



Krakow-style coffee encounters

2018-12-24

In the 19th century, locals drank coffee mainly at home. Elegant cafes started to crop up together with Austrian officials. And coffee shops soon became the new way of socialising in Krakow.

The coffee tended to be lousy though: either with a generous addition of cereal grains or chicory or simply weak. It was called "flowery" coffee, but not due to its aroma, as you could see through the liquid all the way to the bottom of the cup that was painted with flowers. Coffee was often drunk together with strong alcohol; it was supposed to be "strong, hot and almost bitter, sweetened only with a few drops of golden Bénédictine".

People bought either roasted coffee or roasted it at home in special spherical stovetop roasters. Larger shops had their own roasteries. "Downstairs at the front there was Goebel's grocery store with imported goods, so coffee was roasted in iron machines and you could smell it inside the house" – Mieczysław Smolarski recalls living on Grodzka Street. Besides coffee, other roasted mixes were made of chicory and figs as well as roast barley.

People flocked to Krakow cafes mainly on market days. Merchants and Krakow tradeswomen were regulars. Wealthier townspeople opted for the coffee shops run by Filipowski on Stolarska or hostel cafes. Elegant coffee shops popped up with the influx of Austrian public officials in the mid-19th century. "Czas" magazine reported in 1857 that "cafes modelled after Viennese coffee shops are getting bigger in size and becoming more majestic compared to the old coffee chambers". Coffee bars served cheesecakes and pischingers. Coffee was relatively inexpensive and even modestly remunerated clerks and students could afford it.

At the end of the 19th century, small crowded halls became popular which is probably best illustrated by the history of Michalik's shop. Jan Apolinary Michalik (1871-1926) who opened Cukiernia Lwowska "showed great resourcefulness in his trade. He came up with the idea to give names to his cakes (Carmen, Flirt, Paderewski etc.) and regularly launched new creations using all possible means of advertising. He put cakes in the limelight! It disgusted serious Krakow merchants who despised advertising". However, cakes were not the reason Michalik's place became popular. The key to success was a room with an adjacent patisserie which became highly fashionable among arts students. The pastry shop transformed and expanded and new rooms were opened. It was here that in 1905 the Zielony Balonik cabaret was formed and Jama Michalika became one of the favourite hang-out spots for local bohemians. And just like that, at the beginning of the 20th century, cafes usurped the role of places for social gatherings, which in the past had been restricted to people's living rooms.

It is worth having a look around the decor in cafes: Art Nouveau furniture with green upholstery, stained glass, door frames, picture frames, numerous frescos, drawings and caricatures.

Sources:

Władysław Krygowski „W moim Krakowie nad wczorajszą Wisłą”, Kraków 1980

Mieczysław Smolarski „Miasto starych dzwonów”, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 1960



**Magiczny
Kraków**

Irena Homola-Skąpska „Krakowskie cukiernie i kawiarnie w XIX wieku”, w: „Z dziejów Krakowa, Galicji i Śląska Cieszyńskiego”

Boy-Żeleński „Cyganeria krakowska. Znasz-li ten kraj”, Oficyna Wydawnicza Mazowsze, Warszawa 1993