

Traditional Recipes **from Bihor**





Contents

The Traditional Food of Bihor

4 Historical Considerations

Pies

- 12 Pie on Cast Iron
- 16 Pie from Beiuș
- 20 Pie on a Shovel as in Briheni, with Cheese and Potatoes
- 24 "Cocoroază" Pie
- 26 "Răchișe" on the Stove (Simple Pie)
- 28 Peasant's Pie (Pancove)
- 30 Beleș Pie (Vargabéles)

Warm and Cold Snacks

- 34 Romanian Sausage with Maize
- 38 Porcini and Champignon Spread
- 40 Potato Pancakes (Polesniak)
- 44 Pork Jelly (Cocioane)
- 46 Fish Balls (Gefilte Fisch)
- 48 Egg with Onion (Zvibel mit ei)

Vegetable Soups and Broths

- 52 Fried Pasta Soup with Porcini Mushrooms, as in Budureasa
- 56 Grated Pasta Soup (Supă de răzălăi)
- 58 "Greased blanket" Soup (Zamă cu "pătură unsă")
- 60 Zucchini Soup (Zamă de cucurbătă)
- 62 Lettuce Soup (Zamă de șelată)
- 64 Tomato Soup (Zamă de părădici)
- 66 Egg Soup
- 68 Goulash Soup (Gulyásleves)
- 72 Bean goulash (Babgulyás)
- 76 Cold Sour Cherry Soup (Meggyleves)
- 78 Slovak Mushroom Soup (Hribovica)
- 80 Meat Broth and Matzah Dumplings (Matza Knödel)

Main Courses

- 84 Bihor Stew
- 86 Chicken Stew with Dumplings
- 88 Cabbage Rolls with Coarsely Ground Corn
- 92 "Cici" from Bihor
- 96 Refried Beans (Păsulă zolită)
- 98 Pinched Noodles (Boți pițigați)

- 100 Scrambled Eggs (Scrob)
- 102 "Pileucă"
- 104 Cabbage and Noodles (Loște cu curechi)
- 108 Meat and Cabbage Stir-Fry (Toroș)
- 112 Pig's Trotter Stew
- 116 Chicken Paprikash with Dumplings (Csirkepaprikás)
- 118 Vegetable Stew (Lecsó)
- 122 Potatoes and Dumplings
- 124 Cheese and Bacon Dumplings (Bryndzové Halušky)
- 128 Cholent (Șolent)

Sweets and Pastries

- 132 Plum Pie (Moșocoarne)
- 136 Pancakes (Scoverzi)
- 138 Layered Cake
- 140 Floating Island
- 142 Plum Dumplings
- 144 Steamed Sweet Dumplings (Buchty na pare)
- 146 Hamantaschen
- 148 Walnut Cookies



The Traditional Food of Bihor

HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The historical destiny of Bihor county in the second millennium was marked by complex state, political, social, ethnic, religious and cultural realities, which generated a specific model of human interaction.

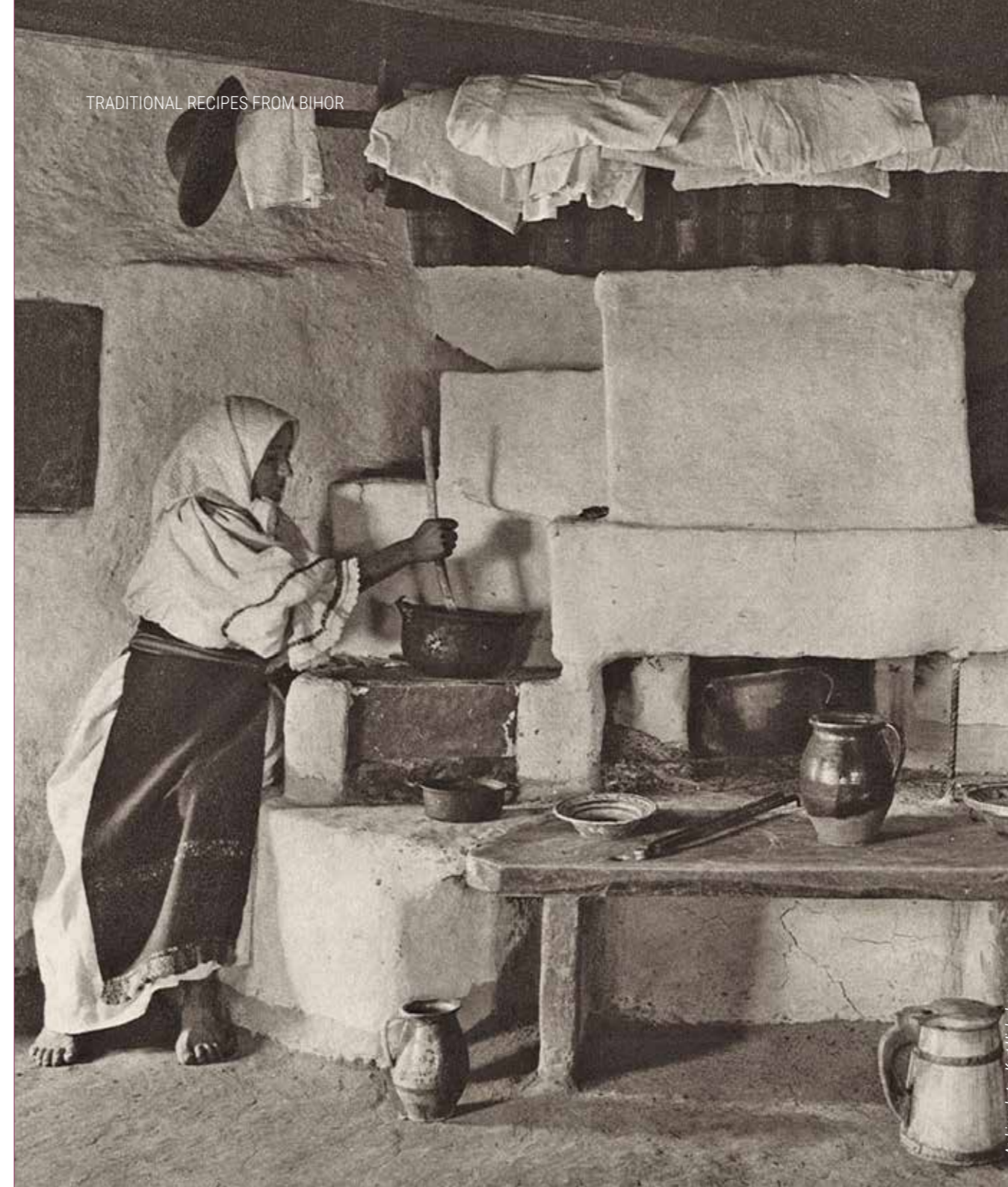
An original material and spiritual culture based on multi-ethnicity, multi-cultural and religious diversity was shaped in this space of confluence between Eastern and Western civilizations.

After the year 1000, Italians, Turks, Macedo-Romanians, Germans, Slovaks, Rutenians and Jews accompanied for a shorter or longer period of time the Romanian and Hungarian people living here. Their presence contributed to the creation of a highly rural existential framework in this geopolitical area. Each of these nationalities knew how to preserve its own identity by keeping its ancient traditions and habits, its folklore, traditional beliefs, but also the food habits transmitted from generation to generation.

The various religious beliefs of these people also played a key role in their food choices. Their menus had to be congruent with their religions (especially during fasting periods): Orthodox and Greek-Catholic in the case of Romanians, Roman-Catholic and Protestant for Hungarians, Roman-Catholic for Slovaks, Mosaic for Jews (belief that is subordinated to Jewish culinary rules).

During the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, Bihor area was marked by the transition from Mediaeval to Modern times, both in the socio-political and economic realms and when it came to mentalities. It is to be noted that this evolutionary process that all European societies were going through at the time implied a dialogue between tradition and innovation. This dialogue also concerned traditional cuisine, where each ethnic group had such strong traditions that food recipes survived generation after generation.

TRADITIONAL RECIPES FROM BIHOR



Archive photo - Kurt Hiescher

There are various factors that contributed to the establishment of a traditional diet in Bihor. Above all, it was the natural setting, as the geography of Bihor county harmoniously combines different forms of relief. The plain (44% of the this territory), the hills (31.6%) and the mountains (24%) were the basis for setting up a sustainable livelihood in this area. The products generated by agriculture and animal farming ensured the creation of daily recipes that survived over a long period of time. It is also true that the production of food needed for daily life or various celebrations was influenced by the seasons and by climate or weather conditions. Similarly, the food crises of the 19th century obliged the peasants of Bihor to introduce new crops in order to survive. This explains the intensive cultivation of corn and potatoes. The general diet and the basic menus of Romanians, but also of the other ethnic groups (Hungarians, Slovaks, Jews etc.) became more stable as a result of natural and human (e.g. demographic) realities that contributed to the local people's loyalty to long known and accepted food sources.



TRADITIONAL RECIPES FROM BIHOR

Specialists concluded that there are four ethnographic sub-zones in Bihor: Crișul Alb, Crișul Negru, Crișul Repede and Crasna – Barcău. Each of these comprises a diverse natural landscape, which supported the development of specific, time-enduring occupations. The main ones were agriculture and animal farming and the secondary ones were orchardry, foraging, hunting, fishing and bee-keeping. Altogether, these produced sufficient food resources for the entire year. Additional occupations appeared in the Modern Age, too, the most important being the crafts. In Beiuș and Crișul Repede ethnographic areas the more frequent were pottery, chest-making and hand-making of sheepskin coats, while in Crasna-Barcău area there was wicker plating or bulrush weaving, for example. Artisans sold or swapped their products at fairs, where they could obtain, in exchange, various ingredients that supplemented the winter food supplies. We mostly refer to cereals, maize and potatoes.

Considering this living context we can conclude that the general diet in Bihor

consisted of plant and animal origin foods (meat and dairy, in particular, for the latter) and fermented drinks. Cereal domination is obvious and we mean wheat, as wheat flour was key in bread baking and preparation of traditional pies. Beside wheat, millet, rye, barley, rice and corn (corn flour, in fact) were also important raw materials for the staple foods of the people of Bihor. Vegetables were, in their turn, main components of certain local menus. Fresh or dried peas, lentils and beans were among the most frequently used.

Cabbage was an important vegetable in the peasants' diet, along with the potato – once it started to be extensively cultivated in the 19th century. Onions, garlic, raw or fermented tomatoes and peppers were also long known here and were cultivated together with local fruit like plums, traditionally used for making sweets such as the plum marmalade.

Several plants were also on the menu, to diversify the common diet: greens such as sorrel, ramson or nettle, but also forest fruits (blueberries, raspberries, wild cherries, cornelian cherries, rose

hips, blackthorn fruit, cranberries etc.), consumed either fresh or dried.

The meat obtained from animal farming was a favourite ingredient in Bihor cuisine. Historical documents reveal that during the Middle Ages as well as in modern times, meat was used for both everyday and festive meals. All the ethnic groups in the region used pork, beef, lamb, chicken, goose and turkey in their recipes. Venison was also valued by the people of Bihor: the wild boar, rabbit or deer were easy to catch during the hunting season, which usually started once the animals became mature or when they were threatening the crops (the wild boar, for example).

Fish was also included in the local cuisine of Bihor county. Fishing has been a documented secondary occupation since the 13th century, this region being rich in running waters as well as ponds or lakes in the plain. Fishermen (referred to as *piscatores* in the historical documents) could catch trout, carp, chub, barbel or the common nase. We will find these types of fish in the local menus especially during religious fasts. Some

artificial ponds nowadays also offer pike or catfish. There were fishing bans during spawning seasons, mainly in spring, between April and June.

Dairy products from cows, buffaloes, sheep or goats are constantly present in the diet of locals from Bihor, except, of course, the fasting periods. These products (sour cream, butter, various cheeses) were either consumed raw or processed using traditional tools. Fresh cheese was also used as filling for pies.

According to historical archives, traditional menus also included fermented drinks: wine, beer and the local spirit named "pălincă" and distilled in special installations from plums, apples, pears or other fruit. Hops was the raw material used in brewing, but its cultivation was for centuries under the monopoly of large land owners from around Beiuș, Beliu or Oradea.

Local wine making was satisfying and relied on the vineyards planted around Oradea or in the sandy areas of Bihor, like the Ier river valley. In fact, both wine and beer were satisfying over time.

Inherited recipes made unrestricted use of the products obtained yearly through the local people's labour, but on holidays they were used differently. The mandatory consumption of only vegetable products during religious holidays (as required by the local churches: Orthodox, Greek or Roman-Catholic, Protestant, Jewish etc.) led to the creation of a specific diet. The restrictions imposed on regular eating habits during religious holidays brought to the menus a series of symbolic foods, like the Christmas cake (which is believed to bring luck in general but also to crops) or the Easter proshora (associated with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ).

Lifecycle-related events (wedding, christening, funeral) proposed specific but sufficiently rich menus. Christening or wedding feasts, for example, had to include meat (pork, beef or chicken). Chicken soups, boiled beans, meat stews, cabbage rolls, pies, sweets were compulsory. The alms giving menu for a funeral, on the other hand, usually included cabbage rolls and pies.

