due to the fact that at those times people stored bread for a very long time and during that time it was probably dropped on the floor a number of times, so was the habitat of many microorganisms harmful for humans. Spreading butter on such bread immediately revealed the layer of dirt on it, which was supposed to discourage people from eating it. As the tale has it, this way, a slice of buttered bread was a key factor that contributed to bringing the epidemics in Olsztyn under control.

The origins of sweet pastry baking can also be traced back to bread's popularity. The development of the art of confectionery was inseparably connected with sugar becoming more and more common. For dessert, the Slavs ate dried fruit, nuts and dishes with honey. In old-Polish cuisine, even flavoured sugar was considered a dessert on its own. It was also used for a variety of jams and marmalades and for making candied citrus fruit. Other popular treats were spices (e.g. honey-candied ginger) — at the time considered real delicacies. At numerous parties, layer cakes and other French-style cakes with fruit such as pear and quince were served. Sometimes cooks came up with more eccentric ideas such as layer cakes with crayfish or sauerkraut.

One of the favourite desserts among the Poles are doughnuts (*pączki*) — round treats made with yeast dough, deep fried in lard and sprinkled with icing sugar or covered with icing. Their origins can be traced back to ancient Rome. To begin with in Poland they were made with bread dough and filled with fat-back. The tradition of serving them sweet was probably born in the 16th century. Doughnuts are an integral part of Fat Thursday, which is the last Thursday before Lent (the time of repentance and abstention from eating), which precedes the most important celebration in Christian culture — the Resurrection of Jesus Christ (Easter). According to the tradition, in order to guarantee oneself luck and well-being for the following year, one has to eat at least one doughnut that day. Another delicacy Polish people eat on Fat Thursday are angel wings (*faworki* or *chrust* in Polish, which stands for “brushwood”) — a deep-fried crisp ribbon-shaped pastry. They were first created, probably by accident, when an inexperienced pastry chef threw a slice of doughnut dough into piping hot oil. Northeast Poland is a region where the tree cake (*sękacz*) — a tall cake that resembles a trunk with knots — is very popular. Not only does it look unusual, but it is also exceptional in terms of its traditional preparation method at home. It is a lengthy process that includes baking it on a rotating metal spit over open fire. The first tree cakes were probably made in Poland in the Middle Ages, with the use of a recipe from the Yotvingians — the Baltic people who inhabited



the area of today's Suwałki region (*Suwalszczyzna*, in northeast Poland). It is said that a tree cake was also served at the wedding reception of King Sigismund II Augustus (1520–1572).

In Kazimierz Dolny, a beautiful small town established in the 11th century, one can buy roosters made of dough that taste a bit like plait bread. According to the legend, a long time ago a devil came to live in the area. He really liked the black roosters bred by local people, and as he was very greedy, he soon ate almost all black roosters in the neighbourhood. Only one smart black rooster survived. He was saved by the Reformed fathers, who consecrated the devil's hiding place. The scared devil ran far away never to return and lead anyone in town to temptation again. To honour the smart bird the people of Kazimierz Dolny started baking sweet-dough roosters. Today, they are sold in local bakeries and cake shops. Yet, the town is worth visiting not only for culinary reasons. In the area, one will find numerous monuments (a castle complex, churches, wells), as well as picturesque walking routes in the Loess gorges. Each year the town hosts a folk music festival, a film festival and meetings with Jewish culture.

Another delicacy are *andruty kaliskie* — thin, crispy wafers from the city of Kalisz. The first written accounts of them date back to 1812. This sweet, crispy snack was sold in small stalls, especially in the area of the municipal park in Kalisz.

Traditional sweets and pastries are eaten very often in Polish homes. Gourmets can also enjoy specialties prepared in line with modern Polish cuisine and the fusion style. For a few years now, the development of the craft confectionery market has been observed. There are now many small companies that manufacture chocolates, pralines, macarons, chocolate creams and other delicacies. Original flavour combinations and exquisite packaging make such sweets an ideal gift. Glass cases in cake shops proudly display many original sweets and desserts. Contemporary cuisine skilfully plays with shape, form and names. Today, one can find the good old apple pie in the form of a traditional pie, aromatic pralines, extravagant, deconstructed desserts or even a cocktail! In summer, one will not be able to resist the temptation of appetising, carefully crafted ice-cream. Among many flavours, the ones worthy of special attention include fruits popular in Poland, such as strawberries, blueberries, gooseberries, blackcurrants and cherries.

Wheat flour was used not only to make bread and sweet pastries. It was also used to make *kluski* — small dumplings shaped into round chunks, boiled in water and served as a side dish. Today, they are served especially as an addition to meat meals. In the past, when people ate in a more modest manner,



especially in rural areas, *kluski* were served with fat and pork scratchings — chunks of pork skin or skin with fat that become crispy when fried in oil. Along with the growing popularity of cultivating potatoes, in the second half of the 18th century *kluski* had potatoes or potato starch added to them. Among the most popular *kluski* one will find Silesian dumplings with a distinctive small hole in the middle. Together with the Silesian roulade (a local meat dish) and boiled red cabbage, they constitute the foundation of a special Sunday dinner in the region of Silesia. There is also a legend from Wrocław associated with the Silesian dumplings. A long time ago, there was a peasant who lived near Wrocław who had lost his beloved wife. The woman had been good-hearted, beautiful and well-known for her delicious cooking. She used to make the best and most tender Silesian dumplings in the area. After she had died prematurely, the man decided to go to Wrocław to pray. When he got tired, he sat in the church of St. Giles and fell asleep. He had a strange dream: in his sleep he saw angels with a lot of joyful souls. All of them were happy apart from his beloved wife, as his huge sorrow and grieving didn't let her have peace after death. The wife ordered her husband to stop grieving, and, in order to comfort him, she left him a magic pot full of Silesian dumplings. However, he had to remember to leave at least one dumpling every night otherwise the pot would not fill up again. He woke up frightened and in cold sweat. To his surprise, he saw the pot in front of him that his wife had been speaking about in his dream. The tempting smell and hunger were so intense that he forgot what his wife had told him. When he took the last dumpling, it turned to stone, raised up and was attached to the church gate. The gate was named the Dumpling Gate, and the pot has remained empty ever since.

- Another popular version of this dish is *kluski leniwe* (lazy dumplings), made with the addition of potatoes and, in some regions, with curd cheese. They are served in many different ways: with melted butter and fried bread crumbs (minced or grated old bread) or with melted butter, sugar and cinnamon.

- In Poznań, for a change, one will find the famous steamed yeast *pyzy*, served instead of potatoes or groats. They taste best when served with roast duck or goose, but can also be made sweet, with fruit and sour cream. Nowadays, classic *pyzy* are also served as street food in a similar way to Chinese *bao buns*. In eastern Poland, one can try *kluski* which are grey and have a variety of fillings, among them *pyzy* made of potatoes and *cepelinai* — dumplings made of potatoes, or potatoes and flour, filled with meat, curd cheese or mushrooms.

- Filled dumplings, which originated in China, were already being eaten in Poland in the 13th century. The first recipe for *pierogi* (Polish name for filled



dumplings) was brought to Poland from Kiev by Saint Hyacinth (1183–1257), who remains their patron until today. According to the legend, he used the recipe in 1241 during the sack of Krakow. He himself, cooked the dumplings and in this way he saved people from famine. Since then, he has also been referred to as Saint Hyacinth, the patron saint of *pierogi*.

The Lublin province is home to many different types of dumplings. They come with red beans, herbs, broad beans and potatoes, cabbage and mushrooms, lentil, buckwheat and with a sweet filling — blueberries. One other variety is called *kolduny*, which are most often filled with chopped beef and onion. These small dumplings are usually served in broth or chicken soup, similar to Chinese *huntun*. At Christmas Poles eat *uszka*, which look like small ears (they are literally called ‘little ears’ in Polish) and are filled with mushrooms.

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MEAT, FISH AND DAIRY PRODUCTS

Meat has had a special place on Polish tables for centuries. Roast, fried, stewed or smoked — it has always been an important part of meals. Many meat dishes owe their distinctive flavour to their long marinating times. Due to the fact that in some periods of history meat was not that common, it was usually associated with festive dishes and exquisite meals for special occasions. Today, Poles mainly eat pork. Beef, rabbit meat, as well as mutton and veal — especially from the region of Podhale — are more expensive and eaten less often, although they are highly appreciated by gourmets. Game is also a delicacy. Meats with low fat content such as beef and game used to be dried. Other ways of preventing the meat from going off were smoking and pickling. However, the latter method has been completely forgotten over the centuries.

Contemporary Polish cuisine is heavily based on products of animal origin and therefore there are many popular and well-known dishes with their addition. One special dish is *bigos* — sauerkraut stew — which today combines stewed sauerkraut, meat and other ingredients. The old-Polish version of this meal was a bit different: no vegetables were added and the dish was based on chunks of meat with vinegar and lemon juice. There were different types of *bigos* — with fish, crayfish and game. *Bigos* based on sauerkraut was created as a cheaper and more available version of the famous speciality and it is in this form that it has survived until today. The dish combines various tastes: sour, sweet, salty and umami. Its structure, which includes different food textures, is also interesting. Its distinctive flavour is created by various ingredients which differ according to regions or even individual homes. So we have *bigos* with mushrooms, dried fruit and nuts, honey, red wine and even caramel. The choice of meat, with beef, pork and various sausages as a must, also influences the final taste of this famous delicacy.

Meat lovers will be happy to see Polish shops and restaurants now offering a wide range of cold meats, such as hams, sirloins, loins and sausages.



