



POLISH
TOURISM
ORGANISATION

TASTES OF POLAND

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THE HISTORY OF POLISH CUISINE

Poland is located at the crossroads of historical trade routes between Europe and Asia. Merchants from distant lands used to come to Poland for amber and to trade in exotic spices and outlandish culinary ideas. We owe some of the magnificent Polish flavours to our neighbours, but also to the minorities that have lived in Poland for centuries. Numerous influences have made Polish cuisine very rich in flavours. It is not difficult to find traces of the oriental, sweet and spicy taste of Jewish cuisine. The Lithuanians taught us the unique art of dry-curing meat, giving us dried sausages such as kindziuk. Like the Ukrainians, we love dumplings. French cuisine has influenced our superb desserts. Our native cuisine is a delicious blend of noble and peasant traditions. We have always had excellent indigenous products as well, such as Polish salt, which comes from the famous mines in Wieliczka and Bochnia near Kraków. Our forests have had an abundance of wild game and honey and it is no wonder that Polish cuisine is so rich in game, while Polish honey is famous throughout Europe. Today, honey is experiencing a renaissance and a number of excellent small and large apiaries produce honey of excellent quality in a variety of flavours. It is most often served with cream cheese. The forest's bounty is evident in much of Polish cuisine. The most commonly used cereals are wheat and rye, which for centuries have been used to bake fantastic Polish breads. Our cuisine is also known for its fish, especially freshwater. A wide variety of vegetables was introduced to the Polish table by the Italian-born Polish queen Bona Sforza. They are served raw as a salad or boiled and topped with breadcrumbs browned in butter. Our own achievement, however, is the impressive selection of soups – over 200 varieties – and pickles. Pickled cucumbers are one of the symbols of Polish cuisine. Today, young chefs are combining the rich, centuries-old traditions of Polish cuisine with contemporary culinary trends, creating unique but typically Polish flavours. They select the best Polish products from environmentally-friendly regions where traditional farming methods are still in use.



WILD BOAR ROAST

- 1 kg wild boar roast
- 150 ml red wine
- 1 sprig rosemary
- frying fat
- Marinade:
 - 0.7 l red wine
 - 1 large onion
 - 2 carrots
 - 3-4 cloves garlic
 - 2-3 bay leaves
 - 25 juniper berries, crushed
 - a few black peppercorns
 - half teaspoon salt
 - 20 ml oil

Peel the vegetables. Cut the carrots into half-moon slices and chop the onion. Mix them with the remaining ingredients. Place the previously cleaned meat into the marinade and leave it in a cool place for 2-3 days.

Take the meat out of the marinade. Fry it thoroughly in hot fat on each side. Roast in an oven preheated to 180°C for about 45 minutes. You may baste the meat with the marinade while roasting. The meat should remain slightly pink inside. After taking the roast from the oven, pour the drippings into a pot and add red wine and rosemary. Reduce the liquid until it becomes thick enough for a sauce and pour a bit of it over each portion of the roast. Goes great with baked beetroots.

POLISH SPECIALITIES

Fruits of the forest, such as game, wild mushrooms and berries, are important ingredients of Polish cuisine. Wild game has such a long tradition in our country that it was once considered the staple food on the tables of Polish nobility. Today, it is widely available in restaurants. Truly impressive game dishes include a whole roasted boar, or roasted saddles of game and venison served in cream. The forest is also a source of wild honey, which has always been present in Polish cuisine. Many places frequented by tourists sell locally produced honey from small apiaries with truly remarkable and exotic flavours. Another gift of the forest are wild mushrooms, without which traditional Polish cuisine could not exist. Dried wild mushrooms are available all year round. They are used to flavour soups and sauces and in the stuffing for dumplings. Polish cuisine is also famous for its variety of tasty food grains, usually served as an accompaniment to meat. They also complement poultry, such as the fabulous roast goose stuffed with buckwheat. Buckwheat is really worth a try; not so popular outside Poland, it is very tasty indeed. The most commonly used vegetables in Polish cuisine are potatoes and cabbage. Some favourite Polish delicacies, like pancakes, dumplings and noodles, are made from potatoes. Sauerkraut is served as an accompaniment to meat dishes and is the basis of the traditional cabbage soup called kapuśniak. Poland is also a leading producer of apples. Many Polish varieties can boast the EU-protected designation of origin. You will love the taste of Polish apples, not only fresh but also in the popular cake szarlotka, or baked with honey, nuts and dried fruits.





