

Christmas Eve in Poland

Beetroot soup – borscht (barszcz czerwony)

Ingredients:

- Canned beets (original recipe calls for boiled and then peeled beets)
- Vegetable broth (recipe below or use carton/cube broth if in a hurry)
 - Cook the vegetables in water: chopped carrots (2-4), parsley (1-2), celery root (1/2), leek (1), add garlic, bay leaves, peppercorn and allspice.
- Onion, dried marjoram, lemon juice, salt and sugar



Preparation:

Add diced beets (with juice from the can) to the broth. Add an onion, marjoram and some lemon juice immediately, so as not to lose color. Simmer until nice red color shows up (15 minutes-2 hours, the longer you do it, the more aroma you get from beets but the color gets darker with time). Couple minutes before the end (or before you reheat it) you can add some more bay leaves and allspice. Season to taste with salt, pepper and sugar. Add some more lemon juice to keep the color. For best taste, let stand for a couple hours or overnight. Reheat before serving (but don't let it boil!) and strain. Serve with uszka (ravioli), pierogi or croquettes.

Dumplings or ravioli with cabbage and mushrooms or meat (Pierogi i uszka z kapusta i grzybami lub miesem)

Ingredients:

- Stuffing 1: sauerkraut, dried forest mushrooms (can be replaced with fresh or even Portobello), onion, oil, egg (optional), salt and pepper
- Stuffing 2: beef, onion, carrot, parsley leaves, garlic, salt and pepper
- Dough for dumplings:
 - flour (4-5 cups)
 - olive oil (2 tablespoons)
 - 2 eggs
 - salt
 - hot water



Preparation:

Sift flour onto a working surface, make a depression in it, add eggs, oil and salt. Gradually add hot water to dough while kneading. Add flour if necessary. Knead dough until it is soft and elastic, for about 15 minutes. Cover with a cloth. Roll out the dough and cut circles (for dumplings) with a cookie cutter or anything circular or divide into squares (for ravioli). Put selected stuffing in the middle, fold in half (diagonally for ravioli) and press the edges together. For dumplings, make a wavy rim, for ravioli, glue two corners together. Boil in salted water until tender, about 3 - 5 minutes after they start to float.

You can use both sweet and savory stuffing with pierogi – fresh or frozen berries with sugar and cinnamon, cream cheese with raisins, mushrooms... You can serve the sweet ones with cream and the savory ones with melted butter or sautéed onion. Savory ones are particularly good on the next day, fried in butter.

Stuffing 1: Rinse the mushrooms, cover with cold water and let stand for 6 hours or overnight. The next day, add them to boiling water and cook until soft. At the end of cooking, season with salt and pepper. Cook the cabbage until tender and then drain. Finely chop (you can also use a food processor or meat mincer) cabbage and mushrooms. Sauté finely diced onions in olive oil, add cabbage and mushroom, season with salt and pepper. Remove from heat and allow to cool. You can also add a raw egg to the stuffing; this is optional.

Stuffing 2: Cook the meat with carrots, salt and pepper. Mince the meat and carrots using a meat mincer or food processor. Add finely chopped sautéed onion, some salt, pepper, finely chopped garlic and parsley leaves.

Split peas with cabbage(Groch z kapusta)

Ingredients:

- Sauerkraut
- Yellow (split) peas
- Butter
- Finely chopped onion
- Cooked forest mushrooms (optional)
- Sausage or fried bacon (optional but not for Christmas Eve)
- Bay leaves, garlic, allspice, salt and pepper



Preparation:

Pour boiling water over peas and leave for about an hour (or more). Then, add the water to covered the peas and cook over low heat until the peas are soft. Chop cabbage, pour two cups of boiling water and cook over low heat with bay leaves, allspice, peppercorn and garlic until soft. Mix cabbage with peas. Sauté the onion until golden and add to the cabbage. Season to taste with salt and pepper. You can add some mushrooms and/or sausage or bacon.

Sour soup with beans (Kwasnica z fasola)

Ingredients:

- Sour water (leftover from cooking sauerkraut)
- Cooked dried mushrooms
- Beans, preferably large one
- Garlic cloves
- Onion
- Bay leaves, allspice, peppercorn, salt
- Butter (optional)



Preparation:

Wash beans and soak overnight in cold water. The next day, cook in the same water with salt until the beans become soft and then drain. Boil the sour water with mushrooms, onion, garlic, bay leaves, allspice and peppercorn. Season with salt and pepper. You can add some butter. Serve the soup with cooked beans.

“Greek” fish (Ryba po grecku)

Ingredients:

- White fish filet
- Onion, carrots, parsley, celery root, leek
- Olive oil
- Bay leaves, allspice, salt, pepper, sugar, paprika, lemon juice
- Tomato paste
- Flour
- Egg (optional)
- Breadcrumbs (optional)



Preparation:

Wash fish fillet, sprinkle with salt and pepper on both sides, cover in flour (optional: immerse in beaten egg and breadcrumbs after that) and fry in olive oil. Using the same oil, sauté chopped (or grated) vegetables and add some water. Mix in tomato paste, add allspice and sauté for a couple more minutes. Arrange fried fish in a serving dish and cover with vegetable-tomato sauce. Can be served hot as a main dish or cold as an appetizer.

Noodles with poppy seed, dried fruits and nuts (Kluski z makiem)

Ingredients:

- Noodles (homemade are the best but you can buy any noodles)
- Salt and oil for cooking noodles
- Canned poppy seed filling (original recipe uses poppy seed that was soaked in milk and water and then ground)
- Powdered sugar or honey
- Vanilla sugar, extract or bean
- Raisins, orange peel, apricots, plums, dates, figs – any dried fruits you want
- Almond flavor (optional)
- Chopped walnuts and almond flakes



Preparation:

Season poppy seed with honey or sugar, vanilla and almond extract (remember to check the taste and ingredients of the filling before you do it - they can vary). Add chopped nuts and fruits. Cook and drain noodles and add the poppy seed mixture. Serve warm or chilled

Dried-fruit compote (Kompot z suszu)

Ingredients:

- Dried apple slices (about 12)
- Dried apricots (about 12)
- Dried pear slices (about 8)
- Pitted prunes (about 6)
- Dried figs, dates, raisins (you can experiment with any dried fruits and citrus) (optional)
- Sugar or honey to taste
- 2 whole cloves, cinnamon stick
- Fresh lemon juice to taste (optional)



Preparation:

Rinse all the dried fruit in a colander under hot running water. Put the fruit and spices in a large pot and cover with water. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, cover and simmer for 25 to 60 minutes until the liquid has a lot of flavor. Add sugar to taste or lemon juice to balance out the sweetness, if desired.