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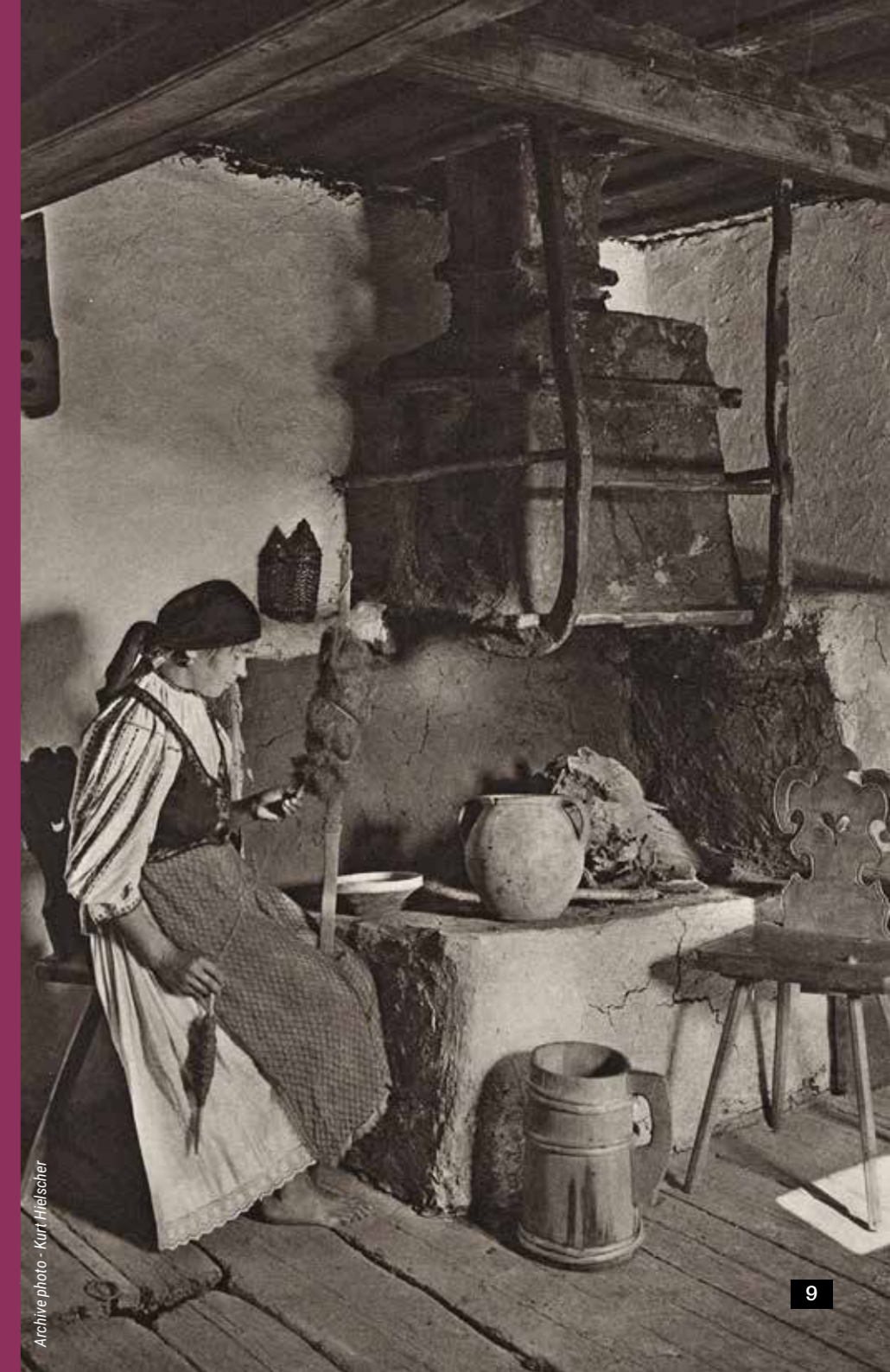
Each nationality living in Bihor respected its legacy recipes (including the spices) during the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, but they were still open towards taking up other types of food. In general, the phenomenon of acculturation was present for a long time in Bihor. Although the ethnic groups from this area kept their culinary traditions, they also absorbed new eating habits or foods as a result of their coexistence with the local population.

The recipes we have selected for this book can only convince us that keeping them for present and future use is our obvious duty. They are the result of long evolutionary processes in this field of life. Moreover, on the one hand they reflect the common taste of their creators, while on the other revealing the culinary preferences of Romanians, Hungarians, Slovaks, Jews and not only, materialized in specific menus that supported the everyday life of these people.

TRADITIONAL RECIPES FROM BIHOR



MAP OF BIHOR COUNTY, IN NORTH-WESTERN ROMANIA, with the localities that provided the recipes included in this book



Archive photo - Kurt Hfelscher

Pies



Pie on Cast Iron

Pies (from the Latin word *placenta*) take an important place in the traditional Romanian menus throughout the year.

This type of pie is made from the same dough as bread. Part of the dough prepared for bread was often kept aside and divided into smaller pieces, which were then filled with cheese and potatoes or cabbage, dill, spinach. Spinach pies were also called “vărzari”.

The locals had an interesting manner of cooking these pies: on a cast iron skillet placed in the upper part of an old type of fire installation used in this area, traditionally named “candalău” (vernacular).

Cheese, potato or cabbage pies were consumed separately, as part of the daily diet. Potato and cabbage ones were mostly part of the fasting diet, but could also be served on Sundays or holidays, along with cheese pies.



INGREDIENTS

for 10 servings:

Leavened dough

- 1 kg wheat flour
- 15 g fresh yeast or 50 g mash for bread dough
- warm water (40-50°C)
- 15 g salt (one full teaspoon)

Unleavened dough (alternative)

- identical to the leavened dough, but without yeast or mash

Filling

- 250/350 g raw or fermented cabbage
- 250/300 g salty sheep or cow cheese
- 250/350 g boiled potatoes
- 5 g ground pepper
- 400/450 g "plum honey" (jam)
- 30 ml sunflower oil for baking



PREPARATION

Preparing the ingredients

Remove the outer cabbage leaves, cut the cabbage in four and remove its stem. Cut the quarters into thin, long strips and leave for 10 minutes, then drain the liquid. Heat 10 ml oil in a pan, add the cut cabbage and fry for 15-20 minutes, until tender.

Weigh the cheese and mash it with a fork in a separate bowl.

Boil the potatoes in salty water, remove the skin, mash with a fork and then add 5 grams of salt and pepper. Mix well and keep in a separate bowl. Weigh the flour and sift in a large container. Dissolve the yeast in 400 ml of lukewarm water (for the leavened dough recipe).

Preparing the dough

Put the sifted flour in an average container, add 10 g of salt and gradually incorporate the warm water. Mix slowly and then knead by hand on the table, to obtain a compact, consistent, elastic dough. Leave to rest for 20-30 minutes. This dough can also be refrigerated at 3-6°C for one or two days, but needs to be kept at room temperature for 30 to 60 minutes before use. Roll the dough in the form of a tube and then cut into 10 equal pieces. These will transform into 10 balls (regionally they are called "cocuți") if you roll them in your hands.

Dust the table and the dough with flour and use a rolling pin to shape the dough round (approximately 10-15 cm in diameter) and thin it to about two millimeters. Put 75-100 grams of the filling you have already prepared in the middle of this disk you obtained.

Lift the margins of the dough around the filling and slowly bring them together in the middle, until they form a bag (sack). Reverse this sack and then gently use the rolling pin to roll it out again into a disk (15-20 cm diameter and 0.5-1 cm thick), without letting the filling get out. Put it in a dry pan and cook it on one side, then turn. You may oil the pie (if filled with cabbage, potatoes or plum jam). Continue baking on both sides.

Baking

Put the pie on a well heated flat metal surface (it can be a stove top, frying pan, skillet, pot). It will instantly start baking and turn golden brown. Bake on each side until the surface is nice and brown, with more intense baking spots. Turn it around several times to prevent burning.

Serve the pie hot, with sour cream or yoghurt.



Source: Ana Popa, Sturz Mariana – Bratca commune, Valea Crișului village.



Pie from Beiuș

This is a Romanian pastry product found mostly in Beiuș ethnographic area – hence its name.

The leavened or unleavened dough was made from wheat flour and filled with either cabbage or cheese or sometimes a combination like: cheese, potatoes, cabbage, spinach and onions. The ingredients used for the filling are the result of the ancient occupations of this area: agriculture and animal farming.

This pastry pie was mostly served at weddings (to welcome the guests, mostly), but also at year-round family events.



INGREDIENTS

for 10 servings:

Leavened dough

- 600 g wheat flour
- 330 ml warm water (40-50°C)
- 25 g fresh yeast
- 25 g salt
- 300 g pork fat

Filling options

- 100 g greens (dill, green onions, spinach, orach), cheese
- 200 g salty cheese
- 100 g boiled and mashed potatoes, 100 g sheep cheese
- 200 g grated apple, with sugar and cinnamon
- 200 g sour cabbage
- 1 beaten egg with 2 tablespoons of oil, to be used when baking.

PREPARATION

Preparing the ingredients

The leaves: wash the green onions, dill, spinach and orache (when in season), soak them and cut them small with a knife. Mash the cheese you want to use for the filling and mix it with the previously chopped greens.

Boil the potatoes in salty water, peel and mash them with a fork and then add the salty cheese. Mash well and keep the resulting mix in a bowl. Weigh the flour and sift into a medium-sized container.

Preparing the dough

Put the sifted flour and salt in an average container, add the warm water little by little and knead by hand. You should obtain a compact, consistent, elastic dough that can be easily worked with. Continue kneading on the table until the ingredients are well mixed together, then divide into 120 gram pieces. Roll out the portions on the table, in disks of ~20 cm diameter.



Grease these round sheets generously with pork fat, 2-3 spoons per portion (maximum one centimeter thick) and then leave to rest for 15-20 minutes, at room temperature (22-24 °C), so that the fat is absorbed by the dough.

When the dough is ready, it becomes more elastic and easier to roll out. Keep your palms open to drag it until it becomes transparent, then place on a table covered with cotton, linen or hemp cloth. Lay the filling evenly on the extended dough.

Rolling: use the table cloth on which you put the dough by holding its margins and lifting on one of the sides only, so that the dough starts rolling. At the end you will get a baguette that maintains the composition inside. If the rolling sheet is too large, you can roll only half of it from one side and half from the other. The two resulting baguettes can be cut apart or kept as they are.

Once the dough is rolled, place the pie in a tray and brush it with the beaten eggs mixed with oil.

Baking

Bake the pie in the oven for 40 minutes, at 200-220 °C. Its shape will depend on the form of the tray. The baguettes can thus be straight, 20-30 cm long, if placed in a square tray, or spiral shaped if you want to use a circular tray.

The pie is served hot.

Pie on a Shovel as in Briheni, with Cheese and Potatoes

This type of pie was traditionally prepared in the Romanian villages of Beiuș ethnographic area, both from leavened and unleavened dough obtained from wheat flour. The dough was rolled out into a thin sheet and then filled. In Briheni, locals mostly used salty cheese and potatoes as filling.

The wooden shovel (peel) was part of the traditional set of kitchen tools and was used for putting the pie in the oven. Ovens were made from tiles produced in Cărpinet, a pottery center renowned in the area. The local word for oven was "camniță".

These pies were included both in the daily menus and in menus prepared for large family events throughout the year.





Pie on a Shovel as in Briheni, with Cheese and Potatoes

INGREDIENTS

for 8-10 servings:

- 500 g flour
- 30-40 g yeast
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 3-4 spoons of water for dissolving the yeast
- warm water as much as the dough can take
- 2 eggs, one to be included in the dough and one for the filling

Filling

- 400 g salty cheese
- 200-300 g boiled potatoes. You can add more or less, depending on the salt content of the cheese



PREPARATION

Mix the egg, oil and salt in a bowl. Once you've soaked the yeast in 3-4 spoons of water, you can also incorporate it along with the flour and the warm water. Make sure you find the right balance for the ingredients, to obtain a soft dough. After kneading the dough you should let it rise until it doubles. Then you can put it on a table or a plane surface dusted with flour and use a rolling pin to roll it into a thin sheet.

Add the filling: salty cheese, boiled potatoes and one whole egg, well mixed together. Fold in the form of an envelope, place in a tray and arrange by hand so that the pie covers the entire tray surface.

Bake in the oven for 30 minutes, at 220°C.

“Cocoroază” Pie

INGREDIENTS

for 8-10 servings:

- 1 kg wheat flour
- 25 g yeast
- 50 ml oil
- 1 whole egg
- salt
- water

Filling

- 500 g corn flour
- cheese and sour milk as much as the dough can take
- 1 whole egg
- yeast the size of a walnut

PREPARATION

Mix the ingredients well and let the dough rise.

Prepare a composition from half a kilogram of flour, maize, eggs, cheese and sour milk, also adding the yeast. Mix it well and leave to rest. It is best to make this composition a few hours before baking.

Divide the dough into pieces and roll out each piece in a thin sheet. Add the composition and fold in four. Put the pies in the oven and grease with pork fat once they are done.

It belongs to the category of Romanian pastries known since the 19th century. The inner dough was mixed with corn flour.

The regional name “cocoroază” defines a pie filled with cheese and dill or nettles, but sometimes with meat, too. When non-animal products were used, it was part of the local fasting diet, usually being served as a main dish for lunch or dinner.

Source: Florea Lenuța – Drăgănești commune, Belejeni village.

This is a simple pie prepared all year round, from a rye or wheat-based dough (leavened or not). Once ready, this dough would be cooked on the bakestone in older times, while in the 18th – 20th centuries it was baked on a tile stove (produced in Cărpinet) or a cast iron stove.

This pie was also made by Orthodox Romanians during fasting periods, when dairy, eggs and meat were forbidden. During those periods, however, these pies were consumed with a vegetable stew or filled with marmalade (“plum honey”) or other boiled cereal with honey.



INGREDIENTS for 8-10 servings, option 1:

- 500 g flour
- 6 g dry yeast or 20 g fresh yeast
- 350 ml warm water
- 3-4 tablespoons of oil
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- salt

PREPARATION

Sift the flour, add the yeast, sugar, water and salt and combine them into a dough.

Add the oil gradually, continuing to knead for about 10 minutes. Cover with a towel and leave to rise. When it has doubled its volume, put it on the table and divide into smaller bits, which should be modelled into balls.