CABBAGE SOUP WITH SMOKED RIBS (KAPUŚNIAK)

- 1 kg sauerkraut
- 300 g smoked ribs
- 1 onion
- 2 carrots
- 3-4 potatoes
- a few tablespoons butter
- 1 pinch caraway seeds
- 1.5 litre broth
- salt, black pepper
- piece of smoked bacon (optional)

Melt the butter in a pot and fry the diced onion until transparent. Add a pinch of caraway seeds and continue to fry, stirring from time to time. Add peeled and sliced carrots and continue to fry for several minutes on medium heat. Pour in the broth. Add smoked ribs along with potatoes peeled and diced into medium-sized cubes. Cover and boil until the vegetables soften and the meat starts to give off an aroma. Squeeze the sauerkraut gently to drain it. Chop it up if it is too long, and put it into the soup. Boil for an additional ten minutes or so. Season with pepper and salt to taste. Optionally, chop and fry smoked bacon and sprinkle onto soup before serving.



TRADITIONAL POLISH CUISINE

Many dishes served in Polish restaurants and homes show the influences of regional Polish cuisines and the cooking traditions of the ethnic minorities that have inhabited Poland over many centuries. Although there are strong Eastern culinary influences from the Tartars and Turks, Polish cuisine owes a great deal to Mongolian, Ruthenian, German, French, Italian and Jewish tastes. Even though Poland's regional cuisines show a wide diversity, there are some dishes that are best described as typically Polish. Take soups: Poles love them and cook many different varieties. The inherent constituent of any festive meal is a broth, traditionally prepared from home-grown chicken, although pheasants or guinea fowl are also used. It is usually served with thin home-made vermicelli. Creamed tomato soup is also quite popular, as well as a soup made with pickled cucumbers. You will love zurek, a sour soup made from fermented rye and sometimes served in a hollowed-out loaf of bread. Certain soups are served seasonally, depending on the time of year. In summer, chilled barszcz is made on a base of young beetroot plants, while in autumn on the menu is a soup made from wild mushrooms. For centuries, Polish cuisine was rich in game, poultry and pork but fish was also very popular, especially freshwater. During the years of Communism, Polish cuisine became more frugal – the most popular dish being breaded pork escalope served with mashed potatoes and mizeria, a cucumber salad with soured cream, or with fried cabbage. Today Poles can once again enjoy the many almost forgotten delicacies, such as roast goose served with buckwheat. Cheese and potato pierogi are very popular, as are meat or cabbage and wild mushroom pierogi. In the winter months, Poles cook bigos, a stew made from sauerkraut with fresh and cured meats and dried wild mushrooms. Some cold snacks are also worthy of note. These include herring served in various styles, a fish stew with vegetables, and either meat or fish in aspic, beautifully decorated and served with mouth-watering sauces.

Poles also know how to make excellent desserts. Some special treats include faworki, fried pastries dusted with sugar, and assorted sponge cakes, poppy seed cakes, cheesecakes, gingerbread and doughnuts. Desserts usually incorporate excellent seasonal fruit like apples, pears or plums, as well as forest berries and wild strawberries.



GOOSE STUFFED WITH BUCKWHEAT GROATS AND APPLES

- 1 whole goose
- 2 teaspoons dried marjoram
- salt, black pepper
- Stuffing:
 - 2-3 cups lightly boiled buckwheat groats
 - 6 medium-sized apples
 - 1-2 teaspoons sugar
 - 2 tablespoons butter
 - ½ cup raisins
 - a few sprigs fresh marjoram
 - salt, black pepper

Clean the whole goose thoroughly, wash and leave to dry. Rub with marjoram, salt and black pepper, and refrigerate for 2-3 hours. Peel the apples, cut them in eighths and mix them with sugar. Cook slowly in butter together with raisins and fresh marjoram. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Mix in buckwheat groats. Stuff the goose and sew it up tightly to prevent leakage. Bake for 3-4 hours in an oven preheated to 170°C. Baste the goose occasionally with melted fat to improve crispiness. When the goose is done, the fat can be stored and used for frying.

