



*“Food is a central activity of mankind  
and one of the single most significant trademarks of a culture.”*

Mark Kurlansky, 'Choice Cuts' (2002)

Regional culture can be manifested through a variety of forms and practices. Visually, it is reflected in traditional outfits or architecture and it can be traced in regional customs which are celebrated from father to son. Culture is also strongly represented in literature, both the oral traditions and the written works. Last but not least, the regional cuisine constitutes a very significant manifestation of culture.

Here in this booklet, we present the selected traditional dishes of the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

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#### Partner schools in the project

Spojená škola (Detva, Slovakia) – coordinating school <http://www.sssdetva.edu.sk/sk>

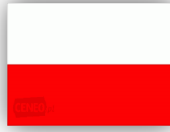
Střední odborná škola obchodu, užitého umění a designu (Pilsen, Czech Republic) <http://www.nerudovka.cz/>

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Regionalne Centrum Edukacji Zawodowej (Nisko, Poland) <http://rceznisko.pl/rcez/>

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# Polish cuisine



Traditional Polish cuisine has been influenced by various national and ethnic groups living within the country throughout history. As a result, the elements of German, Ruthenian, Tatar and Jewish cuisines can be observed in it. An additional impact on the development of Polish regional cuisine was the availability of particular products and the wealth of communities inhabiting a specific region. Also, the period of partitions in Poland had its contribution in shaping the Polish cuisine. Traditionally, Polish dishes are based on products which are available locally such as potatoes, cereals (e.g. wheat, rye, buckwheat and other types of groats), cabbage and dairy products. Meat is also an important ingredient in many Polish dishes.

## Soups and starters

### Żurek / Sour rye soup

#### Ingredients - sour rye starter (zakwas):

- 2 cups of rye flour
- 5 cups of warm water
- 1 bay leaf
- 3 garlic cloves, sliced

#### Ingredients - żurek:

- 1/2 pound peeled & chopped soup vegetables (carrots, parsnips, leek, onion, parsley, celery root)
- 6 cups of water
- 1 pound of potatoes, peeled and cut into 1 inch pieces
- 3 cups of zakwas (above) or more if needed
- 150 g of sausage, diced
- 3-4 bay leaves



- 1 teaspoon of allspice
- 1-2 chopped garlic cloves
- 1 teaspoon of marjoram
- 1 teaspoon of grated horseradish (optional)
- cream (optional)
- plenty of salt and ground pepper to taste
- chopped grilled white sausage (optional)
- topping: fresh parsley, hard boiled egg

**Sour rye starter (zakwas):** use the largest sterilized jar you have or a glass bowl you can cover. Put rye flour in the jar/bowl. Boil the water to get rid of bacteria and let it cool to lukewarm, then add to the flour and stir. Add the rest of the ingredients, cover, and let sit for 4-5 days in a warm dark location (18 and 22 degrees centigrade). Stir daily with a clean spoon. You will know it is done by the sour taste and the acid smell. Note: some recipes call for adding rye crust to your starter. However, you have to find rye bread without any softeners or additives, otherwise you can spoil your zakwas.

**Żurek:** Next you want to make the broth (soup base). You can use chicken broth if you happen to have it or prepare your own broth using vegetables. In a large soup pot, bring the broth to boil with all the vegetables and about 6 cups of water. Simmer for 30 minutes or until all the flavor comes out of the veggies and remove the cooked vegetables. Add the rest of the ingredients and simmer till the potatoes are soft. When adding the rye starter, some recipes suggest to just use the liquid part of the zakwas, and some use all of it (i.e. rye flour and water). It depends on how thick and how sour you want your soup to be. At this stage you can also add some cream. Serve żurek in shallow soup bowls. Cut a hard boiled egg and put it in the soup. Adding some freshly grated horseradish gives żurek a unique flavour but do not put too much of it as its taste is very strong. It is also a good idea to garnish your żurek with fresh parsley or dill.

