

Nantwich Museum

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A Taste of Poland

Food, as for many different cultures, forms an important part of Polish tradition. For those who found themselves displaced and living in an unfamiliar place such as Doddington Polish Resettlement Camp, traditional Polish cuisine was one way in which people could keep their culture alive.



Typical ingredients for many dishes include sauerkraut, beetroot, cucumbers, sour cream, mushrooms and sausage.



Bigos

This is a traditional Polish hunters' stew. The recipe varies depending on region and family although typical ingredients include white cabbage, various cuts of meat and sausages and sometimes tomatoes, honey and mushrooms.



Kotlet schabowy

These are pork cutlets in breadcrumbs. They are easy to make and are often eaten as part of an early evening meal.



Pierogi

These are dumplings made from unleavened dough. The filling can vary but typically includes cheese, mushrooms, spinach or sausage.



Gołąbki

This is like a cabbage roll. The lightly boiled cabbage leaf is wrapped around a mixture of minced meat and often chopped onions, rice and/or barley. It is often baked and then refried in a sweet and sour tomato sauce.

Seeds are used in many dishes such as poppy seed cake. Sunflowers could be seen growing at Doddington Camp. Apparently there is a knack to eating them!



Easter

Although this is a religious festival and Christian rituals are observed, Easter celebrations have also become infused with native Polish culture. For instance the 'blessing basket' is unique in Poland. This is a basket containing food such as cakes, bread, meats and coloured eggs and is taken to the church on the Saturday before Easter Sunday to be blessed by the priest. The forty days of Lent are not considered to be over until this ritual has been completed.

Pisanka (plural pisanki) - Coloured decorated eggs

They symbolise the revival of nature and the hope that Christians gain from the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

There are various types of pisanki, based on the technique and preparation used:

Kraszanki – the egg is boiled in a mixture of plants or natural products. The product used determines the colour the egg will become:

- Brown – onion peel
- Black – oak, alder bark or the nutshell of a walnut
- Golden – bark of a young apple tree or the marigold flower
- Green – shoots of young rye or leaves of periwinkle
- Pink – the juice of beet

Drapanki or **skrobanki** – the surface of the kraszanka are scratched with a sharp tool to reveal the white of the egg shell.

Pisanki – the egg is covered with a layer of molten wax and then decorated with patterns. It is then submerged into dye.

Naklejanki or **nalepianki** – eggs are decorated with elderberry petals, scraps of colourful paper or patches of material.

Oklejanki or **wyklejanki** – eggs decorated with bulrush, pith or yarn.



The Easter Basket

The Easter basket also contains a sugar lamb which symbolises the resurrection of Christ.

Food from the Easter basket is eaten as part of the Easter breakfast. Exactly what this breakfast consists of varies from family to family.

Smingus Dyngus

This is a tradition which takes place on Easter Monday and involves pouring water over people.

Traditionally the boys would try to drench the girls (although they would get their own back on Tuesday)!

Older gentleman may dab their wives with perfume instead.

White borscht soup

This is typically eaten on Easter Sunday morning. It is made from most of the foods included in the Easter basket.

Ingredients

- 6 cups sausage cooking water, fat removed
- 1 clove minced garlic
- 2 cups sour cream
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 link white Polish kielbasa sausage, casing removed, sliced 1/4" thick
- 1 link smoked Polish kielbasa sausage, casing removed, sliced 1/4" thick
- 6 medium potatoes, peeled, cut into chunks and boiled
- 6 hard-cooked sliced eggs
- 6 slices light or dark rye bread
- Salt and pepper to taste

To make

1. In a large pot add the sausage water and garlic. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer, partially covered, for 5 minutes.
2. Fork-blend the flour and sour cream. Temper the sour cream with a little hot sausage water. Return to pot, stirring until thickened. Add sausages, potatoes and eggs to the pot and heat until warmed through. Season to taste. At this point, some people add a pinch of sugar or a tablespoon of vinegar. The soup should have a pleasantly sour taste.
3. Into 6 heated bowls, tear rye bread into bite-sized pieces. Ladle hot soup over bread.

Bigos

A traditional hunters' stew.

Ingredients

- 1/2 medium green cabbage
- 1litre jar sauerkraut
- 1 medium can tomato paste
- 1/2 lb bacon
- 1/2lb kielbasa sausage
- 1lb pork
- 1 large onion
- 2 cloves garlic
- Pimento
- Bay leaf
- Salt
- Pepper

To make

1. Wash and finely chop cabbage. Boil until cooked and then drain. Boil sauerkraut in two cups of water until cooked. Drain into a clean container. Save the sour water.
2. Wash the pork and chop into approximately 1" squares. Heat some vegetable oil in a saucepan and fry meat until cooked.
3. Cut bacon and kielbasa into squares about one third of the size of the pork. Peel and finely chop onion and garlic cloves. Fry all together in a separate pan until golden brown.
4. Combine all of the precooked ingredients into a large pan. Add the tomato paste, spices and earlier saved sour water (amount depends on taste). Mix well and allow to stew for an hour.

Cheesecake

Cheesecake is a popular dessert at family gatherings and festivals.

Ingredients

- 1/2lb ricotta cheese
- 2/3 cup whipping cream
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 3 eggs
- 2 tablespoons raisins
- 1 tablespoon grated orange peel

To make

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F.
2. Grease a 9 inch springform pan and line the pan with a 1/8" thickness of short crust pastry.
3. Prepare the filling by beating the ricotta cheese, whipping cream, sugar, flour and eggs in a large bowl until smooth.
4. Stir in the raisins and grated orange peel.
5. Pour the filling into the pastry lined springform pan.
6. Roll short crust pastry to a thickness again of about 1/8" and cut it into strips that you lay over the top of the cheese mixture. Arrange them in a crisscross pattern.
7. Start baking at 400° for 20 minutes and then reduce the oven temperature to 350°F and bake for another 45 minutes or so until set cool it before removing it from the pan.

Useful website

www.polishfoodinfo.com

Polish shops in the Crewe and Nantwich area

Dwa Koty, 128d Nantwich Road, Crewe
Polish Delicatessen MINI-MAX, 117a West Street, Crewe