

A large, decorated Christmas tree is the central focus of the image. It is covered in warm white lights and adorned with various ornaments, including red, blue, and gold spheres, as well as silver tinsel. The tree is set against a dark background, and the lights create a warm, festive glow. The text is overlaid on the upper and lower portions of the tree.

POLISH CHRISTMAS EVE

RECIPES AND TRADITIONS

A GUIDE ON HOW TO MAKE
YOUR OWN TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS EVE
IN YOUR HOUSE

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Hi! My name is Aleksandra. In CookINPolish.com I share my passion to cooking and to Polish cuisine. Join me on facebook and instagram if you want to be up to date with my families recipes. The food we all love and think about with sentiment, thanks to which we can go back to our childhood and warm our hearts with memories of Babcia preparing meals. Christmas Eve is a special time in Polish families. We gather and celebrate Wigilia dinner together.



We all want to carry on the tradition, even we are not in Poland any more. That's why in this ebook you will find reminders of the most important Polish Christmas Eve' traditions. I tried to make a list of traditions short, just to signalize them, but I strongly encourage you to investigate them further by yourself.

In the next section you can check a basic list of meals to be served at Christmas Eve meal, at the Wigilia dinner. Then finally I chose my favorite meals and included recipes for them on the next pages. Feel free to ask me on facebook if you have any queries about recipes.

If you find my ebook helpful, please share link to my blog to your friends and family.

If you wish to gratitude me, you can send small donation of your choice to my paypal account: a.roslanowska@gmail.com.



BASIC POLISH CHRISTMAS EVE TRADITIONS

- Place a piece of straw under a white tablecloth, that reminds of birth of Jesus in manger in Bethlehem.
- Prepare a spare place setting at the table for an unexpected guest or for those no longer with us.
- The youngest kid watching for the first star of the evening to shine. It is a sign to begin the Wigilia dinner and festivities.
- The youngest member of the family reads the passage of birth of Christ from the bible.
- The eldest member of the family passes the oplatki from oldest to youngest at the table.
- Guests walk around the table, hug and say Merry Christmas to one another.
- Tradition calls for 12 traditional courses to be served during the Polish Christmas Eve. This is to represent 12 months and 12 apostles.
- Each guest needs to try a little piece of each dish.
- Opening presents from under the Christmas tree after dinner.
- Singing Christmas carols in Polish after meal.
- Going to the midnight mass – Pasterka.

A the same time we need to remember, that:

- 12 dishes is too much for one person to make and far too much for my small family, so whatever you serve will be lovely!
- Christmas Eve menus often reflect multicultural aspects, as Jews, Poles, Germans, Lithuanians and other minorities lived together.
- If you have guests coming in don't hesitate to ask for bringing some dish with them. You may chose something you don't love cooking 😊



12 DISHES ON WIGILIA TABLE MAY INCLUDE:

- red borscht with uszka,
- mushroom soup,
- beets and horseradish – ćwikła,
- sauerkraut and mushroom pierogi,
- croquettes with sauerkraut and mushrooms,
- fish in Greek sauce,
- herring under a blanket,
- fried yeast pierogi,
- gingerbread,
- split pea and cabbage stew,
- fruit compote made from cooked dried and smoked fruits – plums, apples, pears, and apricots. Its most appreciated purpose is to speed up digestion,
- carp in aspic,
- cabbage rolls with mushrooms and buckwheat,
- pierogi with buckwheat and farmers cheese,
- herring – in oil and in sour cream,
- lenten cabbage: sauerkraut with mushrooms stew,
- pickled herring,
- vegetable salad,
- noodles with poppy seed.



BOLDDED MEALS RECIPES YOU WILL FIND ON NEXT PAGES



Forest Mushrooms & Sauerkraut Dumplings

COOKINPOLISH.COM/FOREST-MUSHROOMS-SAUERKRAUT-DUMPLINGS/

Pierogi z Kapustą i Grzybami

Are you fasting during Lent? Whatever you will answer, it is always good to limit quantity of meat in your diet. But, let's admit, having Forest Mushrooms & Sauerkraut Dumplings is not fasting, this is something you look for and desire. This is a treat:) The best served with sauteed onions.

