

# THE POLISH TABLE

Magdalena Tomaszewska-Bolątek





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Magdalena **Tomaszewska-Bolątek**

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**Magdalena  
Tomaszewska-Bolałek**

# **THE POLISH TABLE**

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Farmland in spring, around Śniardwy lake



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

X

## INTRODUCTION

*13*

## A TIMELINE OF POLISH FOOD

*14*

## AROUND THE POLISH TABLE

*17*

## BREAD

*39*

## GROATS

*43*

## MEAT

*47*

## FISH

*51*

## DAIRY

*55*

## PIEROGI

*59*

**FROM THE FOREST  
AND THE MEADOW**

*63*

**APPLES**

*67*

**HONEY**

*71*

**BAKED GOODS AND DESSERTS  
FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS**

*75*

**GINGERBREAD**

*79*

**ALCOHOL**

*83*

**RECIPES**

*88*

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

*117*

**MUSEUMS, INSTITUTIONS  
AND INTERESTING CULINARY  
PROJECTS**

*121*

**LINKS**

*124*





Buckwheat in bloom, around Kielce









# INTRODUCTION

The table is one of the most fundamental pieces of furniture in many parts of the world. Tall or short, round or rectangular, whether in the kitchen or in the dining room, it's often one of the most important objects in the house. It's where we have our daily meals, do our homework and place our computers. It's also witness to many noisy celebrations.

Ancient Greeks and Romans were among the first to use tables. The custom spread quickly. Today, the table can play the central role when we seat our guests around it and serve them our delicious dishes. It can also stand on the side, filled to the brim with sweets. Small, intimate tables await lovers in cafés, while enormous ones are always ready to welcome large groups of friends.

The table quickly became more than just a piece of furniture, but also a symbol of unity, community, family and hospitality. Poland is no different in this respect. Our lives revolve around this piece of furniture. Christmas, Easter, birthdays, name days, Sunday dinners, housewarming parties — every occasion is perfect for a feast.

The Polish table evolved over the centuries, along with changes to availability of produce and shifting tastes. Yet in every age, it was filled with beloved homemade delicacies — aromatic meats, fresh fish, crusty bread, crumbly groats, soups, sweets and flavourful spirits. The Polish table has a lot to offer.

## A TIMELINE OF POLISH FOOD





1989 →



SPOŻYWCZY



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## AROUND THE POLISH TABLE

Different cultures evolved on the territory of presentday Poland over the centuries. The Slavs settled the Polish lands at the turn of the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. in a time of unfavourable weather conditions. The seventh century brought climate warming, which in turn had an impact on the development of agriculture.

Back then, the Slavs lived in harmony with nature, which they considered partly divine. Weles was among the gods responsible for crops and cattle. Many deities of the hearth, who took care of the farm and its inhabitants, also played a major role. One of them was Plonek, who took the shape of a black rooster. He helped hardworking farmers by caring for the harvest and carrying their grains to the barn. The lazy ones, on the other hand, he diverted with more or less troublesome pranks.

Multigenerational Slavic families lived under the roofs of wooden houses. Their basic furnishings consisted of tables and benches, which were also used for sleeping, while large, often beautifully decorated chests played the role of cupboards. The number of furnishings depended on the farm's wealth.

The diet of that time abounded in simple meals prepared with local products. Grains were the basis of everyday nutrition. Flours and groats were made from millet, barley, rye and wheat. They were used to make aromatic *podpłomyki* — thin flatbreads made with flour and water, served in either sweet or savoury form — baked on hot stones or the heated part of the hearth. *Bryja* was also an important part of the everyday diet — it was a thick soup made with groats, butter, oil or vegetables. Slavs also ate meat and fish. Pork and poultry were quite popular. Beef was less commonly eaten, since cows were chiefly bred

for their milk. Plants such as peas, lentils, fava beans, carrots, turnips, garlic and parsnips were also used to prepare dishes. Apples, pears, plums, peaches and cherries were also prized. Nature was a major source of culinary inspiration for the Slavs. Nuts, mushrooms, bilberries, raspberries and herbs were collected in the woods. Honey was also indispensable. It was used to season food, sweeten baked goods, and to make drinks such as mead. Yet thirst was most often quenched with low-percentage beer, kvass, milk or water.

Nowadays the health-promoting properties of fermented products are a popular subject. They boost immunity, provide many valuable vitamins and improve digestion. Fermentation was a necessity for the Slavs during the winter months. Other provisions included dried meat and smoked fish. Most meals were prepared in clay pots or in the oven. Meat was roasted on a spit or — like fish and poultry — coated in clay and thrown into the fire. Food wasn't only an everyday part of Slavic culture. It also played an important role in celebrations held in honour of deities and ancestors. For *dziady* — the Slavic counterpart of the Christian All Saints' Day — food was used to honour the deceased. Usually in the autumn and in the spring, and up to six times a year in some regions, ghosts of the dead were welcomed with honey, groats, nuts and spirits. According to an ancient tradition, *dziady* was the time when the world of the dead permeated with the world of the living. Special rules applied. Remains from supper were left for souls to eat rather than cleared away. Fires were lit to show them the way and to drive away all evil spirits. Some work activities were also forbidden. You couldn't sew or weave in case the soul of an ancestor got tied to one place. *Karaboszeki* — masks that symbolized ghosts — were made with clay or wood, and placed where the ritual of *dziady* was performed. Although old Slavic rites have been long forgotten, the custom of bringing food to the dead in their tombs is still alive today in some regions of Eastern Poland.

In the year 966 Mieszko I (922–992), a prince from the Piast dynasty, was baptised. His rule began an important new chapter in Poland's history. Christian culture had a great impact not only on philosophy, art and literature, but also on food. With the rise of the new religion, bread and wine gained importance as elements of the liturgy. The idea of fasting also started to spread. It was restrictively adhered to in Poland for centuries to come. During fasting, you were not allowed to consume meat, eggs or dairy. With time, the belief spread that all foods form a hierarchy of sorts — the closer to heaven, the more pleasing to God. Plants from the soil, fish from deep waters, and pigs — as opposed











to vegetables that grew on bushes, fruit and birds — were considered simple, unsophisticated, and unsuitable for serving on the tables of the highborn.

When Gallus Anonymus (11<sup>th</sup> C–1116) — the court chronicler of king Boleslaus the Wry-mouthed (1086–1138) — describes Poland during the reign of the Piast dynasty, he presents it as a densely wooded country abounding in bread, fish, meat and honey. The land is fertile, cows give a lot of milk and the countrymen are hardworking.

Research shows that people in the Middle Ages ate simple meals. More sophisticated dishes were served only during special holidays and family events. However, life at the royal court was completely different. Kraków was the capital city of Poland during the reign of queen Jadwiga (1373–1399) — a good politician as well as a patron of the sciences and arts. It was a rich and dynamically developing city. Numerous servants, clerks, cooks and porters were employed at the Wawel Royal Castle to take care of the noblemen's palates, with Jakusz from Boturzyn as her head chef. Two meals a day were eaten in court: one before noon and the other in the late afternoon. When strict fasting did not apply, a great variety of dishes appeared on the table. Soups were served for starters and followed by fish or roast meat. Fruit, vegetables and groats were eaten at the end. Beef, lamb, game, poultry and wildfowl were served more often than pork, which started to disappear completely from the tables of noblemen around the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Swans and peacocks were served on special occasions. The use of spices from overseas was a sign of wealth. At the royal court, dishes were spiced with pepper, golden saffron, ginger, mace and cinnamon. Other luxury items included olive oil, imported wines, almonds, dried figs, raisins, sugar and rice. Queen Jadwiga also liked bread and sweets. She had light wheat buns — a rare delicacy at the time — baked specially for her. She also enjoyed cakes with cheese and fruit; honey cakes and jams; and had a favourite spiced candy with an intense aroma of aniseed. In her time *pierogi* with cheese, which were already popular in Lithuania, became widely known in Poland.

The 16<sup>th</sup> century, often referred to as the Polish Golden Age, was the true heyday of Polish cuisine. Poland was one of the biggest countries in Europe. Culture and the trade of grain and wood flourished. It was also a time of great change in the culinary arts. Bona Sforza, the Italian wife of king Sigismund the Old (1467–1548), promoted products from her motherland, and so lettuce, capers, asparagus, pâtés and turkey meat became common ingredients. She also loved citrus fruits and had them imported to the royal table. Bona did not

save on feasts. An especially sumptuous example was the occasion of her son's, Sigismund II Augustus' (1520–1572), wedding. When he married Elizabeth of Austria (1526–1545), wisents' backs, goats, game, capons, marzipan cake, imported wines, lemons, oranges, and many other goods were served at the wedding feast. According to some claims, wedding guests could also taste *sękacz* — a big cake that resembles a knotted tree. The recipe for this wonderful delicacy comes from the cuisine of the Yotvingians — a Baltic people from the North-East of Poland who used to live in what is now known as the Suwałki region.

During the Golden Age, Mikołaj Rej (1505–1569) — a famous poet, translator, politician and advocate for simple living — wrote about food in his poem *The Life of the Honest Man*. The writer noticed a change in the way meals were served. All types of meat used to be served together on one platter. It later became fashionable to arrange each product separately. People also started to notice how the table itself was decorated. Rej wrote extensively about moderation in eating and drinking. He rebuked gluttony and drunkenness. Among various advice for each stage of life, he also found space for a recipe for beetroot with horseradish. Vegetables were baked in the oven, peeled, cut into pieces, then sprinkled with finely grated horseradish and seasoned with fennel seeds, salt and vinegar. The poet also encouraged drying mushrooms, making jams and pickling gherkins layered with oak and cherry leaves.

Noble families became wealthier due to the good economic situation of the time. The rich not only took great care of the furnishings of their homes and their clothes, but also attached importance to their food. Life in palaces and court also revolved around the kitchen. The ability to throw amazing feasts that were the talk of the town was a valued skill. We can find information about what the gentry ate in diaries as well as in the first Polish cookbook — *Compendium Ferculorum or a Collection of Dishes*, published in Kraków in 1682. The author, Stanisław Czerniecki — a soldier and a cook who has served the Lubomirski family — wanted to preserve the knowledge of Polish cuisine for posterity. This meticulously arranged book contained 333 recipes for fish, poultry, beef and flour-based dishes. It has been reissued numerous times and has served as an inspiration for generations of cooks. The book was published at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but the recipes themselves had already been in circulation by that time. They appeared in herbariums, diaries and calendars.

The tables of the Polish nobility and wealthy townspeople in the Renaissance and Baroque periods followed a design style called Gdańsk furniture.







It was developed between the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and crafted mainly in the North of the country. Houses were furnished with dark, bulky, richly decorated cupboards, chests and chairs. Gdańsk tables most often had rectangular tops that rested on balusters or spiral legs. Plant motifs as well as beehives, spheres and lions often appeared on the reliefs. Due to its character, style and production quality, Gdańsk furniture is highly valued both by Polish and foreign collectors.

After the golden and the silver ages, sovereigns from the house of Wettin came into power — first Augustus II the Strong (1670–1733), then his son Augustus III of Poland (1696–1763). These were times of heavy feasting — the nobility used every excuse to meet around a lavishly set table. The historian and diarist Jędrzej Kitowicz (1728–1804) described the meals and customs of the time, capturing a change in the way people ate and food was served. The beginning of Augustus III's reign was dominated by old-style cuisine, which abounded in greasy capons, golden ducks, roasted meat, broths, tripe and fish, all heavily seasoned with pepper, saffron, nutmeg, raisins, almonds, sugar and citrus. Heavy puff pastries and layer cakes were served for dessert. Later on, with the rise of a fashion for French culture, the way food was prepared changed as well. Boiled meats served with sauces became popular, along with stuffing, pâtés and soups. Cooking wine, capers, anchovies and marinated oysters all came into use. The preparation of desserts and baked goods reached a much higher level. Drinking alcohol was accompanied by the custom of making elaborate toasts. Table setting was also revolutionized. Faience and porcelain came into use, and stemmed glasses took the place of heavy chalices. Silver cutlery became a sign of wealth and luxury, so noblemen started to invest in it.

