



## **Traditional and regional products**

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**Connoisseurs find Małopolska local specialties delicious, or “paradise in the mouth” as the Polish saying goes! Oscypek cheese is made of sheep milk and smoked for two weeks over a highlander bonfire. Lisiecka sausage was the favourite meat of Pope John Paul II. Visiting Kraków, one quite naturally tastes obwarzanki (bagels) and bread from Prądnik, whose recipe has not changed in over five centuries. These and other dainties may be found both during cuisine festivals and at regular fairs held sometimes two or three times a week in many towns and villages of the region.**

In summer, we especially recommend a visit to the Małopolska Taste Festival attracting the participation of the best traditional producers from all over Małopolska. The culinary traditions of Małopolska, so far known mostly in the national market, will (let us hope – soon) be present on the tables of European epicures. The first traditional regional products from Małopolska, including oscypek, lisiecka sausage, and bryndza (soft cheese made of sheep milk), will presently be registered as Community’s regional products and protected in all the markets of the European Union.

### ***More than cheeses***

**Oscypek** - The king of Polish cheeses, this legendary smoked sheep cheese is produced according to a recipe that is hundreds years old by highlanders (górale) living within the shadow of the Tatras, in the Pieniny, and in the Beskidy. The main ingredient is the milk of sheep grazing in highland and mountain meadows. It cannot be mistaken for any other cheese: it is shaped like a spindle or... a rugby ball. Its taste is unique too. Oscypek is savoury indeed, slightly salty, and infused with the aroma of bonfire smoke. Although it can be bought all over Poland (and abroad!), it tastes best in the mountains of Małopolska, where it comes from. Highly recommended!

**Redykołka** - Nothing else but a mini variety of the oscypek. As appetising as its larger cousin, redykołka is produced in various, fantastic shapes: of mountain animals, ornaments, and hearts.

**Bundz (or Bunc)** - Another delicacy to be produced of sheep milk. Produced in highland and mountain shelters, it must mature for even up to a fortnight for the process of natural fermentation to take place. This lets the cheese acquire its characteristic taste, slightly on the sour side. Many prefer such a ripe bundz with tomatoes and basil to the famous Italian mozzarella.

**Bryndza podhalańska** - Soft sheep cheese, savoury and salty. Bryndza is made by crumbling bundz and storing it in a warm place for about a fortnight. It matures thanks to the enzymes produced by the fungus of the *Oidium lactis* species. Bryndza is worthy of becoming a permanent element of your cheese plate. As its consistency does not allow placing it with other cheeses, it is suggested that you serve it among them in a small bowl decorated with seasonal vegetables. Tastes best as a spread on fresh bread.

**Żentyca (or Żyntycyca)** - Whey of sheep milk obtained while making oscypek and bundz. The first mention of żentyca (as well as cheeses) in Podhale comes from the 15th century and is



found in the chartering documents for the village of Ochotnica in the Gorce Mountains. In the 19th century, żentyca was used for treating respiratory tracts; as such it was drunk by Frederic Chopin who suffered from a lung condition. Żentyca remains somewhat in the shadow of the widely advertised oscypek, even though – as the highlander sages explain – it is good for the ailments of the stomach, intestinal problems, and weight loss, works well against hangover and is even believed to increase virility. Only rarely would locals add that the unaccustomed city dwellers (cepyry) must not drink it in large quantities unless a toilet or a few convenient bushes are not at hand.

### **Meats and cold cuts**

**Lisiecka sausage** - John Paul II's favourite meat, lisiecka sausage is produced in two villages on the outskirts of Kraków: Liszki and Czernichów (though counterfeits are produced by countless butchers all over the country). Lisiecka owes its delicate taste to the choicest morsels of the best pork from locally raised pigs. It tastes best when fresh and smelling of smoke from smokehouses burning the best fruit-tree wood.

**Zatorska goose** - Zatorska goose is a subspecies covered by the world programme for conservation of farm animals in danger of extinction. Animals are bred according to traditional methods, and feed on natural fodder, composed mostly of oats, grass, and potatoes. This is why the meat of geese from Zator is a true delicacy and rarity, primarily for the excellent taste and low cholesterol content.

