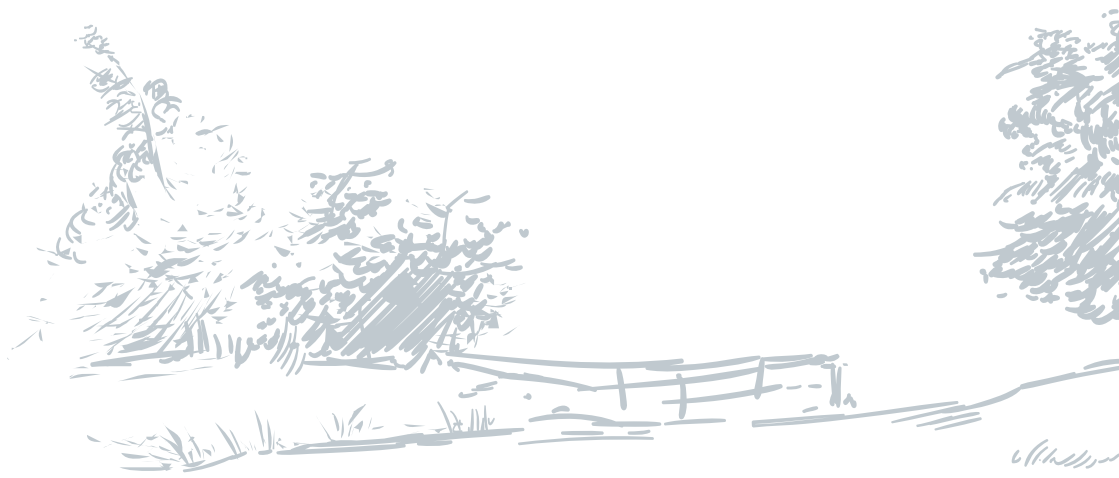


Poland *tastes good*

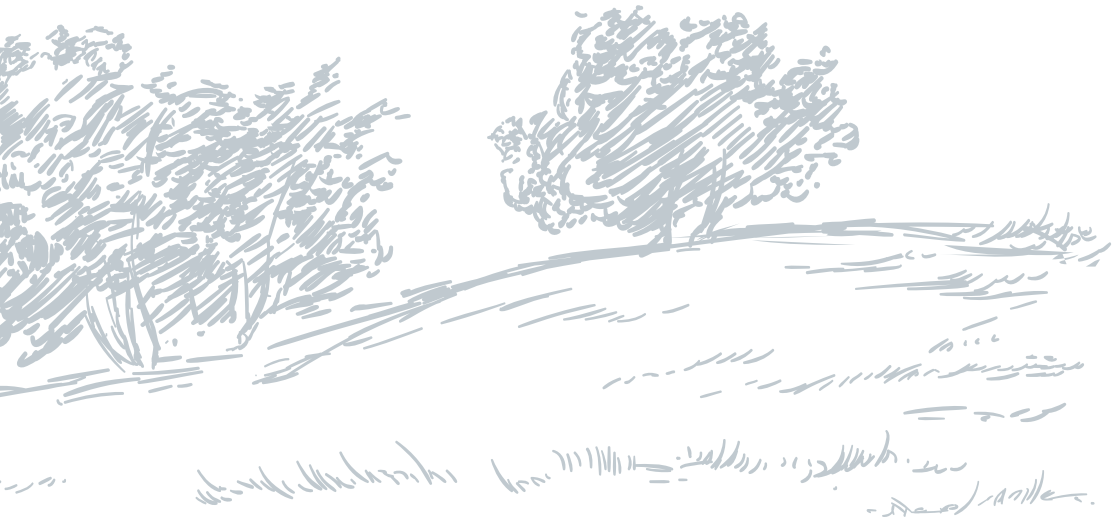
The History of Polish cuisine





Poland *tastes good*

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THE HISTORY OF POLISH CUISINE

AN INCENTIVE TO COOK

Jarosław
Dumanowski

Polish cuisine is a fascinating example of fusing national and local with external influences, care for the quality of products with the taste of dishes and respect for nature with the produce of modern agriculture. This is the result of history, where food and taste have always played a significant role. Polish chefs combine tradition with modernity as well as openness and in doing so have achieved international acclaim. Polish restaurants receive prestigious awards; culinary tourism is booming, while strict EU safety and quality standards have been introduced in the field of food production.

Let us tell the story of Polish flavour, explain the origin of modern Polish dishes and the best Polish chefs draw from this history. You will learn about an old cuisine, based on local products that are, however, available in many countries, and which can be successfully recreated all over the world.





Antiquity

The history of Polish cuisine dates back to ancient times. Chroniclers described the land of the Polans, the ancestors of all Poles, as “flowing with milk and honey” – i.e. abundant in all kinds of food products. Poland, exporting cereals, fish, dried fruits, meat and a whole range of other produce to other countries, was called the “granary of Europe” for centuries.

Travellers were struck by the fertility of the Polish land, the richness of its nature and the talents of Polish chefs for centuries. The oldest Polish recipes were written by cookbook authors from neighbouring countries, who praised various dishes from our cuisine since the Middle Ages. The first cookbook written in Polish was published in the 16th century. However, only few pages have survived – describing ten ways of producing vinegar, one of the basic ingredients of the cuisine used during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. This indicates the importance of advanced food preservation techniques, mainly pickling fish, meat, vegetables and fruits in vinegar, but also suggests a penchant for a full-bodied flavour, especially sour, which to this day remains a trademark of Polish cuisine. Before the invention of refrigerators, vinegar was essential



to food preservation, but to this day many different types of aromatic vinegars are made in Poland, above all from the famous Polish apples as well as other fruits, flowers and herbs.

Unique recipes and dietary advice have been handed down to us by the authors of herbariums from the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century, who primarily wrote about healthy food, diet and the medicinal properties of herbs, vegetables, various broths and beverages.

During the Renaissance, Polish cuisine was promoted in Europe and throughout the world by the princesses of the Jagiellonian dynasty, by exchanging Polish recipes and tips on how to prepare various meals. Princess Anna, the sister of King Sigismund III Vasa, funded the printing of a herbarium written by Simon Syrenius, a professor at Cracow university, who described a number of famous Polish dishes – e.g. meat broth, rye bread, as well as barley, millet and oat groats. For centuries, Poles have paid great attention to the quality of bread, valuing rye and wholemeal varieties, which are still popular and considered healthy today. Bread was sometimes the cause of some amusing misunderstandings between the Poles and, for example, the French. In the 17th century, French diplomats suspected some kind of insult or provocation when offered dark bread. Nicolaus Copernicus, the famous 16th century Polish astronomer, even wrote a treatise on the fair price of bread.





The oldest Polish cookbooks

Stanisław Czerniecki, the author of the first surviving Polish cookbook, published in Cracow in 1682, is considered to be the patron of Polish chefs. He was the head chef of Prince Aleksander Michał Lubomirski and created a fascinating collection of 333 recipes for meat, fish and flour-based dishes. The grand Lubomirski Castle stands to this day in Nowy Wiśnicz, close to Cracow, the former capital and one of the largest travel and culinary attractions of Europe today, and not far away from the historic salt mines in Wieliczka and Bochnia.

Already this centuries-old work shows characteristics that differentiate Polish cuisine to this day: a fascination with nature, openness to different inspirations, attention to health, diversification of products and, above all, the extraordinary flavour of the dishes, many of which we can today prepare ourselves. The most famous of Polish cooks was ennobled by King Jan III Sobieski, and his book became a huge bestseller in print for almost 140 years.





The next Polish cookbook, Wojciech Wielądko's *Kucharz doskonały* (The Perfect Cook), published in Warsaw in 1783, was a reimagining of a popular French cookbook of that era. In subsequent releases, the author was describing more and more Polish dishes and products, often simple and practical, concerning e.g. making flower and herbal syrups, processed fruits, as well as health-enhancing tinctures and liqueurs aromatised with various fruits, spices and herbs, making Polish manufacturers famous to this day.

Paul Tremo, a German-born French cook of the last Polish king – Stanisław August Poniatowski – played a significant role in the history of Polish cuisine. The Frenchman was fascinated by local ingredients and the elements of a wild, natural cuisine, rich with produce from the forests and meadows. By using Polish produce and rounding their flavour by avoiding hot spices, following the example of popular cuisine, the royal master chef made recipes for venison dishes, several variations of the famous Polish broth, fish (especially pike), various poultry and forest mushroom dishes. This fusion of mild French flavours and local Polish produce can also be witnessed in the works of his apprentice, Jan Szyttler, the author of popular cookbooks from the first half of the 19th century. Although he began by imitating elegant French cuisine, he quickly – in line with the spirit of Romanticism – became inspired by peasant cuisine, using wild plants and simple local ingredients, and created

an interesting range of avant-garde, simple, local dishes, even introducing elements of modern vegetarianism.

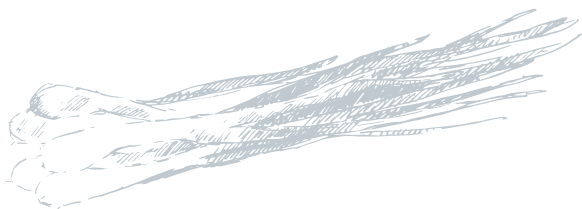
In the 19th century, various regional variations appeared in Polish cuisine, many of which exist to this day. The local cuisine of Podlasie (a region to the north-east of the country, known for its great natural primeval forest and bisons) specialized in, for example, cakes baked over a rotating spit (*sękacze*), smoked dry sausages or countless types of pierogi (a Polish dumpling similar to Italian ravioli). The cuisine of Wielkopolska (Greater Poland) and Pomorze (Pomerania), to the west of the country, is famous for goose meat, white poppy seed buns, gingerbread, fried cheese and lightly smoked plum jam, while the highlanders in the south of the country make genuine sheep's cheese and the region is famous for its delicious lamb. One could provide an almost infinite number of such examples.



Produce

Natural ingredients from the forests, meadows, rivers and lakes as well as organic farming and artisanal food production, are distinctive features of Polish cuisine. Poland is one of the largest producers and exporters of food in the European Union, and Polish products are gaining recognition among such demanding consumers like the French, Italians or Germans. Today, of course, the majority of food comes from highly developed agriculture, although the Poles are still great experts and enthusiasts of mushrooms, wild berries, venison, fish and wild herbs. An affinity towards nature and an appreciation of what is pristine means that preserves of wild fruits, flowers and forest mushrooms are made in Poland to this day. These historical, original recipes are imitated until now in very different versions, available to every consumer. The most famous Polish chefs, creating a very modern cuisine, are also inspired by this history and a call for a return to nature.