POLISH REGIONAL CUISINE

The specialities of regional cuisine are something not to be missed while travelling around Poland. They are extremely diverse due to different agricultural conditions, customs and traditions. In the north of the country, we have the sea, the forests and the lakes. Kashubian fish tastes delicious, both fried or marinated. All along the coast you will encounter excellent dishes made with mushrooms and mouth-watering marinades. Pickled mushrooms are a Polish delicacy. The revival of traditional goose breeding has increased the popularity of this variety of poultry. Apart from aromatic oils, the Wielkopolska region is famous for St. Martin's croissants, made of yeasty dough and filled with sweetened poppy seeds. The origin of this local delicacy even has its own legend, which reminds us that we should always care for those less fortunate in life. The Mazovia region, with Warsaw as its cosmopolitan culinary capital, offers not only cuisine from around the world, but also local Mazovian poultry that includes capon broth, one of the finest in the world. The Podlaskie region, the environmentally cleanest part of Poland, is renowned for its unique eastern Polish cuisine. The local delicacies are kartacze, potato dumplings stuffed with meat, and sękacz, an amazing sweet cake shaped like a tree trunk and baked on a spit. In Silesia, you'll find karminadel, minced meat dumplings seasoned with herring, and a beef roulade served with red cabbage. The Małopolska region, with its capital Kraków, has a wealth of its own flavours. The culinary symbol of the city are dough pretzels, called obwarzanki, sold from street stalls. Kraków is also famous for its cheesecake. The further south you go, the stronger the distinct mountain style of the cuisine. Traditional-style taverns serve kwaśnica, a hearty, warming sour soup made from sauerkraut on a base of smoked meat. Here you can also buy traditional mountain cheese made from sheep or cow's milk. The most famous of them is oscypek, a sheep's milk cheese, which is the first Polish local product with the EU-protected designation of origin. In each region it is worth asking about local dairies and apiaries. They offer a unique selection of tasty home-made products.





POTATO DUMPLINGS (KLUSKI ŚLĄSKIE)

1 kg boiled potatoes

potato flour

2-3 eggs

1-2 tablespoons butter

salt

serve with:

clarified butter, smoked bacon scrunchings

or fried onion

This dish originally comes from the region of Silesia, but nowadays it is very popular across Poland. Mash the boiled potatoes with a potato masher. Mix with butter. Pack the dough tightly into a bowl, then divide into four equal parts. Remove one quarter and fill the empty place with potato flour. This technique helps keep the proportions perfect. Add the remaining dough and knead it energetically, adding the eggs one by one. Add salt to taste. Shape the dough into small balls and use your thumb to make a shallow indentation in the middle of each dumpling. Boil in salted water until they float to the surface. Serve with butter, smoked bacon scrunchings, or fried onions.



POLISH CHRISTMAS

Christmas Eve supper is meat-free and it is not until Christmas Day that meat appears on the table. The Christmas Eve meal starts with the breaking and sharing of blessed wafers that are sometimes dipped in honey. Twelve dishes are served conventionally at the table in celebration of the twelve apostles. These are very traditional dishes, often regional and usually made only at this time of the year. Carp is obligatory and is usually served fried or glazed in aspic. There is also a variety of herring dishes, which can be served in soured cream, with mushrooms – in the exquisite Vilnius-style, or Kashubian-style, with tomato sauce. Hot dishes include pierogi, stuffed with sauerkraut and wild mushrooms or with curd cheese and potatoes, as well as uszka, little round ear-shaped dumplings filled with wild mushrooms that are usually served with barszcz (beetroot soup). Soups on the Christmas Eve menu include either red barszcz or wild mushroom soup. The Christmas Eve meal is topped up with traditional sweets, which include makielki – noodles with poppy seeds, moczki – sweet gingerbread and poppy seed soup, tamańce – biscuits served with a poppy seed paste, and kutia – a dish made with wheat, poppy seeds, honey, nuts and raisins. Poppy seed cakes are considered a sign of opulence; hence Polish desserts cannot have enough of them. They are often further enriched with honey, dried fruit and nuts. Compote made from dried fruit, with the rich aroma of lightly smoked plums, is served in cups at the end of the Christmas meal.



