

## GLOSSARY

A degree of basic knowledge and cooking experience is assumed. If not otherwise stated, recipes are intended for four.

**Bain marie:** a large heatproof bowl set over a pan of simmering water. • **Curd cheese:** *tvaroh* in Czech. Some recipes call for grated curd cheese, which indicates a harder variety than the soft cheese sold as quark in the UK. It may be available in Polish shops under the name *twaróg*. • **Flour:** coarse-grained and semi-coarse flour refers only to how finely the flour is milled. If you are not lucky enough to live near an artisan miller, these flours can be found online. Stoneground flour is coarser and semolina flour would make another potential substitute; or a third of the flour could be replaced with wholemeal flour. Fine-ground flour is similar to pastry or cake flour, while semi-coarse flour is similar to plain/all-purpose flour. • **Larding meat:** use a larding needle to

insert strips of fat throughout a joint of meat. This makes lean joints more tender. • **Muzika:** A spiced Christmas dish made with dried plums and other dried fruits, nuts and almonds. • **Roux:** a mixture of flour and butter used to thicken soups and sauces. • **To make a roux:** stir the flour into melted butter and cook it out, adding a little water or stock. • **Vanilla sugar:** 1–2 tsp vanilla extract can be used instead of 10g of vanilla sugar. For larger quantities, it can be made at home by adding a split vanilla pod to a sealed jar of caster sugar. • **Yeast:** these recipes generally assume fresh yeast. If using instant dry yeast, reduce the quantity by about two thirds. There is no need to make a starter and the yeast can be added directly to the flour.



COVER PHOTOS: roast Easter lamb, plum dumplings, marinated *hermelin*.

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# Neuestes Handbuch der Böhmischen Kochkunst



## IN PRAISE OF CZECH CUISINE

The historic crownlands of Bohemia (Čechy) and Moravia (Morava) and the Golden City of Prague (Praha) have a rich treasury of culinary tradition and can thus confidently assert their place in the highest echelons of European cuisine. While some delicacies, such as Olomouc cheese (*Olomoucké tvarůžky*), Prague ham and sweet wafers from the world-famous spa resort of Carlsbad (Karlovy Vary), have gained international renown, you can only experience the full abundance of Bohemian cuisine in the Czech Republic itself, where centuries of a gratifyingly diverse epicurean heritage can still be enjoyed. Bohemian cuisine draws on a variety of sources. The customs and dishes of the Czechs found in the interior of the country, as well as those of the German-Bohemians who once lived in the Sudetenland, display influences from as far afield as Bavaria and Saxony, Hungary, Poland, France and the Tyrol. Bohemian cookery, however, shows the greatest overlaps and similarities with that of Vienna and Austria in general.

The earliest written evidence of Bohemian cuisine dates back to 1591 when Bavor Rodovský of Hustiřany, a cook and alchemist at the imperial court in Prague, published a seminal book on the art of cooking. The idea of a distinct Bohemian cuisine was first popularised in 1805, when the recipe book *Die Bayerische Köchin in Böhmen* (*The Bavarian Cook in Bohemia*) was published by the capable innkeeper Maria Anna Neudecker. This cookbook can be seen as a kind of forerunner of the foundational recipe collection *Domáci kuchařka* (*The Home Cook*) by Magdalena Dobromila Rettigová, née Artmann,

LEFT: cover for Marie Souček, *Neuestes Handbuch der Böhmischen Kochkunst* (*The Latest Handbook for the Bohemian Culinary Arts*).

Magdalena Dobromila Rettigová (1785–1845) in a be-ribboned hood.





## ALL KINDS OF DUMPLING

### SAVOURY AND SWEET

In many Czech families, dumplings were traditionally eaten on Thursdays. The cook of the house appeared in the kitchen door with a delicious cargo of hearty treats in a deep stoneware dish. It used to be said that every Bohemian girl should know how to make a dozen types of dumpling by the time she married. They can be savoury or sweet, long or round – but dumplings are at the heart of Bohemian cooking.

The Czech term *knedlík* (*Knödel* in Bavarian and Austrian German) is derived from the Middle High German *knode*, meaning “knot”. They come in simply countless varieties. In the Middle Ages, dumplings were made of veal, mutton, goose, chicken, capon or fish. Knights and their retinue also ate liver, bacon, crab, rye, game and rabbit dumplings, or balls of any other plump meat they came across. Modern doughy dumplings were then unknown, but perhaps they were invented on a day when there was not enough pork to feed all the hungry mouths, so the cook eked out the mixture with bread, flour and other ingredients, and then wrapped it in a coating of dough. They were often coated in bread and oats, but breadcrumbs, millet and barley, maize and rice all work perfectly well. These can be combined to make a wealth of regional variants – they can be as small as marbles to add to soup, or as round as cannon balls for a main dish. Bread dumplings often replace the meat entirely with bread or dough, which means they fall apart easily if made too large. To prevent this, some savvy ancestor tied the mixture in a fabric bag, or made use of an old napkin – thus creating the hugely popular serviette dumplings. They became internationally

LEFT PAGE: Czech dumplings are made in an elongated roll, then sliced with the gadget known as a *krajec*.

BOTTOM: A Czech cook proudly presents the dumplings that she has just made, c. 1975.