King Stanislaus II Augustus (1732–1798) also enjoyed feasting. However, he did not like old-Polish cuisine and avoided alcohol. Throughout his eighteen-year rule, he organised the famous Thursday dinners, at which Polish intellectuals would meet at a round table to discuss important topics in line with the ideas of the Enlightenment while eating good food. The royal chef Paul Tremo (1733–1810) combined French and Polish influences in his culinary art. Braised mutton and oysters were among Stanisław Augustus' favourite dishes. Polish-style pike, clear beetroot *barszcz* with *uszka* dumplings, grouse broth, almond soup, pies and spicy marinades were also not to be missed. Although various wines were served at the dinners, the king himself preferred spring water. The entrance of the pages was a sign that the meeting was about to come to an





Bread torte with blackcurrant essence and grapes, inspired by Paul Tremo's recipe,  
prepared by Maciej Nowicki, Museum of King Jan III's Palace in Wilanów, ceramics — Spiek Ceramiczny





end. One of them would hold a silver tray with plums, the other — an envelope with the ‘*Au Roi*’ written on it. Plums were very popular at the time, so they appeared in many recipes in various cookbooks. Gourmands highly valued jams and *roženki* — pitted plums filled with chopped almonds, aniseed or caraway, which were skewered and dried in the oven for a long time.

What changes did the 19<sup>th</sup> century bring and what did a culinary day in the life of a wealthy manor house look like? *The Diaries of mister Kamerton* by Leon Potocki (1799–1864) are a good source here. The day began with coffee served with heavy cream. Then, at around ten, adults opened the door to the cabinet, where they stored different spirits. Gingerbread and plums were a great addition to aniseed or orange liqueurs. Lunch consisted of a dozen dishes. Fruit and jams were served a couple of hours later, followed by tea and cakes at six and a lavish dinner at nine. Such a tight food schedule required a huge back of the house. Therefore, until the mid-nineteenth century, kitchens were located in separate buildings. The cooking, braising and baking of different specialties started in the early morning. We can also learn about 19<sup>th</sup> century noble cuisine from Marcjanna Jawornicka née Oborska (1784–1878), a landlady from Proszewo. She is the author of a manuscript of 346 recipes and housekeeping advice. She most likely started making notes in 1825. The collection begins with a recipe for vinegar. There are also recipes for flour-based dishes, meats, stocks for winter and flavoured vodkas. The landlady had a sweet tooth, so she also jotted down ideas for *pączki* (donuts), *obwarzanki* and *faworki* (also known as *chrust*, which literally means ‘brushwood’) — crispy, deep-fried strips of thin pastry. Apart from culinary specialties, the manuscript also contains cures for toothache and a recipe for homemade ink. Marcjanna Oborska also left behind a book of revenues and expenses, including groceries.

Poorer gentry and townspeople were increasingly forced to manage on their own. They couldn’t afford that many servants, which meant that the lady of the house needed to engage in housework to a much greater extent. The difficult economic situation led to the publication of many books dedicated to homemaking and cooking. The authors provided ideas for nutritious, interesting dishes that wouldn’t break the home budget, and tips on how to throw a party, stock up for the winter or look after the property.

After the Third Partition of Poland in 1795, the country disappeared from the map and was divided between Prussia, Austria and Russia. Culinary culture developed slightly differently in each of the partitions. In territories occupied by







the Russians, Polish cuisine retained its former character the longest. Various flour-based dishes, such as Lithuanian *kolduny* and *pierogi*, were very popular. Inhabitants of the Prussian partition enjoyed dishes based on potatoes, pumpkin and goose. Even though Galicia was the most politically autonomous, it was also under the culinary influence of Austria-Hungary, with thriving cafés that offered a multitude of sweet cakes. Gulash, schnitzel and polenta were also very popular.

Poland regained independence on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1918, 123 years after being partitioned. In its first months as an independent country, there were some issues with food supplies, but once these were overcome, the culinary culture started to develop dynamically. Politicians and artists met in cafés or restaurants and organised various social events and balls. Józef Piłsudski (1867–1935) — one of the most influential people in the country at the time, who was a soldier, independence activist and politician — avoided large parties. His diet was rather modest. He drank a lot of strong tea and didn't like hunter's stew or *kolduny* dumplings, which were popular in his native Vilnius Region. He wasn't a fan of fruit or vegetables either, but he did have a major sweet tooth. He loved candy and Lithuanian rusks sprinkled with sugar and cinnamon. Plum cake with egg-white foam was a must in his household.

In the interwar period, people would shop in markets, market halls and little shops. Delicatessens were popular in big cities. These elegant, often lavishly decorated places enticed their guests with a wide array of products and services. In *U Braci Pakulskich* deli in Warsaw, smoked salmon was cut by hand. Also in the capital, in the confectionery and charcuterie *U Henryka*, the staff cut ham into thin slices using a meat cutting machine, which was still quite a rare sight. *Gdański Dom Delikatesów M. Rotnickiego* in Poznań offered a wide array of fish and seafood, while in *Staroświecki Sklep*, which belonged to the chocolate company E.Wedel, everything was wrapped in paper designed by the outstanding painter, graphic designer and illustrator Zofia Stryjeńska (1891–1976).

Gourmands and partygoers knew very well where to go and what to eat. One of the legendary places from that time was *Adria*, opened in Warsaw in 1931. Clients entered the establishment through a crystal door. Each of the many rooms was elegantly decorated and lit with electric lighting. Guests could choose between the café, American-style bar, and a dancing hall with a coffer-decorated ceiling. Movie stars, musicians, politicians and entrepreneurs all flocked to this place. House parties were equally popular — especially those

dedicated to playing bridge. A lot of advice regarding hosting guests and menu planning appeared in the press, especially in women's magazines. Cookbooks contained recipes for just about every kind of meal. This included tea (*podwieczorek*) — an afternoon snack, which became popular at the time, though the concept was far from new. Łukasz Gołębiowski (1773–1849), one of Poland's first ethnographers, wrote that fruit, cake, cream and chicken with lettuce were served for *jużyna* (an earlier term for *podwieczorek*). In the interwar period, everything depended on location. *Podwieczorek* served indoors differed from the coveted summertime snack eaten in the garden. Afternoon snacks consisted of bread, cake, toast, cookies and butter served with tea, coffee and milk. In spring and summer, fresh fruit was added to the menu — strawberries and wild strawberries sprinkled with icing sugar, raspberries with cream, apples, pears, grapes, and watermelons. Flavoured ice-cream was a favourite on warm days. Not only the food itself, but also table decoration was given a lot of care to. Everything had to be served in an aesthetically pleasing and inviting way.

Feasters usually met for lunch and dinner around art deco tables. These were round, oval or rectangular, and often set on one bulky leg. Liquor cabinets and sideboards were also among the most popular furnishings. The uniqueness of Polish art deco consisted in the way it made reference to local folklore, which was well received both at home and abroad. During the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts, held in Paris in 1925, Polish creators won 35 Grand Prix and 205 awards in total.

World War II and the period of communism that followed were difficult times for Polish gastronomy. Post-war Poland was characterised by a constant shortage of products. Although the restaurant scene had a bit of a revival in the 1950s, it never reached the level of interwar establishments. The years passed without any improvement to food supplies. People forgot the taste of crayfish, elegant roasts or sophisticated cakes and desserts. Food became simpler, since people could not cook whatever they wanted, forced to make do with whatever they had at hand. Cities filled with long queues of people standing in front of shops, and waiting for deliveries became a typical sight. Luxury products were sold in Pewex and Baltona stores, which accepted foreign currencies — usually American dollars. They included cosmetics, jeans and groceries that were otherwise unavailable in the country. The Polish table changed as well. Furniture became plain. Tables and chairs often had long, thin legs that tapered









downwards. Family life flourished around low, high-gloss lacquered benches with rectangular tops.

After 1989, when communism was abolished, gastronomy completely changed its course. New products that Poles could only have dreamt of before were quickly introduced. Restaurants that served foreign dishes sprung up like mushrooms. After many years of food shortages, Poles started tasting, learning, discovering and forming a new taste in food.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century brought many changes to the Polish table. On the one hand, Poles started to appreciate their own cuisine, and on the other, they opened up to flavours from different parts of the world. Today, walking the streets of major cities, we pass many interesting restaurants. Cosy cafés entice us with a selection of coffees and aromatic cakes. Bistros serving Polish food, craft-beer bars, confectionaries and sushi or ramen shops create an interesting mosaic of flavours, and everyone can find something for themselves. Cities teem with all sorts of initiatives: meals eaten outside at common tables, cooking classes, museums, festivals, fairs and events that bring together food and art. The cookbook and culinary press market is flourishing, and Polish and foreign programmes devoted to the culture of food are being broadcast on television.

The table as a place and as a piece of furniture still plays an important part in the Polish home. There's no longer a dominant style — everyone can decorate their home however they want. We might encounter low benches that remember communist times, rugged wooden tables with heavy tops, as well as high-polished coffee tables. Tastes in food and in furniture change. What remains the same is the need to share.







Rapeseed field, the South of Poland









# BREAD

There's something special about the smell of freshly baked bread. Its strong effect on our senses is often used in scent marketing. When we smell it as we enter a shop, it makes us hungrier and eager to buy more.

In Poland, bread plays a special role. Nowadays, it is often eaten even several times a day, usually for breakfast and supper. Not only are sandwiches taken to work or to school, but bread is also used as an ingredient in various dishes. Lately more and more people have been going back to baking bread at home, and there are many new artisan bakeries that specialize in high quality products.

Baking has a long tradition on Polish lands. The introduction of water-mills in the 12<sup>th</sup> century had a great impact on breadmaking. In 1257, when introducing a new organisational and legal order in Kraków, prince Boleslaus the Chaste (1226–1279) took shops selling meat and breadstuff in the market into consideration.

One of the oldest types of bread to survive until modern times is *Prądnik* bread. It was first mentioned in print as early as 1461. It was added to the European Protected Geographical Indications list in 2011. *Prądnik* bread is made with rye and wheat flours, boiled potatoes, rye bran and fresh yeast. Loaves are round and weigh between 10 and 30 pounds. In the olden days, this bread was a delicacy reserved for the clergy and the well-off. According to legend, the first ever loaf of *Prądnik* bread, made with fresh grain, landed on the royal table.

Bakeries operated in towns and in monasteries. In the countryside, bread was usually baked at home. Even towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were still some parts of Poland where breadstuff was considered festive.



Bread was made once a week on Friday or on Saturday. Sourdough had to be made the day before and kept overnight at the right temperature. Only women were in charge of kneading the dough. Bread was made from rye and wheat flour. Given the price of the main ingredient, bran, potatoes, lentils and other fillers were added. The bread was baked in the oven on cabbage or horseradish leaves. Since breadstuff was considered a gift from God, it deserved particular respect. It was essential to complete each step in the baking process in a particular order.

In rural communities, bread played an important role in many celebrations, accompanying people from birth until death. When a child was born, the mother, the midwife and the godmother all received a beautiful loaf as a gift. Sometimes bread was placed in the cradle. It was also indispensable at weddings. A young man wanting to propose would go to the home of his beloved with fresh bread. If her parents accepted the gift, it meant they agreed to the marriage. To this day, a Polish wedding often starts with a blessing of bread, salt and alcohol, during which the bride and groom receive wishes for a long and happy life from their parents. The bread symbolises everything that is important in a person's life and brings the couple wealth, success and God's grace. The salt is meant to protect against moral corruption. After drinking alcohol — usually vodka — the newlyweds throw their glasses behind them. If they break, this is a sign of happiness. Greeting with bread and salt takes place not only at weddings — other important guests can be welcomed like this as well. Yet bread was also used in sad circumstances. A slice of bread was placed under a dead person's clothes, on their chest, so that they could eat it while travelling to the other side. All food had to be taken out of the room where a dead body was exposed so that death didn't contaminate it. Until the day of the funeral, taking water out of the well, cooking and baking bread was forbidden. In the Lublin region in the South-East of Poland bread was given as a thank you to everyone who took part in the vigil and in the funeral.