## Rosół / Chicken soup

- 1 kilo of chicken carcasses (+optionally a few chicken wings)
- 1 turkey neck
- 2-3 carrots
- 1 parsnip

- a piece of celeriac
- 1 small leek
- a small piece of Savoy cabbage
- 1 unpeeled onion (for a nice colour)
- 2 or 3 bay leaves
- 5 whole allspice berries
- 5 black pepper grains
- salt
- fresh parsley



Start with pouring cold water into a 3-litre cooking pot and putting in all of the prepared meat. When the water starts to boil, by using a little sifter, skim off the scum that accumulates on the surface of the soup. At this point, reduce the heat to make the rosół only simmer slightly. After skimming off the scum, add all the vegetables which must be washed and chopped beforehand. Remember not to peel the onion completely. Just get rid of its outer layer which is usually quite dirty. Put in all of the seasonings and cover the pot slightly. Control the temperature in order to keep the soup simmering. Cook it for about 2-3 hours - the long cooking time is really important. When the cooking is over, clear the soup by straining it using a metal sieve. Then, choose the ingredients which you will add back to the soup (e.g. the carrot). Serve the soup with noodles and pieces of cooked carrot and sprinkled with chopped parsley.

## Barszcz z uszkami / Borscht with tortellini („little ear” dumplings)

### Ingredients – borscht (beetroot soup)

- 4 beetroots, 1 carrot, 1 parsnip, 1celery
- 4 cloves of garlic
- 4 allspice berries, 4 bay leaves, 2 teaspoons of marjoram
- 2 – 3 dried forest mushrooms
- 1-2 tablespoons of vinegar



- salt, pepper

### **Ingredients – tortellini (a type of small dumplings)**

- 2 glasses of flour
- 1 egg
- 30 g of mushrooms
- 2 onions
- some oil
- salt, pepper

**Borscht:** peel and chop the vegetables and cook in boiling water. Add vinegar, allspice, bay leaves, pepper, garlic and marjoram. Add dried mushrooms (previously soaked). Cook the soup for about 1 hour. Add some salt to taste. **Tortellini:** first, prepare the filling - soak the mushrooms in water overnight. Boil them in the same water in which they soaked. Strain and cool. Chop the onions and dabble them in hot oil. Mix the mushrooms with the onions. Season to taste. When the mixture cools down, blend the whole with a blender or grind using a meat grinder. Prepare the dough using the instruction included in the recipe for dumplings. Divide the dough into parts, cover with a cloth so that it does not dry. Roll out the dough with a rolling pin until thin, cut small circles with a glass and put a little filling onto the centre of each circle. Fold each circle with the filling inside and stick together firmly, making sure that the filling does not get between the edges. Cook the tortellini in salted boiling water until they come up to the surface (usually about 3 minutes). Serve the soup with tortellini. The Polish name for the tortellini is „uszka” meaning „little ears.”

## Main courses

### Bigos / Sauerkraut and meat stew

#### Ingredients

- 1.5 kg of sauerkraut
- 3 sausages
- 2 onions
- 100 g of bacon
- 200 g of beef steak
- 4 tablespoons of tomato sauce
- 3 bay leaves
- 1 tablespoon of marjoram
- allspice (a few berries)
- salt
- black pepper



Rinse the sauerkraut and shred it, put it in a large pot with bay leaves and allspice, add hot water and stew until soft. Sauté the onions, add the chopped sausages, beef and bacon and fry. Mix the soft sauerkraut with the fried meat and onions. Add marjoram, salt, pepper, and tomato sauce. Mix the ingredients. Cook for one and a half hours on a low flame. Serve with bread.

### Pierogi / Dumplings

#### Ingredients - dough

- 2 glasses of flour
- 1 egg
- salt

### Ingredients - filling

- 7-8 potatoes
- 200 g of cottage cheese
- 1 onion
- 3 tablespoons of butter
- pepper
- salt

Knead the dumpling dough with flour, an egg and lukewarm water.

Add a pinch of salt. The dough

should not be hard but also not too sticky. Cut the onion and fry in butter. Grind the cooked potatoes and cheese using a meat grinder or a food processor, add some of the fried onion, salt and pepper and mix thoroughly. Divide the dough into parts, cover with a cloth so that it does not dry. Roll out the dough with a rolling pin until thin, cut circles with a glass and put a little filling onto the centre of each circle. Fold each circle with the filling inside and stick together firmly, making sure that the filling does not get between the edges. Cook the dumplings in salted boiling water until they come up to the surface (usually about 3 minutes). Serve the dumplings topped with fried onion and/or some melted butter. Adding some thick sour cream is also a good idea.