Then use the rolling pin to turn them into very thin disks. Cook on the pre-heated stove and afterwards brush with pork fat or sour cream.

“Răchișe” on the Stove (Simple Pie)

INGREDIENTS for 8-10 servings, option 2:

- 500 g flour
- 350 ml water
- 3-4 tablespoons of oil
- salt

PREPARATION

Prepare a thick dough as if you were making a pie. This dough does not need to rise.

Unfold it on the table, as thick as a finger. Oil its entire surface and roll from one end to the other “in a thread”. Leave to rest for a few minutes and then roll out again. Repeat this twice or three times, until it looks like pastry dough. After one last rolling out process, cook it in an oiled frying pan.

It can be eaten as it is or with a preferred spread...



Source: Scorte Irina - Tetchea commune, Hotar village.



The word “pancovă” defines a pastry that in Bihor was made from a wheat flour leavened dough. The word itself comes from the Hungarian “pánkó” and for the Romanians it meant a classical pie with various fillings – also considered a sweet product.

This recipe includes a filling of cheese and dill. When prepared as a dessert, these pies were filled with jam and after frying they were powdered with sugar.

Peasant's Pie (Pancove)

INGREDIENTS for 10-12 servings:

- 3 egg yolks
- 15 g yeast
- 500 ml milk
- 50 ml oil
- 10 g salt
- 10 g sugar
- 15 ml vinegar
- 100 g melted lard
- 1 kg flour

Filling

- 1 kg battered, salty cheese
- 3 egg whites
- dill
- 1 l oil for frying

PREPARATION

Whisk the egg yolks with sugar until they become foamy. Then add the warm milk and dissolve the yeast. Add the salt, vinegar and flour and start kneading. At the end, add the warm oil and mix further until the dough takes it in.

Divide the dough in three parts and roll out each part into a thin sheet. Grease the sheets with melted fat, then powder them with flour and roll them.

Let them rise for a little while, at room temperature, then roll out again. Put the cheese and whisked egg yolks mixture on one half, while bringing the other half over it and sticking the margins together with your fingers, to keep the filling from getting out. Cut into smaller squares and then deep fry in the hot oil.

A Hungarian dessert of Transylvanian origin, it was first prepared by innkeeper Varga from Cluj, in the 18th century. It is in fact a pudding made of noodles and cottage cheese, which in time was enriched with raisins. Once this mixture was made, it was rolled up in a strudel dough or a classical pastry sheet. It is a dessert that was constantly found in Transylvania and Central Europe, especially stating with the 20th century.

Beleş Pie (Vargabéles)

INGREDIENTS for 8-10 servings:

- white flour
- 500 g rice
- 350-500 g raisins
- cinnamon
- 500-750 ml oil
- water
- salt

PREPARATION

The filling contains boiled rice, sweetened with cinnamon and mixed with raisins.

Mix salty boiled water with flour and knead until you get a finely textured dough. Divide it into smaller pieces and roll out each piece on a floured cloth, until very thin. Spread oil on this dough and fill with the boiled, sweetened rice and raisins. Roll the dough over the rice and then "cut" the resulting material into 25-30 cm long segments, which are then twisted in a spiral. Leave to rest for about one hour.

Place carefully in a pan with hot oil. After it is fried, this pie should be left to soften for about 24 hours, in a covered pot.

Powder well with sugar before serving.

Warm and Cold Snacks



Romanian Sausage with Maize

Romanians from Bihor used to sacrifice their pigs every year on the Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ (20th of December), which is in fact a very old tradition, coming from pre-Christian times.

This liver-based Romanian sausage traditionally consists of pork organs and several spices (salt, pepper, thyme in particular), mixed with rice.

Starting with the 18th century, when corn started to spread in Bihor, too, a special ingredient was obtained by grounding the corn coarsely: a sort of cornmeal called "păsat". This was constantly used during food crisis periods in the modern age and thus it also became included in existing recipes, such as the one for cabbage rolls (also known as "sarmale").

In itself, the Romanian liver-based sausage with cornmeal was usually eaten fresh or smoked (to preserve it longer). It was part of the typical Christmas and New Year menus.



Romanian Sausage with Maize



INGREDIENTS for 3 kg (10-12 servings):

- 1250 g pork liver
- 300-350 g pork heart
- 300 g pork kidney
- 300-350 g pork tongue
- 250 g greaves
- 1 kg cornmeal
- 150 g pork fat
- 400-600 g onion
- 30 g salt
- 50 g ground pepper
- 200-250 g washed pork intestine



PREPARATION

Preparing the ingredients

Wash and clean the pork organs. Be careful to keep them whole! Wash the cornmeal well and let it drain in a suspended cheesecloth. Peel and chop the onion small. Wash the pork intestine well and then keep it in water, in a bowl.

Boiling and mincing

Boil the cornmeal from the cloth separately, for 20-30 minutes, then hang it again to let it drain and cool. Boil the organs in a pot for 30-40 minutes and then dice them and mince them together with the greaves (medium-size), using a mincing machine.

Preparing the composition

Heat the fat in a pot, add the onion and fry it until it gets glassy and yellowish. Add the chopped organs, the cornmeal, salt and pepper. Stir and mix well on heat, for 5-10 minutes.

Filling the intestines and blanching

Tie one end of the intestine you want to fill. Pour several spoonfuls of water inside, to facilitate filling it with the composition. Use a spoon to introduce the composition in the intestine. When you are finished, tie the other end as well, to keep the filling in the membrane.

Boil water in a medium-sized pot, dip the sausage and let it stay for 2-5 minutes. Take it out, put it on a chopper and let it cool.

The sausage can be served cold or warm, cut in slices. Fresh or smoked, it can also be slightly fried in oil or lard and served with bread, polenta and sour cabbage.



TRADITIONAL RECIPES FROM BIHOR

“Zacuscă” is a Slavic word meaning “snack”, which arrived in Bihor and Transylvania via the Balkans. It is made from fresh vegetables, mushrooms, beans, aubergines, red peppers.

The Romanian type of “zacuscă” from Bihor makes the most of the local natural resources: mushrooms, in this case, mainly porcinis, from the Boletaceae family. Locals pick these year-round, during the rainy periods. In modern times, they started using champignons (*Agaricus*), too, which often grow spontaneously around villages.

This dish is prepared using fresh, baked or fried vegetables (aubergines, red peppers, onions, tomatoes, mushrooms, carrots and zucchini), mixed with spices – in particular salt and pepper. It is generally made in autumn and preserved so that it can be consumed throughout the year. It is very handy and Orthodox Christians are very fond of it during fasting periods.

Porcini and Champignon Spread

INGREDIENTS

- 7 kg sweet red kapia peppers
- 3 kg red peppers
- 2 kg onions
- 0.5 kg carrots
- 3 kg porcini mushrooms (or other type)
- 2 kg champignons
- 3 kg tomatoes
- 1 l sunflower oil
- 100 g salt
- 50 g pepper
- 50 g hot pepper

PREPARATION

First, wash the vegetables and let them dry a bit. Bake the kapia peppers and peel them, also removing the seeds. Cut and boil the porcinis, cut the red pepper and onions small. Mince the tomatoes with a machine, peel and grate the carrots and chop the champignons small. The chilly pepper also needs to be chopped, but first remove its seeds. Fry the red peppers in 300 ml oil and the champignons in 200 ml oil. Stir fry the onions with the

carrots in 500 ml oil. Chop the kapia peppers as small as you can.

When you have prepared all the ingredients (the porcinis, champignons, red and kapia peppers, the onions, carrots, tomatoes and the hot pepper), mix them and add the salt and pepper.

Boil this composition for 2 hours and then put in jars, for conserving.

Source: Țirban Lidia – Pietroasa commune, Cociuba Mică village.

Potato Pancakes (Polesniak)

As potatoes were being cultivated more and more in modern times, they became a stable ingredient in the traditional diet of Romanians and Slovaks from Bihor.

The name of this food is a localism, as the dish itself is part of the area's menu. It is easy to make once you have grated the potato and then blended it into a paste.

It used to be an everyday dish, but was also consumed during Orthodox fasting periods.





Potato Pancakes (Polesniak)



INGREDIENTS FOR 6-8 SERVINGS:

- 1 kg potatoes
- 50 g flour
- 4 garlic cloves
- thyme
- salt
- lard (preferably use the pork fat that results from frying sausages)

PREPARATION

First you grate the raw potatoes and peel and mash the garlic. Then you mix all the ingredients together: the grated potatoes, the flour, garlic and spices.

Fry them all in simple lard or in the pork fat resulting from sausage frying. Serve with sour milk.

Source: Golaş Andrei – Popeşti commune, Budoii village.

Romanians used to prepare this dish after the sacrifice of the pig. Although it was noted in the French world, the recipe spread throughout Europe and not only, being adopted by the Greeks, the Turks, the Bulgarians, by Romanians and Hungarians etc.

Nowadays, the recipe includes fish, beef, lamb or chicken, thus complying to the requirements of the different religions that coexist in this part of Europe.

The vernacular Romanian word for this meat jelly is "cocioane" (from the Hungarian *kocsonya*) and refers to a version of the dish that was usually prepared from pig trotters (preferably non-smoked) and cartilage. It was typical to the winter season and was served either as an appetizer or as a main dish.



Pork Jelly (Cocioane)

INGREDIENTS

for 8-10 servings:

- 1.5 kg of pork cartilage: trotters, head, tail, ears, skin
- 1 kg pork
- 3 garlic cloves
- 300 g carrots
- salt
- pepper
- paprika powder
- water

MOD DE PREPARARE

Boil the pieces of cartilage in water with salt, pepper and one garlic clove, together with the meat and carrots, until the meat starts coming off the bones. When the carrots are boiled, remove them from the pot. You can slice them and use them later, to garnish the jelly.

Arrange the crushed garlic and the meat in plates or bowls, then pour the "soup" you have prepared over the meat. Sprinkle paprika powder on top and add a few black peppercorns. Let the content harden in a cold environment.

Serves cold, of course, with bread.

Source: Șora Ioan – Pomezeu commune, Spinuș village.

Fish Balls

(Gefilte Fisch)

INGREDIENTS for 6-8 servings:

- 2 kg fish
- 3 garlic cloves
- 2 red onions
- 4 eggs
- 2 carrots
- 1 slice of bread
- one lemon peel
- salt
- pepper
- bay leaves
- nutmeg, according to taste
- butter for frying

PREPARATION

We need 1 kilogram of fish, which we mince and mix well with the grated onions, the mashed garlic, the eggs, spices and bread (the bread must be soaked in water beforehand). This mixture is used for making the balls, which are boiled in salty water and afterwards fried in butter.

The remaining 1 kilogram of fish is boiled well with carrots, salt, pepper, one clove of garlic and bay leaves, until it becomes jelly. Put it in a cold place and leave until it thickens. Serve together with the fish balls.

Source: Koppelman Teodor Felix Conrad – city of Oradea.



This dish is typical Jewish and it consists of minced fish meat (carp, pike or white fish) without bones, which is basically turned into a paste. It was probably in the 19th century that fish became the main ingredient for these meat balls, which were part of the Sabbath and Pessary (Easter) menus of each Jewish family in Bihor.

They were served as a cold appetizer on the Sabbath, but also on other occasions throughout the year – mainly during Jewish celebrations.



Eggs are kosher in Jewish cuisine, so boiled eggs are often a good replacement for meat, especially in salads.

A combination of boiled eggs, beef liver and mayonnaise is often used by Jews from Bihar in everyday cuisine. Locally-sourced ingredients were normally used for this dish.

Egg with Onion (Zvibel mit ei)

INGREDIENTS for 10 servings:

- 20 hard-boiled eggs
- 200 g beef liver
- 100 g onion (grated)
- 3 egg yolks
- 300 ml sunflower oil
- 1 teaspoon mustard
- salt
- pepper

PREPARATION

Preparing the ingredients

Weigh the onion, peel it, wash it and then grate finely. Clean and wash the liver. Wash well the raw eggs, too. Separate the yolks from 3 eggs and put them aside.

Boiling

Place the liver in one liter of water in which you dissolved one teaspoon of salt and boil it for 10-15 minutes. Boil 20 eggs for 8-10 minutes.

Chopping and mixing

Prepare your mayonnaise from the raw egg yolks, mustard, salt, pepper and 300 ml of sunflower oil and then store it in a cold place.

Remove the egg shells and chop finely the hard-boiled eggs when they are cold. Soak the liver, cool it and chop it, too. Mix the ingredients well and add salt and pepper according to taste.

Serve cold.

Vegetable Soups and Broths





Fried Pasta Soup with Porcini Mushrooms, as in Budureasa

Budureasa is a settlement located on Bihor Mountains' territory, an area of great natural beauty. The people from Budureasa often cooked using ingredients that they picked themselves from nature, such as the porcini mushrooms. These were used either fresh or after being dried naturally.

The noodles for this soup were made from an unleavened dough, rolled out and then cut into slices. The resulting pasta was boiled and then slightly fried. Beside porcini, the soup also contained locally cultivated vegetables like carrots, onions, potatoes, parsley etc.

This was a seasonal dish, prepared in particular during summer and autumn, but it could be cooked in other periods, too, using the dried mushrooms.



INGREDIENTS

for 5 servings:

- 100 g sliced and dried mushrooms (porcinis)
or 150-200 g fresh mushrooms
- 150 g wide pasta
- 300 g potatoes
- 2 onions
- 2 carrots
- 1 celery root
- 6 peppercorns
- ½ bunch of green parsley
- 5 g sweet paprika powder
- 100 ml sunflower oil
- salt according to taste

Fried Pasta Soup with Porcini Mushrooms, as in Budureasa

PREPARATION

Preparing the ingredients

Soak the dried mushrooms in water 2-3 hours before preparing the soup, to rehydrate them. Wash and peel the potatoes and cut them in cubes. Wash and peel the onion, then chop it small. Do the same with the carrots and the celery root, which should also be cut in cubes. Wash the parsley leaves, drain them and chop them finely. Weigh and sift the flour separately.