## GROATS

Groats are the hulled and sometimes crushed seeds of various cereal grains. They have been used since the arrival of Slavs on Polish territory to thicken soups as well as to serve as a side to meat and fish. Nowadays they are having a comeback in the kitchen due to their various health benefits. Simon Syrenius (1540–1611) — a doctor and a botanist, author of *Zielnik (Herbarium)* — noted that it was one of the first foods ever eaten on Polish lands. However, the appearance of bread reduced the share of groats in the daily diet. Little did Syrenius know, the biggest threat would come in the form of potatoes.

The motif of the house devil has a strong presence in folklore from around Lublin. The house devil is a supernatural creature that helps out in the household and takes care of the animals and the fertility of the fields. To ensure his favour and help, every day you had to leave it a pot with unsalted baked groats — the devil hated salty food.

Suchedniów, a village in Świętokrzyskie voivodeship, has its own festival of groats. It was inspired by a local legend: in the 19<sup>th</sup> century a statue of John of Nepomuk (1350–1393), the patron of Jesuits and bridges, stood in the village to protect it from both flood and drought. The inhabitants of what is now Skarżysko-Kamienna were very jealous of it. During a time of acute hunger, the village exchanged the statue for a bag of groats. After their luck turned, people from Suchedniów tried in vain to redeem the statue.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, millet was still one of the most popular grains in Poland. The groats made with it were an important staple of the daily diet. Little millet dumplings were boiled in milk for breakfast.

In Old-Polish cuisine, millet was served with butter, lard crackling or sweet milk poured over it.

Millet is also a common ingredient in regional cuisines. A recipe for *kulebiak* — a dish rooted in Russian cuisine and popular in eastern Poland — comes from Perkowice in the Lublin region. The dough is made with flour, butter, cream, eggs and yeast, then filled with millet and mushrooms fried with onions and meat, and finally baked in the oven. In some parts of the Subcarpathian region, sauerkraut with peas and millet, flavoured with linseed oil, is prepared for Christmas Eve. Meanwhile *sójki* — a type of small, baked dumplings — come from the Mazovia region. They are filled with groats mixed with sauerkraut and mushrooms with bacon and lard. Millet is a versatile ingredient that can also be used for making desserts.

Barley groats have been eaten in Poland for just as long. Barley comes in many different forms that depend on how much the seeds are crushed. It has been used for beer production, as well as to make a soup called *krupnik*, for centuries. *Krupnik* has many regional variations and is made with a base of vegetable or meat stock, potatoes and groats.

According to legend, buckwheat groats were brought to Poland during the Tatar invasion (hence their alternative name, *tatarka*). Buckwheat became truly popular at the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and was a delicacy among royalty. King Casimir the Great (1310–1370) used to eat it mixed with egg whites. Queen Anna Jagiellon (1523–1596) was also a connoisseur. Buckwheat with raisins, following a recipe from Kraków, contains milk, vanilla, butter, egg yolks creamed with sugar, orange peel, icing sugar and cherry jam. Buckwheat is also a great addition to meat or mushroom sauces. You can use it to make *pierogi* filling and add it to bread. Simple buckwheat dumplings are traditionally made in the Lublin region and then served with lard crackling or bacon. In the Opole region, it is added to *gołąbki* — filled cabbage rolls.

Wheat semolina is particularly delicate. It was once seen as food for babies or the sick. It's good for making desserts, puddings, sweets, and fillings for layer cakes, as well as for thickening sauces.









## MEAT

Meat was often treated as a luxury product, especially when cured. In rural areas, it was eaten only during holidays and at important events such as baptisms, weddings and funerals until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Meanwhile, nobility could afford to eat various types of meat at all times outside of fasting periods.

Game stayed in fashion for centuries. The Slavs were hunters, and hunting remained a popular pastime for kings, knights, and nobility. Even today, game can be found on the menus of Polish restaurants. Polish cuisine is famous for, among others, its boar cutlets and deer sirloin. Chef Jan Szyttler (1763–1850), who worked for king Stanislaus II Augustus, wrote several dozen books dedicated to the culinary arts. They gained popularity not only in Poland but also in Lithuania and Belarus. He was the author of *Hunter's Cuisine* — a true repository of knowledge on game. The chef revealed his secret recipes for partridge pâté; elk nostrils boiled in stock, tossed in egg, crumbed, and then fried until golden, and served with sorrel or lentils; and hare roulades with lemon peel. He also included recipes for sides and drinks that made hunting, and then feasting, even more pleasurable.

Pork was popular among the Slavs, but it gradually disappeared from the tables of the wealthy. Today it is one of the most commonly purchased meats among Poles. Beef is expensive and therefore eaten more rarely. Lamb, which most often appears in the cuisine of the Podhale region, is even more expensive.

There are different ways of preparing meat, depending on its type. Classic Polish meat dishes include golden, breaded pork chops, aromatic rissoles served







## MEAT

with boiled potatoes and *mizeria* — a cucumber salad served either sweet or savoury, depending on the region — and meatballs in scented, cream-based sauces.

Every Polish home has a different recipe for *bigos* or hunter's stew — cabbage braised with meat and a variety of extra ingredients. *Bigos* is a real explosion of flavours, especially umami. The Old-Polish version of this dish was a little different to its modern incarnation. There were no vegetables, only cuts of meat soured with vinegar and lemon juice. The cabbage version was a cheaper, widely available alternative. *Rosół* is another mandatory dish. It's a clear soup made with a meat and vegetable-based broth. Poultry, beef, pork, mutton, pigeon or a mixture of the above is used for the stock. There are also various ways of serving it. It tastes great with noodles as well as with drop dumplings and boiled potatoes. *Rosół* used to be reserved for special occasions, including family dinners on Sundays. It was also recommended for the sick and the weakened. There is still a general consensus that there is no better dish to quickly get someone on their feet.

Duck and goose are also treated as festive foods. Baked poultry has crispy skin, juicy meat and aromatic sides. Among the many available recipes, duck filled with apples or goose wrapped in bacon with sauerkraut are particularly interesting. Filled goose necks and liver are also highly valued. Sausage is also an important product in Polish cuisine. The word *kielbasa* has Slavic roots and has been used in Polish since the Middle Ages. There are a few different types of sausage: steamed, dried and smoked. White sausage made with pork and beef is served as a stand-alone Easter dish or as an addition to *żurek* — a sour soup made with rye leaven. Smoked juniper sausage also has a long tradition: it was often a part of traveller's provisions from as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Blood sausage is also worth trying. It is made with groats (barley or buckwheat), animal blood and offal. It can be served either grilled or fried.





# FISH

Fish from rivers, lakes, and the Baltic Sea have always complemented the diet of the inhabitants of Polish lands. They gained more significance after the Baptism of Poland and the introduction of fasting. They were prepared in various ways: salted, smoked, baked, fried and boiled. In Old-Polish cuisine salmon, sturgeon, pickerel, carp and eel were especially valued. They were served with butter, almonds, chestnuts, pistachios, hard-boiled eggs, artichokes and asparagus, and seasoned with broth, vinegar, wine or spices.

Vendace was highly valued in the Mazury region in northeastern Poland. There's a legend related to this species: a huge fish in a golden, gem-studded crown lived in the Śniardwy lake since ancient times. The locals named it the fish king. People feared the vendace, and so, for a long time, they stayed away from the water. But as the number of inhabitants increased, more and more of them started to sail on the lake. Every time, the fish king capsized the boats of the daredevils who decided to go fishing. Then there was a great famine. Józef from Mikołajki wanted to do something about it. His wife Anna went to the woods to ask forgotten forest deities for help. Together, they made a heavy net out of metal rings and caught the fish king. The man chained him to the pier and from that time on, fishermen could safely go on the lake. Józef not only became a local hero, but he also quickly got rich. In exchange for sparing his life, the huge vendace revealed the best places to catch fish.

Kashubian cuisine is full of fish. *Prażnica* — an elegant dish of scrambled eggs with eel — is great for breakfast. Cod wrapped in bacon, crispy fried roaches, Kashubian tench cooked with sauerkraut, spices and cream, or flounder broth can be served for dinner. Many different varieties of herring make for



the perfect supper — its slices are salted and rolled with various toppings or marinated in vinegar. Many households served salted eel slices on Christmas Eve with a side of potatoes boiled in their skins. Eel was often eaten in an aromatic dill sauce. Fish in Kashubia have their place not only on tables. They can be also found on coats of arms — for example, since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the symbol of Puck has been a lion and a salmon. According to legend, two fish — an eel and a salmon — competed for a place on the coat of arms. They were in the middle of a huge fight when a boat reached them. The passenger was the lion, who already had been chosen to represent the city. It looked at the fighting fish and decided to help the salmon. They have both represented Puck, posing proudly on a blue background, ever since.

Trout can be found in the rapid stream waters of the south of Poland. With their white, delicate flesh, these fish are eagerly used in the kitchen and prized by gourmands. In addition to being fished from the wild, they are also farmed, with the best-known farms located in Ojców National Park and in the Złoty Potok village in Silesia. Trout is best grilled, smoked or baked. In Galicia, the fish is gutted, rubbed with garlic, filled with parsley, fried, sprinkled with lemon juice and seasoned with salt and pepper. This highly aromatic trout is served with potato cakes.

Carp is another popular farmed fish. It has been eaten in Poland since the 12<sup>th</sup> century, with first ponds established by monks from the Cistercian Order near Milicz. Fisheries in Zator near Wadowice also have a great reputation. Carp is associated with Christmas, since it's an inherent part of the Christmas Eve menu. In Old-Polish cuisine, it was often served in a grey sauce made with vegetable or meat stock thickened with roux. It was seasoned to taste with vinegar, wine and lemon juice, and eaten with an addition of almonds, raisins, onion, and even grated gingerbread. Jewish carp (or *gefilte fisz* in Yiddish) is also a very interesting — the fish is served in a sweet jelly with raisins, almond flakes, carrot and slices of boiled egg.











## DAIRY

Early 20<sup>th</sup> century cookbooks were filled with descriptions of serving tea outdoors. Guesthouses offered homemade cakes and fresh milk. Fresh milk used to be reserved for babies and children, so drinking it conjured the adults' memories of their carefree childhood. Dairy was often used in folk medicine and in the practice of magic. A special warming and healing concoction composed of milk, butter, honey and garlic was made for people who were coming down with a cold. In the Lublin region it was believed that smearing sacred butter on a cow's udders protects the animal from witches' hexes.

Until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, cows mostly gave milk in the summer season. To stop it from spoiling, farmers made stocks of butter and cheese. Unfortunately, due to their difficult financial situation, most dairy had to be sold. Popular dishes in poorer houses in Galicia (a colloquial name for the part of Poland which was under Austro-Hungarian rule after the partitions) included *barszcz* (sour soup) with potatoes and milk as well as potatoes with soured milk and millet cooked in milk. In the Kuyavia region in central Poland people brought their own food to engagement celebrations. Butter, cheese, bread and honey were indispensable. Wealthier guests also brought goose or other meats.

Dairy has been a symbol of richness and success for centuries. Early travelers from abroad called Poland 'the land of milk and honey'. Poland also contributed to the development of cheese-making culture. According to archaeological research, the oldest ceramic dish with holes, which was probably used to make cottage cheese, comes from six thousand years BC from Brześć Kujawski in the Kuyavia region. Curd cheeses were typical of the lowlands, while the







inhabitants of the Carpathians used rennet. This art was popularised by Italian shepherds who came to the region.

The flavour of a slice of bread with a thick layer of butter or of a cottage cheese sandwich are familiar to Poles from all regions. There are various ways of using cottage cheese. When served with radish and spring onions, it makes for a great breakfast dish. You can use it to make *pierogi* filling, add it to dumplings or serve with pasta. There could be no fluffy, delicate cheesecakes without it.