Wojciech Modest Amaro, the owner of the first Polish Michelin-starred restaurant, devoted his first cookbook to the “Polish Cuisine of the 21st century”. In it he writes about traditional dishes prepared in a modern way using the latest culinary techniques. His next book, awarded at the famous cookbook fair in Paris, published both in Polish and English, explains the “nature of Polish cuisine” and serves as a guide to herbs, flowers, forgotten vegetables and old varieties of fruits. A similarly fascinating journey was recently offered to us by the head of the association of Polish chefs, Jarosław Uściński, and his wife Grażyna, who present dishes based on wild plants and various lesser known – but slowly returning to grace – traditional vegetables to the readers of their latest book.



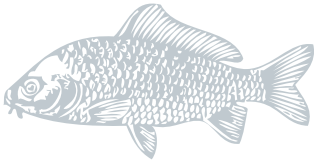


Traditional Polish fish

Due to the role of Lent and the diets of old, based on the theories of ancient Greek and Roman doctors and popularised in the Middle Ages by Arab scholars, fish played a significant role in old Polish cuisine, especially freshwater fish, bred widely in the ponds located beside manor houses. Carp is one of the symbols of Polish cuisine, today mostly an element of the traditional Polish dinner consumed on Christmas Eve. This meal, which unites the entire family around the table, is a product of history, as the Christmas Eve carp is often made the same way as in the recipe contained in the first Polish cookbook from the 17th century. In it, the author described a "boneless carp" – i.e. stuffed with raisins and hot spices from India and Indonesia, with Poles having been probably their greatest European enthusiasts throughout the centuries. Polish carp (today

included in the EU list of traditional products) can be prepared in dozens of ways, which gives one the impression of eating various kinds of meat. This allowed the strict rules of Lent to be bypassed in an interesting manner thanks to the culinary creativity and ingenuity of chefs. While eating carp, gourmets of the past had the impression of eating, for example, veal or beef – without breaking Lent. Therefore, carp could be prepared with cherries and hot spices (to this day cherries are a great Polish specialty and an important ingredient in both meat dishes and desserts), served with gingerbread sauce, spinach or marinated in vinegar

In Poland, pike was also a highly regarded large freshwater fish with delicate flesh, often made with sweet and spicy sauces, or with saffron, which gave it a beautiful golden

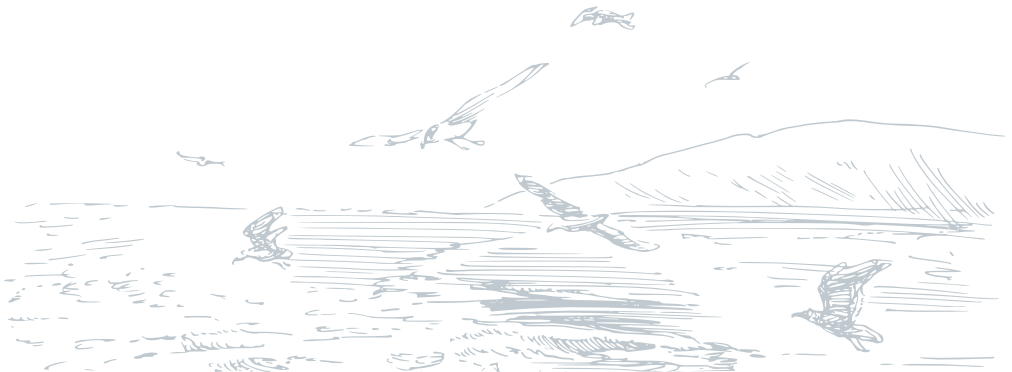


colour. Chefs were able to turn pike and other fish blue by macerating it with natural vinegar, while fish dressed with cherries or beetroot took an intense red colour. The quality of the product, its flavour and colour formed an extraordinarily aesthetic and gorgeous visual appeal, while the predilection for fish and refined aesthetics in terms of the appearance of dishes resemble the spirit of Japanese cuisine.

Sturgeon was another speciality of Polish cuisine, highly valued for its delicate flesh and caviar, similarly to wild salmon caught in the Baltic Sea, the Vistula River and other Polish rivers. Throughout the centuries, sturgeon has been brought to the verge of extinction in many countries. Today, it is bred in Poland and reintroduced to the natural environment: this time, our appetite for this wonderful fish is an ally of nature.

The author of the oldest Polish cookbook also praised wild salmon, which is different from the Norwegian farmed variety due to its original, less intense colour and above all – natural, remarkable taste. Along the Polish coast of the Baltic Sea, especially at the Vistula Spit in the vicinity of Gdansk, to this day one can enjoy not only salmon, but also eel, zander, turbot, flounder, cod and a variety of other fresh fish, combining recreation on the most beautiful sandy beaches of Europe with unique culinary experiences.

Game is present in Polish restaurants to this day, and the famous Polish sausages, hams and other meat preparations are produced not only from pork, such popular in Polish cuisine, but also from the meat of wild boars, fallow deer and red deer. The author of the first Polish cookbook admired poultry in particular, whose delicate and refined meat he regarded as the most suitable for a noble cuisine.



Polish goose – a German delicacy

Besides chicken prepared in various ways (in a stew with gooseberries that remains common to this day, along with great Polish specialities – mushrooms or apples), geese were also very popular. These fine birds were and still are suitable for traditional, large families and for various official occasions. In line with the rhythm of nature and the principle of the seasonality of food, they were mostly consumed in the autumn and at the beginning of winter, in particular around St. Martin's day (November 11 – today Poland's Independence Day, commemorating the events of 1918). Therefore, goose meat is popular on Polish tables even today, when in November it appears in the menus of restaurants across the country.

At the same time, the Polish goose is a popular and famous brand on the demanding German



market, where "Polnische Gans" means a high-quality, festive and unique product. In the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century, when the western and northern parts of Poland were part of Germany, goose meat from these lands was well-known and popular in many regions of Germany. After the borders changed, Germans did not want to abandon Polish goose meat and to this day remain its ardent enthusiasts together with the French. To Germans, "Polnische Gans" is almost like Bordeaux to the English, who – after losing the vineyards of Aquitaine in the 15th century – could not forget the taste of the wonderful wine, which they had already considered their own...





All (tasty) inventions grow out of necessity

In the history of cuisine, various constraints and difficulties contributed to the creation of numerous culinary inventions, finding unique flavours and gaining mastery in this area. This was the case with the Poles when it came to Lent and freshwater fish. The erstwhile long winters (today much shorter and milder) required techniques of preserving and storing food. Polish housewives, chefs and manufacturers became masters in pickling or preserving vegetables, especially cabbage and cucumbers, which to this day form the basis or addition to a wide variety of dishes. In the past, other vegetables and even fruits, were also pickled. Today we no longer have to pickle vegetables, although we still do so due to their flavour and health

benefits. Today, pickled food is one of the most fashionable culinary trends. Their nutritional value is praised by doctors and dieticians, while the famous Warsaw chef and artist, Aleksander Baron, was named "the man who can pickle everything".

Similarly, meat was preserved in autumn and often used to make smoked ham, pork sausages, marinated goose breasts or cold cuts of game meat. These delicacies had to survive winter until the spring, when they were consumed primarily during Easter. To this day, Poles associate festivities and celebrations with charcuterie, and the taste of smoked meats, the aroma of smoking, smoke and bonfires are associated with something extraordinary. That's why we eagerly smoke cheese or even plums (we even fry or dry them in smoke).

We simply came to love many dishes and customs that originated from the constraints and difficulties of the past because of their extraordinary flavour, uniqueness and originality.





How honey saved the Poles in Brazil

Honey is another famous Polish product. Centuries ago it was mainly taken from wild bees living in the forests, while today it is produced in beehives set up and maintained by beekeepers. Thanks to the richness of nature, forests and numerous, diverse crops, Poland produces the most unique honeys with a wonderful flavour and many medicinal properties. The most famous include honeys made from the flowers of linden, acacia, colza, heather and even maple, clover and goldenrod. Buckwheat honeys have a refined flavour. They are made from the buckwheat flowers – a plant used to produce buckwheat grouts that are popular in Poland. In turn, honeydew honey is made from liquids excreted by insects usually feeding on pine or fir needles.

Honey consumed alone, in the form of various beverages, added to dough (the famous gingerbread), mustards and as an additive to dishes, is probably best known in the history of Poland as mead: a low-alcoholic, refreshing or sweet beverage made by fermenting a mixture of honey and water, sometimes with the addition of various spices and juices (e.g. raspberry, apple, blueberry, cherry or dogwood juice). The first highly accurate recipe – ecstatically describing the taste and medicinal properties of this drink – was written in 1555 by the famous Swedish writer Olaus Magnus. According to this classic Swedish writer, mead prepared according to the Polish recipe “will turn out to be a most delicious, healthy drink, which will be able either to match true wine or in case of need if the vineyards have been destroyed, serve most conveniently in place of it; indeed, it will deservedly maintain its status among all the costliest liquors”.

Recently I was contacted by a Pole originating from Brazil, who told me about a small group of Polish immigrants who had been living in this country for generations. The memory of their origin and language was preserved thanks to several customs: folk costumes, dances, songs and meetings, during which Brazilian Poles would drink mead. Many years ago, the grandfather of my interlocutor prepared a large amount of this noble beverage. However, while the supplies were slowly running out, no one was able to read this old, historic recipe dating back more than a hundred years. The recipe was unique, precise and modern in terms of technique. At the same time, the taste of the beverage was very traditional, clearly gingery, formed from the contrast between the sweetness of honey and a mix of oriental spices, which Poles have loved for many centuries



(cinnamon, ginger, cloves and pepper). We managed to read the recipe and translate it into English, since Brazilian Poles no longer understood Polish: they remained Polish by maintaining the old Polish taste and recreating a cult Polish product. Their community was saved...

Today, the centuries-old art of saturating honey and preparing various wine-like beverages highly esteemed by gourmets is legally protected in Poland, and remains one of the most valuable elements of our culinary heritage. Polish meads feature on the list of protected items of the European Union, they are featured in the famous Slow Food list, the so-called Ark of Taste, which is committed to preserving and promoting the memory of the most famous, unique products, and lately have found themselves among slow food presidia (list of products manufactured by specific, top manufacturers).