Sausages are usually made of pork meat with additional ingredients. Among the most famous specialties one will find thin, dried *kabanos* sausages, smoked dry *kindziuk* that has a distinctive sour and spicy flavour, *Lisiecka* sausage made of ham, dry Hunter's sausage or the famous dry *Krakowska* sausage. White steamed pork and beef sausage is an excellent addition to *żurek* — sour-rye soup. This is one of the dishes traditionally served for Easter breakfast. There is a tale related to *Piaszczańska* sausage that smells of herbs and garlic. In the times of king Casimir III the Great (1310–1370), people from the village of Piaski Wielkie couldn't sell their hams in Krakow. They complained to the king and he promised that if they managed to get the sausages through the city gates without anyone noticing they would be given the right to trade their goods there. A few smart people came up with an idea to hollow out thick sticks and put the sausages inside. Thanks to this trick even the city dwellers could enjoy the taste of this excellent cold meat.

- The fame surrounding Polish sausages has even reached America. One of the popular types of hot-dogs in Chicago is called Maxwell Street Polish — Polish grilled sausage, onion and mustard served in a white bun with poppy seeds. It is worth noting that this fast-food specialty has been on the culinary map of Chicago for over 70 years.

- Speaking of fast-food — an interesting thing is that, in the past, Krakow, which used to be the capital of Poland, had its own version of hamburgers. It was called *maczanka krakowska*. It consisted of a quick-fried pork neck that, stewed in its own juice with spices and onion, then put between two parts of a roll and the sauce made while cooking poured over it. No one knows when the dish was first served but it definitely was one of the favourite snacks among horse-drawn carriage drivers and students.

- One more thing that definitely deserves proper attention is bacon. It is an integral ingredient of many dishes such as *zapiekanka* (half baguette cut lengthwise served hot with various toppings), meat roulade or scrambled eggs. Pork lardons made of it are used to add taste to *pyzy*, *pierogi* and other types of dumplings. It is served cold, cut into thin slices after being cooked with spices, salt and garlic. Bacon can also be smoked, fried or roasted. Other ingredients that are very often used in Polish cuisine are fatback and lard. The latter is not only fat for frying but also serves as a base for a bread spread (made with the addition of pork scratchings, bacon, salt and herbs). A thick slice of freshly baked bread with a layer of lard and sliced gherkin is a perfect snack and an excellent addition to high percentage alcohols.

- Another highly popular type of meat in Poland is poultry: chicken and turkey. Ducks and geese are not so common due to their cost. On the other hand,



as geese used to be a very popular delicacy, efforts are now being made to restore the tradition of eating goose meat, especially given that Polish birds are greatly appreciated on foreign markets. To restore goose eating, a campaign has been established by the name of “Goose meat on St. Martin’s Day.” Dishes prepared with goose meat are served in restaurants associated with the Goose Culinary Trail in the Kuyavian-Pomeranian region. St. Martin’s Day is celebrated on the 11th November, which coincides with Polish Independence Day. In the Christian culture, Saint Martin is the patron of children, hotel and vineyard owners and millers, and the goose along with a horse and a pitcher are his attributes. Goose meat tastes best in autumn and winter and the most popular dishes include: roast goose, goose broth, paté and goose breast — first marinated, then smoked, and served with skin. Another specialty made in Poznań to celebrate St. Martin’s Day are the delicious St. Martin’s Croissants made of Danish pastry filled with white poppy seeds, almonds, raisins and nuts, and covered with icing. Let us, however, return to the goose. There is also one non-culinary tradition related to the bird — stripping it of its feathers, which are later used to make duvets and pillows. In the past, bedding was one of the crucial elements of the bride’s dowry. Stripping off the feathers was always organised in winter. It was a form of self-help but also an occasion for a girls’ meeting, as it was only girls and women who took part in this custom. Following the monotonous work with feathers, parties were organised with homemade pastries and drinks.

- In Poland, poultry was kept not only for their meat. The eggs of hens, geese and ducks were used in various dishes, such as scrambled eggs and omelettes, or added as a thickening ingredient. On top of that, they were an indispensable ingredient of many sweet pastries.

- In many countries, Poland being one of them, the egg is a symbol of spring and the beginning of a new life. It is also the symbol of Easter — the most important event in the Christian calendar. It is celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon in spring. This family day starts with an Easter breakfast, served right after the Resurrection Mass — a special early morning mass. Easter breakfast comprises of eggs served in various different ways, cold meats and sour-rye soup, which has a very distinctive flavour. Other sweet delicacies include the *baba* cake covered in icing, cakes with dried fruit and nuts and the *mazurek* cake — a flat cake with jam, toffee cream or nut paste. Easter breakfast always starts with sharing food that was blessed in church the day before, on Saturday. In Poland the tradition of blessing food emerged at the turn of the 14th century, although there are regions where this habit has only become common practice since WWII. Today, on Holy Saturday people go to church with small baskets filled with eggs, cold meats and sausages, bread, cakes, as well as salt





and horseradish. All these items are eaten no earlier than the Sunday following. Not all eggs are eaten during Easter. Some of them (or alternatively emptied egg shells called *wydmuszki* in Polish) are decorated in different manners — painted, covered with stickers or etched. Such eggs are called Easter eggs.

• Apart from meat, Polish cuisine makes use of offal: livers, hearts, lungs, kidneys, stomachs, brains or tongues, all of which are served hot or cold. They are also used for the production of cold cuts. Among the products that contain offal one will find tongue in jelly, blood sausage — a type of sausage made of offal, blood and groats, and tripe — served as a soup, the main ingredient of which are beef stomachs cut into strips.

• However, Polish cuisine is not only about tasty meats, cold cuts, poultry or eggs served in a number of ways. Rivers, lakes and the Baltic Sea have always supplied people with plenty of fish. The Slavs who inhabited Polish lands ate a lot of sturgeon. Unfortunately, today the population of this fish in the Baltic Sea is considered extinct so only farmed sturgeon or other species of this fish are available on the market. Other sea fish varieties popular in Polish cuisine include cod, herring, flounder, sprat, salmon, sole and turbot.

• Common and valued since the Middle Ages is cod. This comes as no surprise, as it has a tender and delicate white meat that is good for baking, frying and steaming. Another important fish species is herring. It is incorporated not only in the everyday menu but also in dishes served at Christmas and Easter. Herring is served fried, baked and boiled. Fresh herrings are marinated in salt, vinegar and oil, as well as served with different sauces: based on cream, yoghurt or tomatoes. Herring with gherkins are by far the best snacks to accompany vodka. In the past, there was a tradition preceding Easter called “herring hanging.” In rural areas herrings were nailed to trees — it was a sign that Lent was over and also a punishment for the fish, which had dominated the menu for the preceding 6 weeks, replacing meat.

• Flounder, an asymmetrically shaped fish, is also a popular Baltic Sea fish. The legend has it that she owes her horrible looks to her vanity. A long time ago there was a contest to identify the Lord of the Seas. The title was to be given to the fish that would be the fastest swimming between the Hel Peninsula and Gdańsk. Instead of setting off quickly to win the race, the flounder — which at that time was one of the most beautiful sea creatures — wasted a lot of time trying to make herself look pretty. She didn't win the contest and when she saw the new Lord of the Seas, the herring, her face contorted in anger, eyes popped out and she lay on her left side. And so it remains in this strange position until today. Despite its awful looks, flounder is very tasty, especially fried or baked. Two regional cuisines — Pomeranian and Kaszubian — are especially rich in sea fish dishes.

In these regions, among many local specialities, one will be served scrambled eggs with eel, fried cod livers and fried roe.

- Polish lakes and rivers are also full of fish. Pike, pike-perch, tench, bream, roach, perch and trout are a great supplement to the meat cuisine. In the vicinity of many lakes popular among tourists one can find local fish smoke-houses and fish bars. They serve delicious food and offer fresh fish and fish products to go. Smoked whitefish with firm tasty meat, delicate vendaces or greasy eels are perfect snacks. Bream, roach and perch are fried in a pan with a bit of salt and seasoning. They taste best served immediately after frying, with their meat tender and their skin crispy. Fried fish can also be marinated in vinegar with chopped onion. Pike-perch and tench taste best fried or served with creamy and mushroom sauces. Trout, on the other hand, is usually grilled or baked and served with the herb butter.
- Milk and various dairy products are another popular element of the Polish everyday menu. The Slavs who inhabited Polish lands used milk, butter and cream in their cuisine — especially in the spring and summer seasons. They also ate soured milk, i.e. milk which was first poured into pots and then given time to go sour. It is a drink that has a distinctive flavour and quickly quenches thirst during hot summer days. Soured milk was also served as a side dish to other dishes and used to make curd cheese. Even though Poland, unlike France or Italy, is not associated with a land of cheese, the latest archaeological research reveals that the oldest ceramic dish with holes — which had most probably been used for the cheese production — comes from 6000 years B.C. and was found in the region of Kujawy.
- Cheese is made in many regions of Poland. The Podhale (a region situated in the south of the country, at the foot of the Tatra Mountains) is famous for its *bryndza* and *oscypek*. Both products were granted the protected trade name under the Protected Designation of Origin. *Bryndza* is a soft cheese with a characteristic taste. It is made of sheep's milk or a mix of sheep and cow's milk. The first written records of *bryndza* date back to the beginning of the 16th century and due to its long tradition, the cheese has a lot of uses in the Polish cuisine: it is used as an ingredient in the filling for dumplings, *knedle* (i.e. potato dumplings), added to pancakes, used as a bread spread and added to casseroles and one-pot baked dishes. *Oscypek*, on the other hand, is a smoked sheep's milk cheese, which was traditionally handmade. It has an intense salty taste. It is eaten on its own, in sandwiches or added to various dishes. Grilled pieces of *oscypek* served warm with sweet and sour cranberry preserve is a delicious snack. One can find out more about the cheeses and their production methods by setting off on the culinary *Oscypek Trail*. One of the most popular cheeses in Poland is curd cheese,



of sour taste and lumpy texture. It is served both sweet, for instance with honey, and savoury — with chives. Curd cheese is also used in fillings for *pierogi* or other types of dumplings. Moreover, it is a very important ingredient of sweet pastries without which it would be hard to imagine an Easter paskha (a cake made with curd cheese, egg yolks, dried fruit and nuts), aromatic cheesecakes or rolls with cheese.