### **Dishes**

**Żurek po Krakowsku** - Polish Sour Soup Kraków Style - In Małopolska, the tradition of souring (fermenting) rye dates back to the 13th century. The Archives of the City of Kraków hold the following recipe for Kraków Sour Soup: three handfuls of rye flour (good for żurek), a quart of boiled water, a small chunk of bread from Prądnik or Kraków, a clove of garlic for the taste, and a small jar of white (i.e. wheat) flour. Having softened all these in a stone jar, set it for two nights by the stove (...). Now, just add some smoked sausage, bacon or ham while bringing your żurek almost to the boil, and your mouth-watering and nourishing main dish is ready!

**Kraków Red Borscht** - The borscht, that flagship of Polish cuisine, enjoys great renown among foreigners. Beetroots have been grown in the soft soils of the Prądnik and Szreniawa river valleys for centuries, even in small, home gardens. Every goodwife would make "sour beetroot juice" to add to tasty soups or to drink straight as a healthy drink. The tradition continues to this day in many homes. Let a testimony to the value of the red borscht be the fact that many would find Christmas Eve supper without it absolutely impossible.

### **Fish**

**Carp from Zator** - Over 1100 hectares of fishponds and history that began in the 12th century under the reign of Prince Boleslaus the Wry-Mouthed (Krzywousty) – these are the foundations of the imposing tradition of fish breeding near Zator. For many years, it was carp from Zator that Polish kings would order to their tables, hence the name of the subspecies preserved to this day: the royal carp. Today, tourists are attracted to "The Carp Valley", where you can go angling, indulge in water sports, walk, and simply relax!

### **Bread, rolls & cakes**

**The Kraków Obwarzanek - bagel** - One of Kraków's symbols, it is associated by tourists with



the capital of Małopolska, not unlike frankfurters with Frankfurt, and parmesan with Parma. Already in 1496, King John Albert ordered what hopefully the European Union will soon “confirm”: true obwarzanek (bagel) cannot be bought outside Kraków! Today, fresh and crunchy obwarzaneks are available in the Main Market Square and all through the city; just choose your preferred variety: with salt, poppy seed or sesame.

**Kraków Pretzel** - Be careful! Precelek (pretzel) is not the same as obwarzanek (bagel)! It is small (only a few centimetres in diameter) oval-shaped, with the ends twisted inside into a knot, hard, glazed, crumbly, and light. It keeps fresh for a long time, and is therefore rumoured to have been ordered in the quantity of a few carts by King Jagiełło before he set off to the battle of Grunwald! A lucky thing that the battle ended in victory and the recipe did not fall into the hands of the enemy...

**Bread from Prądnik** - The tradition of baking bread in Prądnik reaches the times of King Ladislaus (Władysław) Jagiełło. In 1421, the Bishop of Kraków, Wojciech Jastrzębiec, granted an estate in the village of Prądnik Biały (today, a district of Kraków) to his cook, obliging him at the same time to provide the bishop's table with breads. And breads these were special indeed, and still are. One-metre-long and half that across, a loaf weighs 14 kilo! Sold today are most usually the “mini” versions of the loaf, weighing only 4.5 kilo (10 lbs). Connoisseurs claim that bread from Prądnik may stay fresh even for a few weeks, while some maintain that the staler it is the better it tastes!

**The Kołacz wedding cake from Jodłownik** - Kołacz is a cake that has been known for centuries in Małopolska. Initially, it was baked for church and nuptial festivities. It was so also in the commune of Jodłownik in the Beskid Wyspowy Mountains, where rivalry grew around the traditional kołacz with cheese, with housewives having their produce compete for the title of the best. Today, the kołacz, much like those produced centuries ago, is sweet, with golden-brown crust and a thick layer of cheese.

### ***Selection of fruit and vegetables***

**Sauerkraut (fermented cabbage) from Charsznica** - In the Commune of Charsznica, in the North of Małopolska, cabbage is farmed on the total of 2,500 hectares. Brought home, it is immediately pickled in the process of lacto-fermentation (souring) by natural methods, without any preservatives or artificial additives, with only small amount of salt used in the process. Lightly acidic, sour, crunchy, and firm – the distinctive characteristics of true Charsznica sauerkraut. Little wonder that its fame crossed Polish borders long ago. Already in the 1970s, the Charsznica sauerkraut won two golden medals at World Expo in London.

**“Piękny Jaś” beans** - Małopolska's kingdom of beans is the Dunajec valley. Fields of “Piękny Jaś” stretch along the river, from the Rożnowski and Czchowski Reservoirs to Powiśle Dąbrowskie. The seeds of this type are fairly large and characteristically kidney-shaped. As to their taste, decide for yourselves once you have savoured Małopolska bean soup. Bon appetit!