When travelling to the south of Poland, it's worth visiting Podhale, which is famous not only for its beautiful mountain views and amazing nature, but also for its cuisine. Local specialties include *kwaśnica* — a sauerkraut soup with lots of meat — lamb and *moskole* — a type of potato pancakes which were once baked on a heated baking pan and served with butter. Cheese lovers can also find something for themselves. Podhale is home to the *oscypek*. This hard, smoked cheese made with sheep's milk is the most famous cheese in Poland. It has been prepared for centuries according to a recipe passed down from generation to generation. The first written records of this product come from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and the first recipe comes from 1748. *Oscypek* owes its unusual flavour to the milk used in its making. It comes from sheep that graze on pastures, where they eat fresh grass and herbs. The method of its making is also crucial. Making *oscypki* used to be forbidden to women, whose presence could spoil them at any stage of production. *Oscypek* tastes great on its own. It can also be grilled, baked wrapped in bacon, or served with cranberry jam. *Bryndza* — a soft sheep's milk cheese — is also a staple in Podhale. It is great as a sandwich spread and can be added to baked potatoes or a *pierogi* filling. It's also an amazing salad cheese.

Nowadays cheesemaking is developing quite dynamically, thanks to passionate people in search for new flavours. Artisan cheeses made with cow's, goat's and sheep's milk figure on the menus of good restaurants and can also be bought at special markets or even online. They make for a great tasting board that goes perfectly with artisan beer or Polish wine.







# PIEROGI

*Pierogi* are probably one of Poland's most famous and widely recognised dishes. The dumplings' origin is Chinese, and they found their way to many corners of the world thanks to trade on the Silk Road. They were probably brought to Poland thanks to Hyacinth of Poland (Jacek Odrowąż, 1183–1257), a Dominican friar who worked as a missionary in many parts of Europe. He was sent to Kievan Rus' in 1228 and travelled there along trade routes, meeting many people along the way. It was probably from this trip that he brought home the first recipe for *pierogi* — a dish he came to love. According to a legend that can be found in *De vita miraculis sancti Jacchonis* from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, on August 13, 1238 the priest was staying in the town of Kościelec near Kraków. On this day a violent storm broke out and destroyed the crops. Seeing the villagers' desperation, the Dominican told them to pray vigorously. The next day, the grain grew back up and people were saved from hunger. With time, word started going around about the amazing flour that was made out of this grain and could be used to make very filling *pierogi*. Another story concerns the Tatar invasion on Kraków in 1241, during which Hyacinth fed the hungry and the poor and was nicknamed 'the *pierogi* saint'. His *pierogi* were probably filled with buckwheat groats and cottage cheese. Since he travelled all around Poland, *pierogi* became a staple in all regional cuisines.

The oldest Polish cookbook, *Compendium ferculorum* (1682), contains a recipe for *pierożki*. They were filled with poultry or veal mixed with parsley, sorrel or spinach, and heavily spiced with pepper, salt and nutmeg. Hot broth was poured over them before serving. There is also a recipe for sweet *pierożki* made with yeast dough and filled with rose petals fried in sugar. In rural cuisine,

*pierogi* were eaten on special occasions. Women from neighbouring houses were often invited to help make them together. They were served on important celebrations: Christmas, baptisms and weddings as well as wakes.

Nowadays the most popular type are Ruthenian (or Galician) *pierogi*, which are boiled, filled with cottage cheese mixed with cooked potatoes and fried onions, and often served with lardons or bacon. This recipe is not very old, since potatoes, although brought to Poland by king John III Sobieski (1629–1696), only became a staple much later, and started to be cultivated on a larger scale in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The Lublin region is famous for its *pierogi*. Recipes for flour-based dishes are passed from generation to generation, and many of them have been added to the list of traditional products. Fava bean *pierogi*, for example, come from the village Karczmiska. The plant is cultivated in the region, and therefore it is used in many dishes. Housewives fill the *pierogi* dough with cooked beans, potatoes and fried onions seasoned with salt and pepper. *Pierogi* from Lipniaki are filled with sauerkraut and mushrooms. In Wola Skromowska, the filling is made of steamed millet, cottage cheese and mint. They taste fantastic with either lardons or sour cream. Turów, on the other hand, is famous for its lentil *pierogi*. Inhabitants of Dębica Kaszubska in the Pomerania region fill *pierogi* with lamb lungs. Celeriac, carrot, leek, garlic, onion and cabbage are also added to this filling.

In the summer and autumn months, dishes with berries are especially appreciated. The season starts with delicate, slightly sour strawberry *pierogi*. July brings bilberry dumplings, served with lots of sour cream and sugar. They can also be filled with raspberries, plums, cherries, apples or pears. Recently people have also started filling them with blueberries. Most *pierogi* are boiled in salted water, although people from the Suwałki region deep-fry their traditional fruity Wigry *pierogi*. Delicate *pierogi* with sweetened cottage cheese are one of the classic, sweet versions of this dish. The filling can be made even richer by adding egg yolks and raisins to the cheese.











## FROM THE FOREST AND THE MEADOW

When Slavic tribes inhabited Poland, it was a country covered with forests. Thick woods, wetlands and flowery meadows provided people with a wide array of different foods, ranging from game, honey, and wild fruits to healing herbs. Garlic, horseradish, juniper, hops, thymus and mint were among the most popular herbs and spices. Around a thousand years ago, they were joined by lovage.

Aromatic thyme was used in a variety of ways. It was added to food, but also used for women to bathe in to increase their fertility. Newborns were bathed in thyme to aid healthy development. Thyme garlands were woven and then blessed on Corpus Christi or the Octave of Corpus Christi. When hung up at home, they were meant to protect the household from storms, hail and lightning. On Christmas Eve, thyme was burned as incense around fruit trees to ensure they had lots of fruit in the coming year.

Mint, on the other hand, was used in traditional folk medicine mostly as a remedy for indigestion and stomach pains. It was also given to cows for their health. Incensing animals with dried leaves was supposed to protect them from magic. When put under the bed of a dying person, it diminished their sorrow and made it easier to welcome death. In Southern Poland, mint was added to cottage cheese and to *pierogi*. It was also used in sweets, especially in candy making.

Today hops are mostly associated with beer, but they once had a wider range of uses. They were added as flavouring to mead and bread. In the Bieszczady Mountains, their shoots were placed on the threshold or by the window to protect the house from evil creatures lurking on children. It was also



indispensable at weddings: its cones were thrown at the newlyweds to ensure numerous offspring as well as the favour of their ancestors. A song entitled *Hops* (*Chmiel*) is one of Poland's oldest wedding songs, probably originating in pre-Christian times.

The Polish word for lovage, *lubczyk*, means *love-herb*, and it has been associated with love for centuries. The Slavic god of love bore the same name, although he was also known as Lubicz. His symbols were a bird and an egg painted green. When added to food, lovage ensured marital harmony and helped to preserve love. Young girls wove lovage leaves in their flower wreaths or under their shirts to please the boys. It was also believed that bathing in lovage helped to ensure success more generally. Lovage has a very characteristic, intense smell. When added to food it helps us taste umami — the fifth taste which is described as meaty or metallic. In Old-Polish cuisine it was used to flavour broths, soups and sauces. You can also sprinkle it over boiled potatoes.

It's hard to imagine Polish cuisine without horseradish. This plant has grown on Polish lands since ancient times. It was used not only to flavour food, but also in folk medicine as a remedy for heartburn and paralysis or to improve eyesight. It also found its way into Christian culture and became an important Easter product. Blessing food on Holy Saturday is one of Poland's most important traditions. Families prepare baskets filled with bread, eggs, cured meats and other delicacies, depending on the region. Salt, pepper and horseradish are obligatory. In some parts of Poland, people would bite on the horseradish before blessing their food, so they could feel the bitterness of Lord Jesus' passion. It also has its place on Easter tables. Its root, grated and mixed with cream, vinegar, sugar and salt, is a great addition to roasts, cured meats and eggs. If we add cooked and grated beetroot, we get *ćwikła*. It is also used to make tongue in horseradish sauce.

It's also worth mentioning that in Polish cuisine juniper berries and garlic are often used for preparing meat. Both of these plants were once connected to a belief in their evil-protecting properties. They have also been valued for their rich taste and smell. Today they are also used to flavour vegetable dishes, casseroles and sauces. Juniper smoke is also used to smoke fish, meat and sausages.









# APPLES

Fruit trees bloom in Poland in April and May. The delicate petals of different varieties of apple trees, sprinkled with pink and white flowers, can be used to make a fragrant tea. In the autumn we pick delicious fruit and turn it into jams, juices, vinegars, and purées to be used both in savoury dishes and desserts.

Based on archaeological evidence, we know that apples have been used on Polish lands for a very long time. Their pits have been found, among other places, in the Biskupin archaeological site, home to the museum of the Lusatian settlement. Orchards were established on a larger scale in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by monks and supported by kings for centuries, which led Poland to become one of the largest apple producers in the world to this day.

In folklore, this fruit is associated with love and weddings, but it also connects the afterlife with the world of the living. In the South of the country, after Christmas Eve supper, the host divided the apple in as many pieces as there were guests. If they cut through a pit, it meant not everyone would live until next Christmas. The apple tree and its fruit was a recurring motif in love and wedding songs. There was also a belief that if on Christmas Eve a girl walked past a boy while eating an apple, she would quickly become his wife.

One of the apple's early cultivars is *papierówka* (paper apple). It's characterised by small, yellow-green fruit too delicate to be widely transported. Paper apples taste the best when eaten straight from the tree, but they can also be used in preserves and desserts. In the Opole region they are marinated in sweet syrup.

Czernin apples, with their white, juicy flesh, are a cultivar typical of the Pomerania region. To turn them into a dessert, you have to remove the seed



nest, rub them in plenty of butter, fill them with dried fruit and then bake them in the oven. You can pour melted chocolate over the apple at the end.

A once very popular, apple-based delicacy was called zephyr. It was made with apple sauce mixed with whipped egg whites and whipped cream. Apples would also be served filled with nuts, dried fruits, raisins, with sugar and spices.

There can be no apple pie without apples. Each family has a favourite recipe for this dessert, which is known as *szarlotka* in some regions. It is made with either shortcrust (*kruche*) pastry or a yeast-based dough and can be topped with a crumble or an egg-white foam. The town of Góra Kalwaria is famous for its *czerlotka* — cherry pie. It is a shortcrust pastry with apples braised with cherries and herbs. It tastes delicious with a cup of afternoon tea or coffee.

The time for pancakes in Polish homes comes in autumn and winter. They are adored by children and quite sentimental to adults. Apples, especially their sweet varieties, are a great ingredient in pancakes. They taste best when served warm, straight from the pan, sprinkled with a bit of sugar or a few drops of syrup.

Although apples are mostly associated with desserts and cakes, they also make for a great ingredient in savoury foods. They cut through the fattiness of fried liver, add aroma to baked duck and sweetness to *czernina* — a traditional Polish soup with stock and either duck or goose blood as its base. They also go well with herring and onions.