The profit of apples

When it comes to other beverages, Poles are particularly famous for producing apple juice (we are one of the world's largest producers of apples and specialists in the field). Since they are naturally adapted to growing in our moderate climate zone, Polish apples stand out due to their particular, refreshing and slightly sour taste, while the juices made from them do not contain as much sugar as preparations made from crops located further south. Along with the processing development and cheapening of techniques formerly available mainly to large producers, it is possible for small producers, ordinary farmers and owners of small orchards to make natural, pressed juices. They often use this opportunity to create diverse palettes of flavours, often enriching the flavour of apples with natural juices from rose flowers, currants, gooseberries, and even unripened cereals, flowers and herbs.

Apples have been used for years in Poland to make apple pie, cider, a widely available beverage also considered to be healthy. Due to the difficulty of storing apple juice itself and preserving it, it had to be subjected to light fermentation, and this sour and slightly bitter beverage, often made from wild fruits, was found to be refreshing and effectively quenched thirst. It was also used to make apple cider vinegar, which gives an extraordinary aroma to various dishes, especially Polish game meat.



Polish coffee

It is also interesting that Poland is a major producer and exporter of coffee. Of course, it is not grown in Poland, but for historic reasons and due to the fact that Poles greatly enjoy this beverage, imported coffee is roasted in Poland and made into various blends. Poles got to taste coffee a little earlier than did the inhabitants of western European countries. By modern times, this drink had become an important part of the culture and customs of the Muslim world, and Poles – by being in the immediate vicinity of the former Turkish empire, as well as numerous trade, cultural and military interactions with the Turks – quickly came to know the taste of this speciality, so prized in Turkey.

Polish merchants, soldiers and diplomats were often received by Turkish hosts with coffee, sweets, sorbets and fruits from southern countries, which always made a lasting impression among the Poles. The adoption of coffee, as well as a passion for eastern sweets, halva, dried fruits and nuts were a part of a much broader fascination with the culture of the Muslim East, especially in the area of fashion, internal decoration, weapons and riding equipment.

In 1769, a small treatise on how Turks prepare coffee was published in Poland, proving a great insight into Muslim traditions in this area, which were then enthusiastically repeated in many aristocratic manors and burgher houses. King Jan III Sobieski advised his beloved wife to add fresh milk or cream to coffee,



contrary to what was prevalent in Turkey. In Poland, as in other European countries, large amounts of sugar were also added to coffee.

Adam Mickiewicz, a famous Polish poet, wrote in the 19th century that no coffee in the entire world can match the variety found in Poland, and every larger Polish house employs a *kawiarka* (today's barista) – a specialist in roasting and making coffee. The descriptions of Polish manor houses starting from the 18th century contain entire lists of specially designed stoves and closed coffee roasting pans, and this tradition has probably contributed to the modern development of Polish coffee roasting. Mr Kordian Tarasiewicz, who recently passed away, having surpassed 100 years of age, organised Polish coffee plantations in Africa before World War II, but was then thwarted by its outbreak.



King Jan III Sobieski and a love for sweets

The repeatedly mentioned King Jan III Sobieski, the builder of the Wilanów Palace (in Warsaw) and a hero of the wars with the Turks, from whom he so willingly borrowed various customs and treats, was also a great enthusiast of chocolate. Outside of Spain, chocolate was a great novelty in 17th-century Europe and it was mainly consumed in the form of a beverage. Sobieski wanted to taste this new sweet so much that he ordered a special chocolate pot to be seized from his French courtier and made him tell the secret of preparing this beverage. Today, Poland is also famous for chocolate. It is poured over gingerbreads. Polish hazelnuts are added to it, and it also coats Polish fruits...

This passion for sweets, processed fruits and cakes has been documented in detail in Polish history since a special and ample 17th-century treatise was written on the matter at the court of the Radziwiłł dukes, one of the most famous Polish aristocratic

families. It described the famous Polish *babkas*, made famous in France and subsequently in Europe by Stanisław Leszczyński's pastry chefs, preparations from apples, currants and gooseberries, pears, apricots, raspberries, plums and various other fruits, which still remain our speciality. Difficulties in storing and preserving fruits and the high price of sugar meant that fruits were often dried. Although this is no longer a necessity, the unique flavour of dried fruits and the health benefits of such natural sweets still make them very popular – e.g. dried plums or pears, cranberries, cherries, apricots, etc.





Openness

Many times have we have emphasized the astonishing feature of Polish cuisine to skilfully connect what is national and original with foreign inspirations. Poles have appreciated the flavour of hot Asian spices, especially pepper, ginger, saffron, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, and mace, brought to Gdansk by the Dutch, for much longer than gourmets from other European countries. Since the Middle Ages they were combined with sweet (sugar, honey, fruits fried in sugar) and sour ingredients (lemon, vinegar, sour wine). These distinct fusions, typical for the entire Europe in the Middle Ages, were particularly appreciated in Poland.

Polish products and dishes were valued the most by our neighbours, because they knew them the best, and began to describe them in their cookbooks

very early on. The “Polish pike” made the greatest career – already known from a handwritten Czech cookbook from the 15th century, and praised by the Germans in the 16th century, and later on by the Italians. At the end of the 17th century, the *Compendium ferculorum albo zebrania potraw*, the oldest Polish cookbook, was even translated into Russian. The handwritten text, preserved to this day, could actually be considered... the oldest Russian cookbook!

The Poles and Russians waged many wars in the 17th century, but good food brought people together even back then. The famous Polish diarist and soldier of the 17th century, Jan Chryzostom Pasek, initially did not want to participate in a dinner party organised by a Russian deputy, although he was extremely satisfied with Russian delicacies (made with Polish products). There was something about the flavour and its superiority that he defended as vigorously as Polish independence: the famous Polish vodka, and there was not a thing in the world that would make him appreciate the Russian version.





Polish cuisine conquers France



The history of Polish cuisine's popularity in Europe is best described by the example of France. In the middle of the 17th century, classic French cuisine was born and was based on the delicate and natural flavour of dishes, the principle of uniformity of taste and its concentration, emphasis, extracting its essence, as well as several fundamental culinary techniques. This new benchmark quickly found its way to Poland together with the court of French-born Queen Marie Louise Gonzaga, who came to Warsaw in 1647. The popularity of French cuisine since that time is well-known throughout Europe as well as worldwide. However, the most interesting thing in all of this is the fact that such inspirations and influences were something mutual. Pierre La Varenne, already considered the originator of groundbreaking changes in 17th century French cuisine, described Polish-style eggs in one of his cookbooks. In the first half of the 18th century, a truly significant trend for Polish cuisine developed in France. The best French chefs, authors of great culinary bestsellers, wrote not only about the widely-known "Polish pike", but also about the Cracow chicken (stuffed with eggs, herbs, and mushrooms), Polish broth, Polish turkey, Polish tripe, beef tongue, crayfish, and many other dishes. This popularity was related to the fact that the Polish Princess, Marie Leszczyńska, was the wife of the French King Louis XV, and her father, the banished Polish King Stanisław Leszczyński, became the Duke of Lorraine, although the trend for various Polish dishes had begun earlier, and lasted much longer. In the 19th century, when the fashion for French cuisine eventually conquered Europe, all wealthy gourmets would try to recruit French chefs. Many of them also visited Poland, and the story of two of them, Émile Bernard and Urbain Dubois,

is particularly interesting. In 1856, they published *Cuisine classique* in Paris, one of the most famous French cookbooks – in fact, the bible of French cooks. In their youth these chefs, who would eventually become famous, worked for General Wincenty Krasieński, formerly the commander of the famous regiment of Napoleon's imperial guard. Although, in addition to classic French cuisine, they described elements of the cuisine of various countries, Polish dishes, cuisine from their youth, occupies a special place in the book. With remarkable connoisseurship they described the most famous and popular dishes from Polish cuisine – e.g. pickled beetroot borscht (today often made with fresh beetroot). The recipes written by French masters are more accurate than the ones noted by the Polish chefs of that time, and the dishes themselves, although slightly changed in the French spirit and combined with the influences of various countries, retained their eminently Polish character. They also devoted a lot of space to cold borscht, a soup served in hot weather, and prepared with beetroot greens, dill, cucumbers, and chives – a true vitamin bomb. French authors in general loved the nutritious Polish soups, which to this day have a very significant place in Polish cuisine, and described the cabbage soup (made from sauerkraut), and the famous aromatic *krupnik* – a soup made from meat broth and barley groats. Famous chefs recognized the traditional Polish carp served with ginger sauce (cakes baked in honey with hot spices, for which Torun, the city of Nicolaus Copernicus, is still famous today) a classic of world cuisine, stressing that in Poland the dish is served during Christmas Eve. They were also ecstatic about Polish mushrooms, describing boletus in sour cream, and saffron milk caps with breadcrumbs.



Amazing gingerbread

Cuisine is something mysterious, something both simple and understandable to all, as well as something that is difficult to define. It's not only about products, more or less imaginative, national or international dishes, but, above all, about taste: the one of a kind feeling, the only feature specific to food. Ever since the time of Alexander the Great and the contact between the European civilisation with Persia and India, refined, elegant flavour for Europeans was associated with the strong taste of exotic spices, especially pepper, ginger, saffron, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves. This flavour was dominant in Europe in Roman times, then in the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance. The French considered it old-fashioned and outright hostile due to competition with the Dutch, who monopolized the trade of many of these highly desired spices, and were making huge profits from it.

Although the Poles got to know the canon of delicate French flavours very early after its inception in the mid-17th century, for a long time they had admired the full-bodied, strong flavours and aromas of eastern spices, which they enthusiastically combined with sweet and sour dishes. The famous Torun gingerbread is a remnant of this passion for flavour fantasies and contrasts. We mentioned

its application as a base for making the sauce served with carp – to this day a symbol of Christmas Eve, the most traditional and family Polish meal of the entire year.

The oldest recipe for gingerbread sauce has been handed down from the 15th century, and was written in German by the chefs of the Teutonic Order, who ruled the lands on the Baltic (today partly in Poland and Russia). The famous chef Bogdan Gałązka is reviving these historic recipes with a modern twist in the Medieval Teutonic castle in Malbork, the former capital of that state, and today one of the largest Polish tourist attractions (the largest Medieval castle in Europe!). Like his predecessors from over five hundred years ago, he can make the wonderful Polish green chicken (with parsley) and the black version (with roasted sesame seeds). He can make pesto from parsley, and not only from basil (once hardly available in the north of Europe), and even prepare a unique sauce from young green rye with the taste of fresh unripe fruits, or even kiwis that are so popular today.