- Korycin, a village in the Podlasie region, is famous for its *koryciński* cheese made with unpasteurised milk and formed into 30 cm radius flattened balls. Its production began in the 17th century. According to the accounts of soldiers who took part in the battle near the Kumiałka River, there was a Swiss man among them that knew the art of cheesemaking. In return for supplies and shelter, he showed the owner of the nearby mansion how to make cheese. Today, *koryciński* cheese is served in many ways: fresh, as an ingredient of salads and appetisers, or added to sauces, casseroles and baked dishes.

- The culture of cheesemaking has been dynamically developing in Poland for the last few years. As a result, the Polish culinary scene has witnessed the appearance of new types of cheese that surprise with taste, form a delicious addition to the dishes of modern Polish cuisine and go perfectly with locally produced wines. The enthusiasm and engagement of cheesemakers mean that gourmets can choose from a range of products made on small farms or by family-run businesses: goat's cheeses from Sery Łomnickie, specialties by Malinowa Zagroda, Stowarzyszenie Macierzanka, Kaszubska Koza Farm or blue cheese from Rancho Frontiera.

- Two other important dairy products are butter and cream. Butter is used for frying, baking and sauce preparation, whereas cream is an ingredient of many sweet and savoury dishes. It is added to many Polish soups such as tomato soup, cucumber soup and dill soup; it is the basis for creamy sauces served with meat and fish; and finally, it is indispensable in sweet pastries and in whipped cream for decorating cakes and filling cream rolls and puffs. Fryderyk Chopin (1810–1849) was a great enthusiast of dairy products. This outstanding composer had an interesting culinary taste, which partly resulted from his delicate nature and proneness to illnesses. During his frequent trips abroad, he tasted different flavours and ate in the finest French restaurants but was always nostalgic about Polish products and cuisine. Chopin drank a lot of milk, even as an adult, which was quite extraordinary in his times. He liked curd cheese and rye bread. The composer also had a weakness for sweets and always enjoyed eating chocolate, raspberry marmalade and freshly baked doughnuts.









VEGETABLES, LEGUMES, MUSHROOMS AND FRUIT

Good and tasty vegetables are an important ingredient in many dishes. Rich bouillons are made with carrot, parsley root, celeriac and leek. The vegetable that has a special place in the Polish cuisine is beetroot. Sugarbeet is used to make sugar and red pickled beets to make beetroot soup that has a beautiful scarlet colour and can be served hot or cold.

One of the oldest ways of preserving vegetables was to pickle them. It was a method probably known to the Slavs. Back then people used to pickle wild plants, mushrooms, sorrel, turnip leaves, broccoli leaves and tomatoes, whereas today cucumbers and cabbage are more popular. In the past there was also a tradition related to pickling cabbage. In the rural areas, after the harvest, families or sometimes whole communities met to prepare supplies for winter. Cabbage was pickled in large, wooden barrels. The whole process started with washing the plant and removing the first layer of leaves. Then the vegetables were cut in half and their hard, middle part (the heart) was removed. Finally, cabbage was chopped and salt was added. Popular flavour-enhancing products included: caraway seeds, pepper, horseradish root, carrot, apples and oak or cherry tree leaves. Successive layers of combined ingredients were pressed down until the cabbage juices appeared. When the barrel was full, for the first week it was kept in a warm room in order to initiate the fermentation process. Later, it was transferred to a cooler place, e.g. a basement. The preparation of pickled cabbage (sauerkraut) was accompanied by singing and was a joyful time. The ready product was later used in soups, one-pot dishes or served as an appetiser. Cucumbers were pickled in brine and, like in the case of sauerkraut, their taste was enhanced by adding horseradish, garlic and leaves. In some regions of Poland barrels filled to the top were sealed tightly and then placed at the bottom of a well or pond for a period of time. This was supposed to guarantee a special taste of pickles.



For centuries a sour flavour has also had a social meaning. According to past superstitions, if a pregnant woman had a liking for sour food with a distinctive taste, it meant she would have a boy. A liking for sweet products meant a girl would be born. However, it was not only food preferences that gave clues as to the gender of the baby. If a pregnant woman looked especially nice, she was believed to have a boy. If she had problems with complexion and generally looked unattractive, she was said to be carrying a girl (who was stealing her beauty).

Today, pickles are back in favour again. It is related to their healthy properties as well as to the latest culinary trends. Numerous studies have shown that pickles are rich in vitamins, mineral salts, they improve the digestion process and increase immunology. On top of that, they are low in calories. Poles who are looking for new flavours have introduced specialities from different parts of the world into their diet and enthusiasts of pickles — apart from eating sauerkraut and pickled cucumbers — also enjoy *kimchi* (Korean pickles) and *tsukemono* (Japanese pickles).

Nowadays in Poland one of the most popular vegetables is the potato, brought to Europe from South America. Potatoes were introduced by King John III Sobieski (1629–1696), and as kings and the royal court were fond of them, they were often planted or even imported. People started cultivation them on a larger scale in the middle of the 18th century, and by the 19th century, they were common not only among the wealthy citizens. Before potatoes paved their way to the kitchen tables, they were kept in gardens as decorative exotic plants. Even Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), a Polish national poet, columnist and translator, wrote an unfinished mock-heroic poem entitled *Potato*.

One tale has it that the use of potato in cooking in Poland was discovered purely by accident. When the king brought some strange potato tubers, he immediately ordered his gardeners to plant them. After a while, a small plant grew out of the soil. However, its flowers or fruit weren't edible, so the angry monarch ordered the plants to be dug up and burnt. The potato tubers were also thrown onto the fire. The next day, someone took the potatoes out from the ashes, opened them and tasted. It turned out they were delicious. Nowadays, potatoes baked this way, served with a sausage cooked over the campfire, are one of the most popular dishes eaten during trips and picnics.

The inconspicuous potato tuber came in many varieties and therefore had many uses. Baked and boiled potatoes were served as a side dish or as an ingredient of lunches and dinners. What is more, the potato is a vegetable that has been given different regional names all over Poland. In every Polish region one can try interesting local dishes that contain potatoes. In the north-east

of the country, there is a popular savoury dish called *babka* — a pie made of grated raw potatoes and bacon. In Silesia, one will find white ring-shaped Silesian dumplings and black dumplings made of raw potatoes. The cuisine of the Podhale offers *moskole* — thick pancakes with pureed boiled potatoes baked in the oven. They taste great with butter, *bryndza* cheese, sauerkraut, mushrooms and meat sauces.

- Another newcomer from America that has recently reappeared on the menus of chefs and gourmets is topinambour, also known as the the Jerusalem artichoke or sunroot — a species of sunflower. It had been cultivated in Poland since 1730 but never gained as much popularity as the potato. Today, it is back in style not only due to its interesting flavour carrying a slight taste of nuts, but also due to its healthy properties. Topinambour roots are rich in iron and potassium. It is recommended for people suffering from diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and anaemia.
- For hundreds of years legumes have been an important source of proteins and other nutrients. The Slavs were familiar with broad beans, lentil and peas. The cultivation of beans became more common in Europe in the 16th century. Today, legumes are used in the preparation of soups, fillings and salads but they can also be served as individual dishes, for example Breton beans — a thick, one-pot dish with tomato sauce and sausage. Due to an ever-increasing vegetarian trend, in modern Polish cuisine there are many pastes made of green peas, broad beans and beans.
- Nowadays in Poland farmers cultivate many different vegetables. In shops and markets one will find tomatoes, broccoli, cauliflowers, aubergines, courgettes, cabbages, peppers, pumpkins, kale and different varieties of lettuce. Products from all over the world, such as citrus fruit, avocado, Asian vegetables, fruit and herbs, are also readily available. All these products are used in modern Polish cuisine, as well as in fusion, vegetarian and vegan cooking, with the latter two trends gaining more and more supporters in Poland. In large cities there are a number of veggie bars and restaurants. There is also a growing number of local companies selling sandwich pastes, pesto sauces and different vegetable and fruit preserves.
- For centuries, people inhabiting Polish lands supplemented their diet with products found in forests. Forests supplied them with game, wild fruit, berries, medicinal plants and, above all, mushrooms, which are especially valued in Polish cuisine. The mushroom season begins in June, when chanterelles pop up. These aromatic yellow mushrooms can be served as an appetiser or an addition to the main course. In favourable weather conditions (high rainfalls and not

too low temperatures), mushroom hunting will be a success. All picked mushrooms can be cooked straight away, marinated in vinegar or dried. They are appreciated due to their texture, taste and aroma. They combine very well with game, meat dishes and fish but preparing a mushroom soup is also a popular option. Mushroom types especially valued by gourmets are: boleti, bay boletes, saffron milk caps and sillus — with an intriguing texture. In Poland there are a few dozen edible mushroom varieties. However, mushroom hunting requires appropriate knowledge and skills.