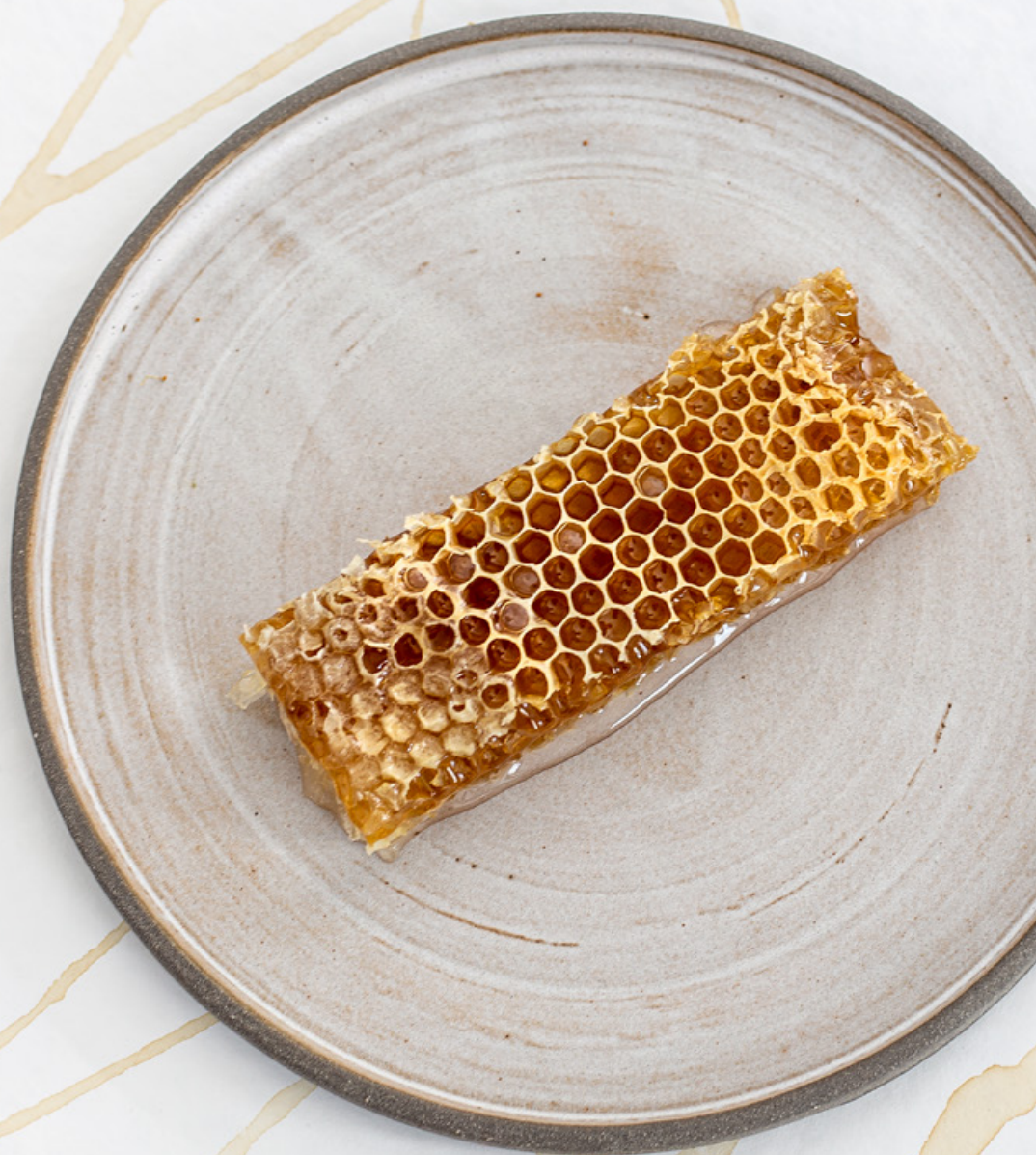
Many recipes for fermented apples come from the Subcarpathian region. They can also be prepared Galician-style. Shredded salted cabbage is placed in oak barrels to alternate with the apples. Three months later the fruit is ready and can be put in separate jars. It is then served with meat dishes or salads.

Apples are also used in the production of ciders — low-alcohol drinks made with fermented apple juice. In Old Polish times they were seen as unsophisticated, but nowadays their taste can seduce many an alcohol lover. A glass of cold cider goes well with artisanal cheeses, meat dishes and light summer puddings.









# HONEY

Some of the oldest records of foreign historians and travellers say that Slavic lands were inhabited by numerous bees. Their honey has been an important product for centuries and is used not only for culinary purposes. The royal chronicler Gallus Anonymus (11<sup>th</sup> century — 1116) took note of their presence. Tributes to the king were paid in honey, and a note in the records of the Benedictine Abbey in Tyniec, founded in the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century, says that it could also be used to pay for court costs. Thanks to the presence of blooming plants in Polish forests, beekeeping has been developing very well for years now.

In folklore, bees were considered holy, pure, and especially dear to God. They were valued for their perseverance, work ethic and their ability to recognise a good person with a pure heart. In folk tales these insects often helped young orphans and other protagonists when they were put to test. Little horse statues made of wax were brought to church to ensure the health and successful sale of animals. Wax was also used to make *gromnica* — a candle used on various occasions in some Christian churches. It was lit at baptisms, First Communion, and put in dying peoples' hands. It was believed to stop thunder when lit during a storm. Honey itself symbolises sweetness and happiness, which makes it a vital ingredient in celebratory dishes.

People living on Polish lands have enjoyed the flavour of *miodownik* — honey cake — since the times of the early Slavs. This sweet, fragrant cake was given as an offering to the god Svetovid — the lord of heaven, abundance and war. It started off as flat, hard bread, and was sometimes called honey bread or nuptial bread, as it was baked for weddings. According to a long tradition, the dough for the wedding honey cake was made when a daughter was born into



the family. The dough, made with flour, butter, milk, eggs, honey and salt, was kneaded for a long time. The finished dough was then preserved in the cellar and would wait there for the wedding. On the special day, it was baked into thin flat cakes, which could either be eaten on their own or layered with fruit and nuts. The most popular modern version of the honey cake has a milk and semolina filling.

*Kutia* is a dish made in Eastern Poland for Christmas Eve. The dish also has Slavic origins and is made with cracked wheat, molasses, honey, poppy seeds, nuts and raisins. It would be left on the table after supper for ghosts of ancestors to feast on. *Kutia* was also used for telling the future. People threw it up in the air, and the more food stuck to the ceiling, the better the coming year was going to be. Noodles with poppy seeds and honey were another variation on the dish, eaten in other regions of the country. Honey is also used to make mustard, sauces, marinades and glazes for meat and fish, and to flavour jams and desserts. A tradition of making warming, healing drinks with honey has existed for centuries. There are many varieties of honey available in Poland: delicate linden honey, buckwheat honey that has a unique pungent taste, slightly bitter heather honey, and aromatic honeydew honey made from conifers.

The Slavs also made honey spirits. Honey beer and mead appear in a story about Piast the Wheelwright — the legendary founder of the Piast dynasty who was famous for making wheels and collecting honey from wild beehives. Mead was considered a very exclusive product at the time. It lost some of its importance in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, yet nowadays it is seen as a part of Polish culinary heritage, and many initiatives are being taken to restore it to its former glory. Mead is a product of the fermentation of diluted honey. Its value is measured by the proportions between honey and water — the more honey, the nobler the drink. Aromatic spices are used to add to its flavour. The best and sweetest spirits mature for 9–10 years. The semi-dry ones are ready to drink after just 6 months.









## BAKED GOODS AND DESSERTS FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS

Holidays have their own set of rules. Many delicacies that were unavailable on a daily basis used to be prepared on the occasion of family and religious celebrations. The most important celebratory bread in Slavic culture was *kołacz* or *kalach*. The name derives from the word *kolo* — wheel — and references the bread's shape. Along with the rooster, it was a symbol of spring and a product connected to *Jare Gody* — a holiday that fell on the vernal equinox. It was believed that on this day the young Jaryło — a man on a white horse with a flower crown on his head, who holds a human head in one hand and some ears of rye in the other — takes the place of the old Jaryło and the whole vegetative cycle starts over. *Kalach* was also always present at the autumnal harvest festival, an occasion on which huge breads were brought to temples as offerings for the gods in the intention of the following year's harvest.

*Korowaj* was another one of the most important sacrificial breads. The first historical records of it come from the turn of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century, but it was probably already known much earlier. *Korowaj* (known in Western Poland as wedding *kalach*) is round, and its decorations reference important Slavic motifs: cones, ears of grains, flowers, leaves, birds as well as shapes of the sun and the moon — all made out of dough. This cake was baked the day before a wedding. Women would meet at the bride's house and bake the sacrificial bread together while singing. They made the dough with eggs, flour, butter, sugar and yeast. It was usually kneaded by the godmother. The bakers had to remember to make the sign of the cross over the *korowaj* before putting it in the oven. The cake was usually presented at the wedding before *oczepiny* — a ritual during which the bride made her symbolic transformation into the wife. It consisted in taking the flour

crown off her head, cutting her hair and putting on an embellished white cap. The *korowaj* was cut by a man and then given to all feasters. If beautifully baked, it promised a happy marriage, success, numerous offspring and wealth. If cracked, it foretold a tragedy. Nowadays, the layer cake has largely replaced the wedding *kalach*.

The Polish Easter table is also filled with sweet treats. The *baba* cakes tower above the egg dishes, roasts and cured meats. They have been baked since the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and have always been prepared with the finest white flour, butter, milk, sugar and yeast. Raisins, dried fruit, and saffron (which gives them a beautiful, yellow colour) are used to enrich their flavour. The dough has to be kneaded for a long time to achieve the right texture. The *baba* is baked in cone-shaped metal moulds with a hole in the middle and then coated with white or pink icing.

Special food also appears at parish festivals. In the Catholic Church, these are organised on the feast days of the patron of a particular church. They connect religious rites with festivities, and formerly, in many regions, also with home celebrations. In Silesia, there was always a festive dinner with a sponge cake, Silesian *kalach* or *szpajza* for dessert on this occasion. The latter is a Silesian delicacy that dates back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is made by combining whipped egg whites with creamed yolks and gelatine, and then flavoured with cocoa, jelly or fruit. Lemon is the most popular flavour. Parish festivals always have stalls that sell toys, knick-knacks and various foods. Traditional snacks in Silesia included heart-shaped gingerbread decorated with various patterns and writings, cookies made with whipped egg whites and *oblaty* — thin, crumbly wafers. Stalls were full of differently shaped hard candy and colourful lollipops. You could choose from local specialties such as *zozwór* — sugar cubes flavoured with mint or ginger — and *floki* made with cream, sugar and coconut flakes. Nowadays, you can also buy cotton candy and jelly beans during church fairs. We no longer have to wait for a special occasion to indulge in a sweet treat. Counters in patisseries and cafés teem with delicacies — traditional cakes and desserts as well as artistic monoportions.









## GINGERBREAD

Toruń is the birthplace of the famous doctor and astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543). It is also the gingerbread capital of Poland. The first mention of this amazing specialty comes from 1293, from the town of Świdnica in Lower Silesia, yet this does not diminish Toruń's role in the expansion of gingerbread culture. Aromatic *katarzynki* (cookies in the shape of six medallions glued together), chocolate-covered hearts, glazed and filled gingerbread — everyone has their favourite product. This delicacy has always been an important part of culture. It has its place in art and literature and has been a Polish staple for centuries. Its origins lie in *miodownik* — Slavic honey cake. Benedictine monks brought the tradition of baking gingerbread to Poland in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Gingerbread is made with flour, honey and spices. Its Polish name — *piernik* — comes from Old-Polish *pierny* — peppery. The two main types of gingerbread are both baked, but one is made for consumption and the other is used as a decoration or gift.

According to old books about customs and daily life, gingerbread was served before noon and always accompanied by some type of alcohol — *nalewka*, vodka or mead. Gingerbread was believed to have healing properties and was available at pharmacies.

Back to Toruń: the origins of the most famous gingerbread factory in Poland date back to 1763, when Jan Wesse married a widow named Dorothea Conrad and took over her deceased husband's gingerbread bakery. However, it was his grandson Gustaw who opened a real factory and started exporting the Toruń gingerbreads to foreign markets. In 1991, after many ups and downs







caused by historical events and changes in ownership, the factory was named Fabryka Cukiernicza Kopernik. Today gingerbread from Toruń can be found all over the country and even abroad.