This old, archaic and forgotten flavour of something that is at the same time sweet and hot, historically associated with a fascination with Asia and the Orient, which seemed like a mythical paradise to Europeans, has returned today as something fresh, a comeback to history, and at the same time an unusual, modern culinary experiment. Karol Okrasa, a famous Polish chef, best known from the popular TV programme about "breaking" traditional rules, combines the sweet and spicy taste of gingerbread with Polish game and fish, but also adds gingerbreads or gingerbread spices and sweets to vegetables.



Just the flavour

Flavour is something entirely obvious when it comes to food, yet also elusive, individual, and transient. Despite that, the history of flavours and the tastes of our ancestors are still somehow present in our reality, on our plates, and on our tongues. To this day, the Poles like well-seasoned dishes, and hot Asian spices are commonly used as ingredients for hot winter drinks, especially mulled beer, wine, or mead.

Poles also admire sweetness and once again it is honey that has traditionally been regarded as the greatest, most original and natural – used in the past and today to make pastry products, vinegars, spirits and liqueurs, and finally the famous Polish, and formerly Slavic, mead. The Poles have become the true masters in making mead, a unique beverage produced since time immemorial, offering the world a unique beverage similar to wine, but with a completely different, more or less dry – or sweet, depending on the proportions of honey and water – taste of natural honey.

The famous Polish meads, which have been entered into the lists of legally protected traditional produce of the European Union, are today manufactured in many flavours, similarly to the already mentioned liqueurs, tinctures, and spirits (among which clear vodka or *żubrówka* with bison grass are the most famous in the world) that feature countless flavours.

The penchant for sourness inherited from our ancestors is present in Polish cuisine not only in the form of the aforementioned pickled vegetables, but also as the so-called white borscht, a sour fermentation from grains which constitutes the basis for the typically Polish sour rye soup. For centuries, it was a humble, light,



Lenten soup served at most with bread or bits of dried or salted fish, but today we generally know its festive version with the famous Polish white sausage, egg, and other ingredients. Such sour rye soup, with a strong, pleasant, and sourish flavour, almost constitutes a meal in itself, and in Poland it is most commonly associated with Easter, when spicy horseradish is added to the sour soup. Horseradish, a traditional condiment, often produced from the roots of wild plants, is considered to be the best complement for white sausage, also a distinctive element of Easter meals.

"White", or rather "grey", sausage means that it has been prepared from fresh meat and – as opposed to smoked sausages – has to be consumed quickly. Alternatively, it can be cooked, and then kept a little longer.

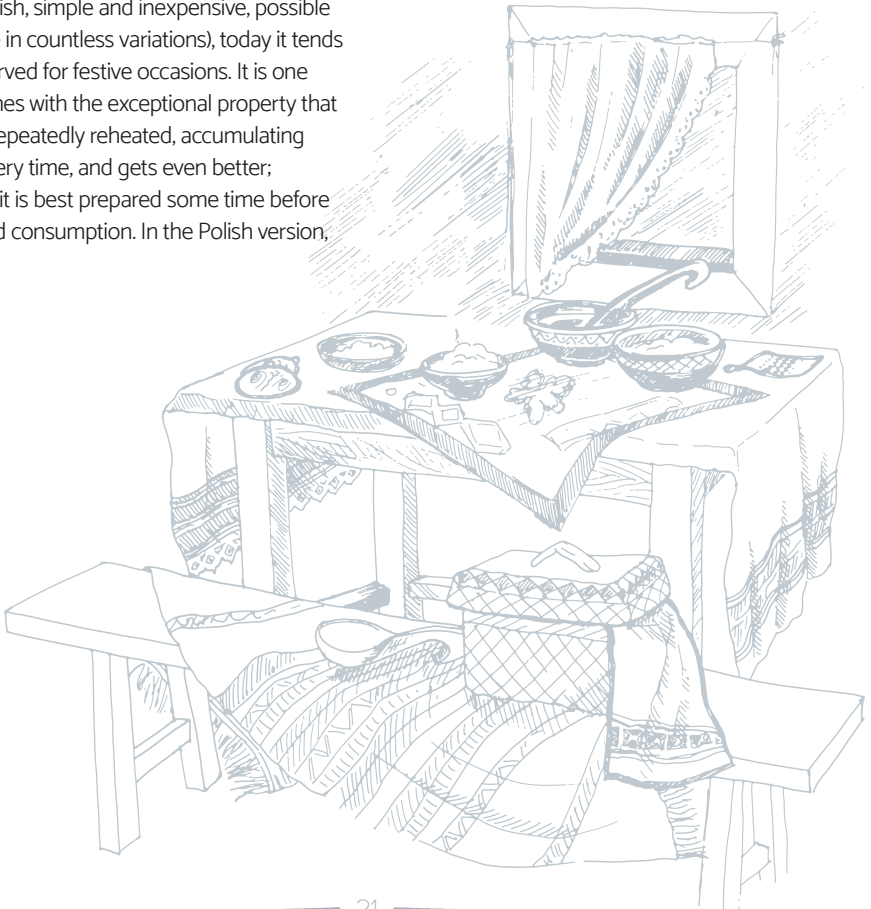




The history of Polish bigos

The famous Polish *bigos* (hunter's stew) is also a sour dish made from sauerkraut and white cabbage with a variety of meats, mushrooms, dried fruit, wine, and an assortment of other ingredients. Today it is a dish known throughout Poland, very popular and appreciated, and associated with family meetings, celebrations, and joy. This Polish national dish is somewhat similar to the French (Alsatian) *Choucroute garnie* (dressed sauerkraut), or the German Sauerkraut served with pork or charcuterie. The Poles are correct in thinking that the only real *bigos* comes from Poland, and though the origins of this unusual dish are similar in France and Germany (one pot dish, simple and inexpensive, possible to prepare in countless variations), today it tends to be reserved for festive occasions. It is one of few dishes with the exceptional property that it can be repeatedly reheated, accumulating flavour every time, and gets even better; therefore, it is best prepared some time before its planned consumption. In the Polish version,

it is not simply sauerkraut with pork and sausage, but a careful combination of many different ingredients. We use various meats – in addition to the most popular pork, *bigos* can also include beef, veal, and a wide variety of sausages, hams, and charcuterie, allowing the dish gain the aroma and after-taste of smoke and fire. In the Polish tradition, *bigos* is sometimes referred to as "hunter's stew", as this one pot dish was the perfect hunter's meal, easily transported, heated, and nourishing "meal consumed by the hunters of yesteryear.





The history of *bigos* is well-known to every Pole and is just as remarkable as the dish itself. In a nutshell, it tells us almost the entire history of cuisine (not only Polish). Centuries ago, the Polish *bigos* was prepared from chopped meat or fish, seasoned with wine vinegar, sour wine, lemons, or juice from unripened grapes. It was a dish known in many countries across Europe, a kind of hash seasoned according to Medieval and Renaissance fashion – with sour, spicy, or sweet additives. It was a meal of the rich. It required large amounts of meat (or fresh fish during Lent) seasoned with huge amounts of expensive, exotic spices. It was considered extremely sophisticated and elegant, especially in the north and east of Europe, where – far away from the Mediterranean Sea – wine vinegar, lemons, or juice from sour, unripe grapes (French *verjus*), as well as hot Eastern spices could cost a fortune, and were much more expensive than the meat itself. However, cuisine is an exchange, continuous inspiration, and evolution involving space, time, and people from different social groups. Eating is a certain social fashion, a way of differentiating ourselves, imitating those whom we want to match. The poorer followers of culinary trends were not always able to afford to copy the habits of the elites accurately: and this imitation resulted in the contemporary Polish *bigos*.



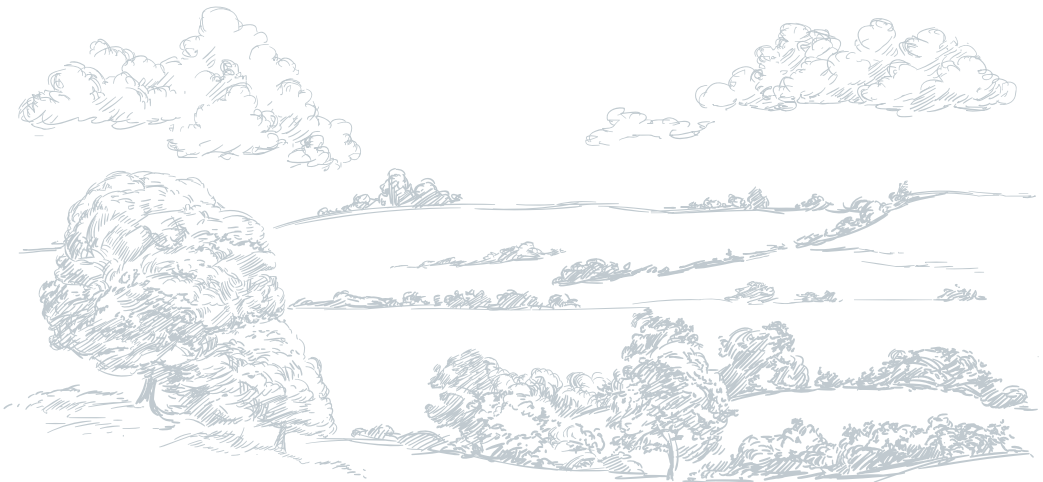


Less wealthy cooks who tried to reproduce this delicacy replaced the exotic ingredients with sauerkraut or pickled cucumbers or sour apples. In the second half of the 18th century this new *bigos* was named "*bigos with cabbage*", which sounds extremely weird in contemporary Polish, as every Pole knows that *bigos* is made with cabbage – its main ingredient. The new dish contained less meat than its historic predecessor, and it could be made in many different ways. Following the 19th century interest in simpler, local cuisine, especially in the era of Romanticism and among the slogans about returning to nature and tradition, this version of *bigos* became the national dish, commonly recognised as a symbol not only of Polish cuisine, but of Poland in general.

