

Chapter II. St. Andrew's Day – Andrzejki

In Bialystok, November 29th, 2016

Dear Marc!

We haven't seen each other for over a month. How are you? I hope everything is fine.

I am already in Poland which is my second destination. I have never been here before and I haven't expected that it is such an amazing country. It's not only because of its outstanding beauty but most of all because of exceptionally friendly and hospitable people I've had a chance to meet.

Once, I arrived in the city Bialystok, I was greeted by Dorota Zukowska and a group of her students who were awaiting me at the train station. I spent with them the whole afternoon. I was taken on a sightseeing tour of the city which was really enjoyable! They showed me a lot of grand monuments and buildings but for me the most distinctive and striking was the Branicki Palace, a magnificent residence on the Biala River, encircled by a beautiful park. It was an impressive sight!

As I managed to find out, Bialystok is the largest city in north-eastern Poland serving the function of the capital of Podlaskie province. It is the administrative, economic, and academic centre of the region which, due to its exceptional environmental assets, has been termed the Green Lungs of Poland. As an interesting side note, I can add that Bialystok is also the place of birth of Ludwik Zamenhoff, the inventor of the artificial language Esperanto.

On the day of my arrival, late in the evening, I was also invited to a traditional Polish dinner. I will never forget the taste of Polish 'pierogi', 'bigos' and 'babka ziemniaczana'. Everything was so delicious! I took some recipes.

The next day, early in the morning, Dorota took me directly to her school where I was going to see the Polish celebration of St. Andrew's Day called "Andrzejki". Soon after we arrived at a place I was shown around the school and got to know some interesting facts. The school is quite big, about 500 primary students and 45 teachers. It was named after Kazimierz Górski who was an outstanding coach of Poland National Football Team. What is special about this school is that it is sport-oriented and well equipped with sporting facilities. I could see many students playing football and volleyball both indoors and outdoors. They were enjoying themselves a lot.

Now let's come back to the celebration of "Andrzejki". I learnt that the tradition of "Andrzejki" fortune telling was noted in the 16th century and it is still known and practiced in all regions of Poland. However, nowadays the ceremony has lost a lot of its magical and serious character and has been transformed into fun and games during St. Andrew parties arranged by young people.

I will tell you how I celebrated this event with Polish students and their teacher from Szkoła Podstawowa nr 37. It was a very special afternoon which brought me loads of fun! The students showed me a lot of ideas of how to find out about the future, namely the marriage, lucky or unlucky love and prosperous or poor perspectives. The most spectacular was pouring hot liquid wax through a keyhole into cold water. The shape of the solidified wax was supposed to represent something that would happen to us in the upcoming year. After unlimited interpretations of wax shapes, we took part in the shoes race. Everyone took off their shoes and put them in a line one after the other. Then, we moved them gradually one after the other in the direction of the door. The owner of the shoe which reached the doorstep first would obviously be the first one to marry. After knowing the result of the shoes competition, it was the time for other fortune telling practices such as palm reading, horoscopes, astrology, magic box or crystal ball. There were lots of laughing while students were piercing the heart with either female or male names on the back. Girls and boys stuck the needle into the heart from the other side, so that they couldn't see what was written there. The little hole in the paper heart showed them the name of their future spouse. I must say that I also

really liked the idea of the cups flipped upside down. Under three cups were placed in sequence: a ring, a coin and a leaf. Then the cups were mixed and students were supposed to choose one of them. Choosing the ring symbolized a happy love, the coin would bring us money, whereas the leaf was the announcement of the wedding. The last idea were fortune cookies. You will never guess what prediction I found inside my fortune cookie! I will keep it a secret till we meet!

Our St. Andrew's celebration lasted only two hours but I will always remember this special party and I'm very grateful for the invitation to participate in it.

I'm sending you photos from my greatest memories and I also enclosed a recipe for these amazing fortune cookies!

Tomorrow I'm leaving for Finland. I know that it will be difficult to say goodbye to Polish friends but I believe I will come back there one day.

I will write to you soon.

Max

SOME PHOTOS FROM THE EVENT



FORTUNE COOKIES RECIPE

Ingredients

- **2** eggwhites
- **75 g** ($\frac{1}{3}$ cup) caster sugar
- **50 g** ($\frac{1}{3}$ cup) plain flour, sifted
- **30 g** butter, melted
- **14** paper messages

Instructions

Preheat the oven to 180C. Use a pencil to mark two 8 cm circles on a sheet of baking paper, flip paper over and place onto a baking tray.

Beat egg whites in a small bowl with an electric mixer until soft peaks form. Gradually add sugar, mix until sugar dissolves. Add flour and butter and beat on a slow speed until smooth.

Working in batches of two, place a teaspoonful of mixture onto each circle on the baking tray. Use the back of the spoon to spread evenly to cover circle completely. Bake for about 5 minutes or until golden around edges.

Working quickly loosen cookies from tray using a spatula. Place a paper message in the centre of each. Fold hot cookies in half, pressing edges together. Gently bend each cookie over the side of a glass to form a crescent shape. Place onto a wire rack to cool. Repeat with remaining cookie mixture.

