POZNAŃ

The city lies on the Warta river. It is the capital of Wielkopolska Voivodeship and the see of the Archdiocese of Poznań.

When the town hall was rebuilt after the great fire, it was decided to install a clock. This was to be a celebratory occasion with a sumptuous feast to which several eminent persons were invited. The main dish was to be roast venison haunch and the preparation befell a young kitchen hand named Pietrek (Pete). A lot of exciting things were happening in the marketplace at that moment. So much so that the kitchen hand took his eye off the roast for a second to watch what was going on in the marketplace. Unfortunately, his absence dragged on... and on.... and... the roast fell into the fire and was burnt to cinders. The terrified lad ran to a nearby meadow where the city folk grazed their animals, made off with two billy goats and dragged them into the town hall kitchen. The goats, sensing their imminent demise, wrested themselves free of the boy and fled to the tower. There, they started head butting each other before the assembled crowd. The spectacle so amused the mayor, voivode and all the guests that Pietrek was pardoned and the clockmaker bidden to construct a special mechanism to set the horological goats in motion every day. Ever since then, once the bugle sounds at the stroke of noon, the assembled crowd has been treated to the two head-butting billy goats every day.

<http://regionwielkopolska.pl/en/folk-culture/legends/the-poznan-billy-goat-legend.html>

The Legend of Poznań’s St. Martin Croissants

St. Martin was a Roman soldier. One day, while entering Amiens with the army, he noticed a beggar dressed in rags by the city gate. He cut his soldier’s cape – his entire fortune – in two with his sword and gave half to the stranger.

The curate of St. Martin’s Church in Poznań retells this story every year before the parish fair gets underway.

In 1891, a baker named Walenty heard the story and decided to do asomething good deed like St. Martin. On the night before the fair, he heard the clatter of horses’ hooves on the road outside. He looked out the doorway a saw a knight in shining old-fashioned armour on a grey horse and a horseshoe lying in the snow.

This encounter inspired him to bake a horseshoe-shaped pastry with a poppy seed filling. Next morning after solemn mass, he handed out his pastries to the poor. Everybody was so taken by Walenty’s idea that these “rogals”, as these “croissants” have since come to be known, were baked every year. When he died, other bakers took up the tradition and guarded the recipe for the filling. Rogals are made of white poppy seeds, bakalie (a Polish confectionery consisting of figs, walnuts, hazelnuts, raisins, orange and lemon peel, and dried fruits) and cream. They are only baked here in Poznań and only on 11 November.

So much for the legend. What is known for certain is that, in 1891, he suggested the idea of St. Martin rogals to his boss, Poznań baker Józef Melzer. The rogals were handed out to the poor after solemn mass on 11 November. These rogals are now only baked in confectioneries which have a special certificate. Poznanians consume around 300 tonnes of this delicacy every year.

The entire nation associates 11 November with the Polish Independence Day celebrations. In Poznań, these celebrations run a decidedly happy course as they are associated with the name of the city’s main street – ul. Święty Marcin (St. Martin St.).

After mass, a colourful procession sets off from the church below the royal castle, where the Mayor of Poznań hands over the keys of the city to St. Martin. Poznanians, in the company of the many visitors who descend on the city to participate in the St. Martin revelry, take part in a variety of parades and performances until well into the night.

<http://regionwielkopolska.pl/en/folk-culture/legends/the-legend-of-poznan-rsquo-s-st-martin-croissants.html>

Legend of how the Crow King Saved Poznań

There used to live a watchman in the Poznań town hall tower whose job it was to keep a lookout for fire and any foreign armies that might be approaching the city. His son Bolko, a boy who loved animals, lived with him. One day, a wounded crow fell at his feet. The boy carefully nursed the bird and bandaged his broken wing. One night, he noticed an elf in a long royal mantle with a crown on his head in the bird’s bedding. The elf addressed him in a human voice.

“Dear Bolko! You came to my aid when I was weak and ill. You ought to know that I am no ordinary bird, but the crow king. We birds never forget a good turn done to us. I leave you this silver trumpet, which has magic powers. Should you ever be in need of help, play it and I shall come to you with my subjects. And now, farewell!”

With these words, the elf changed back into a crow, jumped onto the window sill and flew off. The years went by. Bolko took over from his father as watchman. One day, a hostile army approached the city walls. He thereupon took the crow king’s trumpet and played as beautifully as he could. After a while, birds began appearing in the city in such numbers that it soon turned dark. The enemy was defeated with no effort at all and Poznań was free once more! The same melody that summoned the crow king is still played from the town hall tower every day to mark this event.

<http://regionwielkopolska.pl/en/folk-culture/legends/legend-of-how-the-crow-king-saved-poznan.html>