Magiczny Kraków

Krakowski Obwarzanek, Kukiełka and Prądnicki bread – Bread with a history behind it

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Krakow can still boast of a large number of bakeries where bread is made simply from flour, water and salt, without the use of additives. Next to places that have been operating for decades, there are more bakeries, the owners of which understand how valuable real bread is to the Polish culinary heritage.

In the Middle Ages, bread baking in Krakow was strictly regulated. Bakers mainly used rye and wheat flour. According to the guild recipes, the bread could not contain any added mixture of barley flour. Rye bread and several types of white bread were common: from rolls, through Christmas strudels (baked for the city councilors and also for St. Martin's day), bagels for Lent, to various pies and kalacs sprinkled with sugar or cheese. So called bishop’s bread was considered the best white bread, while the best rye flour was used to bake German bread. The equivalents of today's donuts were filled, fried kreples. Whole meal bread was baked for the common people.

In Krakow, one could also buy bread baked by bakers living in the nearby villages of Pędzichów, Zielonki, Garlica Murowana, Trojanowice, Bronowice and Bibice, located near rivers. Wolnice, which usually took place once a week, were days during which people who were not members of the guild could sell their bread products. Monasteries also specialized in baking bread. On the day of their patron saint, they distributed them to the people.

As Ambroży Grabowski recalls in his "Memoirs" which was published in 1909, "The street vendor stalls were next to the bread and rolls stalls and usually had a pile of oval pancakes made of rye flour, for the price of a grosz. On the surface, they were covered with melted butter, to which flour was sprinkled and therefore had a white surface. It was a real treat for street boys and the poor people - and it was also called a buttered flat bread. It also had a deliciously unusual taste to me as well (...). These breads were also carried around in baskets by young girls who would go to the bars where the commoners had a glass of hot beer during the winter,".

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, andruty (waffles) and pretzels from the factory of Stanisław Gurgul were sold at the delicatessen shops. The shape of the obwarzanek that are now sold are similar to those sold during that time. Marcin Gadocha, PhD, whose topic of interest is the history of Krakow's bread, points out that the first reliable information confirming the baking of pretzels in Krakow dates back to 1834.

Kukiełka (a type of a ceremonial bread)

To this day in Krakow you can buy bread that has been baked in the same way here for centuries. One of its varieties is kukiełka bread, also known as gżele or gżegżółki. Ambroży Grabowski mentions them - as the forgotten baked goods of Krakow bakers: "Another type of bread that was later discontinued, was kukiełka , sold at the cemetery of the Church of the Holy Virgin Mary ... It was made of wheat, was white and spongy and the top was covered with egg yolks and sprinkled with black cumin. The taste was excellent, especially with butter. (...) Only Kukiełka bread from Liszki which was

sold by peasants on market days, has survived. (...) Kukiełka bread from Liszki is by no means tasty, they use potash to make them, and although they seem to be large, they are bloated and empty inside" - complained Grabowski. But today, a fragrant wheat Kukiełka bread, for example with white cheese paste with sardines or plum jam, is a great idea for breakfast.

Prądnicki bread

Nowadays the currently EU protected product bread from Prądnik was also appreciated by Grabowski. He wrote that the bread "(usually called Promnicki) was an irrevocably lost and incomparable specialty that my generation still remembers. It was everyday food for all layers of society of Krakow. Gourmets enjoyed it and the poor fed on it as well. The residents of Prądnik complained about the sales tariff being too low and even in 1854 they were on strike for some time, not delivering bread to the city. "

The oldest information about the Prądnicki bread comes to us from 1421, when Wojciech Jastrzębiec, the bishop of Krakow gave the cook Świętosław Skowronek a farm and obliged the owners to deliver bread to the table of the Krakow bishops. According to Józef Łepkowski, the mayor of Krakow in the second half of the 18th century, every year on Saint John’s day he brought a loaf of Prądnik bread to Warsaw for King Stanisław August. The bread from Prądnik owed its fame to its taste, durability and huge size. Ambroży Grabowski, in his report of his trip to Vienna in 1805, mentions that one of the travelers was afraid of high prices of bread, so he took with him a loaf of the Prądnicki bread. Postillions on seeing the bread, exclaimed with admiration: "Das is ein gutes brot."

Breads baked on burdock leaves were also popular and were sold at Szczepański Square. Pędzichów bread was a specialty at the Słowiański Square, which had many supporters also from outside the district. In Zwierzyniec, “workers” bread was baked, similar to the Prądnik bread, but in smaller loaves and not with such a dark crust. Others preferred the tasty Prądnicki Bread, rather than the steamed bread from the Baruch bakery in Podgórze.

Krakowski Obwarzanek (round shaped bread)

The most characteristic Krakow baked good is the inconspicuous round obwarzanek . Traditionally they are sprinkled with salt, poppy seeds or sesame and more recently also cheese, black cumin and herbs. The production is still done by hand and the baker