Preparing the wide pasta

Put the sifted flour in a separate container and gradually add the salt, eggs and water, while kneading. The dough should be compact and elastic in the same time. It is called "pasta blanket dough" in Romanian and it is kneaded on the table, by hand, in circular moves.

Powder the table and the dough well with flour, roll out to a thin sheet ("blanket"), let it dry for 3-4 hours, then roll and slice into 1-2 cm noodles (they are to be used for stews).

Boiling the pasta

Boil the pasta for approximately 5-8 minutes in a pot of water with one teaspoon of salt. Drain the pasta afterwards, keeping 150-200 ml of that water. Add one teaspoon of oil to the pasta, to keep the strands from sticking to each other.

Frying and stewing

Heat the oil in a large pan, while stirring to keep the pasta from getting crushed.

Add paprika powder to the mixture and also add some of the pasta water you've kept. Lower the heat and stew under a lid for 8-10 minutes.

Assembling and seasoning

After stir-frying and stewing the vegetables, add the vegetable mix to the pot with the boiled, drained pasta. Add chopped parsley leaves and season with salt and pepper, while leaving on the fire for 2-3 more minutes. Stir continuously, but gently, to avoid crushing the pasta.

Serve hot.



Grated Pasta Soup (Supă de răzălăi)

INGREDIENTS

for 6 servings:

- 300 g flour
- 3 eggs
- 1 onion
- 500 g sour cream
- 1 spoonful of oil
- 1.5 liters of water
- salt
- paprika powder

PREPARATION

Chop the onion finely and sauté it in oil. When it becomes transparent, add one spoonful of flour and immediately one glass of water. Add half a teaspoon of paprika powder and 1.5 liters of water. Put salt by taste and leave to boil.

The "răzălăi" are made from 300 grams of flour and 3 eggs. The dough must be well kneaded, until it becomes solid and dense. This dough is grated right into the boiling soup, where the resulting pasta will boil together with all the other ingredients for 10 more minutes.

At the end, add the sour cream and some salt, if necessary.

Source: Groza Camelia – Ceica commune, Cotiglet village.



"Răzălăi" is another local term from Bihor, defining a type of home-made pasta obtained from a hard, wheat-flour dough.

This type of pasta was used in soups, but only after being browned in the oven (simple or sprinkled with sunflower oil). The grated pasta soup was part of the daily menu of Romanian peasants.

Soups have been appreciated by humans since the ancient times. The French were those who put this dish back to rights during the Modern Age.

This Romanian recipe has a typical feature in Bihor: namely, that its main ingredient are home-made noodles obtained from a wheat-flour, unleavened dough. Once kneaded, this dough was rolled out and cut in rather wide strands, which could then be used either fresh or dried. This soup used to be part of the usual lunch menus of Romanians from Bihor.



INGREDIENTS

for 6-8 servings:

- 2-2.5 liters of water
- 1 onion
- 1 carrot
- 1 parsley root
- 1 lovage branch
- 2 potatoes
- 1 large spoon of lard, for frying
- salt
- ground pepper

The pasta dough

- 2 eggs
- flour
- 2 tablespoons of melted lard
- sweet paprika powder

“Greased blanket” Soup (Zamă cu “pătură unsă”)

PREPARATION

The pasta dough

Slowly add the flour to the two eggs and knead until you have a hard dough. Roll it out on the table and grease it with the melted lard combined with ground pepper, salt and sweet paprika powder. Once done, cut it in 1-centimeter wide stripes (however long you want). Then wind up each stripe as a spiral and let them dry.

The soup

Stir-fry the chopped onion, carrots and parsley root in one spoonful of melted lard. Season with salt and pepper and then add the water. When the vegetables are boiled, add the pasta dough pieces you have already prepared. At the same time you can throw the peeled and diced potatoes in the soup, too, along with the lovage.

Serve warm.



Zucchini Soup

(Zamă de cucurbătă)

INGREDIENTS

for 8-10 servings:

- 2 zucchinis (summer squash)
- 2 onions
- 1 tablespoon of lard
- 2-3 tablespoons of flour
- 250 ml sour cream
- 1 bundle of dill
- vinegar or lemon juice as needed
- water
- whey
- milk
- salt
- paprika powder
- pepper

PREPARATION

Chop the onion small.

Peel the zucchini and remove its seeds. Grate the core (pulp) and place in a pot with salt, to allow it to soften.

Stir-fry the onion in lard, with paprika powder and 2-3 tablespoons of flour. Add the zucchini and continue frying on low heat, along with the above mixture. When the zucchini is done, add the whey (depending on how much soup you want to make) and then a little pepper.

Leave it on the stove until the zucchini is boiled. Then add the dill and lots of sour cream. If the soup seems too sour, you may add some milk. If not, add a little vinegar or lemon juice.

Eat with bread and maybe some hot pepper, if you like it.

Source: Gherman Irina – Aștileu commune, Călățeș village.



Zucchini (also known as “cucurbătă” in Bihor – from its Latin name *Cucurbita pepo* is a herbaceous plant present in Europe since the Middle Ages (the 16th century). Cultivated in all geographical parts of Bihor, zucchini (summer squash) slowly became an ingredient for the Romanian traditional dishes of the area. The dense and rather sweet pulp of this fruit was chopped or grated and then boiled (in milk or sour cream, in the old times). If stewed, it could also be used as a side-dish, but the main option was the soup: a seasonal summer and autumn dish.

This leafy vegetable (*Lactuca sativa*, by its Latin name) was constantly cultivated in Bihor, especially since the start of the Modern Age. Lettuce soup is prepared both in spring and autumn, from fresh leaves.

Some time ago, leaves were often boiled in sour milk. It was a main course present in the everyday life of Romanian peasants from this region, in the seasons when it was handy.



Lettuce Soup (Zamă de șelată)

INGREDIENTS

for 6-8 servings:

- 2 green lettuce heads (butterhead)
- 1-2 tablespoons of white flour
- 50 ml oil
- 500 ml sour milk
- 200 ml sour cream
- green garlic leaves
- salt

PREPARATION

First, prepare a roux from flour and heated oil. Pour the sour milk (yoghurt) over it and start adding the lettuce leaves, tearing them by hand in small pieces. Add water, salt and the chopped garlic leaves. Leave the soup to boil for a few minutes and then season with sour cream. You may want to replace the lettuce with sorrel or lesser celandine, if available in nature around you.

The green lettuce soup can be served warm or cold, with bread and hot pepper.

Source: Popa Mariana – Tulca commune, Tulca village.

Tomatoes (*Solanum lycopersicum* in Latin) are perennials growing in a continental, moderately temperate climate such as the one of Bihor. They have been cultivated as garden plants in traditional households of Romanians, Hungarians and Slovaks from this region. The local name of the tomato fruit, "porodică", comes from the Hungarian "paradicsom". Tomatoes were consumed either fresh or as ingredients of this seasonal soup made especially during summer and autumn.

Tomato juice probably started to be made and preserved in the 19th century, which made it possible to cook the soup all year round. This soup was constantly prepared during Christian (in our case, mostly Orthodox) fasting periods.



TRADITIONAL RECIPES FROM BIHOR

Tomato Soup (Zamă de părădici)

INGREDIENTS for 6-8 servings:

- 1 l tomato juice or 1 kg fresh tomatoes
- 1 l water
- 2-3 tablespoons of wheat flour
- 2 onions
- 1 bunch of parsley leaves
- 200 g rice
- 100 ml oil
- salt

PREPARATION

Make a roux with finely chopped onion and flour, stir-fried in oil. Add water and the tomato juice – or finely cut tomatoes.

Add the rice while boiling, so that the mixture thickens. You may replace the rice with vegan noodles or "cici", as you prefer.

Add salt and some herbs at the end.

Source: Varga Alexandra – Dobrești commune, Luncasprie village.

Egg Soup

INGREDIENTS

for 8-10 servings:

- 2 tablespoons of sunflower oil
- 1 tablespoon of white flour
- 1 bunch of green dill – or dried dill
- 1 onion
- 5 eggs
- 200 g sweet cream
- sweet paprika powder
- ground pepper
- ground cumin
- salt

PREPARATION

Heat the oil in a pot and add the flour, stir-frying it a little. Add the pepper, paprika powder and cumin, according to taste. Add the fried flour and let it dissolve, then add the dill and the whole onion.

Once the soup has been boiling for 10-15 minutes, break the eggs directly in it, one by one. They will boil in less than 5 minutes; then you can add the sour cream.

Serve hot.

It is part of the Romanian dishes typical for Transylvania and Bihor. Food specialists, in particular those who study the history of soups, consider it a very old food in this region. Egg, the main ingredient, was found almost year-round in the traditional peasant households of the area, making it a preferred ingredient for dishes served at the end of a full working day, but not only.



Goulash Soup (Gulyásleves)

It was a type of soup or stew prepared by Hungarians and of course, by the Hungarians living in Bihor, too. Its main ingredient during the Middle Ages was beef obtained from the Grey steppe cattle ("szürkemarha") raised in the Pannonian Plains. The goulash is thus also known as "the cowman's soup" or "the cattle herder's soup".

Other types of meat were used over time (pork, mutton, lamb), along with potatoes, cabbage, mushrooms, onion, garlic, all sourced by the local traditional households.





Goulash Soup (Gulyásleves)

INGREDIENTS

for 10 servings:

- 600 g beef rump (hock)
- 300 g onions
- 2 carrots
- 1 parsley root
- 1 small celery root
- 400 g potatoes
- 2-3 tomatoes
- 1 red pepper
- 3 garlic cloves
- 2 tablespoons of lard or 4 of oil
- half a bunch of fresh parsley leaves
- 5 celery leaves
- 2.5 l water
- 1 teaspoon sweet paprika powder
- 1/2 teaspoon hot paprika powder
- salt by taste
- 1 teaspoon ground caraway
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 teaspoon black pepper

For the dumplings:

- 1 egg
- 80 g flour
- 1 teaspoon salt.

PREPARATION

The soup

Dice the onions, wash the beef, drain and dry a bit, then cut in 2-centimeter cubes.

Heat the lard or oil in the soup pot and stir fry the onions with the sweet paprika powder. Add one liter and a half of water and let it boil until it reduces its volume a lot. Fry the beef in that sauce until it whitens. Stir carefully to avoid the content sticking to the bottom of the pot. Add salt, pepper, caraway and the peeled, crushed garlic. Then you may add the chopped tomatoes, the whole peppers and the bay leaves.

Leave this content to boil under a lid for 90 minutes. Add the sliced vegetables: carrots, parsley root and the celery and potatoes cut in cubes. Add 2-2.5 more liters of water, the celery leaves and cover with a lid. Stew for 50 more minutes. Once removed from the heat, the pot must stay in a cold place for half an hour, to "rest" and become delicious!

The dumplings

The dumplings made with flour and egg are essential for a successful goulash. They cannot be left out of this thick soup, which they really enhance.

Beat the egg with a fork and gradually add the flour and salt. When you can no longer mix with the fork, do it by hand until you get a thick, dense and hard dough. Divide it in 3-4 equal parts, which you will then model, one by one, into long baguettes with a diameter of about 8-10 millimeters. Cut them into one-centimeter pieces, using a sharp knife. Roll each of these pieces in flour, to cover them entirely, otherwise they will stick. Put the dumplings on a tray and then throw them in the goulash, where they need to boil for 15 minutes. Pay attention, as they will absorb a lot of liquid, so you need to add a little more water to the pot when you throw them in.

The beef goulash is perfect if served with chili pepper.



Source: Erdei Csaba – town of Salonta.

Bean goulash (Babgulyás)

Babgulyás is one of the typical Hungarian dishes from Bihar. It has become popular in Central Europe (and not only) starting with the 19th century. Its origins are found in a dish that the shepherds ("gulyás") of the Pannonian Plains used to prepare, mostly from beef. In time, veal, mutton or lamb started being used. In their turn, beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) became more and more cultivated in the traditional households of this area and were thus a preferred ingredient for this type of goulash.





INGREDIENTS for 10-12 servings:

For the goulash

- 1 kg dried beans
- 1 kg beef (rump)
- 3-4 carrots
- 2-3 onions
- 4-5 garlic cloves
- 2 parsley roots
- 1 parsnip
- half a medium-sized celery root and a few leaves (optional)
- 100 ml tomato paste (or concentrated juice)

- 2 large tablespoons of lard or 4 of oil
- 200 g smoked ham
- 1 large tablespoon sweet paprika powder

- 2 teaspoons caraway seeds
- 1-2 bay leaves
- salt
- black pepper
- green parsley leaves

For the dumplings:

- 3 eggs
- 240 g flour
- salt
- 2 tablespoons paprika powder

Bean goulash (Babgulyás)

PREPARATION

Wash the beans really well and leave to soak overnight, in lots of cold water. It is best if the water in the bowl is one palm-width over the beans.

The next day, begin by heating the oil or lard in a large pot or a cauldron, add the finely chopped onions and stir-fry a bit. Then add the diced bacon, let everything simmer and become brownish. Add also the beef cubes, allowing them to change colour, too. The meat need not be parched, just a little fried, until the pores close.

Afterwards add the spices: salt, pepper, bay leaves, caraway (you may also use some ground caraway seeds for a more intense taste) and of course, lots of paprika. To obtain a slightly hot taste, add half a spoon of hot paprika powder. Mix everything well together, to allow the spices to blend in uniformly. On top of everything, add the beans and then water so as to fill the pot/cauldron. After 10 minutes, stir and start adding more water, as needed. When everything is boiling, include the vegetables – peeled, but cut in large pieces.

