



SAMOGITIA REGION

Although Lithuania is quite a small country, the inhabitants eat differently in different ethnographic regions. Every guest that comes to our country soon notices that it is so miscellaneous. Different features of the Lithuanian culture and inheritance were formed by variable history of our country. The Samogitians who live in the North-West region are the biggest fans of porridges. Every Samogitian likes hemp meals and appreciates kastinys with cooked potatoes traditionally – no other nation of the world can make this originally fresh-spicy whipped sour cream meal. They bake bread, potato cake that is called kugel. They cook oat kissel, bake sophisticated cakes with berries, fruit, jam. Earlier, they cooked soup putra from different whipped corn flour products. Cooked peas with potatoes were popular, especially on Fridays, and they were served with sour milk or herring. Thus, if you come to Samogitia, you will see, feel, hear and experience everything bit by bit from different times and epochs.

COMPREHENSIVELY

Samogitia is the North-West region and its capital is Telsiai. The region cannot be imagined without kastinys with cooked unpeeled potatoes. Kastinys is a unique whipped fresh-spicy sour cream meal that does not have any analogues in the whole world. It is said that the tastiest kastinys can be whipped with an apple-tree spoon. The Samogitians mostly use caraways to make it tastier. Sometimes, they also add garlic, mints, pop grains or green onions and obtain the colour by means of beetroot, carrot juice or yolk.

Kwas is a popular drink in Samogitia. Cookery specialists list 100 recipes of kwas. It were made not only from corn malt, bread or beetroots, but also from milk, honey, fruit, berries, blossoms, buttons, pies, seeds etc. The Samogitians cooked kwas even from juniper berries.

Porridges were eaten throughout Lithuania, but the Samogitians are leaders in eating porridges. Probably, they were those who preserved an open fireplace in Lithuania that was very comfortable for cooking putra and various porridges. The Samogitians mostly started their morning with porridge. If someone wanted to ask whether a person had already had breakfast, he or she asked: “Have you had your porridge yet?” The Samogitians ate porridge from a common bowl, made a small pit in the middle and poured sauce: pork fat, goose crackling etc. They took porridge with a spoon, ate in small bites dunked in fat.

The Samogitians and Lietuvininkai were the first who started growing sorrels in the kitchen-garden. They called sorrel soup rugstynyne and cooked with or without meat. Onion cibulyne,

sriubalyne and soups with coal-baked herring were the most popular cold soups. Siupinys was made at Mardi Gras and on the first day of Christmas. Even today, hot sauerkraut soup taken to the table means that the wedding is over.

Samogitian pork loin is well known in Samogitia. It was rubbed with spice: bitter pepper and allspice, laurel leaves, saltpetre, sugar, garlic, mint leaves and salt, poured with hot blood and stored for 3 or 4 days; it was turned around every day. Then, the loin was dried up, beaten to make it more fragile, inserted into the large intestine and smoked. The rooms used for smoking in Klaipeda region consisted of a chimney kitchen where poles with hooks were mounted in order to hang meat.

Samogitian pig butchers liked drinking fresh blood. Housewives baked kruvainis from blood. The blood of a slaughtered animal was mixed with barley corn only, but if rye flour was mixed with corn and diluted with a little water, something like bread was baked from this paste – just non-soured. This bread was dark brown. Bacon was salted differently, without any spice. A tub with salted meat was stored in the barn, in a premise for meat – cold chamber. 3 or 4 weeks later, it was allowed dripping and smoked in the chimney. Meat hung there until it was eaten.

The Lithuanians, like other nations, eventually started making more perfect bread ovens in the yards of their homesteads and the ovens were moved to residential premises only in the 17th century. The Samogitians baked bread in separate houses intended for this purpose for a long time. The quality of bread depended not only from the baking skills of the housewife, raw materials or oven, but also from the baking rituals that started from the first minute of preparation.

The Samogitian women mostly put rye flour on the leaven. Instead of the leaven, they also used an old slice of bread that was put in the cooled mixture. First, bread was mixed. The obligatory components of Samogitian bread are caraways and salt. Sometimes linseed or sugar was put in the rye bread paste.

As the Samogitians lacked rye, they also baked hemp bread. It is said that this bread looked nice on the table, but split immediately once it was cut. The Samogitians were sure: the older the bread, the tastier, so some farmers did not wait for the last cut of the loaf, but started the new baking just after eating a half of the previous one... A small round loaf for children was baked with bacon or hemp stuffing. Bread-cake was baked from fine rye flour. It was mixed in milk and butter or goose fat and sugar were added. The paste for bread-cake was raised with domestic or commercial yeast.

The Easter feast was famous with cakes and housewives tried to bake as high cakes as possible. It is still believed that the higher are Easter cakes, the better will be the wheat crop.

As the Samogitian farmers had wonderful pastures and cattle of German species, they consumed more dairy products and made more various meals than other Lithuanians. They served raised milk with caraways, cottage cheese, sweet, fresh or a little dried cheese. The Samogitians liked drying them in the yard on fence poles or in the kitchen on special shelves. They also hung a basket with cheese in the chimney.

Vimbis – the fish liked by the Samogitians – were prepared in quite a simple way: they were coated with salt and pepper and their sides were cut transversely. Spits with prepared fish were

stuck into the ground at a 1 meter distance from the fire made of leafy wood. It seems simple, but it was necessary to bake vimbas for at least 3 hours and keep on turning the spits. At the end, the fish was roasted by transferring the spits nearer to the fire. Fish was also baked on the fire coal, hot stones or in the ash.

According to the sources of the 17th, it can be assumed that the Samogitians mixed barley and oats in halves as they made malt beer. In the 17th century, malt beer was made from water, corn and hops in tree bark dishes. Hot stones were put in these dishes and they were cooked overnight and mash was consumed the next day. Until the middle of the 17th century, people made good barley beer in these localities, liked it and drank it at weddings and funerals. However, after the ideas of the temperance movement spread, people started drinking less domestic beer and replaced it with bread kwas; as they used hops, they obtained a drink that was similar to beer. Strong malt beer also disappeared from Samogitia for other objective reasons: the European culture of drinking had a big influence on the entire Western Lithuania and city and town shops started selling commercial beer and vodka. Beer was also made from mangel-wurzel in Samogitia. It was cooked, mixed with rye or barley flour, baked in the oven and crushed and the preparation was similar to that of bread bear.

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



Financed by the European Regional Development Fund.



2014-2020 Operational
Programme for the
European Union Funds
Investments in Lithuania