## Kotlet schabowy / Fried pork chop

### Ingredients

- 4 pork chops or cutlets
- 1 egg
- 3 tablespoons of flour
- 1 cup of bread crumbs
- 1/2 teaspoon of salt
- 1/8 teaspoon of pepper
- 2 tablespoons of oil



Trim the excess fat from chops or cutlets; rinse and pat dry. Prepare two plates: on the first one place the lightly beaten, raw egg, on the second - bread crumbs mixed with flour, salt and pepper. Dredge the chops first in the egg and then in the mixture until well coated. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat; fry the pork chops for about 4 to 5 minutes on each side, until browned. This type of pork chop is usually served with potatoes and fried cabbage or some salad.

## Gołąbki / Stuffed cabbage rolls

### Ingredients

- 2 large cabbage heads, with the coarse outer leaves removed
- 1 1/2 cups of rice, uncooked
- 150 g of bacon strips, diced
- 2 medium onions, diced
- 0.5 kilo of ground pork
- 4 eggs, beaten (optional)
- a quarter of a litre of tomato concentrate
- 1/4 teaspoon of paprika
- salt and black pepper



Remove the center core of each head of cabbage. Place in a large pot of boiling water. Boil until soft, removing each leaf as it softens. Let leaves cool, then trim the thick rib on each leaf. Reserve 0.5 litre of the cabbage cooking water. Boil rice in a separate saucepot until half cooked. Drain and set aside. In a large skillet, saute bacon and discard excess fat. Add the onion to the bacon and cook until lightly browned. In a bowl combine pork, the partially cooked rice, pepper, salt, eggs, the fried onion-bacon mixture and paprika. Measure the mixture with medium sized ice-cream scoop to make each gołąbek the same size. Preheat the oven to 180°C. On each separate cabbage leaf, place 1 scoop of the meat mixture at the bottom of the leaf and roll, tightly tucking the sides to cover the mixture. Line the bottom of a roasting pan (not aluminum) with cabbage leaves that are too dark or too small to use for rolling. Place gołąbki in a roasting pan, forming layers. Combine the tomato concentrate and the reserved cooking liquid and pour over gołąbki. Cover and



bake for 2 to 2 1/2 hours. Add more liquid, if needed. Gołębki taste best the next day and are usually served with tomato or mushroom sauce.

## Sweets and desserts

### Sernik / Cheesecake

#### Ingredients

- 1 kilo of fine cottage cheese
- 200 g of butter
- 6 eggs
- 300 g of sugar
- 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract or a real vanilla pod
- 4 tablespoons of semolina
- 2 tablespoons of potato flour or starch
- 100 g of raisins



Separate the egg whites from the yolks. In a large bowl, cream the yolks, the softened butter and the sugar until the mixture is smooth. Grind the cottage cheese using a meat grinder or a food processor until it is creamy with no clods. Add the cheese to the mixture in the bowl and mix. Add the vanilla extract (or the vanilla seeds extracted from the pod), semolina, potato flour and raisins. In another bowl, whip the egg whites until the mixture is thick. Add the whipped egg whites to the cheese mixture and mix gently. Bake at 180°C for about 1 and a half hours. It is generally believed that the secret of a perfect cheesecake is the best quality cottage cheese.

## Local speciality

### Dumplings with lentil filling / Pierogi z soczewicą

#### Ingredients - dough

- 2 glasses of flour
- 1 egg
- water and salt

#### Ingredients – filling

- a glass of dry lentils
- 1 onion



First, prepare the filling – soak the lentils for about 15 minutes and then cook in boiling water (15 minutes). Chop the onion and fry it in butter. Grind the cooked lentils mixed with the fried onion. Knead the dumpling dough with flour, an egg and lukewarm water. Add a pinch of salt. The dough should not be hard but also not too sticky. Divide the dough into parts, cover with a cloth so that it does not dry. Roll out the dough with a rolling pin until thin, cut circles with a glass and put a little filling onto the centre of each circle. Fold each circle with the filling inside and stick together firmly, making sure that the filling does not get between the edges. Cook the dumplings in salted boiling water until they come up to the surface (usually about 3 minutes). Serve the dumplings topped with fried onion and/or some melted butter.

The dish was placed on the List of Traditional Products, kept by the Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

## Bibliography

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