Ingredients:

DOUGH:

- 2 cups all purpose flour + additional flour if needed
- pinch salt
- 3/4 cup of hot water

FILLING:

- 600 g/ 1,5 lb sauerkraut
- 100g/ 4 oz dried wild mushrooms
- 1 onion
- salt, pepper



MAKE MORE FILLING IF YOU PLAN TO MAKE BORSCHT WITH USZKA! RECIPE ON FOLLOWING PAGES.

For Forest Mushrooms & Sauerkraut Dumplings I make a simple pierogi dough. Basic recipe: flour, water and salt. Combine all and knead until you get an elastic dough. You can use a food processor with a hook to do it well and easy.

Place mushrooms in a pot, cover with water. Bring to boil and simmer for half an hour. Strain and chop once they are cool.

Place sauerkraut in a medium pot, cover with water. Bring to boil and simmer for about an hour. Strain and let cool down. Then chop or blend it in a food processor.

Chop an onion and saute on the butter. Combine mushrooms, sauerkraut and onion in the bowl. Add salt and pepper.

Roll out the dough on a table. Use additional flour underneath and on the surface, not to get stuck to the table.

Cut rounds, place a tea spoon of the filling in the middle and seal the edges to make a dumpling.

Drop pierogi into the boiling salty water. Wait till they come up to the surface, wait another minute and take them out.

Beets Borscht with Uszka

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Barszcz z uszkami

Beets Borscht with Uszka is traditionally prepared for Christmas Eve in many Polish homes. As the opposite to borscht sometimes forest mushrooms soup is prepared, but not in my family house- we love beets borscht:)

INGREDIENTS

- 2 kg/4,4 lb of beets
- 1 carrot
- 2 onions
- 1 celeriac
- 3 dried forest mushrooms
- 4 bay leaves
- 5 berries of allspice
- 1 liter/4,2 cups of beets sourdough
- salt, pepper to taste
- sugar to taste



Cut beets, celeriac and carrots into small pieces. Fry onions above the stove. Place everything in a large pot, add forest mushrooms, bay leaves and allspice. Fill the pot with water (5-6 liters/8-10 pints) and simmer until vegetables are soft- for about 1,5 hour. Strain the liquid, add beets kvas/ sourdough and here you are- you prepared a borscht:)

If you are not able to get/make beets kvas, you may just use few tablespoons of white vinegar, lemon juice or balsamic vinegar.

Serve Beets Borscht with Uszka.

RECIPE FOR USZKA ON THE NEXT PAGE

Uszka for Borscht



DOUGH:

- 2 cups all purpose flour
- 1 egg
- pinch salt
- 1 ts butter
- 3/4 cup of hot water

For a dumpling dough place flour, egg and butter in the food processor and start mixing with a hook. Sprinkle with salt. Gradually add hot water. Mix until it's smooth. This is my favorite dumpling dough, because it's elastic and easy in operation:)

GO BACK TO SAUERKRAUT & MUSHROOM PIEROGI FOR RECIPE FOR USZKA FILLING!

Roll out the dough on a table. Use additional flour underneath and on the surface, not to get stuck to the table.

Cut small rounds, place a tea spoon of the filling in the middle and seal the edges to make a dumpling. Seal two edges of the dumpling to make a ring.

Drop uszka into the boiling salty water. Wait till they come up to the surface, wait another minute and take them out.

Serve Uszka for Borscht with red borscht. Must have for Christmas Eve in Poland!

Beets and horseradish – Ćwikła

COOKINPOLISH.COM/BEETS-AND-HORSERADISH-CWIKLA/

In my family house beets and horseradish – Ćwikła is served during Easter and Christmas, it usually goes with home made cold meats and vegetable salad.



Ingredients

- 5 beets
- 1/2 cup horseradish
- salt
- 3 tbs lemon juice

Bake or cook beets.

If you prefer to cook: Place clean whole beets without peeling in a pot, cover with small amount of water, bring to boil and cook on small fire – depending on the beets size – for about an hour.

