

Let's Go to the Market. Grocery Shopping in Krakow

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Already since the Middle Ages, fairs have been the heartbeat of Krakow. Due to its location on the intersection of key trade routes, Krakow fairs were frequented not only by the locals but also by merchants from all over the world who were doing business in the city. And to do their daily shopping, local people went to the markets.

The largest selection of goods was available on the Main Market Square. "Nearly the entire square is occupied by benches and wooden stalls with various craftsmen, ironware, knick-knacks, glass, fruit, sweets, vegetables and other edible goods" - wrote Jan Paweł Mucante who visited Krakow in June 1596. Other bustling hotspots included Szczepański and Wolnica Squares as well as the Kleparz market.

Currently merchant traditions are being maintained among others by the markets of Stary Kleparz, Nowy Kleparz, Plac Na Stawach, Hala Targowa – Unitarg and Plac Imbramowski. Shopping at the market is a true ritual for townspeople. After several visits, you are drawn to the same sellers and stalls. At the market you can sample fragrant strawberries, a smiley vendor will pull out a bunch of spinach from under the counter for you and the seller next door will weigh some freshly pickled cucumbers he made himself. No wonder that this homely atmosphere of Krakow markets attracts also foreign tourists. The stalls offer a variety of delicacies - both those that travelled a long way to reach Krakow and those meticulously and tenderly grown by local farmers and producers. The selection will make your head spin because Krakow, being the capital of the Małopolska region, has as many as 12 certified regional products and over 200 registered traditional foodstuffs.

People seeking local produce should also visit Targ Pietruszkowy. The market, whose name literally means "Parsley Market" or simply "Parsley" as locals like to call it, offers organic fruit and vegetables as well as a variety of traditional foods, cold cuts and cheeses. The small version of the market takes place on Wednesdays - sellers are gathered in the basement of the Korona sports club building. And every Saturday at 8am Krakow's gourmands show up at Plac Niepodległości to roam around stalls packed with freshly picked fruit and vegetables. Other spots with excellent quality products are Ekosfera Mateczny and - opening in September 2019 - Ekosfera Północ.

Those travelling to Krakow in search of traditional flavours should check out a pilot action run by the Municipality of Krakow as part of the Slow Food Central Europe project. The initiative promotes places and products that are in line with the ideas of the Slow Food movement - among others those related to the culinary heritage of the region. The project takes a closer look at the local milk bars as well as explores opportunities to sample food prepared by Krakow's top chefs. Thanks to the project, the chefs will come up with dishes using a typical regional type of lettuce called celtuce and look for ways of showcasing *obwarzanek krakowski* in a more noble context not just as a piece of bread that the locals grab on the go. The pilot action includes also other regional products: Piaszczańska sausage, Ojców trout, Galician garlic and Prądnicki bread.

Good news is that for several years now you can again get something to eat at the markets in Krakow. Once the vendors called "faryniarki" used brick stoves covered with a piece of flat



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metal to cook thick soups, offal, sausages or the already mentioned celtuce. Today, some food stall owners occasionally cook for market visitors and from time to time, during food festivals (such as Art & Food Bazar or Najedzeni Fest!) markets turn into restaurants bursting with fragrant spices from all around the world. And Plac Nowy, at the heart of the Kazimierz district, feeds locals and tourists alike almost around the clock.

Krakov locals like to dine *al fresco*. There are plenty of opportunities throughout the summer holiday period because the city parks host Piknik Krakowski. This picnic event travels around Krakow's parks and takes place every Saturday and Sunday, each day in a different location so you will not be bored. At Piknik Krakowski you can but top quality products and learn more about food and cuisine during workshops and demonstrations.