- The Polish landscape is full of croplands, meadows and orchards. Each season offers different picturesque images. In spring, fruit trees blossom with pink and white flowers. Summer comes in fresh green shades and golden cornfields. Autumn is the time of harvest, ripe apples, pears, plums and grapes hide among colour-changing leaves. Winter signifies a time of calmness and peace, covering the world with white and fluffy snow.
- Poland offers diverse and enchanting landscapes. Blossoming apple trees wrapped in morning mist look charmingly beautiful. They look equally pretty when their branches are bending under the weight of fresh, juicy fruit. Therefore, it is not surprising that for centuries apples have played an important role in Polish cuisine and culture. Among the wide range of apple varieties one will find juicy, sweet and sour fruits. Some are perfect for juices and ciders, others for baking and savoury dishes. One interesting fact is that Poland is one of the top apple exporters in the world.
- The apple and the apple tree are two important symbols of Polishness. They have been mentioned throughout the centuries by famous poets. The apple motif can be found in the works of Renaissance poet Jan Kochanowski (1530–1584), as well as in the poems written by Polish Noble Prize winners: Czesław Miłosz (1911–2004) and Wisława Szymborska (1923–2012). In folk culture the apple invoked both positive and negative connotations. In terms of Christianity, it was associated with sins and disobedience because of Eve, who had talked Adam into eating an apple, which resulted in the couple having been expelled from paradise. However, the apple tree also symbolised good things — its flower was the symbol of love and female beauty was compared to it. Apple trees used to be respected to such an extent that in some regions of Poland, it was forbidden to climb them wearing shoes. People also believed that cutting down an apple tree may cause death. Apples were assigned the power to attract love, happiness and health, so they were put on Christmas trees as decorative elements. In Europe, among the royal regalia (along with the sceptre and the crown) was the globus cruciger (the orb and cross), which in Poland



was referred to as the royal apple. The Slavs who inhabited the area of today's Poland perceived apples as the fruit of love. They were used in love magic and given to young couples during their wedding reception, right before their first night together.

- Apple trees blossom in April and May. They have delicate pink and white five-petal flowers with a delicate scent. They are edible and have a subtle taste, hence they can not only be used for decoration but also dried and served as tea. In natural medicine apple-tree leaves are used for the preparation of products with anti-inflammatory and anti-bacterial properties. That said, people most often consume the apple tree fruit. Fresh apples constitute a healthy snack that is available all year round as they are easy to store. They are a tasty addition to cakes, desserts, meat and fish. Fresh and pasteurised juices quench the thirst and also have various health properties.

- Pear is another popular autumn fruit. Pears were long known and appreciated by the Slavs who had inhabited the Polish lands. Pear trees often grew near fields and their huge crowns cast vast shadows in which people could hide from the scorching summer sun. When a pear tree that grew next to a house blossomed for the second time in a year, it considered a bad omen and predicted the death of the first person who noticed it. Since the 18th century, thanks to Christian culture, pears began to symbolise God's love for people and maternal love. Pears were often dried and used in the preparation of homemade juices and desserts. They went well with sweet pastries and with meat. In the 19th century dried pears in honey were recommended as a snack to go with vodka.

- Legend has it that when a priest in Łącko ordered the faithful in his parish to plant one apple tree for each sin committed, his peer in Sechna village ordered the faithful in his parish to plant plum trees. However, the crafty villagers soon learned how to use the fruit to produce slivovica, a strong alcohol based on plums. The smart priest didn't give up and showed his wisdom. In order to ensure the faithful did not use all the fruit to make alcohol, he convinced them to make smoked plums. And this is how the tradition of making prunes was born. Today, they are a great ingredient for desserts, homemade juices, meat, as well as porridges and gruels. Prunes from the Szydłów village also have an interesting taste. Fresh plums are used for making jams, marmalades and juices. The fruit also tastes wonderful when served as desserts and pastries. One Polish speciality is chocolate-covered prunes.

- June is the month of strawberries in Poland. The fruit as we know it today is the result of a cross between the scarlet-strawberry and Chilean strawberry, which was brought to Europe in 1714 by a French spy Amédée-François



Frézier during his mission in Chile and Peru. One especially valued variety is the Kashubian strawberry, which is cultivated in the north of Poland and bears fruit late. Its fruits are rather small but very sweet and have the most beautiful smell. Due to their flavour, appearance and nutritional values, strawberries are added to cakes, homemade juices and desserts that are the most popular culinary treats in June in Poland. Later, they are used in the production of jams, marmalades and juices that can be eaten and drunk in autumn and winter to invoke the taste of summer.

• Another red fruit whose season starts in June are raspberries. They were first cultivated in Middle Ages by monks in monastery gardens. In traditional folk medicine, raspberry juice was recommended for problems with digestion, colds and to increase one's general well-being. Due to their beautiful colour and irresistible aroma, they are associated with love and eroticism. In Polish poetry both the fruit and landscapes full of raspberry bushes often accompany lovers. A girl's beauty and the sweetness of the woman's lips are often compared to raspberries. Even the plant's thorns do not stop anyone from picking them and so raspberries are the symbol of something secret and forbidden, yet very tempting. One of the poets who often referred to raspberries in his works was Bolesław Leśmian (1877–1937). In cooking, raspberries are used to make jams, marmalades and juices. They enhance the taste of pastries, cakes and cold desserts. Yeast rolls with raspberries and luxurious cheesecake served with raspberry mousse are perfect examples of the long-remembered taste of the Polish summer. They are also an excellent accompaniment for savoury dishes. Raspberry sauce may be used as an alternative to wine-based sauces. It is also worth noting that for many years Poland has been among the top raspberry and strawberry producers.

• Other popular summer delicacies include blackberries, cherries (both sweet and sour), blackcurrants, gooseberries and blueberries. All of these types of fruit can be used in cooking just like strawberries, whereas one of the ways of preserving plums or pears is to put them in jars in a sweet and sour vinegar-based marinade.



BOLESŁAW LEŚMIAN

In the raspberry thicket...



In the raspberry thicket from meddlesome eye
hidden up to the eyebrows, long hours out of sight,
we picked raspberries which only had ripened last night,
your fingers blindly bloodied by raspberry dye.

Cranky horse-flies boomed basso — to give flowers a scare?
The sick leaf turned its rusty lumps up to the sun.
Raggy spider-web pendants glitteringly hung,
furry upside-down beetle walked backwards with care.

The air muggy with raspberries, which you, whispering, raided,
when our whispers then only would hush in their scent
as my opened lips gathered from your offered hand
the rich fruit, which the scent of your body pervaded.

The raspberries thus a token of something quite tender,
of that first and surprised act, which in heaven's space
no such ecstasy other than this act could trace
and which we kept repeating to savour its wonder.

I don't know how it happened, in which blink of eye,
that your lips touched the sweaty moist skin of my brow,
I grasped your hands — which gravely you yielded to mine —
while the raspberry thicket still whispered around.

— Translated by Marcel Weyland



Winter landscape, Bolimów Landscape Park





SPICES, HERBS AND OTHER SEASONINGS

Salt is one of the most common seasonings used in Polish cuisine. In the past, it was also a key preservative. In Poland, rock salt deposits can be found in the northern, central and southern part of the country. The most famous salt mine is located in the town of Wieliczka — the Wieliczka Salt Mine. In the 1970s it was included on the heritage list in Poland, and in 1978 also on the UNESCO List of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites.

According to legend, we owe the discovery of the Wieliczka salt mine to Saint Kinga of Poland (1254–1292), a Hungarian princess and the wife of a Polish king Bolesław V the Chaste (1226–1279). During her journey, she decided to set up a camp in the area of today's salt mine. She fell asleep quickly but was soon awoken by earth tremors. When she ordered her servants to dig, they found rock salt — exactly what the princess had wanted to offer her new country as a wedding gift.

Unlike today, salt was very expensive in those times. It is, however, hard to imagine Polish cuisine without salt. It is an indispensable seasoning for pickles, bread, meat and fish. As it enhances the natural sweetness of different products, a pinch of salt is always added to cakes and pastries. Salt also played an important role in various ceremonies and rituals. People believed that it purified and protected against evil powers, therefore it was used in all rituals of passage — added to the new-born's first bath, to welcome newlyweds and say farewell to the deceased. Carried as a talisman, it gave security and protected animals and the household against fire. Spilt salt portended an argument.

Ancient Slavs also could not imagine life without garlic. It was not only an excellent seasoning but a medicinal product, too. It was valued for its magical properties and the ability to keep away evil spirits and demons, in particular the Slavic version of vampires.

Another spicy ingredient that continues to be popular to this day is horseradish. Its leaves were used to bake bread or were wrapped around pieces of butter, whereas its *wasabi*-like flavoured root spices up many dishes. Other herbs and spices that were already in use in the past included juniper berries, thymus (a plant similar to thyme), mustard plants, dill and mint. Vinegar was also added to food. Another common herb was lovage. In Polish it is called *lubczyk* and its name derives from the word *lubić* (to like), which in old Polish also meant “to love.” People believed that lovage guaranteed success in love and marriage, so it was often added to coronets of flowers worn by young girls. When added regularly to food, it was supposed to keep a beloved one in love forever. In cooking, both lovage leaves (fresh or dried) and root are used, with the latter having a similar taste to celeriac.

- The Slavs also appreciated juniper and regarded it as a useful plant that kept away evil spirits and demons. As juniper smoke was supposed to protect against illness, people soon started smoking cold hams in it. They believed that if it protected people from disease, it would surely prevent meat from going off too. Juniper berries were also used to make juices, comfitures, vodkas and a very popular juniper beer.
- Old-Polish cuisine smelled of overseas spices. Just like in many other places, Europeans especially appreciated saffron, which gave food a golden colour. In the kitchens of the wealthiest one would also find pepper, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, vanilla, nutmeg and anise. Sour flavours were emphasised not only with vinegar but also with citrus juices. Sugar was considered a seasoning too.
- Today, chefs use herbs and spices from all over the world. They create fusion cuisine relying on fashionable ethnic foods, adapting them for Polish tastes. In big cities one will find unique versions of *rāmen*, *sushi*, *dim sum* and *pad Thai*, as well as modern Polish dishes with the addition of seasonings and ingredients from past centuries.
- What has always characterised Polish cuisine is — apart from the use of herbs and spices — the use of vegetable fats. Flax is one of the earliest-cultivated plants. Maria Konopnicka (1842–1919), a Polish author of novels and short stories, wrote a fairy-tale about the origins of flax. A long time ago there was a king, who had everything but gold. One day he met some travelling merchants. The oldest of them gave the monarch some seeds and said they would grow into gold. The king sowed the seeds and waited for the results. Unfortunately, instead of the anticipated valuable gold, the field was covered with a shabby-looking plant. The angry monarch ordered that the plant be dug up and thrown away,

and that his servants look for the man who had lied to him. The man turned himself in and was soon put in prison. While sitting in detention, he asked for the stem of the plant to be delivered to him. After two months, with the help of the caretaker's daughter, he produced a beautiful fabric and decided to give it to the king's daughter as a wedding gift. When the monarch saw the linen, he understood that it was a gift more precious than gold.