If you choose to bake, like I usually do: Clean beets, cover each with aluminum foil. Bake in 180 C/ 360 F for about an hour.

Once they're cool, peel them and grate them on a medium sized grater. Actually in Poland a medium sized whole grater is usually called: beets' grater:)

Season with salt. Add lemon juice or white vinegar or... my magic ingredient – balsamic vinegar:) I know, it's not Polish, but if you can accept that fact;), go for it – it makes a difference!

Add grated horseradish. You can add less and check the taste, so that it wasn't too hot. Keep it in a jar to keep all the flavors inside mixed together.

PREPARING TO CHRISTMAS

You can make few jars of baked beets in advance, to have it in your pantry and have it for quick use just the moment you feel like having Ćwikła. You just take one jar, add horseradish and it's ready! Perfect tip for Christmas, make few jars at the beginning of December and you would have more time for Christmas.

Once you have beets baked and grated, add salt, balsamic vinegar. My mum adds a pinch of sugar too. Pack the jars with beets. There should be some juice inside. If there isn't, I add 2-3 tablespoons of water. Close the jar and pasteurize it with a method you prefer. I place jars in a oven and keep it for half an hour in 130 C.

Polish Poppy Seed Roll

COOKINPOLISH.COM/POLISH-POPPY-SEED-ROLL/

Makowiec

Polish Poppy Seed Roll Makowiec is traditional Polish dessert, in my family we always have it for both: Christmas and Easter. My mum makes it without any recipe and makes 4 rolls each time, I made my best to put her instructions in writing and limit the amounts to make 2 rolls. Makowiec for me smells like Christmas. The last few years when I go home for Christmas I always assist my Mum to make Poppy seed rolls. We would seat in the evening, when all the family is resting, my Mum is kneading and then we'd waiting for yeast dough to rise.



Poppy seed filling – prepare it a day before:

Ingredients:

- 500 g poppy seed
- 200 g sugar
- 1 teaspoon almond essence
- handful raisins, chopped walnuts, candied orange peel – as you like and if you wish
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 5 egg whites

Place poppy seed in a sauce pan and cover with boiling water, simmer for 10-15 minutes. Set aside and set aside for a night. The next day squeeze out excess water, add sugar and mix together. Then grind poppy seed two times.

RECIPE CONTINUOUS ON THE NEXT PAGE

Dough:

Ingredients:

- 500 g flour
- 200 ml milk
- 150 g butter
- 5 egg yolks
- 50 g fresh yeast
- 100 g sugar
- half teaspoon salt
- few drops vanilla essence



Dissolve the yeast in the lukewarm milk, add 1 teaspoon of sugar and 3 tablespoons of flour. Cover with a cloth and set aside in a warm place for 10 minutes for rising.

Place flour placed in a big bowl. Add yeast mixture, sugar, egg yolks, salt and vanilla essence. Knead everything, then gradually add melted cooled butter. Add some flour if the dough is too sticky. Set a bowl aside (covered with a cloth) for rising in a warm place. It should take about an hour for the dough to double.

In a meantime add almond essence and butter to ground poppy seed. Add walnuts, raisins and candied orange peel if you like them. Beat the egg whites. Combine delicately egg whites into poppy seed filling.

Lightly fork beat one egg white in a small bowl. In other bowl mix one egg yolk.

Knead the dough again. Divide the dough into 2 parts. Roll out first part on the floured table top into rectangle about 30 cm x 40 cm (12 x 16 in). Brush the dough surface with beaten egg white, place half of poppy seed filling on it and spread it evenly over the dough, leaving 2 cm from edges clear. Then roll the dough along the long edge, stick the ends and place rolls in a buttered baking dish (40 cm x 15 cm → 16 x 5 in). Brush the surface with egg yolk. Do same with second part of the dough. Set aside to rise. After half an hour place in a oven, bake for 40 minutes in 190 C (370 F).

I can almost smell Polish poppy seed roll right now!

Smacznego!

