

## Krakow's Culinary Gems - Sample the Finest Cuisine

2019-08-13

**It is not easy to briefly describe the rich history of Krakow, the former capital of Poland and the city located at the intersection of main trade routes, populated by a variety of nations, nearly each of which has had an impact on the city's culture ranging from architecture to cuisine.**

The unique architecture of Krakow was already recognised in 1978. It was back then that the UNESCO list of World Heritage Cultural and Natural Sites was established. Twelve items were put on the list including two conurbations: the historic centre of Krakow and Quito in Ecuador. In Krakow, UNESCO protected areas include the Old Town within the Planty Park, the Main Market Square with the Town Hall Tower, Cloth Hall and St. Mary's Basilica, buildings of the oldest university in Poland, churches, monasteries, townhouses and palaces as well as the Wawel Hill with the Royal Castle and the cathedral as well as the neighbouring Stradom and Kazimierz with the remnants of the Jewish past: synagogues and cemeteries.

Forty years later also Krakow's cuisine was recognised: the city was selected as the European Capital of Gastronomic Culture 2019. It is an opportunity for the city of Krakow to organise a variety of initiatives where local culinary heritage is showcased and famous Krakow hospitality can be experienced. One of such initiatives is the Krakow Capital Menu. As part of this event in as many as 21 restaurants you can sample dishes inspired by local products and historic recipes.

Krakow's contemporary cuisine is clearly inspired by Jewish and Austro-Hungarian culinary traditions. Traditional bakeries sell sweet-smelling challahs, eateries at the Main Market Square plate up juicy schnitzels which you can then follow with apple strudel or Sachertorte. After the Second World War you could rarely hear any other language than Polish on the streets. The monotony of the local culinary scene was consolidated by the centrally planned food supply system. However, over the last 30 years Krakow has experienced a revival. In the city hungry for innovation and ethnic cooking you can now find excellent spots serving food from virtually all around the world: from everyone's favourite Italian or French dishes alongside Georgian and Ukrainian fare to the recently gaining popularity Israeli, Korean and Japanese cuisines.

On the other hand, local chefs and restaurateurs are looking for ideas for modern Polish cuisine. They draw inspiration from their roots, pastures in the foothills of the Tatra mountains and orchards in Sechna where prunes are still traditionally dried using beech wood. In addition, they go back to childhood flavours and tirelessly unearth old recipes used by their predecessors: chefs cooking for wealthy aristocratic families. We are witnessing the rebirth of a tasty culinary history.

Slowly first eateries that are directly inspired by the city's history open their doors. Some for instance resemble the so called *handelek* from a hundred years ago - a bustling breakfast bar open from early morning until midnight serving food and beer. Their speciality were offal dishes and... sandwiches. Hawełka was famous for the latter - they served "pyramid" multi-tier sandwiches draped with bryndza cheese with pepper, salmon, caviar and Swiss cheese.

Some chefs proudly say on their menus that the products they use come from local farmers.



You can sample such local ingredients, among others, in restaurants bearing a red snail logo which is the symbol of the Slow Food movement. The logo is an indication that chefs buy their produce from small artisan producers who still use traditional methods. Krakow restaurants recommended by Slow Food Poland are: Trzy Rybki, Ed Red, Biała Róża, Miodova, Qualita, Albertina, Bottiglieria 1881, Amarylis and Pod Nosem.

When choosing a place for dinner you can also use Michelin inspectors' recommendations as a guide. They award the following symbols: stars (one, two or three) for the quality of the food, covers (spoon and fork symbol) – for decor, quality of service and atmosphere (one to five covers) and the Bib Gourmand – for value for money. In Krakow, 25 restaurants were awarded the spoon and fork symbols (covers): Copernicus, Trzy Rybki – three covers; Kogel Mogel, Pod Baranem, Jarema, Amarylis, Cyrano de Bergerac, Corse, Studio Qulinarne, Szara Kazimierz, Szara, Albertina, Leonardo – two covers; Karakter, Pod Nosem, Bianca, La Campana, Farina, Del Papa, Bottiglieria 1881, Zazie (also the Bib Gourmand), Miodova, Hana Sushi, Załadka Bistro de Cracovie, Sąsiedzi – one cover.

Another guide not to be overlooked is the yellow book published by Gault&Millau. They include twice as many restaurants in Krakow compared to the Michelin guide: 27 Porcji, Albertina Restaurant & Wine, Amarone, Andromeda Alfa, Art, Biała Róża, Bistro 11, Bistro Bene, Bottiglieria 1881, Copernicus, Corleone, Corse, Cyrano de Bergerac, Del Papa, Ed Red, Edo Fusion, Euskadi, Fab Fusion, Farina, Filipa 18 Food Wine Art, Fiorentina, Gościnną Chata, Introligatornia Smaku, Jarema, Kawaleria, Kogel Mogel, La Campana, L'atmosphere, La Fontaine, Leonardo, Marcelino/Baroque, Miodova, Nolio, Nota Resto, Oranżeria, Restauracja PINO, Pimiento, Plac Nowy 1, Pod Aniołami, Pod Baranem, Pod Nosem, Pod Różą, Portobello, Qualita, Kawaleria, Rzeźnia, Studio Qulinarne, Unicus, Wentzl, Załadka Bistro de Cracovie, Zazie Bistro, Zielona Kuchnia, Wierzynek, Amarylis, Enoteka Pergamin and Enoteka Pergamin Bistro, Garden, Karakter, Mięta Restobar, Nago Sushi&Sake, Primo Italian, Sąsiedzi, Szara Gęś, Włoska and Trzy Rybki. A new addition to this year's Gault&Millau guide is the POP category for cafes, eateries, bars, pubs, foodtrucks and pastry shops which stand out as either having an interesting offer or great atmosphere.