The most important issue regarding the new *bigos*, or at least a fundamental one, is the quality of the cabbage. It should be well-fermented, sour, yet retain a crispy, aromatic, and fresh texture at the same time. Over the centuries, fermenting cabbage, one of the most popular Polish vegetables, has become a true art and

ritual. Carrots, apples, cranberries or blueberries were added to enhance its flavour, together with a seasoning of juniper, pepper, allspice, cumin, fennel, anise, or cloves. As a result, in Poland we have a virtually infinite number of sauerkraut variations, and the *bigos* cooked with it is a true culinary universe. Over the centuries, cabbage was fermented whole in barrels, or in the form of cabbage heads sliced in half. To cook *bigos*, it first had to be shredded. Today sauerkraut is usually shredded beforehand, which saves us work in the kitchen.

History is a constant cycle of forgetfulness and remembrance, and today sauerkraut heads are making a return, which allows us to prepare yet another Polish speciality – so-called *gotąbki* (cabbage rolls), a stuffing of groats, rice, and meat rolled in cabbage leaves (fresh or pickled), which give this Polish national dish a unique flavour.





Yearning

Poles were and still are very attached to their cuisine, which they know like no one else in the world, and remain perfectly aware of its quality and great taste. For centuries, foreign journeys and departures from the homeland have been associated with culinary yearnings and the import of Polish products to various countries. The Polish princess Theresa Kunegunda, daughter of King Jan III Sobieski, who married the German prince Maximilian II Emanuel in 1695, could well be the patron of Polish expatriates, who long for the natural taste of their childhood.

Missing their daughter, her parents sent her the various delicacies that she missed the most. The consignments contained dried mushrooms, salted saffron milk caps, various kinds of groats, smoked carps, dumplings, and fresh butter. Together with these specialities, a Polish chef was also sent to Brussels "to cook all these and prepare Polish dishes". Today, we are sending our readers the best chefs in our book, in the hope that they share their experiences and knowledge, encourage you to discover Poland through its cuisine, to try Polish recipes, and to prepare some of the following dishes using the most popular produce available in many parts of the world.





WIELKOPOLSKA FRIED CHEESE



Wielkopolska fried cheese is derived from quark. The whole process, from the obtaining of milk to the finished product should not take more than six or seven days. The milk is first skimmed, then heated up and cooled down, and later, a starter culture from pasteurised milk and a strain of lactic streptococci is added. The culture causes the milk to sour and curd. After the milk is lightly heated up again and the curds separate themselves from the whey, the latter is drained off, and the remaining quark is drained from excess water. The cheese is then crumbled and left to ripen. It is the ripening process precisely, which lasts from two to three days, that lends the product its characteristic taste and aroma. The ripened cheese is mixed with butter and fried, with the addition of salt and, optionally, caraway.

Wielkopolska fried cheese has been known for centuries in western and central Greater Poland. It was the Dutch or Germans settlers who came to us who started the production process, one can assume. 19th century cook-books and handbooks feature numerous recipes for fried cheese, which is a testament to the cost-effectiveness of cooks in the past. Women would use remaining quark to produce this delicacy, frying it with butter, and adding eggs and spices (or not). Wielkopolska fried cheese, produced at a larger scale, also draws on this domestic tradition.

Wielkopolska fried cheese was registered by the EU as a Protected Geographical Indication on 21 April 2009.



GRÓJEC APPLES



The term “jabłka grójeckie” (Grójec apples) refers to 27 apple varieties (and derived varieties) originating from the so-called Grójec region. However, only ‘extra’ class and class I apples, if they meet the minimum requirements for colouring, size and firmness of flesh may be sold under that name, whereas the values for each of these parameters are determined individually for each variety. All Grójec apples have a specific level of acidity, on average 5% higher than in apples of the varieties concerned but from different regions. Another distinctive feature of Grójec apples is the strong blush resulting from the higher content of pigments (mainly anthocyanins and carotenoids) under the skin, again at an average of 5% higher.

Grójec apples owe their qualities to the climate and soil conditions in their production area. These areas form part of the Central Mazovian Lowlands and the Southern Mazovian Lowlands, a region with a particular microclimate distinguished by low nighttime temperatures during the pre-harvest period. Obviously, this does have an impact on the special and distinctive taste of the apples. Podsolic and pseudopodsolic soils typical for the vicinity of Grójec are also ideal for apple tree cultivation.





Another aspect is the special cultivation method. Each potential orchard site is investigated beforehand, also for the quality of soils, and adequately prepared (with green fertilisers or manure only) if there are any deficiencies. The trees are trimmed and thinned right at the start of the vegetation period, so that the desired crown shape for each variety is achieved, and branches are trimmed in a way that lets the sunrays reach every apple. One could say each plant is monitored on an individual basis, and if there are any mineral deficits, or the tree blossoms or develops fruit poorly, a relevant foliar product is used. However, this is done under special supervision, just like the elimination of diseases, weeds, and pests. Chemicals are used as an absolute last resort, and only when mechanical techniques turn out to be of little use. Still, in such cases the farmers use products that are the least cumbersome for the natural environment, and aimed at the specific pest.

Fruit farming at such high level has been developing around Grójec for centuries. It was not without reason that the area was referred to as the “biggest orchard in Europe”. Queen Bona, who received a large tract of land in this part of the country in the 16th century and decided to use it for a royal fruit plantation, consisting especially of apple trees, can be said to be the foundress of the apple-growing tradition around Grójec. Her son, King Sigismund II Augustus, approved of this with relevant decrees, and so apples from the Grójec area would feature at the royal table for the centuries to come.

Roch Wójcicki of Belsk, Niedźwiedzki (first name unknown) of Łęczeszyce, Stefan Roguski of Goszczyn, and Edward Kawiński of Konary, all members of the clergy, also substantially contributed to the development of fruit farming in the 19th century. Their clergy orchards saw the promotion of modern apple tree cultivation and apple storage methods, later beautifully elaborated on by Jan Cieślak of Podgórzycze at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1918, Cieślak built the first fruit warehouse in Poland.

Another step forward was made after World War II by the father of modern fruit farming, professor Szczepan Pieniżek. It was on his initiative that the Institute of Pomology and Floriculture was founded, developing knowledge on the optimal and sustainable cultivation of fruit trees. Elżbieta Gajewska, a student of his, founded the Experimental Station of the Institute of Pomology and Floriculture at Nowa Wieś, where he ran a model farm constituting an invaluable source of knowledge for Grójec farmers with respect to the newest apple tree cultivation methods.

Although the coat of arms of Grójec is composed of three crenelated bastilles, it could just as well feature a blossoming apple tree branch. That is how important fruit farming is for the inhabitants of this region. The end of May has for many years been a time of celebrations, with the Feast of the Blooming Apple Trees being an opportunity to buy seedlings of the tastiest varieties. On 5 October 2011, “jabłka grójeckie” were registered by the EU as a Protected Geographical Indication, covering 27 varieties and derivative varieties, including Gala, Gloster, Idared, Lobo, Ligol, cultivated within a strictly delineated area: 21 municipalities in the Mazowieckie Province, and 5 municipalities in the Łódzkie Province. Błędów, Belsk Duży, Grójec, and Warka are the municipalities with the largest crop concentration, reaching 70%. Apple producers are obliged to observe the integrated production (IP) method or the GLOBALGAP specifications, which is a safety system for food in agriculture from site preparation to packaging and labelling.



ŁĄCKO APPLES



The term “jabłka łąckie” (Łącko apples) is reserved for a group of specific varieties grown in the Łącko Basin. These fruits are rather highly acidic, with a so-called “green mountain-ous note”, and are incredibly juicy and fragrant. The firmness of flesh is also high, and the blush is greater and more distinct compared to apples of the variety concerned from other regions. Furthermore, as the fruit-growers say, these apples do not “rust” – peeled, they do not turn brown.

The uniquely strong taste and aroma of the Łącko apples as well as their beautiful colouring is attributable to the microclimate in the Łącko Basin (i.e., the large temperature fluctuations between daytime and nighttime), the soils which allow the trees to take root better, and the slope of the land at around 15° causing excess waters to drain easier and having a positive impact on annual temperature distribution. It is therefore no surprise that the fruit-farming tradition in the Łącko Basin dates back several centuries. Historical records of as early as the 12th century show that dried apples from this region were floated down the Dunajec river, then the Vistula, up to Gdańsk, from where they would reach the tables of the wealthy all across Europe. The local legend says that the development of fruit-farming in the region is attributable to two clergymen. One required the prospective bride and groom to promise in their marriage notice that they would plant at least ten new fruit lines. The other told his parishioners to plant one apple tree in atonement for each mortal sin after confession, instead of reciting Hail Marys. It looks like there were sinners aplenty, as each year, there are several hundred thousand fruit trees blossoming in the Łącko region, mostly apple and plum trees (with another specialty of the region, “śliwowica łącka” – Łącko plum brandy – derived from the latter).

The name “jabłka łąckie” was registered as a Protected Geographical Indication on 5 November 2010. From that moment on, only apples of the Idared, Jonagold, Champion, Ligol, Golden Delicious, Gala, Boskoop, Red Boskoop, Elise, Early Geneva, Topaz, Lobo, Rubin, Gloster, and Jonagored varieties may be sold under that name, provided they belong to the ‘extra’ class or class I, have the required acidity and firmness, and have been grown within the Łącko, Podegrodzie, or Stary Sącz municipalities in the Nowy Sącz county, or the Łukowica municipality in the Limanowa county, all in the Małopolskie Province.





VISTULA CHERRY



“Wiśnia nadwiślanka” is a local variety of the sokówka cherry (juice cherry) commonly found along the river Vistula from Ożarów to Lipsk. The fruits of the Vistula cherry are significantly smaller than those of cultivars, and have a more intensive colour, ranging from dark red to burgundy – the same colour as the juice derived from them. They also have an intense, slightly tart and highly acidic taste. The Vistula cherry is the perfect fruit for all kinds of preserves, being much more aromatic and richer in flavour than other popular varieties of cherries. For comparison, Vistula cherry harvests begin when the extract reaches 16 on the Brix scale, with 14 being the level for other varieties. The Vistula cherry is harvested, manually or mechanically, between 5 July and 5 August. The stalks are taken off, and a little bit of juice oozes out from the fruit, turning into jelly, which is also a characteristic feature of the “nadwiślanka”.

