


TRADITIONAL POLISH EASTER FOODS

Elizabeth Furiga, Communications Intern



Żurek is a sour rye soup usually topped with boiled egg halves and kielbasa. Poles associate żurek with Easter, although it is often enjoyed throughout the year.

Easter in Poland is typically a feast of smoked meats and ham. **Biała kielbasa** is one of the feature meats. It is an unsmoked pork mince sausage covered in a thin pork casing. It is featured in the Easter soup and consumed during the meal with horseradish or mustard.



Herring is popular in Poland as in many other countries in Europe. It is eaten at holidays, especially Christmas and Easter. **Śledź ie Herring** is served as fillets marinated in oil and vinegar, with or without vegetables, and smothered with chopped onion.



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Sour rye soup, commonly known as żurek in Poland, is traditionally an Easter soup, though it is often enjoyed throughout the year and can be found on the menus of lunch bars across Poland. A white soup made of a sour rye flour starter, żurek includes smoked meat such as kielbasa or sometimes ham.

A variant of the dish, made with sour wheat flour instead of rye, is known as barszcz biały.

In the Podlaskie region of Poland, Poles eat żurek with hard-boiled egg halves. In the Silesia region, restaurants serve a variation of the soup over mashed potatoes. Poles might also serve żurek in a bread bowl or with boiled potatoes.

The word żurek is the diminutive of żur, which means sour.

Slovakia also has a soup similar to żurek, but it is vegetarian and features mushrooms, not kielbasa.

Robert Strybel, The Polish Chef

In a pot, combine 2 to 2 ½ c. diced, smoked kielbasa, ham and/or roast pork, 6 c. water, 1 quartered onion and several peppercorns. Simmer it on low heat, covered for 1 hour. Stir in 2-3 c. rye meal sour*, 1 c. water in which 1 heaping T. flour has been dissolved, and ¼ of a mushroom bouillon cube. Bring it to boil, reduce the heat, and let it simmer for 5 minutes. Switch off the heat, add 1 bud of crushed garlic, 1 heaping t. of prepared horseradish and 1 heaping T. of marjoram. Stir it. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve it over hard-boiled eggs and ¼ inch slices of cooked kielbasa.

**żur liquid - available bottled at Polish deli's. If you're lacking rye meal sour, add 2 c. of water mixed with 2-3 T. cider vinegar.*

Soup Variation: This soup can also be made with 1 part kielbasa stock (in which your kielbasa was cooked) and 1 part water.

A Glossary of Polish Easter Treats

compiled by ROBERT STRYBEL

B

BABA, BABKA

A tall, tapered, yeast-raised cake, usually studded with raisins—a typical Easter treat.

BIAŁY BARSZCZ

A tart, white Easter soup containing eggs, sausage, and sour liquid made with fermented wheat flour—a dish typical of eastern Poland.

C

CHAŁKA

A braided egg bread originally borrowed from Jewish Cookery.

CHLEB

Polish bread containing about 40% rye flour and 60% wheat that is an absolute "must" on the Polish Easter table.

CHRZAN

A typical condiment made from pungent horseradish roots and vinegar symbolizing the bitter herbs of the Passover—served alongside other Easter foods.

ĆWIKŁA

A typical Easter relish or salad made of beetroot and horseradish served alongside hard-cooked eggs, ham, sausage, and other cold meats.

J

JAJO, JAJKO

The Polish word for egg. At Eastertime, it serves as a prominent ritual artifact and food symbolizing new life; just as a chick pecks its way out of its egg-shell confinement, so too Jesus broke out of His entombment when He rose from the dead.

K

KIEŁBASA

A fresh, smoked Polish sausage typically served as an Easter treat.

KOŁACZ

A large round cake made with babka dough, known as a wheel cake, but not as tall as a babka. Traditionally baked for Easter, weddings, and other festive occasions.

M

MAZUREK

A flat Polish Easter cake similar to the American sheet cake. Topped with a variety of toppings and cut into squares for serving.

P

PASKA

A Ukrainian braided egg bread that was first encountered around Poland's former eastern borderlands.

PASZTET

A smooth, spreadable pâté usually made from the meat paste of finely ground cooked meat or liver with vegetables such as carrots or mushrooms. A dish served for Easter and other special occasions.

PIECZEŃ

Roasted meat of various kind such as pork, veal, beef, boar, or venison.

S

SERNIK

A Polish Easter favorite made with farmer cheese and often containing raisins.

SZYŃKA


The Polish word for ham. In Polish tradition, the ham is usually sliced, cold, and served alongside horseradish, ćwikła, and bread. A dish typically served at Easter.

Z

ŻUR, ŻUREK

A ryemeal soup with sausage and hard-cooked eggs seasoned with marjoram.

For more Polish cultural content, visit polishfalcons.org/category/culture/.



Mazurek is made with short pastry and decorated with a heavy layer of icing, dried fruits and nuts. **Babka** is a tall airy, no-knead yeast cake. Poles bake the cake in a bundt shape and top it with a glaze. Its name comes from the shape which resembles a grandmother's pleated skirt. **Sernik** is a Polish cheesecake. Made of a special cheese called twarog, the cake has a rich, dense texture. **Makowiec** is a poppy seed roll made from the same type of dough as the Babka. The cake features poppy seeds as its main ingredient and typically comes with a sugar icing.



A HISTORY OF DYNGUS DAY

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Easter Monday holds special meaning to both Poles and Polish-Americans. The day is known as Smigus Dyngus or Lany Poniedzialek in Poland and Dyngus Day in the U.S. On the Monday after Easter, Poles celebrate the end of Lent and the joy of the Easter season.

The celebration of Smigus Dyngus has existed in Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary since the Middle Ages.

Traditionally, young boys woke girls by pouring buckets of water over them and switching their ankles with willow branches. Poles held the superstition that girls who received a drenching were going to be married within the next year. Girls, who remained dry all of Easter Monday, were thought of as unattractive or unlucky. In the past, boys also played tricks on girls as a part of the celebration.

Today, Smigus Dyngus is mostly water-focused, and both boys and girls take part in the festivities, soaking each other with buckets of water, filled plastic bags or squirt guns. Most Poles live in tall apartment buildings, and on Easter Monday, the high balconies become the preferred spot for staging a sneak water balloon attack on passersby below.

Among Polish-American Communities in the U.S., the Easter Monday celebration is known as Dyngus Day. The holiday is a time for these communities to celebrate Polish culture, heritage and tradition. The largest Dyngus Day celebration occurs in Buffalo, N.Y., where it has been celebrated since the late 19th century. The modern Dyngus Day celebration in Buffalo came about in the 1980s. Since 2006, the city's Polish community has held a Dyngus Day parade. It was the first of its kind in the world.

Dyngus Day is also celebrated in Chicago, Cleveland and Pittsburgh. The festivities celebrate Polka, Polish food and culture, as well as the fun of soaking your neighbors.