I've decided to leave metrics as they are, European version, as I think using cups may be misleading, ounces too. Please use metrics conversion tool, for example shared here: <https://www.metric-conversions.org>.

Herring under a blanket

COOKINPOLISH.COM/HERRING-UNDER-A-BLANKET-SLEDZIE-
POD-PIERZYNKA/

Śledzie pod pierzynką

This herring salad has few layers of ingredients with herring on the bottom of it, that is why it is usually called Herring under a blanket. This is one of my favorite herring dishes for Christmas Eve and Christmas.



Ingredients

- 3 fillets salted herring
- 1 medium onion chopped
- 4 medium beetroots baked or cooked grated
- 4 medium potatoes
- 2 medium carrots
- 2 eggs cooked hard
- 4tbs mayonnaise
- 2 tbs thick yogurt
- salt, pepper

1. Cook potatoes and carrots in a peel.
2. Cut herring into small cubes, mix with finely chopped onions, add pepper. Put on the bottom of the bowl.
3. Mix mayonnaise with yogurt.
4. Grated beetroots mix with 3 tbs of mayonnaise sauce and cover the herring in a bowl.
5. Cut potatoes into small cubes- this would be the next layer in a bowl.
6. Cut carrots finely and mix with mayo sauce left. Cover with it potatoes' layer in a bowl.
7. Grate eggs on small wholes grater and finish the bowl with it.

The salad is the best on the next day, when the flavors are mixed. Enjoy! Smacznego!

Lenten Cabbage with Mushrooms

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-KAPUSTA-POSTNA/

Kapusta postna

Lenten cabbage with mushrooms is in Poland usually served on Christmas Eve, but it is also popular dish during Lent. Healthy, sour – enjoy!



Ingredients

- 0,7 kg/ 1,5 lb sauerkraut
- 50 g/ 0,1 lb dried forest mushrooms
- 1 onion
- salt & pepper

Put dried mushrooms into the water for the night for rehydration. The next day cook them for 20 minutes.

Cut sauerkraut carelessly, place in the jar, add water in which mushrooms were cooked. Put on the fire, bring to boil and simmer.

In the meantime chop onion and saute on 3 tbs of rapeseed oil. Add to sauerkraut and simmer for 30 minutes.

Check every few minutes, stir, refill water if necessary. Season with salt and pepper to your taste.

After 30 minutes lenten cabbage with mushrooms is ready. Serve it with good rye bread and butter.

Grandma's Yeast Dumplings

Years ago my Grandma Emilka was preparing these yeast dumplings for Christmas Eve, she was using her own recipe – some of this and a handful of that, just like an experienced Polish cook. Nowadays my sister Kasia got over- she recreated recipe and now she is making the best Grandma's Yeast Dumplings. They are filled with either forest mushrooms and sauerkraut (perfect with beets borscht too) or: poppy seed filling (served as a Christmas Eve dessert).

I advise you to make the filling a day before, because one day preparations might be overwhelming.



SAUERKRAUT AND FOREST MUSHROOMS FILLING:

INGREDIENTS:

- 400 g/ 1 lb sauerkraut
- 100g/ 4 oz dried wild mushrooms
- 1 onion
- salt, pepper

Place forest mushrooms in a pot, cover with water. Simmer for half an hour. Strain and chop once they are cool.

Place sauerkraut in a pot, cover with water. Simmer for about an hour. Strain and let cool down. Then chop or blend it in a food processor.

Chop an onion and saute on the butter. Combine mushrooms, sauerkraut and onion in the bowl. Add salt and pepper. Ready!

RECIPE CONTINUOUS ON THE NEXT PAGE

POPPY SEED FILLING:

INGREDIENTS:

- 300 g poppy seed
- 100 g sugar
- 1 teaspoon butter

Place poppy seed in a sauce pan and cover with boiling water, simmer for 15 minutes. Set aside for a night. The next day squeeze out excess water, add sugar, mix together and grind it two times.

PIEROGI DOUGH:

- 400 g flour
- 150 ml milk
- 100 g butter
- 2 eggs
- 35 g fresh yeast
- 1 tablespoons sugar
- half teaspoon salt



Dissolve the yeast in the lukewarm milk, add 1 teaspoon of sugar and 3 tablespoons of flour. Cover with a cloth and set aside in a warm place for 10 minutes for rising.

