

## Poles Know Food

Growing up I have fond memories of eating the Polish food my mom made me. She would send me to school with Golabki's in my thermos (ground meat, rice, onion, and seasonings stuffed cabbage with red paste or sauce). Classmates would give me weird looks, but I didn't care. To me, this was comfort food. My mom would also cook up sauerkraut and kielbasa for a quick delicious meal.

As an adult, I like adding mushrooms inside my Golabaki's and thinly sliced carrots on top to mine.

Nowadays I make a mean Babka which is a dessert bread filled with fruit, nuts, cheese, or chocolate. I like to make my Babkas with chocolate and ricotta cheese.

Polish food has a bad rap in many parts of the United States of America, but many love it. Not everyone grew up eating cabbage, so they say they hate Polish food.

Cabbage is popular in many dishes, but it is far from the only vegetable in the Polish diet. Although in recent years cabbage benefits have been frequently talked about since it's a superfood. Cabbage is full of antioxidants, vitamin C, and K, and fiber making it an excellent source to build up immunity, bone health, heart health. Not to mention it's superb for hair and skin health. Cabbage is a great low-calorie option and contains the most nutrition while eaten raw in a salad or as a side dish.

Enough about cabbage. Poland is filled with resilient people who had to overcome many countries conquering them. Poles are hearty people dealing with harsh Winters yet know how to enjoy the simple things in life like drinks and food with great company. Fermentation, drying, and pickling played a major part in Polish cuisine since many crops can't grow in extreme cold. Fish, vegetables, and fruit would all be preserved to last the Winter. In their vast forests, you can find wild berries, nuts, herbs, and mushrooms which are popular in the food eaten. The meat that was most present in Old Poland was pork, chicken, and wild game, like rabbits and birds.

Many countries have influenced Polish food due to the 123-year long partition of Poland. Austria, Hungary, Germany, Italy, France, Ukraine, Czech, Lithuania, Belarus, Turkey, and Russia all influenced how Poles cooked. Polish dishes were also influenced by Asian and Jewish culture. Many wars have stopped Poles from eating saltwater fish in the Baltic Sea; therefore, they mainly ate freshwater fish like codfish and sole.

Due to the Roman Catholic Church strictly enforcing a nine-week lent until the year 1248, Poles couldn't eat meat or dairy during this time. Many vegetarian and fish dishes were created because of this fast.

Poland was an international melting pot before America was. Many different cultures altered their cuisine. Since Poland became independent; they have been able to add potatoes, honey, tomatoes, and saltwater fish to their fare.

Some modern Polish food includes pumpkin dumpling breakfast soup, crispy onion sourdough bread, crispy duck with apple walnut sauce, baked trout with sorrel sauce, fava beans with sage butter, strawberry filled pierogis, cardamom vanilla cream cake, and boozy chocolate walnut torte. To washing all that down with vodka is still a favorite Polish tradition. Vodka cocktails incorporate spices, berries, chocolate, and apples for yummy beverages.

Poles sure know how to create flavorful dishes using a few or many ingredients for an unforgettable meal. Next time you're in Europe, don't forget to stop by Poland to experience the food yourself and the broad history of the country.

Author: Danielle N. Mott