The Vistula cherry is also known as “słupska”, “słupianka”, or “słupiec”, the names being derived from the village of Słupia Nadbrzeżna where the cherry trees were first grown in the beginning of the 20th century. The tradition of growing these peculiar cherries is around 120 years old. Today’s popularity of this fruit is attributable to the work of Teofil Zajęc, of Słupia Nadbrzeżna precisely, who was the first to plant a larger number of Vistula cherry trees, having bought them from Leszczyński, a landowner (the former estate of Leszczyńskis is covered with cherry orchards up until this day). This has been confirmed by Czesław Mikołajek of Nowe in the Ożarów municipality. He recalls that in 1925, the old Zajęc, who was enchanted by the properties of his cherry fruits, convinced Jan Krupa, headmaster at a school in Słupia Nadbrzeżna, to help him plant cherry trees along the road to Tadeuszów, and to send his students to work. Mr Mikołajek was, back then, one the young men participating in this initiative. The rapid developments in the cultivation of the Vistula cherry came in the Interwar period, when merchants would buy it on the spot. The growing cultivation area caused producers to look for new distribution channels. The waterway turned out to be one of them, with ships on the Warszawa-Sandomierz route taking the cherries regularly to the capital city.

Since 16 December 2009 “wiśnia nadwiślanka” has been a Protected Designation of Origin. This means that only the producers operating strictly within the Mazowieckie Province (Lipsko, Siemno, Solec nad Wisłą municipalities), Świętokrzyskie Province (Ożarów and Tarłów municipalities) and Lubelskie Province (Annopol municipality in the Kraśnik county) may produce Vistula cherries. Only the fruit of the suckering sokówka cherry trees may be sold under the protected name. Vistula cherries intended for consumption must be harvested by hand. Regardless of their intended use, the fruits must be packed into suitable packaging directly at the place of harvesting to ensure appropriate product quality and supervision of origin.







APPETIZER

Salmon fillet marinated in fruits of the forest, grilled and served on a layer cake of pumpernickel and cottage cheese with herbs, mixed greens, strawberries, vinaigrette, mustard seeds and honey

- 400 g salmon fillet – 4 pieces of 100 g each, skinned and boned.
- 300 g red fruit of the forest – possibly frozen
- 50 g clarified butter
- Oil for salad dressing – 80 ml
- 200 g pumpernickel or brown bread
- 200 g of cottage cheese or, alternatively, thick yoghurt
- Several fresh strawberries or raspberries
- Fresh thyme to season the cottage cheese
- Garlic – 1 clove
- Lamb's lettuce or other small leaves – mustard greens work well – 4 x 10 leaves
- Mustard seeds or coarse-grain mustard - 1 tablespoon
- Honey – 1 tablespoon
- Apple cider vinegar or white wine vinegar – 2 tablespoons
- Water for salad dressing – 3 tablespoons
- Salt and black pepper – to taste

Marinate the salmon fillets with salt and pepper in the fruits of the forest for 2-3 hours. From time to time, turn the fish over and rub the fruit and juice into the flesh. Place the pieces of fish slightly rubbed with clarified butter or oil on a hot grill. Cook it gently on both sides. It is a good idea to grill the fish in baking paper – then, it will be easier for the inexperienced to turn the fish over without damaging it. It is also important not to overcook the fish. The fish should be ready after grilling for 2-3 minutes on each side. To be sure, after removing from the heat, wrap the pieces of fish in aluminum foil – this will ensure that they are cooked through.

Put the juice along with the left-over pieces of fruit from the marinade into a frying pan in which a chopped clove of garlic has been fried briefly, in butter or oil. Cook down for about 3 minutes until the sauce thickens. Add vinegar, water, honey and after it has cooled down, throw in the mustard seeds or mustard. Then, stirring vigorously, pour in the oil in a thin trickle. The salad dressing is ready. Season it with salt and pepper only, remembering that some ingredients have already been seasoned.

Season the cottage cheese with just a little salt, pepper and thyme. Cut the pumpernickel or brown bread into thin slices in more or less the same shape as the grilled salmon. Each serving is composed of 2 slices of bread spread with cottage cheese, covered with green leaves and topped with salmon. Pour the diced strawberries over the dish and gently sprinkle with salad dressing.



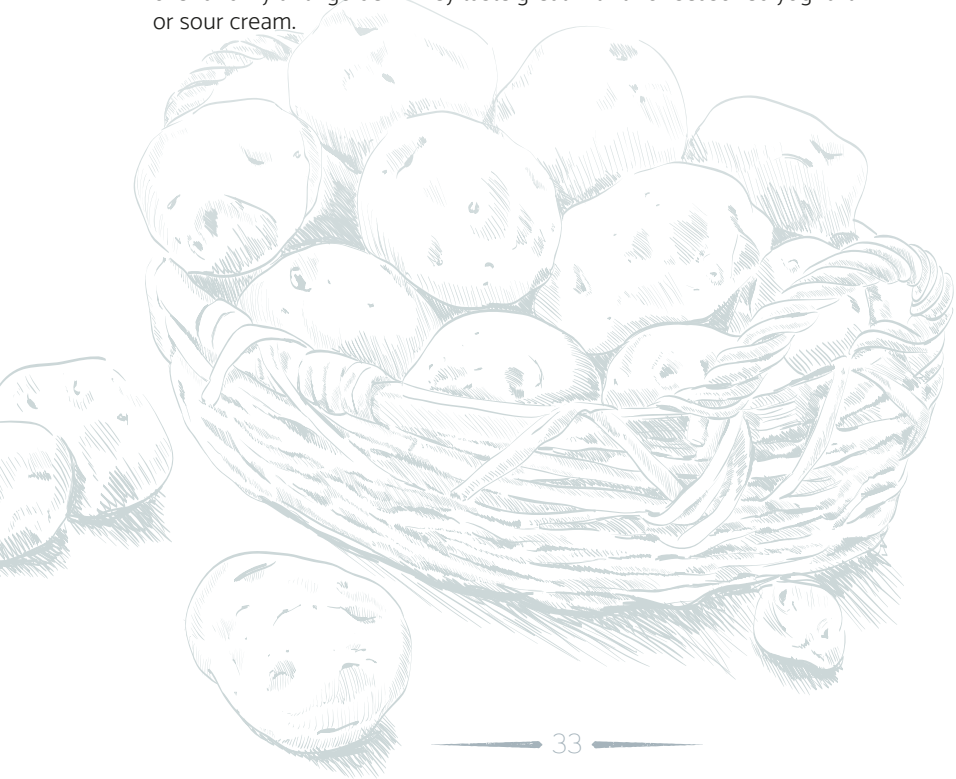


WARM APPETIZER

Potato pancakes – with dill and mushrooms – a simple yet very Polish flavour

- 500 g potatoes
- 150 g mushrooms, fresh or frozen – may be chanterelles or oyster mushrooms
- 1 bunch of aromatic dill
- 2 medium onions
- 100 g wheat flour
- 200 g raw smoked bacon slices (optional)
- 6 eggs
- Oil for frying (preferably lard)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Thick plain yoghurt or sour cream – to serve with the pancakes

Wash and dice the mushrooms. Fry the mushrooms with the diced onion in oil for about 7 minutes. Finely grate the potatoes. Chop the dill. Mix the grated potatoes with flour, mushrooms, seasoning, dill and eggs. If the mixture is too thin, add a little flour. Fry the pancakes in a mixture of oil and lard. The best method is to place the slices of smoked bacon into the frying pan and place the potato mix on top of them. After about 2 minutes, turn over and fry until golden. They taste great with thick seasoned yoghurt or sour cream.







MAIN COURSE

Veal roulade with sweet stuffing made of apricots, poultry liver and thyme

- Boned veal leg – 1.3 kg
- Poultry liver - 200 g
- Chicken drumsticks – 200 g
- Brown bread – 50 g
- Parsley leaves – 2 bunches
- Milk – 100 ml
- Dried apricots – 80 g
- Onion – 100 g
- Vegetable broth – 300 ml
- 2 sour apples

Salad:

- Iceberg lettuce – 1 pc
- Fresh cucumber – 150 g
- Radishes – 1 bunch
- Leaves of fresh herbs: basil, lovage, thyme

Dressing:

- Thick plain yoghurt – 100 g
- Juice from 1 lemon
- Salt, pepper, sugar – to taste

Cut the veal leg into slices, gently flatten out with a meat tenderiser and stuff.

Stuffing:

Place the chopped onions, poultry livers, chicken drumsticks and several chunks of apple into a saucepan with olive oil. Fry intensely until golden brown. Soak the bread in milk, squeeze and add to the mixture. Add the chopped parsley leaves, thyme and dried apricots, soaked previously in boiling water. Chop everything finely and put the half of the mixture into a food processor and blend.

Rub the stuffing onto the meat and roll up. Tie or fasten them so that they do not unroll. Slightly sprinkle the roulades with wheat flour and fry until golden. Then, place them into a saucepan or an ovenproof dish and pour into it some light vegetable broth slightly covering the roll ups with it. Season with pepper, bay leaves and stew covered for about 1 hour (until tender). Finally, add some salt.

Wash the iceberg lettuce and cut into wedges so that the pieces do not fall apart and are attached to the stalk. Cut the cucumber and radishes into fine slices and along with herbs layer the iceberg lettuce leaves with them. Next, sprinkle with salad dressing and serve. Remember to use the juices from cooking the meat as a gravy.







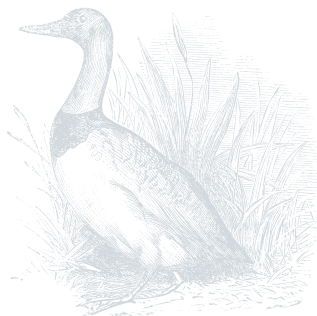
MAIN COURSE

Duck legs braised in balsamic sauce, served on an orange potato puree with spicy peach broccoli

- Duck legs – 4 pcs
- Wine vinegar – 3 tablespoons
- Onion – 150 g
- Fresh thyme – a few sprigs
- Honey – 20 g
- Dry red wine – 250 g
- Water – 200 ml
- Bay leaves – 3 pcs
- Cloves – 5 pcs
- Broccoli – 1 pc
- Canned peach halves – 50 g
- Butter – 30 g
- Olive oil – 30 g
- Garlic – 2 cloves
- Red chillies – to taste
- Potatoes – 300 g
- Orange juice – 100 g
- Butter – 30 g
- Plain yoghurt – 50 g

Fry the duck legs on oil together with the diced onions. Add the bay leaves, a few black peppercorns, cloves and after around 5 minutes pour in the wine and 200 ml of water. Cover and braise until tender for about 1.5 hours. 15 minutes before the end, add the balsamic vinegar and honey.