Once they are boiled, the vegetables are removed from the soup and mashed with a fork to create a puree that will give consistence to the goulash. If you are cooking outdoors, in a cauldron, you don't need to do this, as the vegetables will almost melt in the hot soup because of the frequent stirring. This vegetable paste will be mixed with the tomato sauce and then poured back into the soup. Add more water if necessary and also add the salt, to match your taste. From now on you just need to wait for the beans and the meat to boil.

Prepare the dumplings in the meantime, as the bean goulash needs them, too! The method is the same as for the simple goulash dumplings.

At the end, add the pressed garlic and mix everything well once more, leaving it on the fire for 10 more minutes. Taste the beef and beans while the composition is boiling, as the cooking time depends on their tenderness.

This consistent dish is served hot, in deep plates or bowls. Sprinkle with freshly cut parsley leaves and necessarily garnish with slices of red onion.



It is a typical Hungarian dish of Bihor, constantly prepared in this area since modern times. Sour cherries, freshly picked from the tree named *Prunus cerasus* during summer, produce a slightly sour soup that used to be served as a main course, cold or lukewarm. Sometimes it would become dessert, if sugar was added.



Cold Sour Cherry Soup (Meggy leves)

INGREDIENTS for 8-10 servings:

- 1.5-2 kg sour cherries
- 150 g flour
- 2-2.5 l water
- 100-150 g sugar
- the zest of half a lemon
- one cinnamon stick or 1 teaspoon cinnamon powder
- 250 g sour cream

PREPARATION

First boil the washed cherries whole, in a large pot, adding sugar, salt, the lemon zest and the cinnamon. Lower the heat once the water starts boiling, but leave it on for 2-3 more minutes, until the sugar is entirely dissolved. Remove the cinnamon stick.

Mix a scoop of hot sour cherry soup with the flour and sour cream, in a separate recipient. Put the resulting mix on the fire for 2-3 minutes, until it starts getting thick. Add it to the soup, stir well and boil it some more, to obtain a thicker soup. Remove and leave to cool.

Serve cold, even from the fridge.

Slovak Mushroom Soup (Hribovica)

INGREDIENTS

for 8-10 servings:

- 2 cups dried mushrooms
- 5 large potatoes
- 1 onion
- 1 spoon of vinegar
- 3 spoons of flour
- 200 ml milk
- 200 ml sour cream
- salt
- pepper
- 1 tablespoon of lard or 2 of oil

PREPARATION

Soak the dried mushrooms in hot water for 10 minutes. In parallel, peel the potatoes and cut them small. Heat the lard or oil in a pot, at medium heat. Add the finely chopped onion and stir-fry for a couple of minutes. Then add the water, hydrated mushrooms, salt and pepper.

When the mushrooms are almost done, add the potatoes. Separately, prepare the roux using a bit of oil, flour and milk. When the potatoes are done you can add the roux, which will mix with the soup base. The sour cream comes at the end.

Serve warm.

Source: *Vatlavic Monica – Şinteu commune, Şinteu village.*



Slovaks used to eat this soup during Advent, when meat was forbidden. Its main ingredient are dried mushrooms preserved in the local traditional households of northern Bihor, where Slovaks were living.

It is a main course for lunch or dinner.



This dish was part of the Bihor people's menus regardless of their ethnicity (Romanians, Hungarians, Slovaks, Jews etc.). Jews cooked it on *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) and their version includes minced beef dumplings as well as crushed matzah. The vegetables (carrots, parsley and celery root, onion, paprika and pepper) boiled in the soup could also be eaten separately, as a main dish. This meal was typical for the Jewish world and dedicated to Shabbat as well.

The Jews from Bihor respected the Jewish rules for ritual eating and prepared this dish using matzah as a main ingredient. Matzah is a type of unleavened bread made from wheat or rye flour and prepared on Jewish Easter (*Pesah*), in memory of the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt.

Meat Broth and Matzah Dumplings (Matza Knödel)

INGREDIENTS for 8-10 servings:

The broth

- 1.6 kg beef
- 2 kg beef bones
- 1 kg carrots
- 500 g parsley root
- 500 g celery
- 200 g onion
- 250 g paprika
- 50 g peppercorn
- salt according to taste
- optional, noodles or vermicelli

The Matzah Knödel dumplings

- 20 eggs
- 400 ml oil
- 500 g flour
- 15 pieces of matzah bread
- one and a half teaspoons ground pepper
- one and a half teaspoons of salt
- 50 g sodium bicarbonate
- 1 bunch of parsley leaves
- water or chicken broth

PREPARATION

The broth

Model the minced meat into approximately 20 balls. Put all the other ingredients together in a large pot and let them simmer. When the vegetables are almost boiled, add the meatballs to the soup. Sieve after boiling.

Of course, you may add noodles or some sort of vermicelli to the soup. The boiled vegetables and the meat were usually consumed separately, as a main dish.

The Matzah Knödel dumplings

Finely crush 10 pieces of matzah bread – possibly through a mincing machine.

Break the other five matzah pieces into small fragments, by hand. Mix all the ingredients in a large bowl. Knead well and then make 60 portions, modelling them into dumplings the size of a meatball. Boil in water or in chicken broth, as you prefer.

The floating dumplings are the best!

Main Courses



Bihor Stew

INGREDIENTS

for 4 servings:

- 600 g pork breast without bones
- 80 g smoked peasant bacon
- 1 onion
- 1 bell pepper or red pepper
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1 cup of water
- 1 cup of fermented wheat bran ("borș")
- 50 ml oil
- white mushrooms or field mushrooms
- 500 g coarsely ground corn
- 1 liter of milk mixed with water, to boil the polenta
- salt
- ground pepper
- thyme
- 2 tarragon branches
- 1 teaspoon sweet paprika powder

PREPARATION

Prepare the polenta in a pot, using the coarsely ground corn, oil and milk combined with water. Add salt according to taste and let it boil on low heat for about 30 minutes, stirring continuously.

Chop the vegetables for the stew and stir fry them in oil. Cut the pork breast in cubes and boil it in the fermented wheat bran liquid mixed with water. Put the meat in the same pot as the vegetable mixture, adding the spices and the diced bacon. Leave everything on the fire until well stewed. Serve the stew with the previously made polenta.

In some parts of Bihor people say that this dish is so satisfying that it was considered the typical meal of forestry workers.

Source: Rus Samuel – Brusturi commune.

TRADITIONAL RECIPES FROM BIHOR



Stew is one of the traditional Romanian dishes, prepared throughout time by shepherds only from vegetables (onion, pepper and garlic) and served with polenta. In the villages of Bihor meat, potatoes and mushrooms were introduced in this dish, as they were easy to find in this area. People would also use mutton or beef and other locally grown vegetables (tomatoes, pepper, garlic, onion, potatoes) and season it with a special ingredient: paprika powder.

The stew was almost a staple food during periods when fresh meat was available.



Stew (“tocană” in Romanian) is a Latin word (*toccare*). The Bihor version, prepared by all ethnic groups in the area, uses fresh chicken. Dumplings (a word of Russian or Polish origin: *galuska*) have become a widely used side dish in this region, in modern times.

The dumplings were made from wheat flour mixed with egg and water and were freshly boiled. The chicken stew served with dumplings is a main dish consumed on a daily basis in Bihor, for lunch or dinner.

Chicken Stew with Dumplings

INGREDIENTS FOR 8-10 SERVINGS:

- 1 chicken of about 2 kg
- 500 g onion
- 200 g carrots
- 150 g bell pepper
- 1 bunch parsley leaves
- 100-150 ml oil
- sweet paprika powder
- salt according to taste

For the dumplings

- 10 eggs
- 700 g wheat flour
- 50 g salt

PREPARATION

Chop the onions, carrots and pepper and stir fry them in a medium-sized pot. Add the paprika powder and the portioned chicken and fry well. Add some water, so that the mixture starts simmering and becomes a bit more “juicy”.

Beat the eggs for the dumplings with the fork, adding the flour and salt little by little. You should get a dough that you can easily separate small portions from, using the fork. Boil the dumplings in a separate pot until they rise to the surface of the water. To finish, mix the dumplings with the chicken stew and sprinkle with finely chopped parsley leaves.

Serve warm.

Cabbage Rolls with Coarsely Ground Corn

Once the maize culture spread in Bihor, at the end of the 18th century and into the 19th century, corn flour became an often used food ingredient in the region.

Coarsely ground corn (in Romanian "păsat", coming from the Latin *pinsatum*) is a type of flour resulting from the coarse grinding of corn grains. In the Romanian peasant cuisine of Bihor, this flour was used to prepare dishes that, in time, became typical for the local menus - for example polenta with milk, cheese and bacon or cabbage rolls. Cabbage rolls (in Romanian "sarmale", a word coming from the Turkish *sarma*), also known in this region as "boți", "tășcoi" and "curechi umplut" (filled cabbage), is a food that can be found in all the Eastern Mediterranean countries. In Romania they were generally made with pork or beef mixed with rice and have been very popular since the start of the Modern Age.

Cabbage rolls using exclusively corn flour (locally named "boaște cu păsat") were prepared for various large events held during the year (christenings, weddings or funerals), but also during fasting periods (for example, before Easter or during Advent).

INGREDIENTS

for 10 servings:

- 5 kg pickled cabbage
- 200-300 g coarsely ground corn
- 250 g lard (pork fat)
- 200-300 g bacon – for greaves
- 200-300 g smoked meat (jowl, legs, ribs)
- 1 kg pork: shoulder and chops
- 250 g onion
- 150 g tomato juice
- 25 g salt
- 5-10 g ground pepper
- 5-10 g sweet paprika powder



TRADITIONAL RECIPES FROM BIHOR

Cabbage Rolls with Coarsely Ground Corn

PREPARATION

Preparing the ingredients

Unfold the pickled cabbage carefully, to keep the leaves whole as you separate them. Put the leaves in cold water for an hour, to eliminate the excess of salt. Cut out the margins of these leaves, keeping a rectangle of 15-18 or 13-15 centimeters.

The resulting margins can be cut in long strips and kept separately. The ground corn is sifted through a medium-sized sieve, so that the grains are 0.5-2 centimeters big. Wash the grains under running water and let them drain. Peel the onions

and chop them small. Wash the smoked meat to remove the excess of salt and let it boil for 20-30 minutes, until it is tender. Keep this water. Mince the pork (shoulder and chops), sift through a 4-6 mm sieve and mix with salt and pepper. Cut the bacon in cubes of 1-2 cm.

Preparing the composition

Heat the lard, fry the bacon to obtain the greaves and then remove them and keep separately. Stir fry the onion in the hot fat until it becomes glassy and yellow. Add the sweet paprika powder and the ground corn. Stir for 3-4 minutes, then let it cool and combine with the minced meat.

Arranging in the pot

Grease with fat the walls and bottom of a medium-sized pot and powder with one tablespoon of sweet paprika powder. Spread the cabbage strips on the bottom and the smoked meat in the middle of the pot. Then start arranging the cabbage rolls around this center, in layers. Add the water from the smoked meat and the tomato juice. Close the pot with the remaining cabbage leaves to maintain the steam and savour inside.

Cook slowly for 2-3 hours. In some parts of Bihor, the pot is still kept in a hot oven for 25-30 more minutes after the cabbage rolls are cooked.

Filling the cabbage leaves

Unfold each leaf out on the table, fill with one tablespoon of composition and add 1-2 greaves. Roll in the lower margin, to make a 4-5 centimeter thick tube. Fold in both ends by pushing with your finger, thus obtaining the cabbage rolls. The remaining leaves can be used to cover the rolls in the cooking pot.



Sources: Ana Popa, Duluș Gaborăș Nicolae – Bratca commune, Valea Crișului village, Puriș Ciobanu Mariana - Luğașu de Jos commune and village.

“Cici” from Bihor

These are another type of typically Romanian pasta. The “cici” were made from a wheat flour dough that had to be medium hard in order to be modelled into a baguette. The pasta were then cut from this baguette in equally sized pieces. Once dried, the “cici” were boiled in the bean soup and then fried on the stove plate in pork fat or sunflower/pumpkin seed oil, thus becoming a dish in itself.

The “cici” often replaced bread, being eaten with the bean soup or other dishes. They were part of daily lunches or dinners.



“Cici” from Bihar

INGREDIENTS

for 6 servings:

- 500 g wheat flour
- water
- Salt
- Dried beans soup, resulting from boiling:
 - 300 g dried beans
 - 1 l water
- 1 teaspoon of ground pepper
- 20 ml sunflower oil
- 1 bunch of parsley leaves



PREPARATION

Preparing the ingredients

Sort the dried beans, flush some water on them and leave to soak overnight in cold water. Remove the water the next day. Weigh and sift the flour in a bowl. Wash the parsley leaves, remove the tails and chop finely.

Preparing the “cici” (pasta)

Put the sifted flour and salt in a medium-sized bowl and little by little add water. The dough must be compact and elastic; we call it “pasta blanket”. It is kneaded on the table by hand, in circular movements. Powder the table and the dough with flour. Roll out the dough in a 2-3 mm thick sheet. Continue twisting it on the table with open palms, pushing forward and back, then on the side, to make it as uniform as possible – of about 5 mm.

Cooking the bean soup

Put 300 grams of dried beans in a pot, after having soaked the beans in water overnight. Add one teaspoon of salt and boil in water for 50-60 minutes, until they are soft. Sift the resulting soup and keep the boiled beans separately.

Boiling the “cici” (pasta)

Heat the bean soup to the boiling point. Add the “cici” you have already prepared and boil for 10-15 minutes.

Seasoning and arranging

Drain the boiled pasta and put it on a plate; pour some sunflower oil on it and sprinkle with parsley leaves.

Serve hot.



Starting with the 19th century, the common bean has become a frequently used legume also in the Romanian cuisine of Bihor. Refried beans is simple to make and handy, as it can be served either warm or cold. Over time, it was used both as a starter and a side dish (for pork knuckle, for example).