According to one story, there was once a miller who lived near Toruń with his daughter Katarzyna. Unfortunately, the girl's mother died. The father quickly remarried, and the stepmother turned out to be an awful woman who kept tormenting the poor girl. One day Katarzyna saw a witch's cat carrying a mouse in his mouth. The girl felt sorry for the rodent, so she saved its life. The stepmother got angry and threw her out. The orphan found shelter in the convent of Benedictine Nuns in Toruń, where she got a job in the kitchen. Many years later, there was a terrible famine in the city. The nuns tried to help where they could, but they quickly ran out of stock. One night, Katarzyna heard someone call her. It was the rodent she had saved many years before standing before her. It turned out to be the mouse king. The grateful animal took the girl to the cellar. She found it filled with stacks of gingerbread dough. The next day, the nuns started to bake it and give it out to the hungry. The grateful people of Toruń decided to call these delicacies '*katarzynki*' in honour of the merciful Katarzyna, who saved them from dying of starvation.

Gingerbread has also traditionally been baked in Świdnica and is made there to this day. The dough used to be prepared and cut into sun, star, and moon shapes as early as September so that it could be baked in time for Christmas. These dark cookies were covered with a fair bit of icing and served at the end of the Christmas Eve meal.

Gingerbread has also been produced in Szczecin since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Among ingredients still used today, we can find wheat or rye flour, honey, brown sugar, almonds, cinnamon, cloves, cardamom, ginger, nutmeg and lemon peel. As for shapes, marine symbols are common in Szczecin. They include ships, anchors, seagulls and sailors.

Gingerbread was also used to decorate Christmas trees. Krzywin in Greater Poland is famous for its cookies in the shape of Saint Nicholas of Myra. Nowadays local bakeries prepare chocolate and icing-covered delicacies for parish festivals (feasts of the church patrons).







# ALCOHOL

The Slavs saved mead and their best beers for special occasions. The latter was one of the most popular medieval drinks. Practically everyone drank it. Early beers were very low in alcohol and did not contain hops. They were made with millet, barley, rye, wheat, and even with oats. Beer was brewed at home and sold in taverns scattered around all of the important trade routes. Beer brewing started to develop dynamically during the reign of king Casimir the Great (1310–1370). The drink was prepared for the inhabitants of newly established cities as well as exported abroad. Beer started to lose some of its significance towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and during the partitions of Poland. Its situation improved along with industrial development, only to deteriorate once again during the war and the communist regime. Beer brewing has been having a comeback since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Today, beer lovers are spoilt for choice. Polish microbreweries are developing rapidly, bars and restaurants have many artisan beers on offer, and Polish products are more and more often included in international rankings. Interest in beer culture is also starting to grow. Tastings and beer pairing courses attract both foodies and people interested in culinary tourism.

Wine and enotourism are also on the rise. Since it's an alcohol used in church during liturgy, at first it was mostly associated with the centres of Christian religion. With time, wine also started to appear in royal and noble courts. Polish wineries were prosperous up to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when for various reasons (mostly related to climate), foreign drinks supplanted local products. There were attempts to reintroduce winemaking to Polish lands after World War I, yet difficult times began again before it was possible. A real revolution began

in the 1980s and has lasted to this day. Now there are around 300 commercial wine producers in the country. Their products can be bought both in Poland and abroad. The Zielona Góra region, the Subcarpathian region, the Lesser Poland region, Lesser Poland Gorge of the Vistula and the Sandomierz region are currently the most important regions for winemaking.

Vodka started appearing on Polish tables in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was mentioned for one of the first times in *On Herbs and their Potency*, a comprehensive work by the botanist and doctor Stefan Falimierz. The scholar gives many recipes for what he describes as vodkas, although not all of these mixtures contain alcohol. High-percentage liquors were originally treated as medicine and kept in well-guarded cabinets. They could be either bought or made at home. Both pure and flavoured vodkas were produced. The bestselling author Lucyna Ćwierczakiewiczowa (1829–1901) shared her recipes for lemon, walnut, bitter orange or greengage plum vodka. Other culinary authors added caraway, coffee, or artemisia-flavoured spirits to the mix.

Lists of products that paired well with alcohol emerged along with the development of drinking culture. Fish should be served with vodka — herring in vinegar, cream or tomato sauce is always a great choice. Smoked salmon, whitefish and sturgeon also work. When it comes to meat, vodka goes well with steak tartare, one of the most popular Polish appetizers. It is made with beef sirloin and served with fresh onion, gherkins, pickled mushrooms and raw egg yolk. Other foods served with vodka include cold pork jelly, roasted ribs, aromatic chicken thighs, and stews. As for vegetables, fermented gherkins and pickled mushrooms are the best choice. Old cookbooks also recommend pears and plums pickled in sweetened vinegar.

Thanks to its 500-year history, Polish vodka has been added to the list of Protected Geographical Indications. For a producer to be able to use this name, the liquor must be made with Polish rye, barley, oat, wheat, triticale or potatoes. The production process must also take place in Poland.











Cherry orchard, the South of Poland





# RECIPES

X

## PROZIAKI

90

## LAZY DUMPLINGS / PIEROGI LENIWE

92

## KASHUBIAN HERRING / ŚLEDŹ PO KASZUBSKU

94

## POTATO BABA / BABA ZIEMNIACZANA

96

## HORSERADISH SOUP WITH EGG AND WHITE SAUSAGE / ZUPA CHRZANOWA Z JAJKIEM I BIAŁĄ KIEŁBASĄ

98

## RUTHENIAN PIEROGI AND PLUM PIEROGI / PIEROGI RUSKIE I PIEROGI ZE ŚLIWKAMI

100

**SILESIA ROLADE / ROLADA ŚLĄSKA**

*102*

**PORK NECK BAKED WITH  
CARAWAY / KARKÓWKA PIECZONA  
Z KMINKIEM**

*104*

**APPLE KALACH / KOŁACZ  
Z JABŁKAMI**

*106*

**HONEYCAKE LAYERED  
WITH JAM / MIODOWNIK PRZEKŁADANY  
KONFITURĄ**

*108*

**KATARZYŃKI COOKIES**

*110*

**LOVAGE AND IN THE RASPBERRY  
THICKET / LUBCZYK I W MALINOWYM  
CHRUŚNIAKU**

*112*



# PROZIAKI

When they ran out of bread, the smart and resourceful housewives of the Subcarpathia region in the South-East of Poland reached for flour, soured milk, eggs and baking soda to quickly prepare the dough for *proziaki* — small, flat buns. Their name comes from the word *proza*, which meant baking soda. They probably derive from the Slavic *podłomyki* — flatbreads made with flour, water and salt, sometimes with the addition of herbs and spices. It's hard to tell exactly when *proziaki* started being baked, but the recipe has certainly been in use for over 150 years.

450–500 g / 16–18 oz. all-purpose flour

250 ml / 1 cup kefir or yogurt

1 egg

pinch of salt

1 teaspoon baking soda

Mix the egg thoroughly with kefir or yogurt. Add the salt and baking soda. Stir in the flour. Knead for a short time. If the dough is too sticky, add a little bit of flour and knead again. Cover the bowl with a linen cloth and leave the dough to sit for 20–30 minutes. Put the dough on a table top and roll out until it's around 1 cm / 0,4 in. thick. Using a glass or a round mould, cut circles of 6–12 cm / 2.5–4.5 in. in diameter. Place the flatbreads in a hot, dry pan with a thick bottom and fry on both sides until golden (around 10–15 minutes). Traditionally, *proziaki* are served with butter, cheese or jam. They can be baked in an oven for 14–17 minutes at 190 degrees °C / 375 °F.



# LAZY DUMPLINGS / PIEROGI LENIWE

Everyone has a favourite childhood dish which is usually a reminder of our family home, the food our mother made, or holidays spent at grandma's house. Polish cuisine has many flour-based dishes on offer. They are often treated as comfort food. Such dishes include apple pancakes sprinkled with icing sugar, strawberries and cream, buttery plum cake and *pierogi leniwe* — lazy dumplings — made with boiled potatoes and, in some parts of Poland, with cottage cheese. *Pierogi leniwe* are served with breadcrumbs and fried in butter or sprinkled with sugar and cinnamon.

150 g / 5 oz. boiled potatoes

200 g / 7 oz. cottage cheese

200 g / 7 oz. flour

1 egg

butter

cinnamon

sugar

Put the boiled potatoes, cottage cheese, egg, salt and flour into a bowl. Mix well until you get a smooth batter. If it's too sticky, add a little flour. Roll the dough into strips of about 2 cm / 0.8 in. in diameter. Flatten them and cut into 3–4 cm / 1.2–1.5 in. long pieces. Drop the dumplings into boiling salted water. Take them out 4–5 minutes after they start floating. Serve with melted butter, sprinkled with sugar and cinnamon. Lazy dumplings also taste great when reheated in the pan.





# KASHUBIAN HERRING / ŚLEDŹ

## PO KASZUBSKU

Fish was always an important part of the daily diet of people living by the sea. A particularly big variety of fish dishes can be found in the Kashubia region (a part of Pomerelia in the North of Poland). Some species, such as eel, were eaten on special occasions. Herring, on the other hand, was so common that it needed to be prepared in many different ways so that people wouldn't get bored of it. One of these methods is baked *hylyng* with onions, which is known as Kashubian herring in other parts of the country.

### *Herring*

500 g / 17.5 oz. slices of fresh  
or salted herring  
salt  
pepper  
all-purpose flour  
oil for frying  
2 onions

### *Pickling liquid*

650 ml / 2 ¾ cups water  
125 ml / ½ cup 10% vinegar  
3 tbsp sugar  
½ tsp salt  
4 bay leaves  
6 allspice berries  
10 peppercorns  
a big jar

If using salted herring, first soak it for 2–3 hours in cold water to get rid of excess salt. Dry the fish, season with salt and pepper, and sprinkle with flour. Fry the herring in a pan until golden. Take it off the pan and fry the slices of onion in the same pan. Pour water into a pot. Add the sugar, salt, and spices and bring to the boil. Add the vinegar at the very end and cook on a low heat for 1–2 minutes. Leave the pickling liquid to cool. Put the herring and the onion into jars, pour the vinegar over them and put in the fridge for at least two days. Serve the *hylyng* and onions with bread or boiled potatoes and sour cream.







## POTATO BABA / BABA ZIEMNIACZANA

Potatoes were used in all Polish regional cuisines by the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They were served as a side with meat and vegetarian meals. They were used in many interesting dishes, including various types of pancakes and dumplings. Among the most popular are grey, round *pyzy* filled with meat from the Polish capital, *moskole* from the South, and Silesian dumplings with a well in the middle. On the other hand, Podlasie — a region in North-East Poland — is famous for its *baba ziemniaczana* — a type of potato bake.

1500 g / 53 oz. potatoes  
300 g / 10.5 oz. smoked bacon  
2 medium onions  
75 g /  $\frac{2}{3}$  cups wheat flour  
2 eggs  
salt, pepper  
parsley  
sour cream

Cut the bacon into cubes and fry in the pan. Chop the onions, add them when the meat is fried, and fry until the onion turns golden. Take the pan off the heat. Peel, wash and grate the potatoes. Get rid of excess water. Combine the potatoes with flour, eggs, salt and pepper. Mix thoroughly. At the very end, add fried bacon and onions, and mix again. Pour the mix into a mould lined with paper so that it is 3–4 cm / 1.2–1.5 in. thick. Bake for 70–85 minutes in an oven heated to 180 degrees °C / 350 °F. Serve with sour cream and parsley. *Baba* tastes best and becomes much easier to cut when reheated the next day. The colour depends on the potatoes. The *baba* will be grey unless you use a type that doesn't darken.



# HORSERADISH SOUP WITH EGG AND WHITE SAUSAGE / ZUPA CHRZANOWA Z JAJKIEM I BIAŁĄ KIEŁBASĄ

Old Polish cookbooks contain a multitude of recipes for soup: light milk soups for breakfast, vegetarian soups for the period of fasting, and warming soups for cool winter days. Some of them were typical of festive cuisine. Horseradish soup is still eaten on Easter Day in some regions of Poland. There are different recipes for this delicacy, but most include fresh grated horseradish, white sausage and egg.