Skim the fat from the surface of the sauce and the sauce is almost ready. If there is not enough liquid, take out the duck legs and add a little water. Bring to boil and blend. Cook the potatoes like for classic mashed potatoes, remembering to let the steam evaporate properly. Cook the orange juice on low heat until about 70% of the liquid has evaporated. Mix the potato puree with the juice and yoghurt. Wash the broccoli and cut off single florets but not too small. In a frying pan, heat the butter with olive oil, add the chopped garlic with the chillies. After a minute, add the chopped peach. And after another minute, add the broccoli, previously blanched. Arrange the dish on a plate according to your imagination.







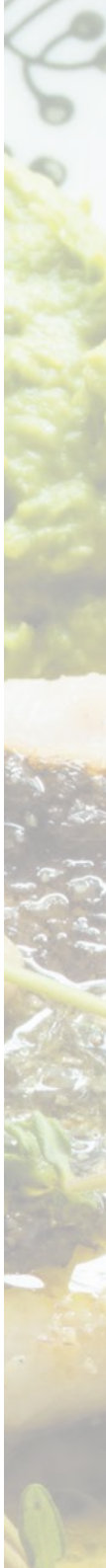
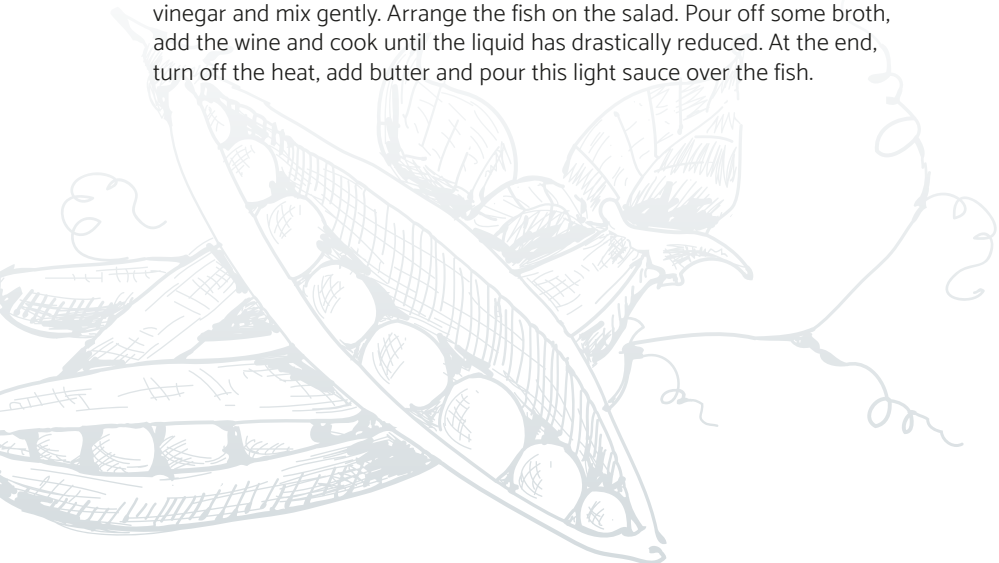
MAIN COURSE

Sturgeon or another white-fleshed fish fillet, cooked in an orange and ginger broth, served on pea puree with a salad of white radish and horseradish.

- Sturgeon fillet – 0.6 kg
- Mashed potatoes – 0.3 kg
- Green peas – 0.3 kg
- White radish – 1 pc (0.5 kg)
- Cold pressed rapeseed oil – 0.1 litre
- Lemon – 2 pcs
- 2 tablespoons of freshly grated horseradish
- Vegetables for making a court-bouillon – 0.3 kg
- Orange – 1 pc
- Ginger – 50 g
- Parsley leaves – 1 bunch
- Dry white wine – 50 g
- Butter – 50 g
- Apple cider vinegar – 2 tablespoons
- Honey – 1 tablespoon

Wash and clean all the vegetables. Dress the fish and check if all the bones have been removed.

Put the vegetables into some water to make a court-bouillon and simmer on low heat for about 1 hour. Remove the vegetables from the broth, squeeze the orange juice in and add the pieces of fresh ginger. Gently place the fish pieces into the slightly simmering broth, season and add a few peppercorns. Cook, without allowing to boil, for about 10 minutes. Then, remove the fish from the broth. Peel the white radish and slice as thin as possible. Grate the horseradish, add parsley leaves, honey, apple cider vinegar and mix gently. Arrange the fish on the salad. Pour off some broth, add the wine and cook until the liquid has drastically reduced. At the end, turn off the heat, add butter and pour this light sauce over the fish.







MAIN COURSE

Veal tenderloin marinated in sweet grass, juice of fresh pomegranates and vodka, caramelised with apples and juniper berries, served on a warm soufflé of chanterelles with black currant sauce flavoured with dark chocolate

- Veal tenderloin – 250 g
- Sweet grass – 1 pc (frozen or fresh)
- Fresh pomegranate – 2 pcs (their seeds)
- Vodka – 50 g
- Sour apple, rennet or antonovka – 200 g
- Onion – 30 g
- Juniper seeds – 5 pcs
- Butter – 100 g

Soufflé:

- Frozen chanterelles – 80 g
- Eggs – 5 pcs
- Cream 36% - 30 g
- Onion – 20 g
- Ground hazelnuts – 20 g
- Fresh rosemary – 10 needles

Sauce:

- Frozen black currants – 100 g or jam – 50 g
- Onion – 20 g
- Cane sugar – 20 g (if currants are frozen)
- Gravy (as paste) 50 g, or home-made – 150 ml
- Dark chocolate – 20 g
- Dry red wine – 50 ml
- Vegetable broth – 50 ml
- Oil – 20 g
- Cold butter – 30 g

Dress and clean the tenderloins. Remove the seeds from the pomegranates and squeeze out the juice. Chop up the sweet grass several times, add the pomegranate juice, vodka and meat. Marinate the meat with the ingredients in a bowl for at least 6 hours. Peel the apple, cut it into wedges.

Put the tenderloins into a frying pan with olive oil and fry on each side on a fairly high heat to obtain a slightly pink colour inside. Remove the meat. Pour the juice left from the marinade (without the sweet grass) and reduce until the mixture thickens. Fry the apples with juniper berries on very high heat with the addition of butter for around half a minute. Then, add the thickened pomegranate sauce – add some salt and coarsely ground black pepper and then remove from heat.

Soufflé:

Fry the chanterelles with the finely chopped onions and rosemary. Allow to cool, chop finely. Add the sour cream, egg yolks, a pinch of salt and pepper, and 4 beaten egg whites.

Grease some small bowls or cups with butter and sprinkle with ground hazelnuts.

Fill them up to $\frac{3}{4}$ with the mixture and put into the oven at a temperature of 210°C for 7-8 minutes.

Sauce:

Chop the onion finely and sauté in a hot frying pan with some oil. Once the onion is slightly browned, add the blackcurrants. When the juice is slightly reduced, add the cane sugar. After caramelising, pour in the red wine and gravy (gravy paste diluted in broth). Reduce down by about 30%, then add chocolate, take off the heat and just before serving whisk in some well-chilled butter.





DESSERT

Pancake layer cake layered with *dulce de leche* cream with vanilla and chocolate sauce

10 classic pancakes – dough:

- 10 classic pancakes – dough:
- 300 g wheat flour
- 1 egg
- 100 ml water
- 100 ml milk
- Salt
- Oil – 2 tablespoons

Dulce de leche cream:

- Canned dulce de leche – 250 ml, widely available
- 1/3 vanilla pod and 50 g sugar
- Whipping cream, 36% - 300 ml
- 100 ml brandy or mead (the mead may be mixed with vodka)
- Raisins 200 g

Chocolate sauce:

- 1 milk chocolate bar
- 100 ml cream
- 2 tablespoons of butter
- Ground cinnamon (genuine)
- 50 g ground ginger (fresh chopped ginger will be better)

Dough:

Into a bowl, add the flour, water and milk while stirring with a whisk. Once the consistence is suitable i.e. resembling thick cream, add the egg. Add a pinch of salt and 2 tablespoons of oil. Mix – the consistency should not be too thick.

Fry in a ceramic or non-stick frying pan on both sides, without browning the pancakes too much.

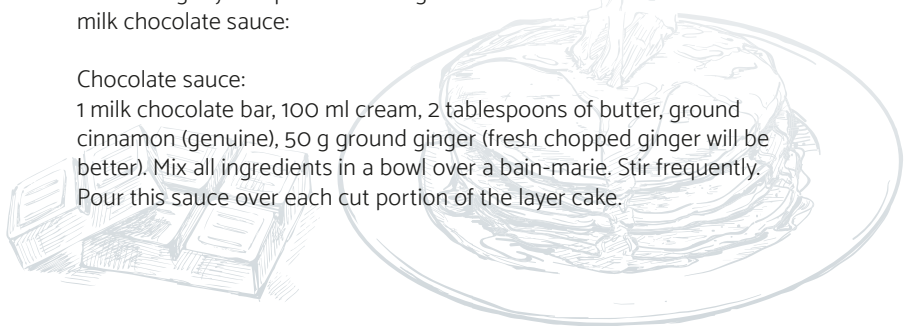
Marinate the raisins in mead for about 30 minutes.

Whip the cream. Mix gently with the dulce de leche and chopped vanilla.

Add the drained raisins. Layer each pancake with a thin layer of the vanilla mixture and arrange them into a stack. When the layer cake is ready, weigh it down slightly and put in the refrigerator for several hours. Serve with warm milk chocolate sauce:

Chocolate sauce:

1 milk chocolate bar, 100 ml cream, 2 tablespoons of butter, ground cinnamon (genuine), 50 g ground ginger (fresh chopped ginger will be better). Mix all ingredients in a bowl over a bain-marie. Stir frequently. Pour this sauce over each cut portion of the layer cake.