BOILED BARLEY WITH POPPY SEEDS AND HONEY (KUTIA)

- 1 glass boiled pearl barley
- ½ cup poppy seeds
- 0.5 l milk
- a few tablespoons honey
- 50 g raisins
- 50 g shelled walnuts
- 50 g shelled hazelnuts
- 50 g almond flakes
- 1 tablespoon candied orange peel

Boil the poppy seeds in milk, strain, and grind twice in a grinder. Mix with the pearl barley. Scald raisins with boiling water, then add to the mix along with chopped walnuts, hazelnuts and almond flakes. Season to taste with honey and candied orange peel. Optionally, add other dried fruit such as apricots, plums or figs. In the past, this traditional dish was made with boiled wheat seeds.

POLISH EASTER

After a period of fasting, the Easter breakfast is very rich in meats. The table is dominated by cured meats, such as delicious Polish sausages, ham, roast pork loin, gammon and home-made pates. The meats are accompanied by pickled mushrooms, plums, pumpkins and cucumbers that have been marinating since autumn. Horseradish and tartare sauces are also served along with traditional meat accompaniments such as cranberry or red current preserves. The traditional menu includes the very Polish sour soup zurek, served with sausage. White sausage, stuffed with raw meat, is also served separately as a hot cooked dish. The Easter table is adorned with colourfully decorated Easter eggs. Eggs also come in a variety of tastes; the most delicious are stuffed eggs. Traditionally, a variety of sweet products are served at Easter and the pride of place on the Easter table goes to the yeast cake. It is tall, well iced, with a plump golden centre that is full of glazed fruit and nuts, and is considered one of the symbols of Easter. Other sweets include mazurki, crumbly pastries with a variety of toppings, the most popular being butterscotch, chocolate and glazed fruit and nuts. Due to the influence of the Jewish, or maybe Eastern Orthodox tradition, pascha, a type of rich yeasty bread, also appears on many Polish Easter tables.