- Poland is famous for its linen, which is a great fabric for clothes, bed-linen, tablecloths and doilies. But flax can also be used in cooking. Its seeds are added to bread; they are also used to make flaxseed oil, which has a distinctive smell and flavour, and which is a great choice for cold dishes (e.g. fish) as well as salads and raw vegetable salads. Due to its healthy properties, flax is considered one of the superfoods. Some of the active ingredients it contains, above all omega-3 acids and lignans, have anti-cancer properties, regulate hormonal imbalances, and neutralise the activity of free radicals.
- Blue and grey poppy seeds are often added to sweet pastries and dishes, especially those served on Christmas Eve. Eating poppy seeds is supposed to guarantee wealth and numerous offspring. It is an indispensable ingredient of *kutia* — a sweet dish composed of boiled wheat, poppy seeds, malt, nuts and dried fruit — that derives from the borderland cuisine, noodles with poppy seeds and a poppy-seed cake — a yeast roulade filled with poppy-seeds, dried fruit and nuts. Poppy seeds are also sprinkled on bread and rolls and served with honey as a farmstead cheese addition. Last but not least, they are used for the production of oil that is perfect for light salads, sauces and desserts.
- However, the most commonly used vegetable fat in Poland is rapeseed oil. Rape, with its delicate yellow flowers, has been cultivated on Polish soil since the 16th century and it was already being used then to make an oil perfect for frying. In some regions of the country during Lent fish was seasoned with rapeseed oil instead of butter. Nowadays, it is used for the preparation of cold dishes, in particular for herring and salads. Quite often the Poles also use the sunflower oil.
- Apart from dried fruit and poppy seeds, almonds, walnuts and hazelnuts are other important ingredients in pastries. They are used as decorative elements and added to sweet cake fillings just like poppy seeds are added to the cheese filling. Moreover, they play an important role in vegetarian and vegan cuisine, being — together with sunflower and pumpkin seeds — the basis for various pesto sauces and pastes.
- Bee-keeping has played a huge role in the Polish lands for centuries. The oldest archaeological evidence proving that bee-keeping existed dates back



2000 years. In the 15th century, people started building bee-hives next to their houses. For centuries, bees were considered semi-saintly creatures that lived on the border between the world of humans and the afterworld. It was believed that they were the only animals to have souls and that they would die just like human beings. A swarm of bees symbolised hard work and conscientiousness, and bees were often portrayed in tales and legends as creatures that helped the poor and those who suffered. Due to the respect that surrounded bees, honey was also highly valued and used in folk medicine. In many accounts foreign travellers referred to the Polish lands of the Middle Ages as “the land full of milk and honey.” Even today, to say that something is very tasty or the best in the world Poles say it is *miód malina* (literally “honey and raspberries,” close to the English “sweet as honey” or “the bee’s knees”).

Honey also has multiple uses in cooking. It is added to pastries, spread on bread, added to sweet dishes, used to glaze meat and as the basis for alcoholic beverages. Before gingerbread gained popularity in Poland, it had been common among the Slavic people to make *miodownik* — honey cake. It was a very special cake as its dough was made when a daughter was born in the family. Then the dough was allowed to mature over many years in a cellar so that it could be turned into a cake on the girl’s wedding day. For that reason, it was also called the “mating bread.” Today’s honey cake looks a bit different. It is either a cake with layers of pastry and pudding or made of semolina and marmalade, decorated with walnuts in honey. In Poland a lot of different honeys are made. The most common are multifloral and lime honeys. Other types include: buckwheat honey (of a distinctive taste and scent), heather honey (which has a beautiful colour, is the least sweet and most spicy of all honeys), clover honey (characterised by high acidity) and honeydew honey (rich in protein).

Apiculture products also include beeswax used in candle production, and propolis and pollen, which are used in the pharmaceutical and cosmetic industries.

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Wreżel
6.8%
East Coast

SALAMANDER
AIPA
ZA SPOTKANIE

KORMORAN
WARMINSKIE
REWOLUCJE

Wreżel
7.8%
Belgian Blond Ale
BBA

WHITE IPA

Potróże Kormorana
WEIZENBOCK

Wreżel
5.0%
Summer

Potróże Kormorana
COFFEE STOUT

ALCOHOL

Alcohol plays an important role in Polish culture and cuisine: it accompanies a lot of traditional festivities. In the past, high percentage alcohols in particular were treated as disinfectants and medicaments.

- Among a wide variety of alcohols beer deserves special attention. It was already a common beverage in the time of the Slavs. The art of brewing beer developed greatly during the Middle Ages and was inseparably associated with monastic cuisine. Due to a poor quality of water, everyone — regardless of their social status and background — drank light alcoholic beverages. Outside monasteries beer was also brewed in municipal and court breweries, and even in households. Beer remained the number one drink until the 18th century, when it began to be replaced by vodka.
- Accounts from that time mention, among others, beers from Grodzisk, Bydgoszcz and a mysterious green beer from Biłgoraj. The Grodzisk beer is one of the oldest in Europe — its production is believed to have begun in 1301. In the 18th century it was popular all over Poland. This beer is characterised by its remarkable flavour and aroma. As good quality always comes at a price, for centuries this alcoholic beverage continued to be one of the most expensive in its category. On the other hand, due to its unusual quality it has even been mentioned in books by Michael Jackson (1942–2007), a top English expert in beers and whisky.
- In the 15th century beer from Bydgoszcz was considered so exquisite that it was only available to a select few, including the king of Poland. Biłgoraj, on the other hand, is where a tale about an unusual green drink was born. At the time it was a sparkling beverage of a beautiful colour, known in many parts of the country. However, with the rising availability of products from around the world in the city, its citizens got so excited with foreign alcohols that they stopped drinking their local beer. As there was no demand for it, its production



soon ceased. After a while, people started to miss the old taste but the beverage was nowhere to be found. Not only was it unavailable for purchase, but the recipe for it had also gone missing.

Over the last few years Poland has observed a rise in the interest in beers. According to worldwide trends, local and craft beers are becoming more fashionable, along with beer and food pairing, and brewing beer at home. In large cities there are a growing number of bars dedicated to beer enthusiasts, where they can buy beers from all around the world and nibble on matching snacks.

Mead making has also enjoyed a long tradition in Poland as mead has been popular in the region since the Middle Ages. Mead is basically fermented, diluted honeys, most often lime honey. Depending on the proportion of honey to water (or juice) the following can be distinguished: *półtorak* (1 unit of honey to 0.5 unit of water) — the most valued matures for 9–10 years; *dwójniak* — a sweet type of mead maturing for approx. 4 years; *trójniak* — a semi-sweet type of mead ready after at least a year; and *czwórniak* — a semi-dry type of mead ready for drinking after only 6 months of maturation. Meads can be made with the addition of fruit, spices or herbs. They are served at room temperature, with ice or as mulled meads with a spicy aroma. More and more often they are added to cocktails. The drier ones go well with traditional Polish cuisine, especially meat and fish dishes. The sweet *półtorak* is a tasty accompaniment for cakes and desserts.

Up to the 16th century, high percentage spirits were treated in Poland mainly as medicines and made with herbs in order to intensify their healthy properties. Only after some time did people start regarding them as yet another beverage. Aristocracy and nobility traced their origins to medical mixtures. However, if we are to trust legends, peasants and the lower classes treated spirits (or *gorzałka* as they called it) as the devil's gift because they knocked people sideways and made even the toughest men dizzy. There is a tale about it written by Wanda Dobaczewska along the following lines: a long time ago, there was a poor peasant. One day, when he was ploughing his field, he sat near a bush and took out a piece of bread. Then he thought it was yet too early for a meal, so he wrapped the bread in a piece of cloth, put it on the ground and continued his hard work. Unfortunately, part of his land was in swamps inhabited by many evil creatures and demons, including the worst one — the Dark Evil. The Dark Evil began playing tricks on the peasant waiting for him to get angry. However, the good old man didn't say one bad word — even when the Dark Evil stole his bread. So the Dark Evil went to his companions and told them about the strange man. They told the Dark Evil to go and give back what he had taken from the peasant. The Dark Evil turned into a young boy and went to find the peasant, who could



barely stand on his feet because of exhaustion. The boy offered him help and quickly ploughed the remaining part of the field. He then asked the peasant to employ him. Over the next three years the Dark Evil ploughed, sowed and harvested, and the peasant got richer and richer. When he was about to leave, the Dark Evil — as this was in his nature — decided to play a trick on the peasant. He went to the peasant's house and asked for wheat, a large pot and water. He then started boiling and mixing. After a while, he placed a bottle with a strong-smelling transparent liquid in front of the peasant. The drink was nothing like beer or mead. The peasant tasted it and lost his breath as the liquid turned out to be very strong. After a few more sips the man felt dizzy and then he saw the real face of his servant. The Dark Evil escaped through the window, leaving the man with a few more bottles full of alcohol. When he woke up the next day, the peasant suffered enormously because of a headache and a stomach-ache.