DESSERT

Pumpkin tart with cinnamon, caramelised cane sugar and spices

- Condensed milk – 0.5 l
- Pumpkin – 0.7 kg, diced
- Cane sugar – 150 g
- Ground cinnamon – 1 flat teaspoon
– or gingerbread spice mix – cardamon, black pepper, cinnamon, cloves, anise, nutmeg – ground in equal proportions apart from the black pepper – use less.
- Eggs – 6 pcs
- Cherries or gooseberries in a thick jelly. Currant jam or raspberries may also be used

Sweet shortcake:

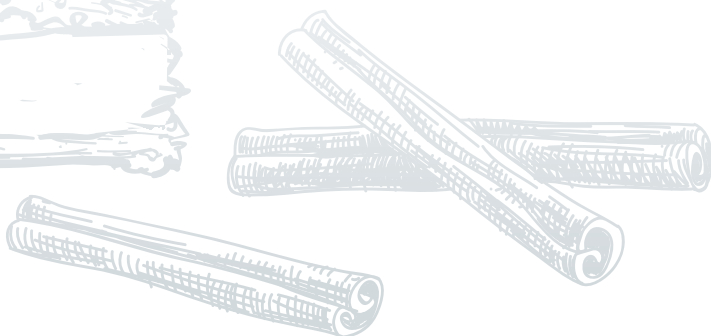
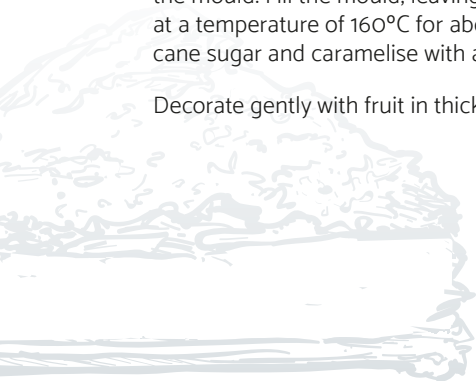
- Flour – 1 glass
- ½ slab of butter
- ½ glass of sugar
- Pinch of salt

Dough – mix the ingredients in a bowl to obtain a uniform consistency. If the dough cannot be rolled out – place it into the tart mould, remembering the mould should be precisely lined with a layer of dough 3 to 5 mm thick.

Put the dough in the oven at 190°C for about 7 minutes.

Dice the pumpkin – peeled and seeded – and braise gently in a saucepan in a small amount of butter to obtain an almost uniform consistency. Then, add the condensed milk and, after leaving to cool, the 6 egg yolks, sugar and cinnamon. Using a mixer, blend into a uniform mix and gently pour it into the mould. Fill the mould, leaving 1 cm free at the top. Put in the oven at a temperature of 160°C for about 30 minutes. When cool, sprinkle with cane sugar and caramelize with a blow torch.

Decorate gently with fruit in thick jelly and serve.







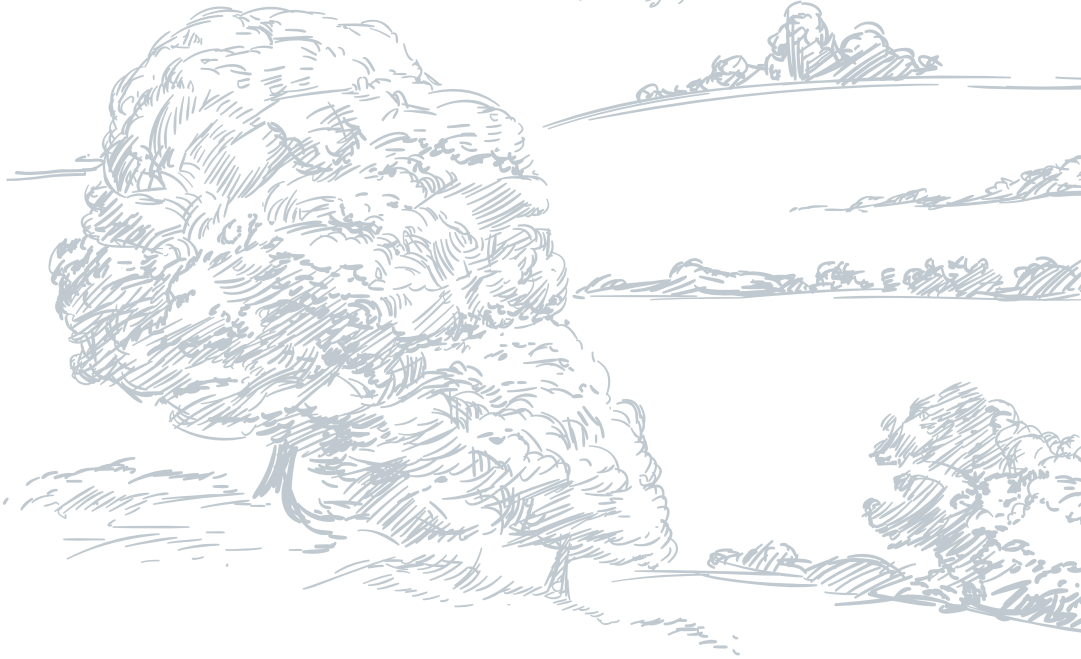
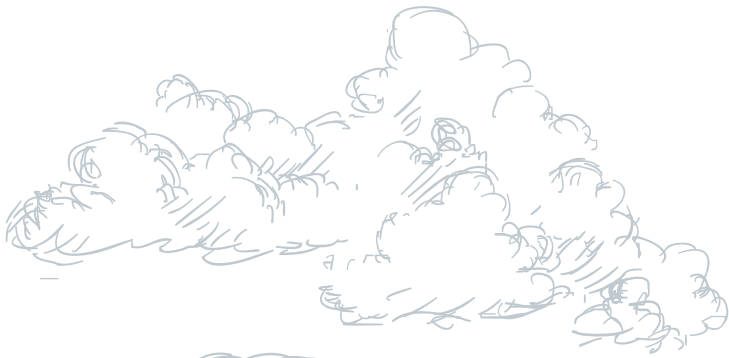
DESSERT

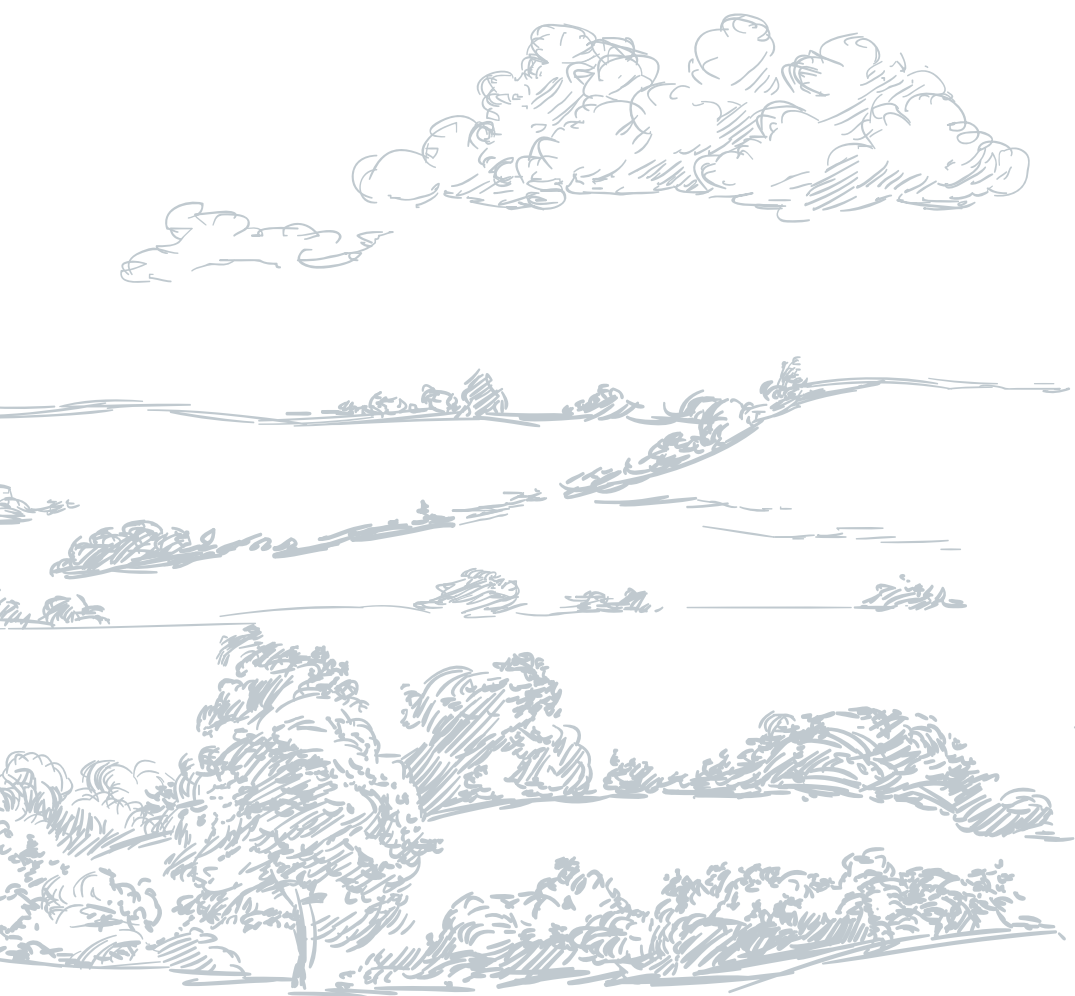
Dumplings (small pierogi) stuffed with chocolate mousse, served on apple fried with mint and cinnamon

- Classic dumpling dough – 200 g
- Ingredients: flour 250 g, about 70 g of warm water, 2-4 eggs, a pinch of salt,
- Cottage cheese or mascarpone – 100 g
- Dark chocolate – 70 g
- Butter – 100 g
- Cloves, cinnamon – to taste
- Fresh mint – several leaves
- Salt, sugar – to taste

Dumpling dough – add the ingredients successively, to obtain a dough which is not sticky and can be rolled out. Roll out into thin sheets. Stuffing: mix the cottage cheese with melted or grated chocolate, a pinch of salt, sugar and cloves. Form smallish dumplings. Cook in salted water. Sauce: in a frying pan, heat up the butter, add the finely diced apple, a little bit of cinnamon and sauté for about 2 minutes. Add the mint. Remove the cooked dumplings from the water and add them to the frying pan with the apples in butter. The water remaining on the dumplings emulsifies with the butter to form a sauce. Decorate with the chopped strawberries or raspberries and fresh mint leaf.









+48 22 376 72 26

+48 22 452 54 00

ul. Karolkowa 30,
01-207 Warszawa

www.kowr.gov.pl

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