Place flour in a bowl. Add yeast mixture, eggs and salt. Knead and gradually add melted cooled butter. Add some flour if the dough is sticky. Set a bowl aside (covered with a cloth) for rising in a warm place. After an hour knead the dough again and divide it into 3-4 parts.

Take one part and roll out on the floured table top. Cut rectangles, triangles, as it goes, with a knife.

ASSEMBLING:

Take a piece of a dough, place a teaspoon of the filling in the middle and seal the edges together.

As we are making always these two fillings' pierogi, we differentiate them using rectangle or triangle shape.

Fry grandma's yeast dumplings on one side for 2 minutes, flip and fry another minute till golden.

Zamojskie Buckwheat Dumplings

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Dumplings are Polish favorite dish. They can have a whole range of fillings: sauerkraut, meat, farmers cheese, fruits. For Christmas Eve meatless pierogi should be on your menu:) They can be served with Beets Borscht.

INGREDIENTS:

DOUGH:

- 2 cups all purpose flour + additi
- 1 egg
- pinch salt
- 1 ts butter
- 3/4 cup of hot water

FILLING:

- 75 g / 3 oz buckwheat
- 200 g / 0,5 lb farmers cheese
- 1 onion
- salt, pepper



Place flour, egg and butter in the food processor, sprinkle with salt. Start mixing with a hook, gradually add hot water. Mix until the dough is smooth. Cover with a cloth while you prepare the filling.

Cook buckwheat in salty water. Set aside for cool down. Once it's cool add farmers cheese, fork all to combine ingredients. Add sauteed chopped onion. Season with salt and pepper.

Roll out the dough on a table. Use additional flour underneath and on the surface, not to get stuck to the table.

Cut rounds, place a full tea spoon of the filling in the middle and seal the edges to make a dumpling.

Drop Zamojskie Buckwheat Dumplings into the boiling salty water. Wait till they come up to the surface, wait another minute and take them out.

Sauerkraut and Mushroom Croquettes

COOKINPOLISH.COM/POLISH-VEGETABLE-SALAD/

Krokiety z kapustą i grzybami

Sauerkraut and Mushroom Croquettes are one of the staple dishes in Poland for Wigilia. We serve it to Beets Borscht instead of Uszka. If you changed the filling to meat, you can just have it for family dinner as a separate dish or with chicken soup. There is quite a lot of frying involved, so I limit krokiety in my diet to few times a year.

Ingredients

- 2 cups flour
- 1 egg
- 2 cups milk
- pinch salt
- 1- 2 cups water

Filling

- 0,5 kg sauerkraut
- 2 handfuls dried forest mushrooms
- 1 onion
- salt and pepper
- 3 bay leaves
- 4 seeds allspice



Coating

- flour
- breadcrumbs
- egg

Filling preparation

A day before place forest mushrooms in a bowl and cover with water. Leave over night for rehydration.

The day before you can also cook sauerkraut. Chop it carelessly and place in a jar. Cover with water, add bay leave, allspice and pepper. Bring to boil and simmer till it's soft. After about 40 minutes it should be ready. Let sauerkraut cool and place it on a sieve. Squeeze it thoroughly, (I use hands to do it best:)

On the next day chop an onion, heat a pan, place some butter on it and saute an onion. Add soaked and chopped forest mushrooms. Saute for few more minutes. Add sauerkraut so that all the flavors mixed. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Pancakes preparation

Mix flour with egg and milk in a hand mixer or manually with a fork. Sprinkle with salt. Add water. I add 1 cup of water, check the consistency and add some more if necessary. We need to get batter consistency. Put aside for few minutes – gluten will make the dough smooth.

Grease medium size frying pan and pour in some batter when hot. Keep pancakes thin for best Krokiety. Fry for 2-3 minutes on each side. From this ingredients you will get about 10-12 pancakes.