## GAME-STYLE ROAST PORK

### *Vepřová pečeně na divoko*

*1kg pork leg • 4 cloves garlic • 1 tsp salt • a little pepper • 1 tsp ground caraway • 4 bay leaves • 8 allspice berries • 8 peppercorns • 4 juniper berries • 5 tbsp oil • 3 tbsp flour*

Clean and pat the pork thoroughly dry and score diamond patterns in the skin with a sharp knife. Peel and crush the garlic, mix it into a paste with the salt, a little pepper and the ground caraway. Rub the paste into the meat, quarter the bay leaves and insert them into the scored skin along with the allspice, peppercorns and juniper berries. Pour a little water into the base of a roasting tin, add the meat, cover and braise in a pre-heated oven at 200°C for 2–2½ hours (turning frequently and basting with the meat juices). Put the roast aside to rest in a warm place. Deglaze the pan, add flour to make a roux, cook out with water and simmer on a low heat for 15 minutes. Slice the roast pork, serve with sauerkraut (p. 77) and dumplings (p. 55), with the sauce separately for pouring.

*“In better times, the people of Prague were very big meat eaters. Even in petty bourgeois and working-class families they often ate boiled beef every day with tomato (‘paradise apple’), mushroom, dill, or horseradish sauce – admittedly with bread dumplings, which may be simple yet are far from easy to prepare. Sundays were roast goose, duck or pork with cabbage and dumplings – the elongated potato dumplings might be preferable here, with fragrant, golden-brown fried onions.”*

Willy Haas

## BOILED PIG’S HEAD

### *Vářená prasečí hlava*

*½ pig’s head with snout • salt • ½ clove garlic • 4 peppercorns • ¼ bay leaf • root vegetables (2 carrots, ½ celeriac, 1 parsley root, ¼ leek) • 1 onion • horseradish*

Wash the pig’s head and boil for 2 hours in water with salt, garlic and the spices. Slice the root vegetables and onion into ribbons and add them 20 minutes before the end of the cooking time. Remove the pig’s head as soon as the meat is soft. Take the meat off the bones, carve into slices as thick as a finger and serve with the boiled vegetables, soup, freshly grated horseradish and boiled potatoes.



## STUFFED PEPPERS

### *Plněné papriky*

STUFFED PEPPERS: 10 green peppers • 3 tbsp oil for frying • 1 large onion • parsley • 500g minced pork • salt • pepper • marjoram • 100g rice

TOMATO SAUCE: 1kg tomatoes • 1 tbsp oil for frying • 1 small onion • parsley • 40g butter • 30g flour • beef stock or water • 100ml red wine • 20g sugar • salt • 1 bay leaf • 3 allspice berries • 5 peppercorns • lemon juice

TOMATO SAUCE: finely mince the onions and parsley and fry them in oil. Wash and halve the tomatoes and add them to the sauce, braise until soft with a little water and pass through a sieve. Make a pale roux with butter and flour, and mix in the tomato puree. Slake with a cup of beef stock or water, add the wine and sugar and season with salt, bay leaf, allspice and pepper. Simmer the sauce for 15 minutes. Remove the spices and add lemon juice to taste.

STUFFED PEPPERS: cut off the tops of the peppers at the stem and hollow them out. Boil the rice in salted water. To prepare the filling, fry the finely chopped onion and parsley in oil, mix with the minced pork, salt, pepper, marjoram and the cooked rice, stirring well, and stuff into the peppers. Put the peppers in a casserole dish, pour over the tomato sauce, cover and braise for 45 minutes.

## ROAST PORK LOIN WITH ROSEMARY

### *Vepřová panenka na rozmarýnu*

600g pork loin • 3 tbsp mustard • 2 tbsp honey • ground rosemary • pepper • salt • oil for frying

Trim the skin and fat from the pork loin. Make a marinade with the mustard, honey, rosemary, salt and pepper; brush it onto the pork and leave to stand for two hours. Roast in hot fat until medium or well-done, as you prefer. Leave in the covered pan to rest for another 10 minutes. Serve with roasted or mashed potatoes.



## PLUM JAM TURNOVERS

### *Povidlové taštičky*



DOUGH: 500g flour • 1 egg • salt. FILLING: 300g–400g povidla (or plum jam) • 1 tbsp rum • cinnamon • a little sugar • 1 egg • 2–3 tbsp icing sugar

DOUGH: sieve the flour onto a bread board, add the egg, salt and about 200ml warm water, a little at a time, then knead into a soft dough. Flour the work surface and roll the dough out to about half a centimetre thick and cut out palm-sized discs.

FILLING: mix the *povidla* with rum, cinnamon and sugar to taste and spread an equal amount on each disc. Whisk the egg with a little water, brush it around the edges of the dough, fold the dough over and seal the parcels well. Bring a pan of salt water to a simmer and cook the turnovers for about 6 minutes, until they float to the surface. Fish them out with a slotted spoon and refresh briefly under cold water, then dry them.

Sprinkle the turnovers with cinnamon and icing sugar before serving.

## FRIED PLUMS

### *Smažené švestky*

250ml white wine • 200g flour • salt • 190g sugar • cinnamon • the grated zest of ¼ lemon • 2 egg whites • 1kg dried plums • 100g almonds or 40g marzipan • 500g fat • 140g chocolate

First prepare the batter: whisk the wine, flour, salt, 60g sugar and lemon zest to a smooth batter, whisk the egg whites to stiff peaks and then fold into the batter.

Boil large, dried plums in water until they're semi-soft and then leave them to cool again. Remove the stones and replace them with a peeled almond or a little marzipan in each plum. Dust the plums with 130g sugar and cinnamon to taste, drop them into the batter, deep fry them in hot fat and drain them on kitchen paper.

While the fried plums are still hot, roll them in a mixture of grated chocolate and sugar, and serve immediately.

TOP: Marie Plíhalová, known across the city as “sugar grandma” (*cukrová babička*), a sweet old lady in every sense, selling cakes on the promenades in Stromovka Park.

BELOW: Bohemian rhapsody – blue plums.