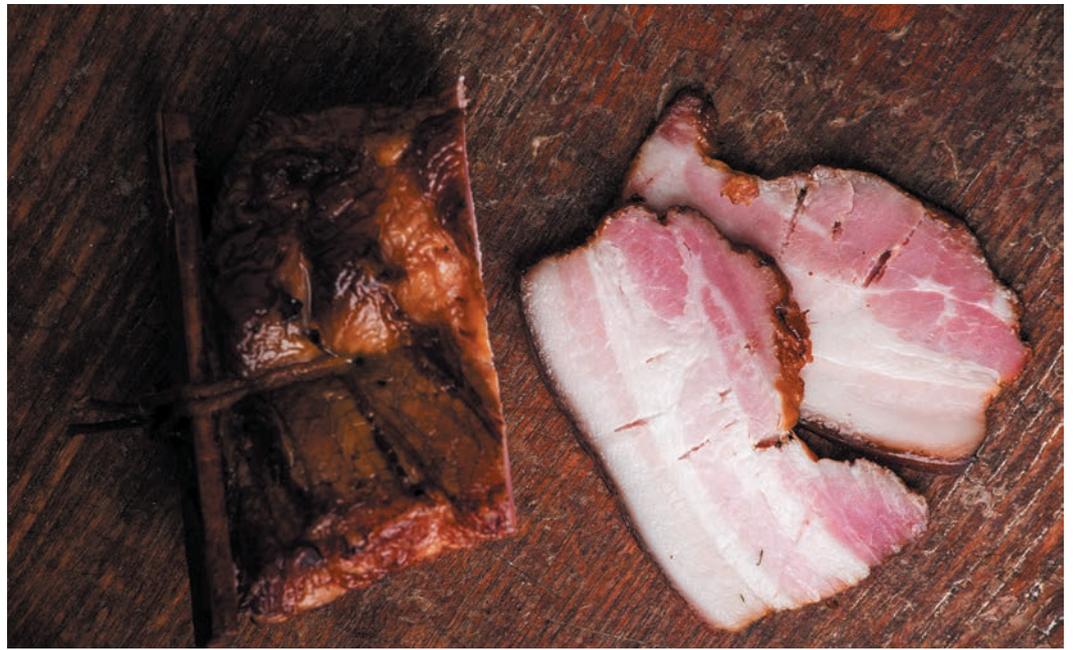
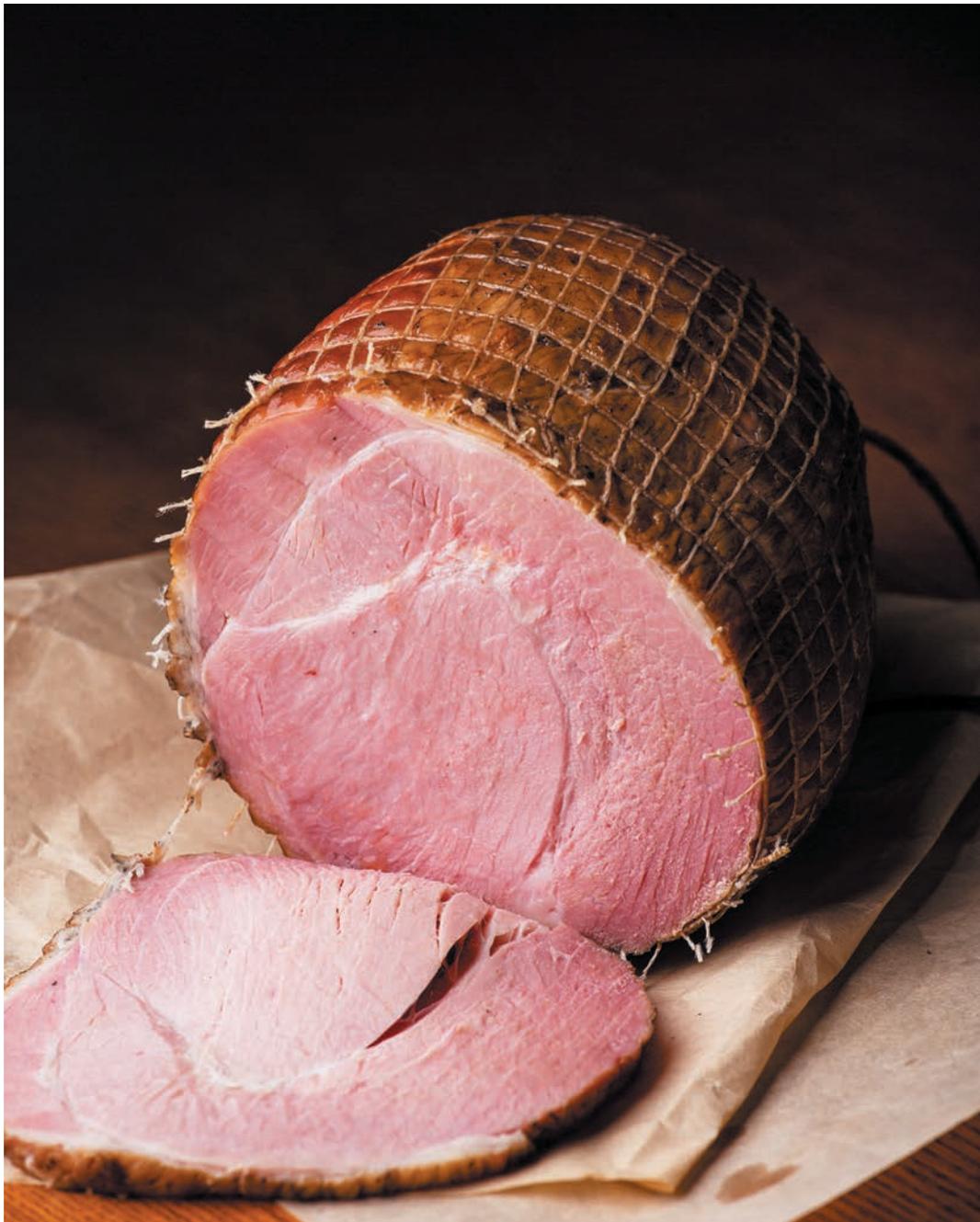