- The alcohol referred to as Polish vodka needs to be produced in Poland using potatoes or one of five local grains: wheat, rye, triticale, barley or oat. Due to its flavour it is highly appreciated in other countries. Its reputation may also be proven by the fact that — according to some accounts — in 1967, the Rolling Stones were paid for their concert in Poland with... two railroad cars filled with vodka. This spirit should be consumed very cold. It can be served in shots and is ideal for cocktails with ice. Vodka shots go best with meat dishes and herring snacks.

- In the past, many courts used to make their own cordials — alcoholic extracts of flowers, fruit, honey, spices, leaves or even amber. They were probably known by the 14th century but their dynamic development coincided with the mass production of beet sugar. In some regions, in the mansions of the nobility, cordials were made on the day of birth of a baby and later served at his or her wedding. When a young man proposed to a girl and her family served him a cordial, it was a good sign. If, however, the candidate was given so-called black soup — bouillon with blood of a hen, duck or goose — it meant the family didn't agree to the marriage. Coming back to the topic of stronger spirits, aromatic alcoholic beverages were served with appetisers, usually in the morning hours. The setting was also important — cordials were served in nice glasses and cordial enthusiasts were often collectors of carafes. This type of alcohol is usually served cold. The only exception is *krupnik* — sweet honey and spices liqueur. Semi-sweet cordials go best with meat dishes, whereas sweet — with desserts. Unlike vodka, cordial is not to be drunk in a single gulp but rather sipped and enjoyed slowly.

The culture of drinking in Poland is closely bound to inns — establishments for

CECHA  FABR.

Czysta

GORZELNIA, REKTYFIKACJA
I FABRYKA WÓDEK
MAZOWIECKIEJ SPÓŁKI PRZEMYSŁOWEJ
W JANOWIE
I MIŃSKU MAZOWIECKIM

45% 0,6

178 B. WITZE, WARSZAWA

PODLASKA



PIERWSZA NAJSTARSZA
POLSKA PAROWA FABRYKA WÓDEK I LIKIERÓW
A. CHMIELECKI
STAROGARD (POMORZE) zał. 1889 r.

ULANSKA



ZAKŁADY PRZEMYSŁOWE
WINKELHAUSEN
TOW. A.M.D.
STAROGARD - POMORZE

Pojemność ca 1 litr Moc 40%



JAKONIAK

DYSTYLARNIA
PAROWA
M. ŁUBA
w ŁODZI
ROK ZAŁ.
1898.



ORPHELINE

తననెలతలెనిగె నాకెలత.
తననెలతలెనె - తననెలత.

BIALOWIESKA

ZUBROWKA



ВОДЧЫЙ ЗАВОДЪ
ТОВАРИЩЕСТВА „НАСЛ. КОММЕРЦ. СОВЪТНИКА
Н. И. ИВАНОВА въ ТАШКЕНТЬ.
ВОДКА ЗУБРОВКА

travellers where they could get something to eat and drink. The first inns were built in the early Middle Ages and from the 13th century they also appeared in villages. They weren't only designed for merchants but also for local villagers, who met and organised different celebrations there. Throughout history, inns were home to many conspiracies, plots and attracted supernatural creatures that took advantage of participants in the midst of a drunken stupor. Many times in the morning peasants coming back home told stories about ghosts and demons they had met on their way or strange visitors to the inns who had tempted them with visions of rapid wealth.

- Inns also play a part in the legend about the most famous Polish magician, Jan Twardowski. He was a nobleman, who lived in Krakow in the 16th century. He made a pact with the devil, which made him powerful and very rich. The agreement assumed that after his death the devil would take Twardowski's soul to hell in Rome. However, the cunning man was in no rush to bid farewell to life and so he avoided foreign travel. After many years, the messenger from hell caught the stubborn nobleman in an inn called Rome. Still, he didn't manage to execute their agreement because Twardowski ended up on the moon, not in hell.

- There is another story about an inn that disappeared from the surface of the earth. In Lublin Province, in the area of today's Czaracie Pole nature reserve, there used to be a huge inn. Its owner was a mean man, who built his wealth by taking advantage of the weaknesses of his customers. One day, a pregnant woman entered the inn looking for her husband. He was there, drunk, and told her to go away. On her way out of the inn, the tearful woman said just one sentence: "Let the place be damned." Once she closed the door, a strong wind started blowing and the whole building and everyone inside disappeared underground. Even today the local villagers say that if one listens carefully from time to time, laughter and music can be heard. These are the inn's guests and the devil enjoying their time in the abyss of hell.

- Today, food and alcohol are served not only in inns but also in restaurants, bars and hotels. And those who would like to feel the atmosphere of old inns and taste regional specialties, can set off on the Lesser Poland Gourmet Trail (*Małopolska Trasa Smakoszy*).

- Once Poland became part of the Christian cultural heritage, the demand for wine rose as it played an important role in the liturgy. Earlier some quantities of wine had been imported, even though it was difficult and complicated. Together with the rising demand, in the gardens of monasteries and courts people started planting grapevines. However, the geographical conditions of the region were poor and vineyards didn't yield wines as good as those from







TURN

KWIETEC

WINN

WII

PALAC
MIERZECH


RIESLING
2013
WINNICA PALAC MIERZECH


RONDO/REGENT
2014


RO


SOLARIS
2014


PINOT NOIR
2014
WINNICA SREBRNA GÓRA KRAKÓW



Alcohol

France or the Rhineland. Therefore, for centuries wine remained a very expensive alcohol available only to the wealthiest people. In the old Polish cuisine wine wasn't added to dishes. It only became a culinary ingredient towards the end of the 18th century with the rising popularity of French cuisine. For a long time Polish citizens appreciated mostly strong Hungarian wines and sweet wines from the Mediterranean region. As time passed by, the culture of drinking wine became marginalised — mainly due to the problems with supply. A winemaking culture revival began in the 1980s. Despite quite a short history, new Polish wines are gaining an increasing number of supporters in Poland and abroad, and are winning awards at various wine festivals. Wine tourism, also referred to as enotourism, is also developing dynamically. Tourists and wine enthusiasts can choose from a vast variety of offers that include: wine culinary trails, grape harvests, wine SPAs and tasting events during which top chefs prepare meals and pair them with locally produced wines.

The last few years have also been a period of dynamic development in the market of Polish ciders — low percentage alcoholic drinks based on the fermented juice of apples. Cider was already known in Poland in the 16th century under a different name, *jablecznik* (apple drink) but at that time it was considered a beverage for the lower classes and therefore not produced on a mass scale. The situation changed only in the 21st century and today ciders are served with meat, fish, cheeses and sweet pastries. They are also a popular choice for a chilled drink in summer.







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POULTRY SOUP OR BROTH

Rosół drobiowy



Poultry broth is a clear soup cooked with vegetable and meat stock. It can be made of poultry (chicken, ducks, geese), beef, lamb or a mixture of meats. Depending on the region, it is served with pasta, dumplings or even potatoes. Because of the long preparation time and the quality of ingredients needed, broth used to be served in Poland only on special occasions. It was served during Sunday family lunches or at wedding receptions. Broth was believed to have warming and immune-strengthening properties, so it was an obligatory meal for the ill and the weak. One of the finest versions of this soup is an old Polish poultry broth made of partridge, pigeon, deer, fallow deer and roe deer.



small chicken (offal removed)

4 l (4 quarts) water

4–5 large carrots, peeled and cut into chunks

3–4 parsley roots, peeled and cut into chunks

2 medium celeriac, peeled and cut into chunks

2 medium onions, peeled and cut into chunks

½ tbsp allspice

1 tsp black peppercorns

4–5 bay leaves

1 bunch of parsley leaves

salt

- Pour boiling water over the chicken. Put the chicken in a pot filled with cold water. Bring to a boil. Remove scum. Season with salt. Boil the stock for 30 minutes. Add peeled vegetables cut into chunks: carrot, parsley root, celeriac and onion. Season with pepper, allspice and bay leaves. Cover, reduce heat to low and simmer for 90–120 minutes. Serve with chopped parsley leaves.
- You can drink plain and skimmed broth. It is a perfect base for many dishes, especially soups and sauces. It is also served with small wheat noodles, cooked meat and vegetables.



DUCK WITH APPLES

Kaczka z jabłkami



People around the world enjoy eating duck. In Poland, they are valued for their delicate meat. For many centuries, Poles have mastered a wide variety of duck dishes. The most frequently served is duck breast. For special occasions, Poles also roast a whole bird. In Pomerania, duck is filled with offal stuffing and pork. For tender meat, the Siewierz-style duck is roasted in a bread oven and served with horseradish cream, fermented cucumbers and marinated wild mushrooms.

In other parts of Poland duck is served sweet, stuffed with fruit. Sometimes roasted pieces of duck, like in the case of fish and other meat types, are served in aspic — a jelly made from meat stock, seasonings and gelatine in which the pieces of meat are immersed. When put into the fridge, the jelly coagulates and hardens. Dishes in aspic are served as starters. They also go well with spirits.



1 duck, offal removed (1½–2 kg [3–4½ lbs])
6–8 medium apples
4–5 tbsp olive oil
2–3 tbsp marjoram
3–5 tbsp apple vinegar
20–40 g (1–1½ oz) dried cranberries
1 tbsp pepper
salt

- Rinse the duck and pat dry. Rub the inside with apple vinegar, salt and marjoram. Rub the outside with olive oil, marjoram, salt and pepper. Peel and core the apples, cut into quarters, cover with olive oil and sprinkle the remaining seasonings. Put 2 apples inside the duck. Refrigerate the duck for 2–3 hours and let the meat marinate with seasonings. Place it in the roasting pan, sprinkle with water and put in an oven preheated to 180°C (350°F) (put it in the lower part of the oven to avoid overbrowning). Every 15–20 minutes baste the melted fat over the duck. After 40–50 minutes turn the duck over, so that it roasts evenly and keep basting the bird. After 30–40 minutes turn the duck breast-side up. In general, the duck needs to be roasted for 90 to 120 minutes, depending on its size. 25–40 minutes before the end of roasting, add the remaining apples quarters mixed with olive oil and marjoram and dried cranberries to the roasting dish. Serve with potatoes or dumplings.