**Plums from Łukowica** - Łukowica is one of Małopolska's largest horticultural centres, known for orchards with the highest quality “węgiełka” plums. For at least a century they have been dried into prunes. Although today, unlike in the past, there are households that own no drying house, plum drying continues to be a powerful local tradition. Luckily, the list of dishes that



require prunes remains imposing: bigos – hunter’s stew, infusions, home-made lard, stuffed pork, etc.

**Suska sechłońska plum** - A local legend from around Laskowa says that the parish priest, whose name has sadly been forgotten, made his parishioners plant plum trees as atonement for their sins. Fruit was abundant, and locals began to use the plums for production of slivovitz (śliwowica). To prevent this, the pastor announced that plums will continue to be grown but the fruit must be dried, for it turned out that prunes dried in smoke cannot go into slivovitz... The tradition began by the pastor continues to this day. Fathers and sons continue to plant, dry, and sell plums. Let a testimony to the age of the tradition be the name of the village: Sechna, derived from Old Polish sechnie – drying.

**Apples from Raciechowice** - Kalinka Czerwona, Kulon, Zorza Polarna, Cezar Wilhelm, Grafsztajn, Gołąbek, and Landsberska are names of apple tree varieties grown over a century ago around Raciechowice. Today, there are over 1.5 million fruit trees in Raciechowice orchards, and the annual crop exceeds 30 thousand tons! The fruit ripens in the mountainous climate of the Beskid Wyspowy, whose characteristic features include high temperature fluctuations between night and day. This makes the Raciechowice apples differ both in taste and in colour from their lowland counterparts.

**Apples from Łącko** - In Łącko, known far better for the production of slivovitz, apples have been grown since the 12th century. In the bygone times, the dried apples from Łącko were known in many European countries. Today, fruit from Łącko is a true regional rarity. The distinctive taste and aroma as well as the exceptional juiciness of Łącko apples are the product of the special microclimate of the Łącko Hollow. Their “blush” is markedly stronger than those of lowland apples. They make fantastic fruit juices.

### ***Something to drink***

**Slivovitz from Łącko** - Produced in Łącko since late 19th century, this slivovitz – locally known not as śliwowica but krasilica, that is “the one that adds rosiness to cheeks” – is known primarily for its exquisite taste and robust aroma, and the alcohol content of up to 70%. Today, local producers excel at making the most tasty liquor and adorn it with the most beautiful label. Łącko highlanders say that krasilica is a booze that one must not get drunk with. It is to be savoured like the most superior and pale cognac (and with utmost care, as it is highly treacherous), it goes gently down the throat, and its power cannot be properly gauged. The drink leaves a wonderful aroma and flavour in the mouth, and – should you topple one dram too many – knocks you off your feet right away. Let us drink it, then, with moderation yet without excessive anxiety!

**Wyborna slivovitz** - Wyborna slivovitz from Chełmska Góra near Bochnia is, as the Polish name tells, exquisite and was produced already at the end of the 12th century by the monks of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. Today’s recipe, however, comes from the area of Łącko. Much like its cousin from Łącko, Wyborna slivovitz is white or pale yellow, strong aroma of the ripest, large, dark-blue garden plums, alcohol content of up to 70%, and – most importantly – the taste that remains truly unforgettable.

### ***Other products***



**Magiczny  
Kraków**

**Salt from Wieliczka** - It is no exaggeration to say that the history of the mines in Wieliczka is the history of Poland. Poles know very well the legend of the ring that Princess Kinga dropped into a mine in Hungary only to have it found and brought to her from the depths of the earth near Wieliczka (Or, as some claim, in Bochnia: what would a legend be without a touch of an unexplained mystery?) together with the first lump of salt. Those who attended Polish schools remember from their history lessons the tales of how the power of Polish kings and the riches of Kraków were built on the profits from the Salt Mines of Wieliczka. Today, the Salt Mine in Wieliczka attracts tourists from all over the world, and salt from Wieliczka is used, besides consumption, in medicine and cosmetics.

**Capuchin balm** - Capuchin balm is a natural preparation strengthening the organism and regulating the operation of the alimentary tract. It belongs to the subcategory of foods known as dietary supplements, and its beneficial effects result from the combined powers of its ingredients: herbs, honey, propolis, and balsamic resins. The balm has been produced for over a century at the Capuchin Monastery in Kraków, and the exact recipe has always been known by only one(!) friar, who passes the carefully guarded secret only to his follower.