It used to be a favourite of every day life throughout the year, including during Christian fasting periods – especially for Orthodox Christians, in Bihor.



INGREDIENTS

for 10-12 servings:

- 1 kg white beans
- 5 l water
- 1 carrot
- 1 slice celery root, about 150 g
- 1 parsley root
- 1 parsnip root
- 1 tablespoon of salt
- 1 teaspoon of pepper
- 250 ml oil
- 2.5 tablespoons of flour
- sweet paprika powder

For the onion sauce

- 4-5 onions
- 100 ml oil
- sweet paprika powder
- salt
- pepper according to taste

Refried Beans (Păsulă zolită)

PREPARATION

Boil the vegetables and beans together for about one hour. Add 100 ml of oil and half of the pepper to the water and leave the salt for last. When the beans are boiled, first remove the vegetables, then drain the beans and keep part of the liquid in which they boiled. Smash the beans with a potato masher.

In a separate pot, heat 150 ml oil and stir in two and a half tablespoons of flour. Fry it a little and then add the remaining pepper and paprika

powder. Pour in part of the water in which the beans boiled. Mix the resulting paste with the beans and heat it a bit more, so that the roux can also boil a little. Stir continuously. When the beans start “talking”, i.e. babbling, you will know that the meal is ready.

You will also need an onion sauce, which is made by stir-frying the sliced onions with some salt, in 100 ml oil. When they are done, blend in the paprika powder and the pepper, according to taste. Top the refried beans with the resulting dressing when serving.



It's a good sign if your guests wipe their plates with some bread as they finish eating. It means they really liked the beans!

Source: Dubere Florica – Tulca commune and village.



This is also a typical Romanian recipe from Bihor, based on a mixture containing wheat flour. Once the dough is made, it is divided into portions similar to pasta, which are then fried and can be enriched with tomato juice at the end.

The scrambled eggs from Bihor was often found as a main course for lunch or dinner in the traditional local cuisine but also in the fasting diets.

INGREDIENTS

Version 1, for 10 servings:

- 1 kg flour
- 100 ml oil
- 5 eggs
- tomato juice
- 1 bunch parsley leaves
- grated cheese or other cheese (optional)
- water
- salt

PREPARATION

Mix the flour and eggs in a bowl, with water and salt, until a soft dough is formed. Knead it in that bowl, with your hands.

Break small pieces from the dough or, if you have time, you can roll it out on the table in a 0.5 cm thick sheet, which you can then divide into pieces of about 2 cm long and 0.5 cm wide. Fry them in oil and then add the tomato juice diluted with water. Let to boil and then drain. Sprinkle with parsley leaves before serving.

It can be served with grated cheese or another type of cheese on top.

Scrambled Eggs (Scrob)

INGREDIENTS

Version 2, for 10 servings:

- 1 kg flour
- 100 ml oil
- water
- salt

PREPARATION

Prepare a harder dough from these ingredients. Cut it in small pieces and model each piece with your palms into a pea-sized ball. These "pasta" are left to dry and then stir-fried in oil, afterwards being boiled in water. Drain the resulting product using a sieve.

In the old times, women would use this type of scrambled eggs instead of rice when making cabbage rolls.

Source: Șora Ioan – Pomezeu commune.



This name is a localism from the Beiuș ethnographic area. It refers to a typical local dish that was prepared immediately after the winter holidays.

It was made of pork left-overs from Christmas and the New Year feasts (in particular blood sausage and liver sausage), which were blended together with sausage fat.

“Pileucă”

INGREDIENTS

- slices of bread
- blood sausage
- liver sausage
- sausage fat

PREPARATION

Use slices of dried bread or toast: slightly soak them in water and arrange them in a tray, putting crumbs of the remaining blood and liver sausages on top. Add another layer of bread, with a spread of fat from the sausages you have preserved during winter. You can add more layers, depending on the available quantities and the size of the tray.

Put the tray in the oven and let it cook until a crust is formed on top.

Cabbage and Noodles (Loște cu curechi)

Cabbage (*Brassica oleracea*, in Latin) is a legume that was mentioned in Bihor in the 17th century, but its cultivation outside of the local gardens started to be done constantly only since the 18th century.

This dish (called “Loște cu curechi”) is part of the Romanian menus of Bihor, but is also cooked by Hungarians (“Káposztás tészta”) and Slovaks (“Rezance s kapustou”) as a seasonal food, in summer and autumn, when fresh mature cabbage is available to the local peasants. In time, it became a main course served for lunch or dinner.





Cabbage and Noodles (Loște cu curechi)

INGREDIENTS

for 10-12 servings:

- 1 kg cabbage (one piece)
- 5 tablespoons of sunflower oil
- 2 teaspoons of ground pepper
- 2 teaspoons of sugar

For the noodle dough (square pasta)

- 500 g flour
- water
- 1 – 2 eggs

PREPARATION

Preparing the ingredients

Remove the outer leaves from the cabbage, cut into four and extract the stem. Cut the quarters into thin strips or grate them on a large grater or a special cabbage grater (we call it "jilău" in this area). Add 3-5 grams of salt to the grated cabbage, leave for 10 minutes and then squeeze the water out.

Preparing the noodles

Weigh and sift in a bowl the flour you intend to use for the pasta, then add the salt and eggs. Knead the mixture, gradually adding water. The dough must be thick, compact and elastic in the same time. Put it on the table and continue kneading by hand, in circular moves. Sprinkle lots of flour on the table and on the dough. Roll out in a thin sheet and let it dry for a day or

two. Once it is dry, cut it in medium-sized squares (locally called "laște" or "loște").

Cooking

Cook two teaspoons of sugar in a pot, for 1-2 minutes. Pour 4 tablespoons of oil over the sugar and when it's hot add the sliced and drained cabbage. Stir fry the cabbage carefully for 30-40 minutes, until it becomes light brown. Add two teaspoons of pepper (we recommend using freshly ground pepper for a more intense flavour) at the end.

Boiling the pasta

Boil the noodles in a pot, in salty water (one teaspoon of salt), 10 minutes before frying the cabbage. They need to boil for about 7-8 minutes. Drain them afterwards and add one teaspoon of oil. Combine the noodles and the cabbage and stir gently, to avoid breaking the noodles and to obtain a homogeneous mixture.

The cabbage and noodles are best served hot.





Meat and Cabbage Stir-Fry (Toros)

This dish was mostly made for the so-called "Pig's Dinner". At the end of the working day, all those who took part in the pig's sacrifice and in the preparation of the related food products were offered this meal.

The hosts needed to have pickled cabbage in their household for this, so that it could be mixed with the meat and the various fatty parts of the pig.



Meat and Cabbage Stir-Fry (Toroș)

INGREDIENTS

for 4-5 servings:

- 300 g pickled cabbage
- 600 g pork (collar)
- 250-300 g onion
- 150 g tomato juice
- 150 g sour cream
- 50 g pork fat
- 20 g sweet paprika powder
- 5-10 g salt
- 5-10 g ground pepper
- 5 g ground caraway
- 5 g dried thyme



PREPARATION

Preparing the ingredients

Unfold the pickled cabbage carefully, to keep the leaves whole when separating them. Put the leaves in cold water for an hour, to eliminate the excess of salt.

Drain and put them on top of one another; cut in thin slices. Peel the onion and chop it small. Cut the pork in uniform cubes, to allow for uniform cooking.

Stir frying and simmering

Heat the fat in a pot, stir fry the meat for 7-8 minutes until it becomes brownish and then add 200-300 ml of water. Simmer the meat, while constantly stirring. The necessary cooking time depends on the roughness of the meat and the amount of fat it contains.

When the water has reduced and the meat is partly done, add the sweet paprika powder, caraway, thyme and

pepper. Cook them all together for 3-4 minutes so that the aromas intensify.

Add the chopped cabbage to this composition and stir-fry everything together for 4-5 minutes. Then add the tomato juice and some water, so that the liquid partly covers the solid content of the pot.

Slow cooking

Simmer the mixture on low heat, for 60-90 minutes, stirring occasionally. The food is done once the cabbage and the meat are ready.

Serve warm.

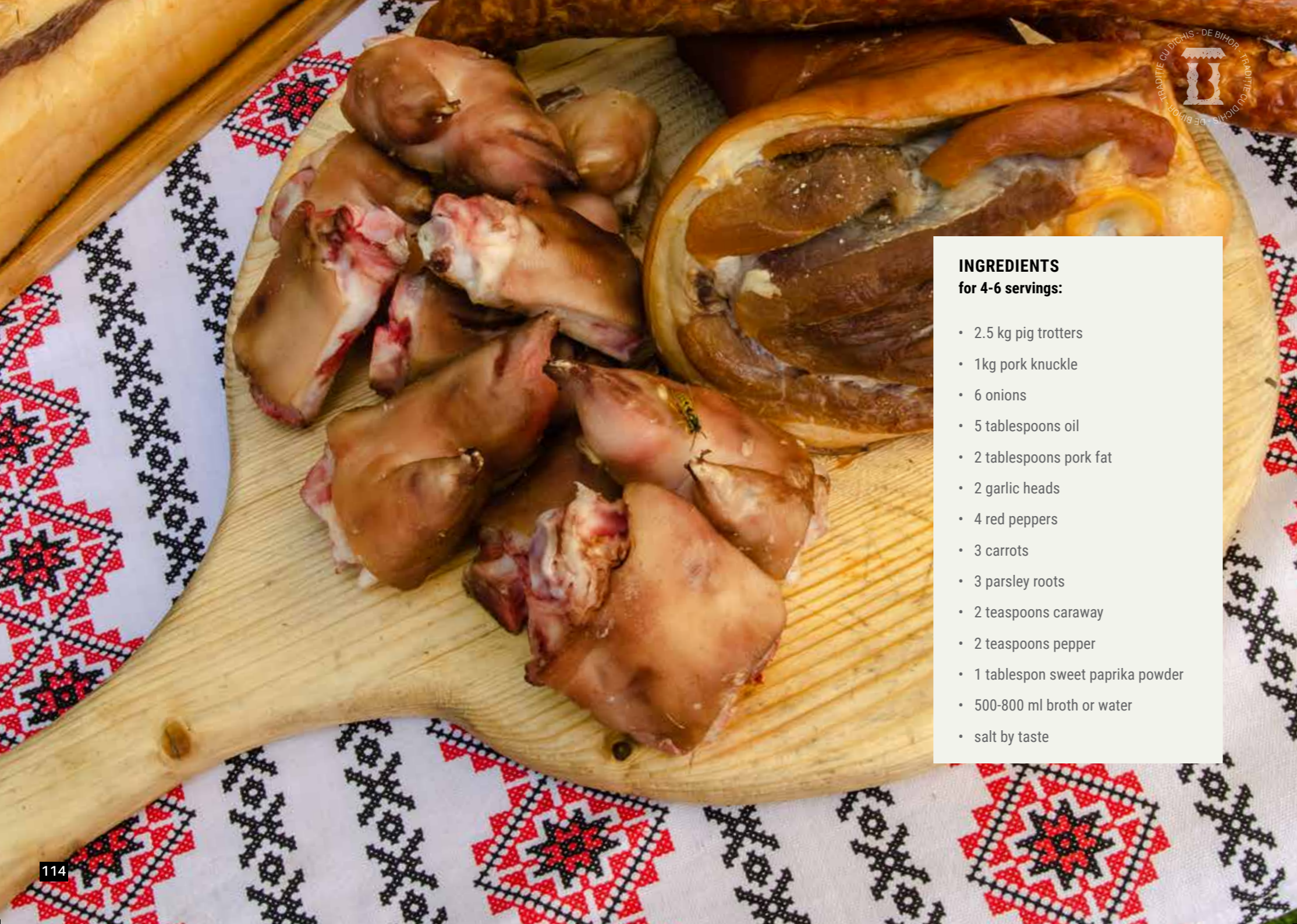
Pig's Trotter Stew

The pig (*Sus scrofa domesticus*, by its Latin name) was one of the first animals in human history to be domesticated. In Bihor, it used to be sacrificed before Christmas by all the ethnic groups living here (Romanians, Hungarians, Slovaks etc.).

This stew made of pig's trotter became a favourite meal in the rural part of Bihor, not only for the Pig's Dinner but also on various family reunions throughout the year. Pig trotters were generally preserved by brining and smoking.

This special dish confirms the fact that almost all the pig's parts were used for food, but also that this ensured a diversity of traditional menus in this area.





INGREDIENTS for 4-6 servings:

- 2.5 kg pig trotters
- 1kg pork knuckle
- 6 onions
- 5 tablespoons oil
- 2 tablespoons pork fat
- 2 garlic heads
- 4 red peppers
- 3 carrots
- 3 parsley roots
- 2 teaspoons caraway
- 2 teaspoons pepper
- 1 tablespoon sweet paprika powder
- 500-800 ml broth or water
- salt by taste

Pig's Trotter Stew



PREPARATION

Preparing the ingredients

Peel the onion and chop it finely. Peel and wash the carrots and parsley, wash the red pepper and dice them all.

Cut the pork knuckle in pieces, clean and wash the pork trotters.

Stir-frying and simmering

Heat the fat in a pot and stir fry the chopped vegetables (onions, carrots, parsley root, red peppers and garlic) for 5-8 minutes. Add the knuckle and trotters and parch for 5-8 more minutes, until they become brownish. Add the paprika powder, caraway and tomato cubes (if you decide to use this ingredient) and stir thoroughly. Pour the broth or water over the stew and allow it to simmer until the meat and vegetables are tender and juicy.

