



LITHUANIA MINOR REGION

The dishes in Lithuania Minor are not really exclusive but very simple. People of this region did not know the fine dishes – all the dishes were very similar: leaf soup or sour peas, sometimes *grucka* (soup) or beetroot soup. It is said that the same meal was served on a table three times a day. The main food is unpeeled potatoes, beetroot, sauerkraut and sauces: with cannabis, cracklings. During the holidays, they ate not so bad and poorly; they made pap, Lithuanian sausage (*skilandis*), *kosenybe*, hodgepodge, which was made from white peas.

The bread was baked from rye and the *pomele* (pie) from wheat flour. The bread was baked every four weeks. They know how to cook meat very well. When they slaughtered sheep, pigs, geese, after slicing, meat was salted in a barrel, and pieces of the bacon flitch were hanged into the chimney for smoking. For the inhabitants of Lithuania Minor a herring put on a willow branch and baked in front of the fire was a delicacy. However, do not forget the sweet dishes – pap, rolls, waffles (*vofeliai*), and coffee (*kafija*).

COMPREHENSIVELY

Lithuania Minor is a part of the Curonian Spit, districts of Silute and Klaipeda and the southern part of Taurage County. The inhabitants of Lithuania Minor called themselves *lietuvininkai* and differed from the Lithuanians of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The oldest knowledge about the dishes made in Lithuania comes from Prussian times.

Lithuania Minor region has long been famous for dairy products. The inhabitants of the seacoast made beaten cream (*kastinys*), cottage cheese and butter, similar to people of Zemaitija region. For breakfast, *lietuvininkai* loved boiled cheese: they put undrained curd into boiling fresh milk, before mixing it with eggs. They cooked such cheese and put it on the bread. In the region of Klaipėda people also made fermented cheese. Already prepared salty *surgobis* (calf stomach parts) was brought from Germany. Most often cheeses were not matured; they were only fermented with calf stomach, drained, pressed and ate fresh.

In the Lithuania Minor, bakery customs were similar to Samogitians. The housekeepers of this land baked rye, soft, sour-sweet, scalded bread. Their bread-beds were rectangular, hollowed, and then built out of deciduous wood. They ate bread, which was baked with grounds that were left after making the barley beer, in the evenings because it had the ability to make dizzy.

The women of Lithuania Minor liked to bake round bread, so when it was a little raised, it was sometimes put into straw baskets to keep a nice circular shape. Often bread was put into furnace in such a basket. In the Pomeranian region, the women used to bake the men's palm-sized bread loaves, and called them dumplings. To avoid sticking of the loaf bottom, they sprinkled the oven's pad with gritty flour, laid with maple or fern leaves. The bread of this land had a thick crust, but did not dry out for a long time. Also, they used to bake flat bread flavoured with cracklings. For Easter, they baked small loaves with flavourings: dried berries, apples and cracklings on a maple leaf or a dried cabbage leaf. This is bunny bread.

Pies, sweets are exceptional Lithuanian dishes. The tradition of producing a variety of sweets came from Germanic culture. Before the war, the region of Lithuania Minor was famous for various sweets made in bakeries and cafés: poppy-seed roll, pie *Gandralizdis*. In summer, a frequent Lithuanian made ‘Crushed cherries’. To make this, it was needed to pour fresh sweet milk on crushed cherries and crumbled bread.

Coffee beverage called *kafija* is the most important drink of *lietuvininkai* taken from Germans. It became popular among *lietuvininkai*, so that even the breakfast soup was left out. It is made from chicory roots. Beverage *kafija* is not only a great substitute for coffee, but also a set of useful features. Cakes, bread with butter and marmalade, waffles and *krafai* (wheat flour cakes, fried in fat) were served with a beverage *kafija*.

A liqueur “Krupnikas” was popular in the whole Lithuania Minor, only here it was called *meskinis*. Due to amount of honey, various herbs and other spices, the taste, smell, thickness and colour vary – many recipes are created, especially during the interwar period. They all have big amount of honey and a specific method of production is applied: the herb infusion is made from strong vodka and usually stored in oak barrels, then mixed with honey, filtered and aged again.

Since old days, pork meat was very popular in the region of Lithuania Minor. Pigs were slaughtered in late autumn, and the meat was used to flavour stews and beetroot soup. Delicacy – meat of little pigs. The inhabitants of this region also made a kind of Lithuanian sausage - *skilandis*, cooked delicious blood soups with fruits, but the finest dish of slaughtering was blood sausages. They sliced bacon flitch into small pieces and poured with boiling water, poured them with blood, added marjoram, salt, and pepper. They put the mass into the intestines, smoked with juniper smoke. They also made liver sausages, but before that, liver was baked, cut into small pieces, flavoured with cracklings and fried onions.

The ethnographic descriptions reveal the fact that even in the 20th century fishermen ate the first fish that they caught raw. This fish was not only enjoyed by the seafront inhabitants, but also by fishermen of major part of large lakes and rivers. The most commonly eaten were hakes, tenches, burbot and other small fish. The skin was taken off starting from the tail, then they removed the intestines – and put the fish into the mouth...

The old way of making fish is to bake it on a bonfire, sticking the meat onto wither. In order to have a more delicious dinner, bread was put under the baked fish to absorb fat. It is also known that fish was baked alive in a hot clay shell in hot live coals. When it was ready, the clay was simply broken down, taken along with the fish scales and the skin. Such a dish was eaten without bread, only sprinkled with salt. Fish fried in such manner was considered to be a delicacy.

The favourite fish of the seafront inhabitants were stewed smelt, grilled lampreys and burbot boiled in milk. The fish was fried in frying pans only after the World War I. Fishermen of the Curonian Lagoon villages were less likely to cook fish soup, but they liked to stew fish in a bakery oven.

For longer storage, the fish was salted, dried and smoked. *Lietuvininkai* used to dry the fish in a chimney of the house, before keeping it salted in a wooden barrel for a couple of weeks. On the seafront, it was a tradition to dry the fish outdoors. Fish smoking became more popular only in the 20th century. At that time, fish smokers were began to be built in the villages by the lakes.

Lietuvininkai raised geese in each farm. Here, from old times, during St. Martin, it was a tradition to settle with the mercenaries, and it was absolutely necessary to give everyone a live

goose. The geese markets were popular in Lithuania Minor. They started with St. Andrew's Day, on November 30th. Advent Geese markets were held every weekend in Klaipeda and **Konigsberg** regions.

In order to increase the awareness and popularity of Lithuanian culinary heritage, the Lithuanian Countryside Tourism Association is implementing the project "Traditional Lithuanian Food Guide". The aim of this project is to raise awareness among the public, especially the younger generation, about the interesting and diverse food culture in our country, and to express our respect for the people who follow the culinary traditions of our grandparents and parents, and cook according to old recipes and technologies.

Project promoter

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