SOUR RYE SOUP ŻUREK

- 1 l fermented rye flour
- 1 l vegetable broth
- 500 g raw white sausage
- 1 carrot
- 1 piece celeriac
- 1 piece horseradish root
- 50–100 ml cream (30%)
- 1 piece smoked bacon
- marjoram
- 2–3 bay leaves
- a few seeds pimento
- salt, black pepper
- serve with:
hard-boiled eggs

Heat the vegetable broth until boiling and add bay leaves and pimento along with coarsely grated carrots and celeriac. Add white sausage and cook on medium heat for about 30 minutes. Add the fermented rye flour and a considerable amount of marjoram, then cook for another half hour. Remove the sausage. Dice the smoked bacon finely and fry in a dry pan. Add to the soup along with the drippings. Grate the horseradish root into the soup. Pour in the cream and season with salt and pepper to taste. Cook for a couple more minutes. Serve with white sausage cut into pieces and hard-boiled eggs.



POLISH CURED MEATS

Poles love sausages and the tradition of their production in Poland is centuries old. They come in a wide range of tastes and qualities, of which many are included in the European register of local food products. One is called Lisiecka sausage, produced in a small town near Kraków and made from sliced meat using only traditional methods. Another Polish speciality is the very popular white sausage, which is an accompaniment to the traditional sour soup, żurek. Poland is also a major producer of kabanosy. These are thin, aromatic, very dry sausages that come in many varieties. Poles like to take them on trips to serve as a snack between meals, keeping hungry hikers going. The most elaborately cured meat is ham. Traditionally home-made and served at Easter, the joints were cured in spices, smoked and then cooked. Even today shops carry ham with a very traditional taste. Polish meat delicacies also include palcówka sausages and kaszanka, a variety of black pudding. Palcówka, or finger sausage, now also known as Polish raw sausage, used to be made by forcing ground meat into skins with one's fingers. There is a great choice of black puddings on the market, but the best ones are likely those made with buckwheat. They are usually served hot with fresh bread. The kindziuk has recently experienced a renaissance. This is a very unique sausage that originated in traditional Lithuanian cuisine. The exquisite taste of Polish cured meats depends, above all else, on the quality of the meat used and the adherence to traditional methods of production.