2000 ml / 8.5 cups beef stock	salt, pepper, marjoram, allspice,
4 medium parsley roots	garlic powder, bay leaf
4 medium carrots	sour cream
1 little celeriac	hard-boiled eggs
fresh horseradish (to taste) or substitute	white sausage
horseradish powder	parsley or scallions

Peel and dice the carrots, parsley roots and celeriac. Heat the stock, add the spices and grated horseradish. Add the cubed vegetables and cook for 15–20 minutes. Pour the soup into plates. Put a quarter of a boiled egg and 2–3 slices of sausage on each plate. Sprinkle with parsley or scallions.





# RUTHENIAN PIEROGI

## AND PLUM PIEROGI / PIEROGI

### RUSKIE I PIEROGI ZE ŚLIWKAMI

*Pierogi* is a dish that will never bore you. They used to only be prepared on special occasions, while nowadays they are available all year round in restaurants and shops. There's a multitude of different recipes, so you can try a different one every day. In December, on Christmas Eve, we eat sauerkraut and mushroom *pierogi*, in June — strawberry *pierogi*, in July — bilberry *pierogi*. *Pierogi* filled with meat, buckwheat, or potatoes and cheese are served all year round.

<i>Pierogi dough</i>	<i>Ruthenian pierogi filling</i>	<i>Plum pierogi filling</i>
500 g / 18 oz. all-purpose flour	350 g / 12 oz. potatoes	500–600 g / 17–21 oz. plums
1 egg	200 g / 7 oz. cottage cheese	sugar
225–250 ml / 1 cup water	3 onions	potato starch
pinch of salt	200 g / 7 oz. bacon	sour cream
1 tbsp rapeseed oil	fat for frying	
	salt	
	pepper	

Knead the dough with flour, water and eggs. Add 1 tablespoon of oil at the end. Roll out the dough and cut circles using a glass. Put the filling onto the circles, seal them together, press the edges with a fork or make a frill. Boil in salted water. Take them out 3–4 minutes after they have started floating. Serve with bacon and fried onions or with sour cream. They taste great when reheated in the pan.

*Ruthenian pierogi*: peel and boil the potatoes. Mash when cooled down. Stir in the cottage cheese, salt and pepper. Fill the *pierogi*. Finely dice the onions and bacon. Fry the bacon in hot oil, then add the onions. Put the boiled *pierogi* onto a plate topped with bacon and onions. *Plum pierogi*: wash the plums, remove their stones and cut them into quarters. Put the fruit into a bowl, sprinkle with sugar and potato starch. Put the fruit filling onto the dough circles, shape and boil the *pierogi*. Take them out 3–4 minutes after they have started floating. Serve with sour cream and sugar.







## SILESIAN ROULADE / ROLADA ŚLĄSKA

Filling meat dishes are an essential part of important festivities. At first, Silesian roulade was mostly served at weddings. As people became wealthier, it started to appear on tables more often. Today it's an important element of the traditional Sunday dinner. It is served with Silesian potato dumplings with a little well in the middle and a side of *modra kapusta* — slightly sour, braised red cabbage.

1000 g / 35 oz. beef	salt
200 g / 7 oz. dill pickles	pepper
300 g / 10 oz. smoked bacon	5–6 allspice berries
300 g / 10 oz. sausage	2–3 bay leaves
200 g / 7 oz. onion	water
lard	
mustard	1 tbsp flour to thicken
all-purpose flour	the sauce

Cut the meat into pieces and smash each piece thoroughly with a meat mallet. Season the slices with salt and pepper, and spread them with a thin layer of mustard. Cut the pickles, bacon and sausage into batons. Cut the onion into bigger pieces. Put the ingredients onto the meat and roll it like a roulade. Tie the meat with a cord and coat in flour. Fry the meat on each side in hot lard. Put the fried roulades in a deep pan or a pot. Cover with warm water. Stew on a low heat until the meat becomes tender. Turn over while stewing. At the very end, put a spoon of flour into a bowl and add a little bit of sauce. Mix thoroughly. Pour back into the pot and stir well for the next 2–3 minutes. Serve the roulade with Silesian dumplings or buckwheat groats.



# PORK NECK BAKED WITH CARAWAY / KARKÓWKA PIECZONA Z KMINKIEM

Caraway used to be a very popular spice and was used in Old-Polish cuisine to flavour fish pickled in vinegar. Buttery caraway soup was eaten in Kraków and in the Podhale region. It was used to spice meat in the South of Poland. When put inside a bun and served with pan sauces, this mouthmelting, aromatic pork neck turns into a street food dish called *maczanka krakowska*.

1000 g / 35 oz. pork neck  
500 ml / 12 cups meat or vegetable stock  
150 ml /  $\frac{2}{3}$  cup cream  
3 onions  
1–2 tsp caraway  
all-purpose flour  
salt  
pepper  
lard

Cut the meat into 2 cm / 0.8 in. slices. Season with salt, pepper and caraway. Put into a bowl, cover and put in the fridge for a couple of hours (or, even better, for the whole night). Melt the lard in the pan. Sprinkle the meat with flour and fry on both sides. Place the pork neck in the roasting tin, pour stock over it and bake for 2–2.5 hours in an oven heated to 160 degrees °C / 320 °F. Add the sliced onions an hour before it's done. When the meat is ready, pour the sauce in a pot and add the cream. Serve the meat with potatoes or in a bun covered with sauce.





# APPLE KALACH / KOŁACZ Z JABŁKAMI

Apple desserts have been known for centuries. Apples can be baked, stewed, and used as a baking ingredient. Apple pie is one of the most popular Polish cakes, and it is made with *kruche* or *półkruche* pastry with a crumble and often meringue. Apples are also a great addition to yeast-based cakes.

370–400 g / 13–14 oz. all-purpose flour  
120 ml / ½ cup milk  
150 g / 5 oz. sugar  
45 g / 1.5 oz. butter  
18–20 g / 0.6–0.7 oz. fresh yeast  
2 medium eggs  
300–400 g / 10–14 oz. small apples  
potato starch  
cinnamon  
lemon juice

Heat the milk slightly. Melt the yeast in the milk, stirring well. Put the flour in a bowl. Add the butter, eggs and warm milk. Thoroughly knead the dough, then cover it with a cloth and leave for 60–90 minutes to rise. Peel and quarter the apples. Sprinkle each quarter with lemon juice, cinnamon and starch. Put the risen dough into a greased 20–22 cm / 8–9 in. cake tin. Put the fruit on top of the cake. Cover the cake tin with a cloth and leave to rise for about 60 minutes. Bake the kalach for 55–60 minutes in an oven at 170 degrees °C / 340 °F.







# HONEYCAKE LAYERED WITH JAM / MIODOWNIK PRZEKŁADANY KONFITURĄ

Honey — the main ingredient in honeycake — is liquid gold. It enriches the flavour of drinks, dishes and baked goods. The Slavs collected it from wild bee-hives. They sacrificed it to the gods and often used in the kitchen. Before sugar became widely known, it was one of the main sweeteners in Polish cuisine. There are many varieties that all differ in flavour, colour and consistency.

## *Dough*

320–350 g / 11–12 oz. all-purpose flour  
50 g / 1.8 oz. sugar  
1 flat tsp of baking powder  
1 big egg  
100 g / 3.5 oz. butter  
80 gr / 2.8 oz. liquid linden honey

## *Filling*

600 g / 21 oz. cherries or plums  
70–90 g / 2.5–3 oz. sugar  
20 ml / 1.5 tablespoons liquid honey  
40–50 g / 1.5–1.8 oz. butter  
fresh thyme

Pour the flour, sugar and baking powder into a bowl. Add the egg, butter and honey. Knead the dough and put it in the fridge for 30 minutes. When it's cooled down, divide it in 3 parts. Using a knife, cut three 9x21 cm rectangles. Put the rectangles onto a tin lined with paper and bake for around 18–23 minutes at 180 degrees °C / 350 °F. When baked, cut the rim to get nice, even rectangles.

Pit the fruit and cut them in half. Melt the butter in a pan and braise the plums. When they are soft, add sugar and honey and braise on a low heat until you get a pretty solid jam. Put one cooled-down cake top in a baking mould. Spread a layer of fruit on top, cover with a layer of cake and then another layer of fruit. Put the third layer of cake on top. Cool the cake down in the fridge for 5–6 hours. Cut into 2–3 cm / 0.8–1.2 in. thick pieces just before serving. They can be sprinkled with additional honey or fruit syrup and decorated with fresh herbs.





## KATARZYNKI COOKIES

Legend has it that there was once a baker named Bartłomiej who lived in Toruń with his daughter Katarzyna. An apprentice named Bogumił fell in love with her. Unfortunately he was too poor to court her. One day the boy saved a bee, and in turn the queen of bees revealed him the secret recipe for a unique cake. When Bogumił went back to work, it turned out the king was about to visit the town. The boy kneaded the dough and shaped it into two hearts and two rings. As the cakes were baking, they rose and melted together, creating a weird shape. The king was very impressed with the cake, and so he showered the boy with gold, gave him the title of royal baker and asked Bartłomiej the baker for his blessing for Bogumił to marry his daughter. These delicious gingerbread cookies have been called *katarzynki* ever since.

200 g / 7 oz. all-purpose flour  
50 g / 1.8 oz. rye flour  
130 g / 4.5 oz. mead  
10 g / 2 tsp. sugar  
70 g / 2.5 oz. soft butter  
10–12 g / 2–2.5 tsp favourite gingerbread spice  
¼ tsp baking soda

Cook the mead with the sugar and let it cool down. Put both flours into a bowl, add the spices and soft butter. At the end add mead and sugar. Mix thoroughly. Wrap in foil and leave in the fridge for 1–2 hours. When cooled down, roll out the dough until it's around half a centimetre thick. Cut the cookies using a katarzynki-shaped mould. Put it on a baking tin lined with paper. Bake the cookies for 11–13 minutes at 175 degrees °C / 350 °F.





# LOVAGE AND IN THE RASPBERRY THICKET / LUBCZYK I W MALINOWYM CHRUŚNIAKU

Polish vodka can be enjoyed in many different ways, from shots to long drinks. Depending on the type. It can be served in different temperatures. The main ingredient also has a big impact on the flavour. Vodka pairs very well with Polish dishes — whether it's meat, fish or vegetables.

## *Lovage*

30 ml / ⅛ cup Polish vodka  
80 ml / ⅓ cup dry cider  
fresh lovage  
ice cubes  
sparkling water

Put ice cubes into a tall glass until it's half-full. Add the vodka, cider and fresh lovage leaves. Fill with sparkling water and mix with a drink stirrer.

## *In the Raspberry Thicket*

40 ml / ⅛ cup Polish vodka  
15 ml / 1 tablespoon raspberry juice  
15 ml / 1 tablespoon elderflower syrup  
a couple fresh raspberries  
ice cubes  
sparkling water

Put ice cubes into a tall glass until it's half-full. Add the vodka, raspberry juice, elderflower syrup and raspberries. Fill with sparkling water and mix with a drink stirrer.







Meadow in winter, around Szydłów









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### POLISH CULINARY PATHS

What does Poland taste like? It's 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 along the pathways of Polish cuisine.

The publication was commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland and is available online free of charge in English, Chinese, Georgian, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese.

*Polish Culinary Paths* — [www.hanami.pl/pcp](http://www.hanami.pl/pcp)



The Museum of Toruń Gingerbread, branch of the District Museum in Toruń









## MUSEUMS, INSTITUTIONS AND INTERESTING CULINARY PROJECTS

### POLISH VODKA MUSEUM (WARSAW)

*[www.muzeumpolskiejwodki.pl/en/about](http://www.muzeumpolskiejwodki.pl/en/about)*

The Polish Vodka Museum's unique exhibition is housed in a 19<sup>th</sup> century rectification plant located on the premises of the former Warsaw Rectification in the revitalised Koneser Praga Centre complex. The museum guides passionately tell the unknown story of Polish vodka on an energetic journey through 5 interactive galleries, ending with a lecture and a vodka tasting. Those interested in experiencing more flavours and gaining a deeper understanding of vodka also have the opportunity to participate in an array of workshops and try out the wide selection of Polish vodka in the shop.