Slow cooking

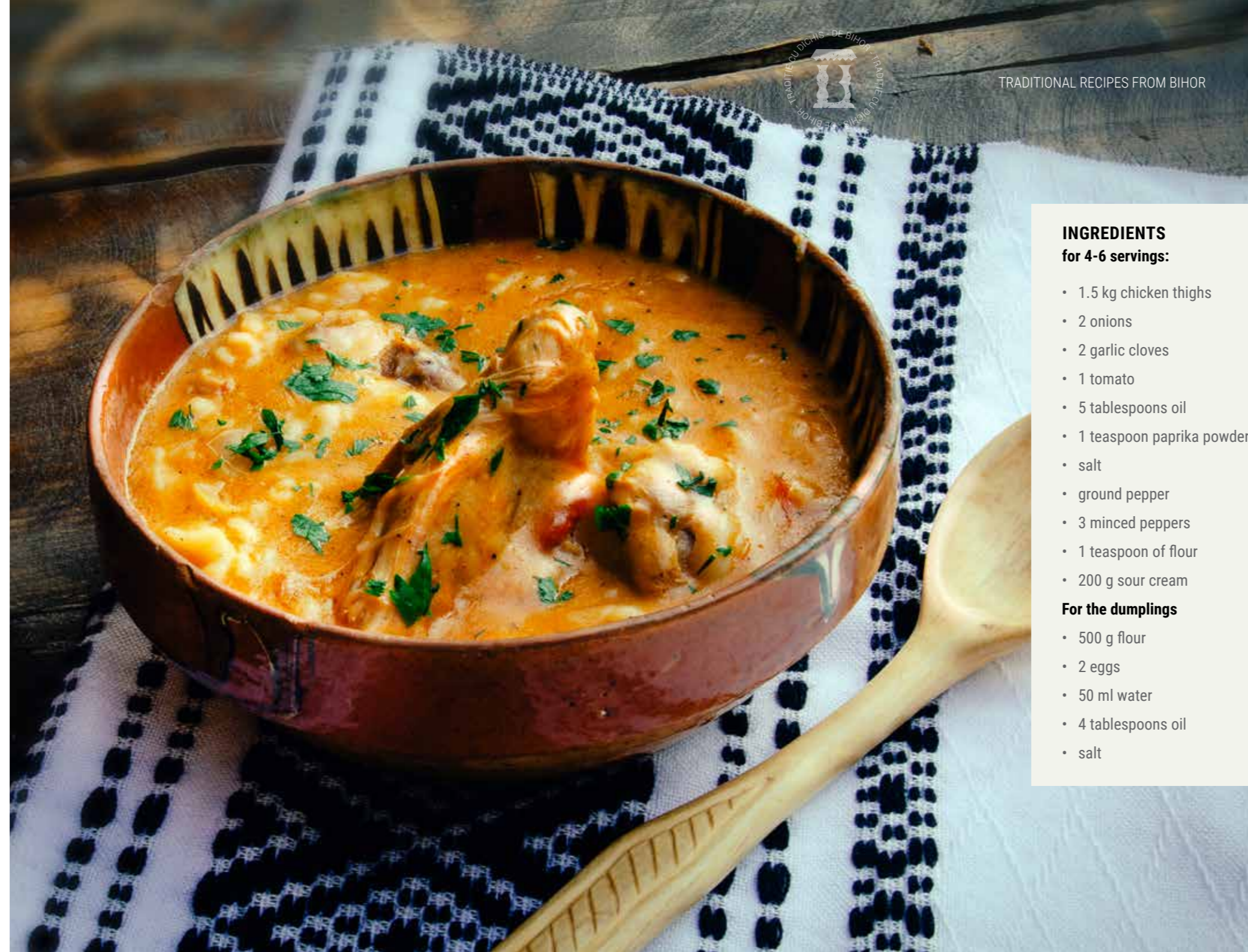
Simmer the entire content on low heat for 2-3 hours, stirring occasionally. The dish is ready when the meat comes easily off the bones and the vegetables are boiled.

Serve the pig's trotter stew warm.



This is a traditional Hungarian dish mentioned since the 19th century. Its main spice is paprika powder and the preferred garnish are the wheat flour dumplings (“nokedli” or “nokerli”), either fresh or dried for several days.

It was a usual main course of lunch or dinner menus.



INGREDIENTS

for 4-6 servings:

- 1.5 kg chicken thighs
- 2 onions
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1 tomato
- 5 tablespoons oil
- 1 teaspoon paprika powder
- salt
- ground pepper
- 3 minced peppers
- 1 teaspoon of flour
- 200 g sour cream

For the dumplings

- 500 g flour
- 2 eggs
- 50 ml water
- 4 tablespoons oil
- salt

Chicken Paprikash with Dumplings (Csirkepaprikás)

PREPARATION

Wash and dry the chicken a bit.

Heat a frying pan, pour in the oil and stir-fry the thighs. Remove them from the oil and then leave aside.

Chop the onion and fry it in the pot where you will be cooking, until it becomes glassy. Finely grate the garlic cloves and add them to the same pot, then add the diced tomato. Stir fry them all a bit more, then add 300 ml of water and let everything boil for a while. Stir from time to time. When the above ingredients are boiled, incorporate the minced peppers and add the chicken thighs immediately. Add 300 more ml water and leave on the stove, in the covered pot.

Prepare the dumplings while the chicken thighs and vegetables are boiling.

Beat the eggs and combine with flour and water, until you get a thick dough. Separately, boil some water and when it starts bubbling, cut the

dumplings from the dough (1.5-2 cm large) with a tablespoon and drop them in the boiling water. When they are done, they will rise to the surface. From that moment on, let them boil for two more minutes. Drain the dumplings in a sieve, rinse them with cold water and mix with some oil, to prevent them from sticking to one another.

Mix the flour and sour cream in a separate pot and add a tablespoon from the boiling liquid. This roux that is formed (in BiHOR it is called “thickening”) will then be poured into the pot where the chicken and vegetables are boiling. Let the paprikash simmer until it thickens, carefully stirring so that the dumplings are not smashed. This final step should not take more than 5 minutes. Season with pepper and paprika powder, according to taste.

This hearty and flavoury dish is one of the typical menus in BiHOR county.

Vegetable Stew (Lecsó)

In Bihor, vegetables started to be cultivated constantly in the local people's gardens during the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Cabbage, pepper, carrots, tomatoes, cucumbers were planted on quite a large scale, especially in the villages that were close to the main urban centers of the county, like Oradea, Beiuș, Salonta, Aleșd.

The vegetable pot (stew), also named lecsó, was a dish prepared especially during summer and autumn, as its main ingredient is the fresh pepper. Of course, it includes other vegetables, too, especially tomatoes and onions.

It is a seasonal meal, made from fresh vegetables and ham, bacon, sausages or similar.



INGREDIENTS
for 10 servings:

- 5 onions
- 2 kg bell peppers
- 1 kg tomatoes
- 10 ml sunflower oil
- 100 g smoked, fatty bacon
- 5 g salt



Vegetable Stew (Leccsó)

PREPARATION

Preparing the ingredients

Wash the bell peppers, drain them and slice them in rings, on the short side. Peel the onion, wash it and cut it julienne. Wash, dry and dice the tomatoes. Dice the bacon in 0.5-1 cm cubes.

Stir frying

Heat 10 ml of oil on high heat in a pot, for 1-2 minutes. Melt the bacon in this oil for 2-3 minutes, but on lower heat, then add the onions. Stir fry them for 2-3 minutes.

Simmering

Add the sliced bell pepper to the fried onion and bacon and let them simmer on low heat, for 3-5 minutes. Add the diced tomatoes and simmer until reduced, then allow everything to boil carefully, on low heat, to avoid sticking to the pot bottom (for 10-15 minutes). Adjust the taste by adding more salt, at the end.

Serve hot (usually) or cold.



Source: Suciú Ionuț – Tinca commune, Gurbediu village.



This has become one of the traditional foods typical for Bihor area, especially after the potato started to be cultivated here in the 19th century.

The dumplings were made from a soft wheat flour dough and mixed with boiled potatoes. It was almost a staple food, made throughout the year. Fried fatty bacon ("clisă sfârâită") was also often part of this dish.



Potatoes and Dumplings

INGREDIENTS for 6-8 servings:

- 1 kg potatoes
- 2 onions
- 50-100 ml oil or one tablespoon of fat
- paprika powder

For the dumplings:

- 500 g flour
- salt
- water

PREPARATION

Boil the potatoes (locally named "hiribe") in their skin. Once boiled, drain the water and peel them. Mash and mix them with the previously stir-fried onions (stir fry in oil or fat, with some paprika powder).

Prepare the dumplings from flour, salt and water. The dough must be medium hard, so that you can form the dumplings and boil them in salty water. When they are boiled, drain the dumplings and then combine them with the potatoes.

Outside of fasting periods, this meal also included fried bacon.

Serve warm.

Cheese and Bacon Dumplings (Bryndzové Halušky)

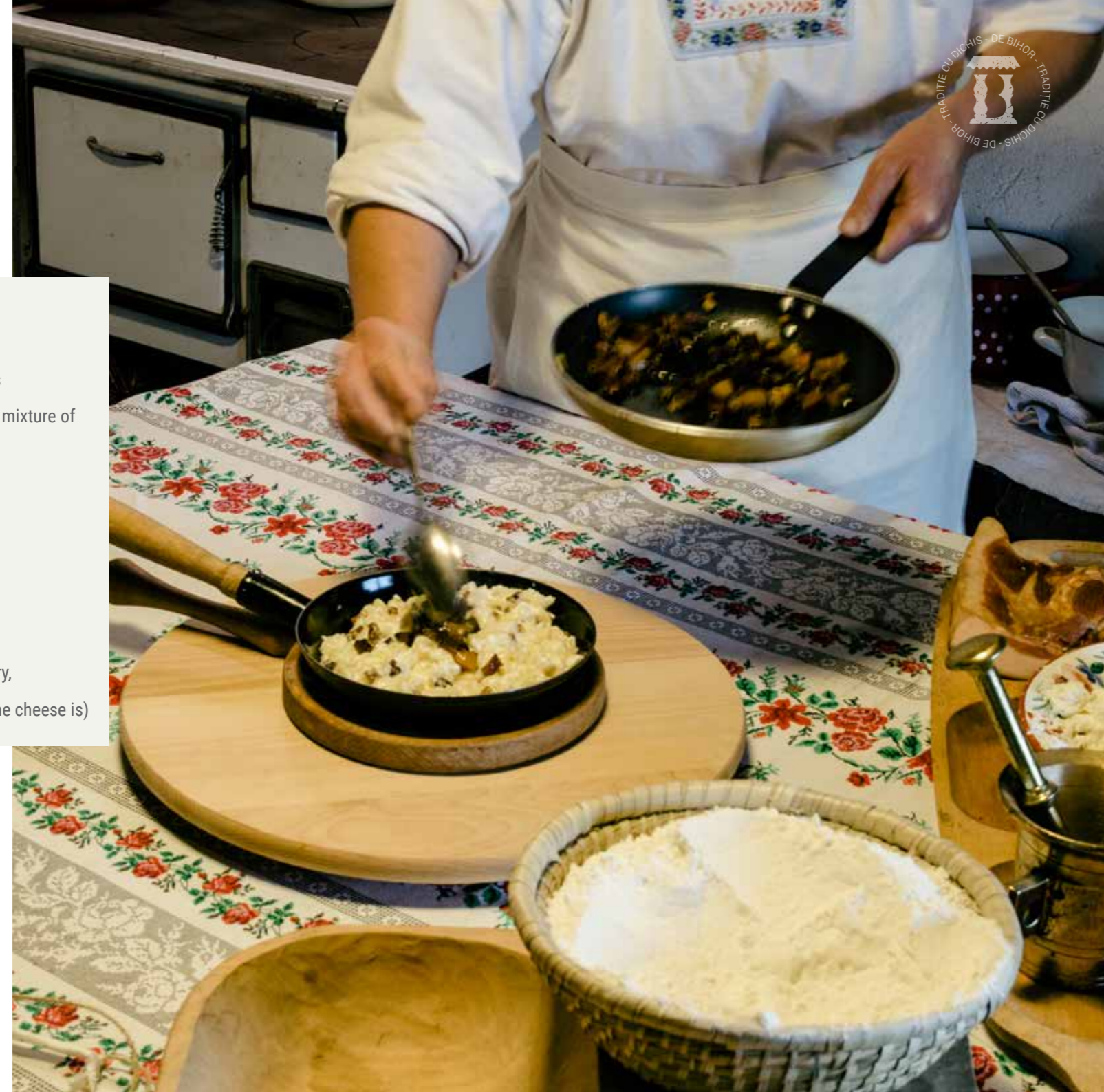
The Slovaks from Bihor were brought here by the Habsburgs, starting with the 18th century. They settled in the northern part of the county and brought along this typical Slovak food, which has become popular among most locals from Bihor and not only.

In Bihor, the recipe would include locally-produced ingredients like wheat, cheese and bacon.

The dough for the dumplings (in Romanian “găluște”, which comes from the Russian *galuška*) was made by kneading wheat flour until it became soft. The pasta that was prepared could also be used in soups. These dumplings were in fact a garnish that accompanied various stews.

This dish is often prepared in Slovak villages. It used to be an everyday food, but was also served at family events or different holidays throughout the year.





Cheese and Bacon Dumplings (Bryndzové Halušky)

INGREDIENTS

for 10 servings:

- 2-2.5 kg white potatoes
- 1 kg sheep cheese or a mixture of cow and sheep cheese
- 250 g white flour
- 4 eggs
- 500 g sour cream
- 500 g fatty pork bacon
- 150 ml sunflower oil
- 5-10 g salt (this can vary, depending on how salty the cheese is)

PREPARATION

The potatoes

Weigh, peel, wash and grate the potatoes on a fine grater. Weigh and sift the flour. Dice the bacon small and fry in a pan with one tablespoon of oil, until it becomes crunchy and yellowish. Weigh the cheese, crush it and combine with the sour cream.