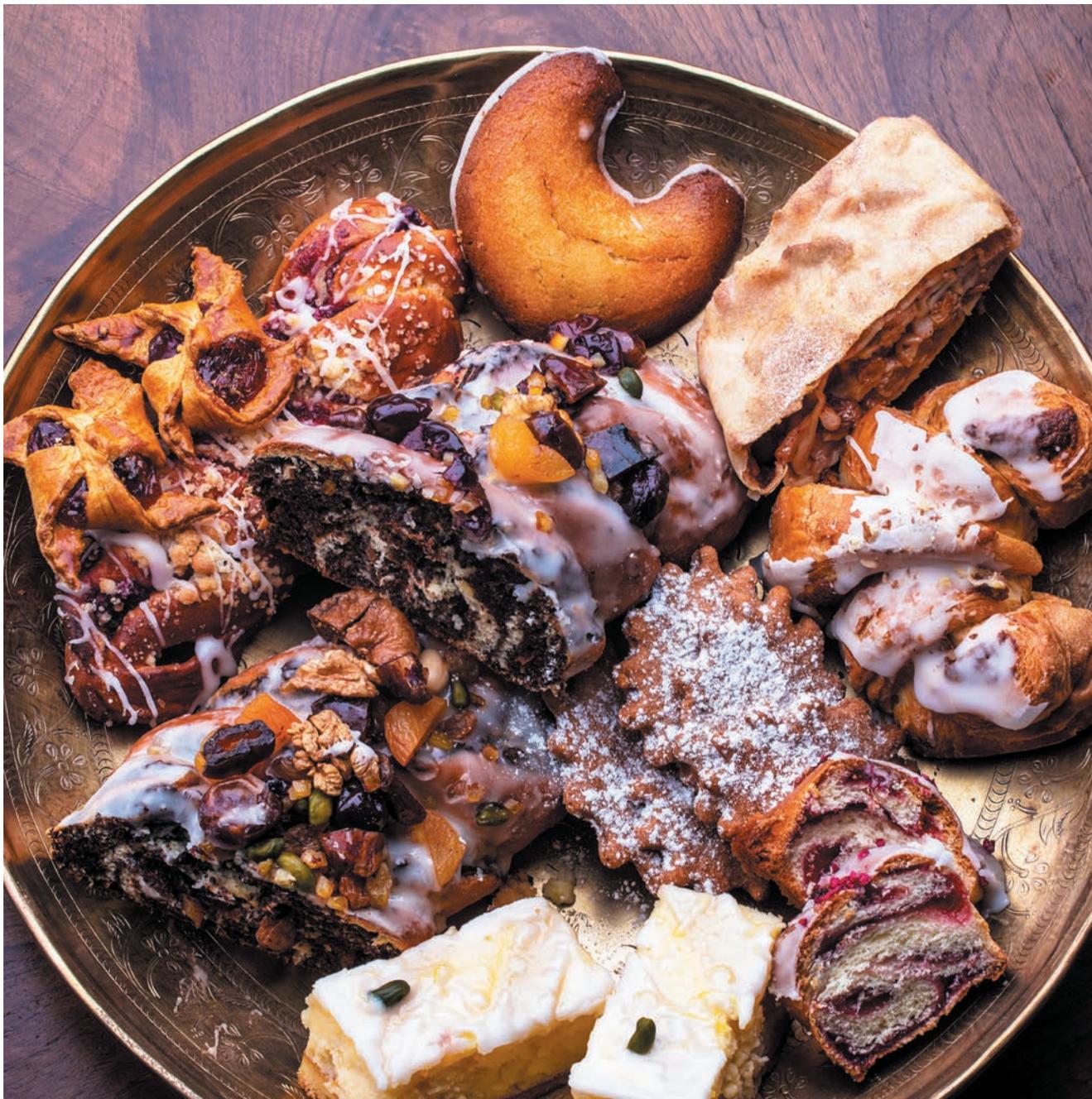


POLISH BAKED PRODUCTS

The one thing that is missed the most by Poles living abroad is the taste of Polish bread. Bread in Poland is unlike any other. There are many varieties, from the heavy, thick full-flavoured dark, wholegrain bread, to the lighter, softer white bread with a crispy crust. Among the brown breads we distinguish wholegrain bread made with honey and Lithuanian or Vilnius-style bread, which is compact and slightly sweet, similar to pumpernickel. Poles are very fond of naturally leavened sourdough rye bread. The best bread comes from small bakeries, bazaars and speciality delicatessen. Polish rolls can be either white or dark. The charka, a slightly sweet yeasty bread formed into a decorative braid, originates in Jewish tradition and can be found in most grocery stores. It can be eaten with butter and honey, but also tastes great with ham. Poles love buns, whether the festive variety with poppy seeds or the everyday ones made from yeast dough and covered in a crumble, berries or with sweet cheese. They are all widely available and taste best with morning coffee.







POLISH PASTRIES

Traditional Polish pastries are sweet and very filling. The proof is in the Polish cheesecake, which consists of a curd cheese filling mixed with glazed fruit placed on a crumbly short crust base. Another centuries-old speciality of Polish confectioners has been gingerbread, with the most famous variety originating from the town of Toruń. The secret of baking this spice- and honey-filled cake was closely guarded for centuries. Traditionally, a piece of gingerbread used to be given to the bride as a dowry. To this day in Toruń, but also elsewhere, it is possible to buy gingerbread in a variety of tastes and often fanciful shapes. But nothing tastes better than a pączek from a Polish patisserie. These yeasty doughnuts filled with rose preserve are made fresh daily. The height of their popularity comes on 'Fat' Thursday, when Poles eat millions of pączki. Another popular sweet cake, szarlotka, is a pastry made with apples. It tastes exceedingly good because of the unique quality of Polish apples. When visiting north-eastern Poland, the sękacz cake must not be missed. This regional delicacy, made from multiple layers of pastry dough, is baked over an open fire. Kołaczki, sweet pastries made for special occasions, are found in the southern part of the country, with the most popular ones made with poppy seeds and cheese. The most delicious pastries are made from yeast dough, and include poppy seed cakes, sponge cakes and sweet breakfast rolls with various fillings.