Forming Krokiety

Place sauerkraut and mushroom filling on the pancake. Use about 2 tablespoons on each pancake, spread it over it and form Krokiety as in the picture below. Fold the side inside and roll it.

Sauerkraut and Mushroom Croquettes are ready when coated in flour, an egg and breadcrumbs and fried on each side till brown.

I fry some some croquettes without coating, check both options to decide how you like it better.

Polish 'Greek fish'

COOKINPOLISH.COM/RYBA-PO-GRECKU/

Ryba po grecku

Nobody knows why fried fish with steam veggies is in Poland called Polish 'Greek fish':) It is just a common name, used from decades by our grandmothers and mothers.

Greeks, please do not get offended:) Almost all Poles love it, when we eat Greek fish, we think warmly about Greece and Greeks:)



Ingredients

- 1 kg/2,2 lb white fish
- 5 carrots
- 2 white parsley
- 3 onions
- 3 tbs tomato paste
- salt, pepper
- 1tbs soy sauce
- flour for tossing

Grate carrots and parsley, place in a pot and steam in small amount of water. Add salt and pepper and soy sauce.

Fry chopped onion. Once steamed veggies are done, add onions and tomato paste, stir gently and cook for another 5 minutes without lid, to evaporate excess water.

Cut fish, take the bones out, season with salt and pepper, toss in a flour and fry on hot oil for 3-4 minutes on each side.

Assemble in a bowl: a layer of veggies (1/2 of them), fried fish and the rest of veggies.

Polish 'Greek fish' is best the next day, when the flavors mix.

Notes:

- you can use fish filets- there are boneless,
- I use white fish like: cod, hake or pollock. If in your country you have other fish easy to get, you can just use white fish with thick bones, easy to take out.

Polish vegetable salad

COOKINPOLISH.COM/POLISH-VEGETABLE-SALAD/

Sałatka Jarzynowa

I remember from my childhood that Polish vegetable salad – sałatka jarzynowa – was a must for each Easter, Christmas, birthdays and – very popular those times in Poland – name days. In the 80-ties mayonnaise was hard to get in stores, so we used to prepare it at home. It was fun for us, kids to help with all the culinary preparations. Dieticians say that this salad is a dietetic crime, but one cannot deny this yummy tradition, come on! 😊

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cooked carrots
- 4 cooked potatoes
- tin peas
- 5 pickled cucumbers
- 2 apples
- medium red onion
- 3 hard cooked eggs
- 3 tbs mayonnaise
- 3 tbs thick yogurt
- 1 tbs mustard
- salt & pepper



Dice vegetables (except of peas;) and eggs into small cubes. Add mayo, yogurt and mustard, season with pepper and salt if needed.

Store in a fridge for 2-3 days, maximum 4:)

It's better to prepare ingredients a day before: cook carrots and potatoes in advance. In my family we cook them together in peels and then peel them. Eggs can be also cooked before.

Polish vegetable salad tastes good with sliced cold meats and [Ćwikła](#).

Enjoy! Smacznego!



Peas and Cabbage Stew

COOKINPOLISH.COM/PEAS-AND-CABBAGE-STEW/

Groch z kapusta

Phrase "peas and cabbage" in Polish common language is defined as mixing two things which do not match. Peas and cabbage stew is not a mess, try:)

Historically in Poland cabbage is one of the most popular vegetables. It is cheap, so it's available for poor people. Is easy to store during winter, so can be used during the whole year. For years people in Poland use it widely, so we have many traditional dishes with cabbage as ingredient.



Ingredients

- 200 g dried peas
- 500 g sauerkraut
- 1 large onion
- pepper, marjoram

Dried peas leave in the water for the night. Next day change the water, bring to boil and simmer for an hour. I used peas halves- they can be cooked without presoaking in water.

Cut sauerkraut, cover with hot water and boil it for 30 minutes until it's cooked.

Chop and saute onion in the pan.

Mix cooked peas, sauerkraut and onion, season with pepper and marjoram. Peas and cabbage stew is ready!



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Wishing you a Happy
Holiday and a joyful New
Year.

Best wishes from Poland!

Aleksandra from



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