POULTRY LIVERS WITH ONION AND APPLE

Wątróbka drobiowa z cebulą i jabłkami



By the end of the 1990s, the consumption of the offal had dropped significantly. Now, the “fifth quarter” is experiencing a revival thanks to its rich flavour and an interesting texture. Dishes made of stomachs, hearts, livers and kidneys are served as appetisers or main dishes. Offal is also used as stuffing for savoury pastries and *pierogi* (filled dumplings). It is also perfect for pâtés.



400 g (1 lb) poultry livers
2 medium onions, thinly sliced
1 large apple, sliced into rings
fresh rosemary
marjoram
salt
¼ tsp ground black pepper
Plain flour (all purpose flour)
rapeseed oil

- Wash the livers and pat dry. Pour a little oil into a frying pan and fry the onions for 2–3 minutes. Remove the onions from the pan. Put apple rings in the pan and fry with rosemary for 2–3 minutes. Remove from the pan. Heat the oil and add the livers coated in plain flour. Fry on medium heat for 4–6 minutes (depending on the size of the livers). Add the onions and apples. Fry for another minute, season with salt, pepper and marjoram. Serve with roasted potatoes.





STEAK TARTARE

Tatar wołowy



Steak tartare (also known as beefsteak tartar) is a popular appetiser in Poland. It is most frequently made of beef tenderloin. Although it is questionable, many people ascribe the name of the dish to Guillaume Le Vasseur de Beauplan (1600–1675), who was a French soldier and cartographer. In his book *Description of Ukraine*, he presented the manner in which horsemeat was prepared by Tatars, Eastern Europeans and North Asian societies ruled by Genghis Khan.



500 g (1¼ lbs) beef tenderloin
1–2 tbsp linseed oil or olive oil
120 g (¼ lb) onion, finely chopped
120 g (¼ lb) *ogórki kiszzone* (fermented cucumbers
that can be substituted with pickles), finely chopped
4 egg yolks
juice from ½ lemon
salt
pepper

- All the ingredients should have a similar low temperature. Wash and pat dry the meat. Chop with a sharp knife into tiny pieces. Season with salt, pepper, lemon juice and oil. Tartare can be served in a numerous ways. One is to mix the chopped and seasoned meat and to serve finely chopped onions, cucumbers and egg yolks aside. Another is to mix chopped onions, fermented cucumbers and egg yolks, and then add seasoned meat, mix thoroughly and form small servings. Tartare is served with bread.



MEAT-STUFFED DUMPLINGS

Pierogi z mięsem

There are a few hypotheses about the origin of the word *pierogi*. One of them states that it originated from the Uralic languages. Another theory indicates that the word derives from an Old Church Slavonic word *piru* which means “celebration” and “holiday.” For many centuries, all women living in a particular village would gather in one house to make *pierogi* together. *Pierogi* were always served on Christmas Eve, during Lent, and at wedding receptions. Today, many Polish restaurants offer *pierogi* with traditional fillings, such as: meat, curd cheese and potatoes (the latter are called *pierogi ruskie* or *Ruthenian pierogi*), sauerkraut mixed with wild mushrooms, *kasza gryczana* (buckwheat groats) and the offal. There are also new versions of fillings for this dish: mozzarella with spinach, chicken and cheese. In the summer, the most popular *pierogi* fillings are sweet strawberry and wild blueberry served with sour cream and sugar.

Dough:



500 g (4 cups) plain
flour (all purpose flour)
1 egg
225–250 ml (1 cup) water
pinch of salt
1 tbsp rapeseed oil

Filling:



400 g (1 lb) beef
70 g (2½ oz) wild mushrooms
1 onion
pinch of ground black pepper
pinch of salt
2–3 allspice berries
1 bay leaf
Knob of lard

- Grind or finely chop the meat. Finely chop the mushrooms and onion. In a large frying pan, melt the lard; add the meat, onion and mushrooms. Season with salt, pepper, allspice and bay leaf. Fry. Set aside to cool and remove the allspice berries and bay leaf. Mix together the flour, water and eggs and knead the dough. At the end of kneading add 1 tbsp of rapeseed oil. Roll out the dough and cut it into circles using a glass. Place the filling in the middle of each circle, seal the ends and pinch together the edges with a fork or make a ruffle by hand. Put in a pot of boiling water, wait until they float to the top, let boil for 3–4 minutes. Remove and serve.



RIBS ROASTED IN BEER

Żeberka pieczone w piwie

Nowadays, pork is the most popular type of meat on the Polish table. Pork is used to make cold cuts, lard and fatback. On special occasions, people serve roasted piglets filled with the offal and *kasza gryczana* (buckwheat groats). Their shins are also highly valued. Roasted or simmered shins pair perfectly with beer. Chopped and cooked shins are used to make *nóżki* (pork jelly) — chunks of meat covered with jelly served cold. Poles also like pork ribs.



1.5 kg (3½ lbs) pork ribs
500–600 ml (2 cups) beer
2 medium onions
3 garlic cloves
3 tbsp honey
3–4 tbsp rapeseed oil
Plain flour (all purpose flour)
salt
½ tsp black ground pepper
1 level tsp marjoram
1 level tsp rosemary
½ tsp caraway seeds

- Cut ribs in pieces, wash them under running water and pat dry. In a bowl, mix together the oil, honey, salt, pepper, marjoram, rosemary and caraway. Coat the ribs in the marinade and keep refrigerated for 3–4 hours. Remove from the fridge, dredge with flour and fry on both sides. Place the fried ribs in a heatproof dish, pour the beer over the ribs and cover with a lid. Roast at 180°C (350°F) for 40–55 minutes. While roasting, baste the ribs with sauce every so often. Serve with boiled or roasted potatoes.



PORK ROLLS

Zrazy wieprzowe



All the dishes that required a number of cooking techniques and longer cooking time used to be served on special occasions. Even today, rolls — i.e. tenderised pork or beef rolls with stuffing — are considered to be a very special dish. They are roasted and very often served with thick and aromatic sauces.



- 6 slices of pork loin — 1.5 cm (1 inch) thick
- 1 piece of sausage — 8–10 cm (4 inches)
- 2 fermented cucumbers
- 1 onion
- pepper
- marjoram
- salt
- oil for frying

- Using a meat mallet, tenderise meat on both sides. Cut the sausage and cucumbers into thin and long slices. Cut the onion into halves and thinly slice. Place tenderised meat on a countertop, brush with oil, put a slice of sausage, cucumber and some onion on it. Roll and secure with toothpicks. Fry on both sides, put in a heatproof dish and bake in an oven preheated to 160°C (320°F) for 20–30 minutes. Serve with boiled potatoes or *kluski* (dumplings).



FRIED CARP

Karp smażony



Poles have been consuming carp since the 12th century and the first carp farms were established by the Cistercian Order in Milicz. For centuries, carp was a cherished fish because of the numerous fasting periods in Poland. The most valued carp comes from Zator, a town close to Wadowice, and it has been farmed since the times of Bolesław III Wrymouth (1086–1138). After WWII, the fish started being associated with Christmas. Today, the Christmas table cannot be complete without at least one dish made of carp. According to the Christmas tradition, when preparing carp, one has to keep the scales — one scale for each family member. Scales are washed, dried and given as a gift to all family members. Kept in the wallet, they guarantee wealth and well-being.



1 large carp (approximately 1½ kg [3 lbs])
2–3 tbsp plain flour (all purpose flour)
3–4 tbsp breadcrumbs
salt
pepper
oil for frying (preferably rapeseed oil)

- Wash the carp, remove scales and gut the carp. Wash the fish again and remove the head and fins. Cut it into 1.5–2 inch steaks. Pat dry with paper towel. Season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle with flour and breadcrumbs. Heat the oil in a frying pan, add fish and fry on both sides. Fry until both sides become golden brown.



HERRING IN OIL

Śledzie w oleju



Herring always tastes great. There are so many herring based recipes that one can never get bored. In Polish cuisine, herring is always served for Christmas Eve and during Lent, but Poles eat it all year round. Herring can be served in the form of fillets brined in salt, but it can also be served fresh — fried in a pan or battered. It is served with sweet and savoury toppings. It tastes perfect with spices.



8 salted fillets
1 large onion
1 tbsp sugar
1 large bay leaf
5–6 allspice berries
¼ tsp ground black pepper
sunflower or rapeseed oil

- Chop onion finely. Place in a bowl, sprinkle with sugar and black pepper. Mix thoroughly and put in the fridge for 2–3 hours. Roll the herring fillets to form small ‘logs’ and put in a jar. Add the onion, bay leaf and allspice berries. Pour oil over the herring making sure that it is well submerged. Seal the jars and refrigerate for 5–6 days to marinate. Serve as an appetiser.



SILESIA DUMPLINGS

Kluski śląskie



Small, large, light, dark, round, oval — Polish cuisine is rich in dumplings. Served with scratchings or melted butter, they are a dish on their own. Often, dumplings replace potatoes and groats and they are served as a side dish to meat or fish dishes. Sunday lunch is a special meal for Poles. Families gather around the Sunday table. Menus differ between regions, but in the majority of places Sunday lunch was and still is associated with an aromatic poultry broth with noodles made by mother or grandmother. In Silesia, Sunday lunch comprises *kluski śląskie* (Silesian dumplings), *rolada śląska* (Silesian beef roll) and *modra kapusta* (red cabbage cooked with apples, onions, seasoned with sugar, vinegar and salt).