CHEESECAKE

- 1 kg quark cheese
- 200 g butter
- 250 g sugar
- 5 eggs
- 2-3 tablespoons potato flour
- 1 vanilla pod
- shortcrust biscuits
- raisins or candied orange peel (optional)

Grind the cheese three times. In a large bowl, blend softened butter, sugar and yolks. Cut the vanilla pod in half, scrape the seeds out with the blunt side of a knife, and mix them into the dough. Add the cheese and stiffly beaten egg whites. Mix the dough gently. Optionally, add raisins or diced candied orange peel. Cover the bottom of a cake tin with crushed shortcrust biscuits and pour the cheese dough over it. Bake for 60 minutes in an oven preheated to around 170°C.

POLISH SPIRITS

Poland is famous for many delicious types of alcoholic drinks. We have a long and rich tradition of brewing beer and making mead and home-made liqueurs. Today, many small local breweries offer excellent, unpasteurized beers with original flavours. If you go on a trip around Poland, you will encounter a mind-boggling variety of these local drinks. They are pale or dark, weak or strong, with a taste of honey or with a whiff of hops. For something stronger, we recommend Polish mead, a product that has a long history in our country. Since there has never been a lack of honey in Poland, people quickly learned how to process this gift of the forest into a high-proof liqueur. The best quality mead is Półtorak, followed by Dwójniak and then Trójniak. The names indicate the proportion of honey in the drink: Półtorak is made using two units of honey for each unit of water, while Trójniak has two units of water for each unit of honey. Polish vodkas are produced from cereals (wheat and rye) and potatoes. The long tradition of its production guarantees high quality. Today you are really spoiled for choice of flavours and blends. Żubrówka, the bison grass vodka, is one of the most popular. Each bottle of this unmistakably Polish rye vodka contains a blade of bison grass which gives the drink its unique flavour. Tinctures are also considered a Polish speciality. Traditionally made in homes using seasonal fruit, they are now also available in some shops. The most delicious varieties are pigwówka (made from quince), smorodinówka (made from blackcurrants) and wiśniówka (made from cherries).







THE REVIVAL OF THE CULINARY COMMUNIST ERA

Operating as small bistros open 24/7 where you can enjoy a shot of vodka and a traditional snack, "milk bars" owe their continuing existence to Polish nostalgia. They are a bit of a joke, but they simply refuse to go away. After several years of absence they are now returning in growing numbers to the streets of Polish cities. Milk bars were omnipresent during the 70s and 80s. Prices were very reasonable and the decor was more than unassuming. They were quite different than typical restaurants, which usually opened in the afternoon and had a dress code enforced by the cloakroom attendant. Milk bars were usually frequented by students, artists and travellers. As the word "milk" in their name suggests, they did not serve meat dishes. With the decline of Communism, most of the bars ceased to exist, but they are now experiencing a revival. Still decorated in the style of a bygone era, only their menus have changed. You can now order typical Polish home-made dishes, with both meat and vegetarian options. Prices are still reasonable and the atmosphere is like in the days of old. At snack bars you can enjoy a shot of vodka and a traditional snack "on the hop", or try old-school staple bar foods like minced meat in aspic, steak tartare or pickled herring. These bars draw crowds of both locals and tourists as they convey a unique, retrospective atmosphere. You will enjoy visiting one of these places to soak up the atmosphere of the big city night life and will like the prices of snacks in both milk and snack bars, which are very affordable.



STEAK TARTARE

- 200g beef fillet
- 1 white onion
- 2 pickled cucumbers
- 1 teaspoon mustard
- 1 yolk
- oil
- salt, black pepper
- marinated mushrooms, capers

Clean the meat, wash it in water and dry. Chop finely with a sharp knife. Season with mustard and freshly ground black pepper. Add oil. Let cool. Shape into the desired form and place onto a plate. Put a yolk on top. Dice the pickled cucumbers and the onion finely and serve on the side, together with a slice of whole-grain bread. Optionally, add capers and marinated mushrooms.



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ISBN: 978-83-7336-390-8