Kneading and boiling

Prepare two liters of water and one teaspoon of salt for boiling. Mix the grated potatoes with the flour, eggs and one teaspoon of salt. Knead until you get a soft composition (dough). You can add more water if it is too hard – or flour, if too tender. Place a sieve or a holed tray on top of the boiling pot (the holes should be 0.5-1 cm large). Press the dough through the sieve/tray with the help of a spoon or a spatula. When the dough goes through the sieve, the dumplings are formed and they fall straight into the boiling water. They should boil for approximately 8 to 10 minutes.

Mixing and assembling

Drain the boiled dumplings, add a tablespoon of oil from frying the bacon and mix carefully to prevent the dumplings from sticking. Pour the cheese and sour cream mixture over the dumplings and mix again without crushing the dumplings. Add more salt, if necessary.

To serve, put on a plate about 250 grams of dumplings and add the fried bacon on top (about 50-60 grams).

Serve hot.



This is a typically Jewish dish prepared on the day or night before Shabbat. Beans are its main ingredient, often accompanied by boiled eggs, oats or even meat: goose, turkey or smoked duck and not so often veal or chicken. The dumplings used as garnish were made from a mixture of wheat or corn flour, eggs, spices and duck fat. In fact, this dish originated in the Middle East and has been present in Europe since the 17th century.

The Jewish Cholent from Central and Eastern Europe became known starting with the 18th-19th centuries, when the Sephardic Jews settled massively in Bihor and other areas.

It was consumed as a main dish especially during winter.



Cholent (Șolent)

INGREDIENTS for 10 servings:

- 1.6 kg veal
- 1 kg dried beans
- 500 g onion
- 500 ml oil
- 10 eggs
- 1 kg potatoes
- 250 g pearl wheat or barley
- 25 g paprika powder
- 5 g pepper
- salt according to taste

For the kigel

- 0.5 l broth
- 25 ml oil
- 250 g corn flour
- 250 g white flour
- salt, pepper, paprika powder according to taste

PREPARATION

Cook the cholent in a large saucepan. First, stir fry the onion and meat in oil. Add paprika powder, pepper and salt and lots of water, then the whole potatoes, the beans and the eggs. Simmer this composition on low heat for 4 hours. You may also want to add pearl wheat or barley or extra spices (e.g. paprika powder, pepper, salt).

The kigel is some sort of a dough blanket that will cover the actual food while it is cooking in the oven or on the stove. Knead it well until hard and roll out in a sheet the size of the saucepan. Place the "blanket" over the pot's content. Slow cook the cholent in the oven or on the stove, at medium or low heat.

This dish tastes better if it is cooked in an earth pot or a cast iron saucepan.

Serve hot, with pickles on the side.

Sweets and Pastries



Plum Pie (Moșocoarne)

It is a pie that belongs to the rural Romanian menus of Bihor, made from part of the dough prepared for bread. The “moșocoarne” with plums (also known as “moși cu coarne” in north-western Romania, meaning “old men with horns”) were a genuinely local product. Later on, they were made mostly in areas with constant fruit growing activity.

This plum pie was a dessert prepared especially during summer and autumn, when there was sufficient fresh fruit available. If made in other periods for family events or on other occasions, it included dried plums or plum marmalade (also locally made, by boiling and crushing the plums).





INGREDIENTS

option 1, for 12 servings:

- 1 kg of flour
- 1 kg plums
- 2 eggs
- 25 g yeast
- 50 ml oil
- salt
- water or milk

PREPARATION

Sift the flour in a pot and add warm water or milk, as preferred. Dissolve the yeast in the liquid and knead a medium tender dough, which should then be left to rise.

Roll the dough out with a roller pin later on and cut the resulting sheet into squares. Put half a fresh plum, powdered with sugar, in the middle of each square. Fold each square in four and bake in the oven for 30 minutes.

When taken out of the oven, the pies are smeared with a water and sugar syrup.



INGREDIENTS

option 2, for 12 servings:

- 500 g flour
- 250 ml water
- 1 sachet of dried yeast
- 200 g sugar
- 4 tablespoons of semolina
- 1 egg
- plums
- salt

PREPARATION

Prepare a bread dough using the flour, salt, water, yeast and one tablespoon of sugar. Let the dough rise for about 30 minutes, while you remove the plum stones and sugar the plums.

Roll out the dough in two sheets. Lay the first one in a tray, sprinkle with semolina and arrange the plums on it. Lift the margins of the dough a bit to the inside. Cover everything with the second sheet, after you have pricked it with a fork and brushed it with the beaten egg. Bake at medium heat for approximately 40-45 minutes.

The plum pies can be eaten warm or cold.

Pancakes (Scoverzi)

INGREDIENTS

for 10-12 servings:

- 500 g flour
- water or milk
- 150-200 g sugar
- 2 eggs
- fat or oil
- salt

PREPARATION

Mix the ingredients to obtain a creamy, almost liquid dough.

Take one dipper from this composition and pour into the heated and greased cast iron pan. You start pouring from the middle of the pan and then let the mixture cover the entire surface while moving the pan in circles. Fry the pancake on both sides.

There is a variety of options for filling the pancakes: jams, sweet cottage cheese and others.

Source: Varga Tatiana – Dobrești commune, Luncașprie village.

TRADITIONAL RECIPES FROM BIHOR



This pancake recipe belongs to the category of Romanian pies made from a leavened wheat flour dough. In the old times, in Bihor it was considered one of the desserts filled with sweet cottage cheese or plum marmalade (“plum honey”).

It was also possible to fill the pancakes with salty cheese, meat or vegetables. Regardless of the filling, they were mostly consumed during religious holidays, as part of the lunch or dinner menus.



Here is a pastry product cooked by women from the Romanian villages of Bihor. It consists of several layers of cake made from a soft wheat flour dough, generally held together by a sort of plum marmalade ("plum honey"). It was part of both daily and holiday menus throughout the year.



Layered Cake

INGREDIENTS for 12 servings:

- 300-500 g flour
- 6 eggs
- plum marmalade
- 6 tablespoons of milk
- 6 tablespoons of sugar
- 100-150 g powder sugar
- 6 tablespoons oil
- 1 tablespoon baking soda quenched with lemon juice

PREPARATION

Mix the ingredients to form a soft dough and bake two or three sheets from it – depending on the size of the tray you are using. Pour the mixture in the tray using a dipper and make circular movements to allow the dough to flow and cover the entire surface of the tray.

Bake each sheet and let it cool. Spread the filling – in this case, the "plum honey" obtained by boiling the plums on low heat, without sugar, for almost one day.

Powder with sugar before serving.

Floating Island

INGREDIENTS

for 4-5 servings:

- 1 liter of milk
- 6-7 eggs
- vanilla, vanilla essence or vanilla sugar
- 4 tablespoons of sugar

PREPARATION

Bring the milk carefully to the boil and incorporate the vanilla. In the meantime, separate the eggs and whisk the egg whites well, adding four tablespoons of sugar. Continue beating until the mixture is thick and holds a stiff peak.

Lower the heat when the milk starts boiling, then drop spoonfuls of egg white to it. Dip the spoon often in cold water or milk. Don't add too many

of these dumplings to the boiling milk, as they will increase in size and need enough space for it. When the egg white dumplings are boiled they become poached meringues that need to be removed from the milk pot. Pay attention to the time needed for these to boil when you make the first round – usually between 30 seconds and one minute. If you manage to get the right time and you've beaten the whites well enough, the meringues will not dissolve in the hot milk. Use a large spoon to remove them from the surface of the milk. Once you are finished with them all, you may add a bit more hot milk to the pot and stir in the egg yolks (previously whisked with sugar).

Use a low heat for the entire procedure. The custard should not boil, it only needs to be warmed up, otherwise it will look like scrambled eggs. Stir the mixture carefully until it starts thickening, then remove quickly from the stove and pour into a cold pot. You may add some starch if the milk does not thicken. Add the meringues to the custard only when it is cold.

Serve cold, even refrigerated.

Source: Csathó Töhötöm – city of Oradea.

TRADITIONAL RECIPES FROM BIHOR



This dessert has arrived in Bihor already starting with the 19th century. Its origins are in France (“île flotante” or “oeufs à la neige”), but it spread in Central and Eastern Europe as well.

It was part of the Sunday menus and was also served at special family events by all the ethnic groups living in Bihor.



This is another sweet recipe, widespread in Central and Eastern Europe. Romanians, Hungarians, Slovaks from Bihor, they have all been cooking it already since the 19th century, when potatoes became the base of the dough for the dumplings.

It was mostly prepared during summer and autumn, as a main dish or a dessert.



Plum Dumplings

PREPARATION

Choose potatoes that are more floury for this dish, usually white potatoes. Boil them in their skin, peel and mash them like for mashed potatoes. Add the beaten egg, the flour and the oil. Mix well and do not mind if the “dough” is sticky. It is supposed to be!

Remove the stones from the fruit, powder them well with sugar and cinnamon and then mix in a bowl. Bring water to a boil in a large pot and reduce the heat to a minimum when it starts boiling, so that it remains hot.

Melt the butter in a large frying pan and add the bread crumbs. Fry this mixture on medium heat for two-three minutes, constantly stirring, until the crumbs become brown. Add three tablespoons of sugar – or more, if you want it to be sweeter.

Cover the workplace with flour. Roll the dough into a tube-like shape, divide in two and then divide each half in two again. Repeat this procedure until you get small pieces of dough; you should obtain about 30 pieces, which will make 30 dumplings. Form them

into balls by rolling each piece between your palms. Press each ball on the table and constantly powder with flour, so they become disks. Place a plum from the sugar and cinnamon mixture in the middle of each disk and wrap it in the dough, again in the shape of a ball. Permanently cover the table with flour during this procedure, because this dough is very sticky.

Once you have modelled all the dumplings, transfer them into the slightly boiling water. They should boil, but make sure that they don't stick to the bottom of the pot. When they are done, remove them from the water with a scoop and roll them immediately through the bread crumbs and sugar mixture.

This is a delicious dessert that can be served both warm and cold, maybe between the main meals of a hot summer day.

INGREDIENTS for 8-10 servings:

- 500 g plums without stones
- 500 g potatoes
- 250-300 g flour
- 1 egg
- half a tablespoon of oil
- 2-3 tablespoons of sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 50 g butter
- 150 g bread crumbs



This is a traditional Slovak dessert, present also in the Slovak communities from Bihor. It is made from a tender wheat flour dough that was boiled as dumplings.

It has been widespread in the Habsburg Empire since the 19th century, but also in Europe. These dumplings were served both warm and cold and always with home made jam.

Steamed Sweet Dumplings (Buchty na pare)

INGREDIENTS for 8-10 servings:

- 500 g flour
- 1 sachet of dried yeast or 20 g fresh yeast
- 1 tablespoon of sugar
- 1 egg
- 300-400 ml of milk
- 125-150 g butter
- jam
- salt
- powder sugar
- cinnamon

PREPARATION

Add the yeast (dried or fresh) to the flour and mix in the eggs, salt and the warm, sweetened milk. First add only 300 ml of milk, gradually incorporating the rest. A medium-hard dough will result, which will need to rise in a warm place. When ready, roll it out on the table powdered with flour to obtain a 1 cm thick sheet. Cut it in equal squares and wrap one spoon of jam in each square. Leave these "sachets" rise for another 15 minutes.

Place the resulting buns on a sieve (you can also use a kitchen towel instead), over a pot with boiling water, which you should then cover with another pot. This is a steaming process that the buns should go through for about 15-20 minutes, depending on their size. As soon as they are done, place them in a separate recipient and pour melted butter on them. Sprinkle with cinnamon and powder sugar.

Source: Bigas Berta – Popești commune, Budoii village.

Hamantaschen

INGREDIENTS for 8 servings:

- 50 g yeast
- 500 g white flour
- 250 g margarine
- 5 egg yolks
- 2 sachets of baking powder
- 100 g lemon zest
- marmalade

PREPARATION

Mix all the ingredients – except the marmalade – and knead to obtain a dough. Roll it out in a thin sheet, which you then cut in round shapes. Place the marmalade in the middle of each shape and wrap the dough around it in to form a triangle.

Bake in the closed oven at 170 °C, for 10-15 minutes. When they cool down, powder with sugar.



Source: Koppelman Teodor Felix Conrad – city of Oradea.



TRADITIONAL RECIPES FROM BIHOR



This Jewish pastry product is dedicated to the *Purim*, a celebration of the Jewish people's salvation from persecution in the ancient Persian Empire.

The triangular shape reminds us of Haman's three cornered hat, Haman being the villain who planned to kill the Jews and failed. This dessert is made from a wheat flour puff pastry, preferably filled with jam or marmalade.

Jews used to bake these cookies especially on *Purim*, but not only. It was a favourite dessert in Bihor, particularly during winter.

The cookies (biscuits) were made from a wheat flour dough that was left to rise for one day. They were decorated with walnut pieces before baking.



Walnut Cookies

INGREDIENTS for 8-10 servings:

- 250 g honey
- 6 eggs
- 50 g cinnamon
- 50 g crushed cloves
- 2 sachets of baking powder
- 250 g margarine or 250 ml oil
- 500 g white flour

PREPARATION

Mix the ingredients (without the flour) on a steam bath. Add the flour when they are well mixed and you will obtain a dough. Leave it in a cold place until the next day, then roll out in a blanket and cut with a round shape.

Brush with beaten egg and place a piece of walnut on top.
Bake at 170 °C, for 15 minutes.

Source: Koppelman Teodor Felix Conrad – city of Oradea.

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Editors:

- Bihor Destination Management Agency
- Bihor National Information Centre and Tourism Promotion

Historical considerations: Professor Aurel Chiriac, PhD

Design and photography: Adrian Samoilă

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