### THE MUSEUM OF TORUŃ GINGERBREAD

(branch of the District Museum in Toruń)

*[www.muzeum.torun.pl](http://www.muzeum.torun.pl)*

The building of this old gingerbread factory has been modernised and turned into an interactive exposition filled with modern, visually attractive objects. The Museum of Toruń Gingerbread has a pioneering approach to gingerbread heritage. It organises innovative activities, engages visitors in interactive forms of sightseeing, and above all adopts an unconventional, multisensory approach to museum education. For instance, it gives the public the opportunity to take part in the process of making decorative gingerbread, which guarantees an unforgettable visit.

## THE POLISH TABLE

### MUSEUM OF KING JAN III'S PALACE IN WILANÓW

*www.wilanow-palac.pl*

The museum has been offering culinary reenactment workshops for both children and adults since 2015. A team of professionals led by the chef Maciej Nowicki is responsible for these events. The project 'A Place at the Royal Table' is a winner of the 2019 European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards.

### CULINARY KRAKÓW

*www.kulinarny.krakow.pl*

Kraków is an exceptional place on the Polish culinary map. It received the title of European Capital of Gastronomic Culture in 2019. It is home to a Michelin-starred restaurant, small gastronomic concepts and fine dining restaurants as well as a wide array of street food. Love of good food can be combined with engagement with the local community thanks to many food initiatives — events such as Najedzeni Fest, Art & Food Bazar and Targ Pietruszkowy, a local favourite. There are also many wine-centred initiatives in the region, including Zaułek Małopolskiego Wina.

### LIVING OBWARZANEK MUSEUM (KRAKÓW)

*www.muzeumobwarzanka.com*

The mission of the Living Obwarzanek Museum is to provide an interactive presentation of the history and tradition of the *obwarzanek* — a tasty, traditional bread with a 600-year history.

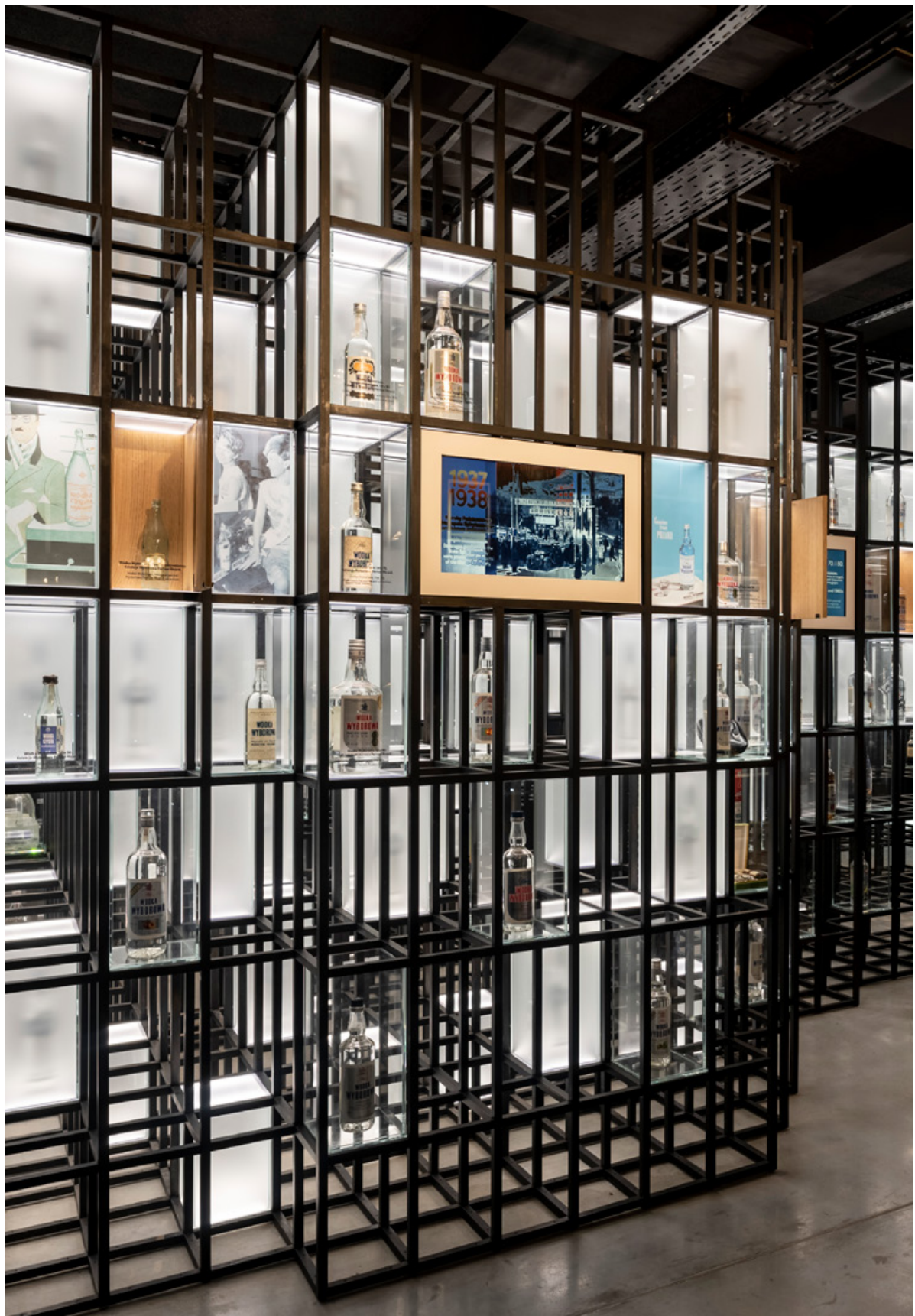
### THE MUSEUM OF BREAD IN RADZIONKÓW

*www.muzeum-chleba.pl*

The first bread museum in Poland exhibits tools that were used for making bread, objects connected to eating it, as well as everything that shows our respect for bread.







# LINKS



## *Portals about Poland*

Polska — [www.polska.pl](http://www.polska.pl)  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland —  
[www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy](http://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy)  
travel.lovePoland — [www.lovepoland.org](http://www.lovepoland.org)

## *Organisations, Associations, Tourism and Food Tourism*

Eat Polska — [www.eatpolska.com](http://www.eatpolska.com)  
Sopot “Stronghold” — Archeological Museum in Gdańsk —  
[www.archeologia.pl/en/grodzisko-sopot/opening-hours](http://www.archeologia.pl/en/grodzisko-sopot/opening-hours)  
Folk Architecture Museum and Ethnographic Park in Olsztynek —  
[www.muzeumolsztynek.com.pl/en.html](http://www.muzeumolsztynek.com.pl/en.html)  
Marianna Orańska Palace — [www.palacmarianny.com.pl](http://www.palacmarianny.com.pl)  
Polish Vodka Association — [www.pva.org.pl](http://www.pva.org.pl)  
Adam Chętnik’s Kurpie Open-Air Museum in Nowogród —  
[www.facebook.com/skansenkurpiowski.wnowogrodzie](http://www.facebook.com/skansenkurpiowski.wnowogrodzie)  
Warsaw Foodie — [www.warsawfoodie.pl/en](http://www.warsawfoodie.pl/en)  
Prince’s Tower in Siedlęcin — [www.wiezasiedlecin.pl](http://www.wiezasiedlecin.pl)  
Stowarzyszenie Polskich Dystrybutorów Owoców i Warzyw  
„Unia Owocowa” — [www.uniaowocowa.pl](http://www.uniaowocowa.pl)

## *Design and Handcraft*

AgnaWoolArt — [www.agnawool.art](http://www.agnawool.art)  
aleWorek — [www.aleworek.pl/en](http://www.aleworek.pl/en)  
BernOnTable — [www.facebook.com/BurnonTable](http://www.facebook.com/BurnonTable)  
Forma Natura — [www.formanatura.pl](http://www.formanatura.pl)  
FRAJDACeramika — [www.frajdaceramika.pl](http://www.frajdaceramika.pl)  
Hadaki — [www.hadaki.co](http://www.hadaki.co)  
Hetman jewelry — [www.hetmanjewelry.com](http://www.hetmanjewelry.com)

Julia Crystal Factory — [www.hutajulia.com](http://www.hutajulia.com)  
kasia białek ceramika — [www.kasiabialekceramika.pl](http://www.kasiabialekceramika.pl)  
Krosno Glass S.A. — [www.krosno.com](http://www.krosno.com)  
Kuźnia Barona — [www.facebook.com/Ku%C5%BAnia-Barona-337690129584539/](https://www.facebook.com/Ku%C5%BAnia-Barona-337690129584539/)  
Projekt Ładniej Ceramika — [www.projektladniej.com](http://www.projektladniej.com)  
Spiek Ceramiczny — [www.spiekceramiczny.pl](http://www.spiekceramiczny.pl)

*Restaurants, Food Products and Alcohol*

A. Baron / J. Nowicki — [www.facebook.com/baronnowicki](https://www.facebook.com/baronnowicki)  
Baron the Family — [www.baronthefamily.pl](http://www.baronthefamily.pl)  
Browar Kormoran — [www.browarkormoran.pl](http://www.browarkormoran.pl)  
Browar PERUN — [www.facebook.com/BrowarPERUN](https://www.facebook.com/BrowarPERUN)  
Browar Spółdzielczy — [www.browarspoldzielczy.com](http://www.browarspoldzielczy.com)  
Cydr Chyliczki — [www.cydrchylizki.pl](http://www.cydrchylizki.pl)  
Cydr Ignaców — [www.facebook.com/CydrIgnacow](https://www.facebook.com/CydrIgnacow)  
DESEO Patisserie & Chocolaterie — [www.deseopatisserie.com](http://www.deseopatisserie.com)  
Doctor Brew Craft Beer — [www.doctorbrew.pl](http://www.doctorbrew.pl)  
Fabryka Cukiernicza KOPERNIK S.A. — [www.kopernik.com.pl](http://www.kopernik.com.pl)  
Gospodarstwo „Kaszubska Koza” —  
[www.facebook.com/GospodarstwoKaszubskaKoza](https://www.facebook.com/GospodarstwoKaszubskaKoza)  
Restauracja Źródło — [www.facebook.com/zrodlo.praga.warszawa](https://www.facebook.com/zrodlo.praga.warszawa)  
RestoBar Ogień —  
<https://www.facebook.com/RestoBar-Ogie%C5%84-1894080104182688/>  
Sakana Sushi & Sticks Wilanów — [www.sakana.pl](http://www.sakana.pl)  
Sery Łomnickie — [www.serylomnickie.pl](http://www.serylomnickie.pl)  
Vegan Ramen Shop — [www.veganramenshop.pl](http://www.veganramenshop.pl)  
Winnica Jadwiga — [www.winnicajadwiga.pl](http://www.winnicajadwiga.pl)  
Winnica Płochockich — [www.winnicaplochokich.pl](http://www.winnicaplochokich.pl)  
Winnica Turnau — [www.winnicaturneau.pl/en](http://www.winnicaturneau.pl/en)  
Wyborowa S.A. — [www.pernod-ricard.com/pl-pl/wyborowa](http://www.pernod-ricard.com/pl-pl/wyborowa)





Grains, Kashubia





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p. 29 Portrait of Marcianna Oborska, neé Jawornicka, photographed by Karol Beyer, circa 1860, [www.polona.pl](http://www.polona.pl); p. 118–119 The Museum of Toruń Gingerbread, branch of the District Museum in Toruń, Krzysztof Deczyński; p. 120 Polish Vodka Museum, Grzegorz Ścibisz; p. 123 Polish Vodka Museum, Marcin Oliva “Soto”, all other Magdalena Tomaszewska-Bolałek

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