750 g (1½ lbs) potatoes
250 g (½ lb) potato starch
1 small egg
salt

- Peel, boil and mash the potatoes (after cooling them) making sure that there are no lumps. Put in a bowl, add the potato starch, egg and salt. Knead well to avoid lumps. Bring a large pot of water to the boil and add some salt. Divide the dough into 4 parts and form 4 logs. Cut into 2.5 cm (1 inch) pieces. Form round balls and with your index finger make an indentation in the middle of each ball. Put in the boiling water. Allow them to boil for 1–3 minutes after they float to the top. Serve with bacon lardons as a dish on its own or treat them as a perfect addition to other dishes.



POTATO PANCAKES

Placki ziemniaczane



Potato-based dishes are relatively new to Polish cuisine. In the 19th century, in the territory of the Greater Poland, people started making a dish called *bambrzok*. It was made of grated potatoes mixed with wheat flour, eggs and seasonings. The mixture was put in a pan and roasted. The savoury version of *bambrzok* was served with a sausage or bacon. The sweet alternative was *bambrzok* with plum butter. Today, one of the most popular Polish dishes is golden and crispy potato pancakes. They are served with meat goulash (stew) or mushrooms, smoked salmon, sour cream or sour cream with sugar.



500 g (1¼ lbs) potatoes

1 small egg

2–4 tbsp potato starch (depending on the water content in potatoes)

1 large onion

salt

pepper

oil for frying

- Peel the potatoes and grate them. Peel and grate the onion. If potatoes contain too much water, discard the excess water. Add the egg and potato starch. Mix thoroughly. Heat the oil in the pan and pour in the batter to form small pancakes. Fry until golden brown. Serve as you like — with sweet or savoury toppings.





SANDWICH SPREADS: PUMPKIN, TOPINAMBOUR AND CAULIFLOWER

Pasta kanapkowa z dyni, topinambura i kalafiora

Polish cuisine has always changed along with global trends. Contemporary recipes for traditional dishes contain less sugar, salt and fat. There are a growing number of vegetarians, vegans and people following raw, gluten-free or lactose-free diets. Fortunately, many varieties of vegetables and fruit are cultivated in Poland, so people who refuse to eat meat or dairy can easily find substitutions. Among the vegan specialties, Poles like meat-free pâtés, hummus and sandwich spreads. Spreads are served with freshly baked bread or pancakes.

Pumpkin spread



300 g (2/3 lb) roasted
pumpkin
30 g (3 tbsp)
pumpkin seeds
1 garlic clove
2–4 tbsp linseed oil
oregano
salt

Topinambour spread



300 g (2/3 lb) topinambours
50 g (4 tbsp) hazelnuts
2–4 tbsp poppyseed oil
lovage
salt

Cauliflower spread



300 g (2/3 lb) cauliflower
1 kale leaf
2–4 tbsp linseed oil
marjoram
black pepper
salt

- Pumpkin spread — Place the pumpkin, seeds, garlic, oil and spices in a food processor. Blend until a smooth spread is obtained.
- Topinambour spread — Wash and peel topinambours. Boil for 15–25 minutes in salted water. Strain, pat dry and set aside to cool. Put all the ingredients in a food processor. Blend until a smooth spread is obtained.
- Cauliflower spread — Wash, dry and separate the florets from a head of the cauliflower. Roast in an oven preheated to 180°C (350°F) for 20 minutes. Set aside to cool. Put in a food processor. Add the kale leaf, linseed oil and seasoning. Blend until a smooth spread is obtained.



RASPBERRY CORDIAL

Nalewka malinowa



How to evoke the flavour of summer in the middle of winter? One just has to collect fresh fruit in the summer and preserve them in the form of jams, marmalades and juices. One can also use them to make aromatic and warming cordials. Many families follow the recipes passed down from generation to generation. Not only do homemade liquors cheer people up, but they are perfect as desserts. They also have medical properties. They used to be served to bring strength and fight colds.



1 kg (2 lbs) ripe raspberries
1 l (4 cups) Polish vodka
400 g (1 lb) sugar
150 ml (⅔ cup) linden honey
1 jar

- Wash and strain the raspberries. Put them in a jar, sprinkle with sugar and add honey. Seal the jar and place in a cool, dark place for 2–3 days to draw out their natural juices (you can shake the jar a few times in the meantime). Open the jar and pour vodka over the fruit. Seal the jar and let it stand in cool, dark place for 2 weeks. After 2 weeks, mix the cordial thoroughly, strain and pour into bottles. You can enjoy your cordial right away, but it tastes best after maturing for 2–3 months in a cool, dark place.



ROASTED APPLES

Jabłka pieczone



Apples are the most popular Polish fruit. Thanks to the abundance of flavours, textures and structures, apples are frequently used in cooking. They are the basis for many desserts, cakes, compotes and jams. They are also added to meat- or fish-based dishes. They can be fried with sugar, cinnamon and other spices. If we want to keep their shape, it is better to simmer them with spices.



5–6 medium apples
juice from ½ lemon
3–4 tbsp honey
salt
1–2 tsp rosemary

- Wash, pat dry and peel the apples. Core the apples and cut into quarters. Sprinkle the apples with lemon juice to avoid browning. In a small bowl, mix honey and rosemary thoroughly. Brush the apples with honey and rosemary carefully. Place in a heatproof dish. Roast for 15–25 minutes at 180°C (350°F).



GINGERBREAD COOKIES

Pierniczki

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Gingerbread is a dark cake with an outstanding spicy flavour and aroma. Toruń is a Polish city famous for its tradition of baking gingerbread and gingerbread cookies. The first mentions of these pastries date back to the late 14th century, but they may have been consumed as early as in the 13th century. Yet, the oldest recipe for this specialty from Toruń dates back to 1725. For many centuries, gingerbread was a luxurious product and some people even believed it to have healing properties. Cookies come in different shapes: people, animals (e.g. storks, boars, deer or fish), fruit and hearts. Today, cookies are glazed, covered in marzipan or filled with marmalade. Gingerbread and gingerbread cookies are part of Polish Christmas tradition. Not only do people appreciate their flavour, but they also use them as Christmas tree ornaments.

↓

375–400 g (3 cups) plain flour (all purpose flour)
40–50 g (½ stick) butter
150 g (⅓ cup) honey
1 egg
½ tsp baking powder
2½ g (¾ tsp) cinnamon
1½ g (¼ tsp) ginger powder
1 g (⅓ tsp) cardamom
½ g (pinch) nutmeg
½ g (pinch) ground cloves
½ g (pinch) ground black pepper
juice from ½ lemon

- In a heatproof bowl melt the butter. Add the honey, eggs, baking powder and lemon juice. Mix thoroughly. Add the flour and ground spices (cinnamon, ginger, cardamom, nutmeg, cloves and black pepper). Knead the dough until smooth. Roll out to form a rectangle (3–4 mm thick). Use cookie cutters to cut out the desired shapes. Bake in an oven preheated to 180°C (350°F) for 9–12 minutes, until golden brown.



CHEESECAKE WITH A RASPBERRY SAUCE

Sernik z sosem malinowym

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Cheesecake is one of the most popular cakes in Poland. It is served with afternoon tea, as a dessert after a family dinner, as a sweet treat to accompany a cup of tea or coffee, or cordials. There are numerous versions of cheesecakes — both baked and served cold. Cheesecake most probably came to Poland thanks to King John III Sobieski. During his supremacy, the nobility fell in love with a delicate and bright Viennese cheesecake. Today, cheesecakes are served with fruit sauces. There are also versions of the cake filled with poppyseed as well as vegan versions of cheesecakes in which curd cheese is replaced with tofu.

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600 g (1½ lb) *twaróg półtłusty* (4% fat curd cheese)
250 g (½ lb) raspberries
200 ml (1 cup) double cream (heavy cream, 30%)
170 g (¾ cup) sugar + 50 g (½ cup) sugar
20 g (2 tbsp) unsalted butter
1 tsp vanilla extract
1 tbsp potato starch
3 eggs

- Wash the raspberries and put in a saucepan. Add sugar and let boil for a while. Set aside to cool.
- Blend the cheese with a stick blender. In a large bowl blend the cheese with a stick blender. Add the eggs, butter, vanilla extract, heavy cream and potato starch. Mix with a hand mixer until smooth. Place the batter in a round cake tin (17–20 cm [7–8 inches] diameter) lined with a baking paper and brushed with butter. Bake in an oven preheated to 160°C (320°F) for 50–70 minutes. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool. Refrigerate for 2–3 hours. Pour the warm or cold raspberry sauce over the cheesecake.





Magdalena Tomaszewska-Bolałek

*Text & Recipes & Artistic Project & Photographs
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Orientalist, journalist, culinary culture scholar, author of the following books: *Japanese Culinary Traditions*, *Zodiac Animals in the Japanese Culture*, *Japanese Sweets* (in 2014, the book received the first prize in the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards in the category Japanese Cuisine; in 2015, during the 20th anniversary of Gourmand World Cookbook Awards at the Frankfurt Book Fair 2015, the book received the third prize and was declared to be one of the three most important publications on Japanese cuisine published between 1994 and 2014) and *Culinary Traditions of Korea*, which received a Gourmand World Cookbook Award. *Polish Culinary Paths* has been published in English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese. It was highly appreciated by the critics and readers around the globe and it has received the following awards: double Grand Prix in the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards, Prix de la Littérature Gastronomique, Chinese Diamond Cuisine Award and Polish Magellan Award.

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LINKS

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Amidst all of human qualities, people's nature also equips them with this attribute that they enjoy all sorts of flavours, not solely due to their appetites, but also due their proficiency, skill, and knowledge...

Stanisław Czerniecki

*Compendium ferculorum or collection of dishes**

I need to add here, however, that with delicious and healthy cuisine, the cleanliness and freshness of the products prepared plays the most important role; thus, these two conditions cannot be repeated often enough.

Lucyna Ćwierczakiewiczowa

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