Magiczny Kraków

Where I eat in Krakow:chef Grzegorz Fic

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He rarely eats out, but ordering dishes that have a nostalgia factor is always a priority. Grzegorz Fic speaks about Krakow's gastronomy.

For breakfast and coffee: the Main Market Square

I do not regularly sit in cafes, but in the summer I would simply choose one of the beer gardens on the Main Market Square: near the Cloth Hall or in Szara restaurant. Do some people-watching, stretch out in the sun and feel like a tourist in my own city.

For Sunday lunch: Pod Baranem

I have this one place in Krakow where I always feel at home and I have strong feelings for. It is Pod Baranem. Jan Baran cooks like people used to cook in the 1990s when I started my career. They serve the best steak tartare in town. There is fish, onion, gherkin on the plate... The waiter asks if we want vodka - the entire ritual involved in serving steak tartare has been meticulously maintained here. Then we eat chicken broth. My wife orders duck or game, I choose lamb. And *kompot* to go with it. Everything is just right!

For a quick snack and an evening out: Baroque

When I go out, it is usually to socialise and not to eat. That is why I go to Baroque - also my friend works there. Sometimes I visit Scandale. I enjoy meeting other chefs, but we never discuss what we have on our plates or in our glasses because we consider that rather uncouth. We do not compare ourselves to others because we did not go out to talk shop.

But of course I like checking on how others are doing. I visit Marcin Filipkiewicz and Krzysztof Żurek. Or other chefs who, like Miłosz Kowalski, chef in Halicka, found a new place for themselves.

For a date: somewhere low-key

I have not been on a date for 20 years. I would send those who are looking for a good spot to my place, but that is not appropriate. I would look for a place with a similar vibe - somewhere you can talk and focus on the other person. Some exmples are Amarylis, Studio Qulinarne and Bottiglieria 1881.

For good cake: Słodki Wierzynek

I am no expert, but if I buy cakes, it is here. They have fantastic black forest gateau, great chocolates, outstanding Frambolade cake with white chocolate and raspberries. It's worth checking out for yourselves. I miss the old taste of ice-cream in Słodki Wentzl. Their strawberry and vanilla... I am planning to visit Oskar Zasuń's new place. My colleagues say he is doing great.

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To relax I leave Krakow

I work here, but I cannot relax here. I live near Krakow and I find typical urban entertainment such as cinema tiring. The city is not meant for relaxation and drinking hot chocolate in a cafe is not my thing. I relax in my own garden, in the outdoors or hunting. The forest soothes me.

A dish that I strongly associate with Krakow: good products

It is a very personal memory: during my internship in Wentzl in the 1990s, I saw how you can prepare game. Their wild duck roasted in cabbage and wild catfish are my recollections from the beginning of my career and I would love to see Krakow restaurants come back to this type of cooking.

Now restaurateurs go for steaks and burgers. I have steaks on the menu myself because guests ask about them. I miss having a place in Krakow that sets trends. Fine dining in our city is like the blind leading the blind: everyone is treading warily, everyone is preparing what they believe is right. There is no restaurant that would have a clearly defined style and cuisine. I miss rivarly, but understood as something positive, someone you could aspire to be, draw inspiration from. Someone who would push boundaries and move Krakow's gastronomy forward. We have great chefs, that is true, but we need a little more commotion.

Main inspirations in my kitchen: products

In Albertina I started preparing lobsters which has always been my dream. In 2004 I went to Scotland and was enchanted by the simplicity of Scottish food. I came back to Poland, got sucked into a variety of jobs and then finally met Basia Zamorska with whom we run Albertina - and it worked. I appreciate Polish products: game, smoked trout. I like shopping at the Kleparz farmers' market where I always go to Marek's stall and, depending on the season, buy mushrooms, asparagus or brussel sprouts. But let's be honest, it is rare for a chef to have time to go to the market personally and buy the best seasonal produce. Polish cheeses are also delicious. Why buy Italian or French cheeses when those from Kaszubska Koza farm are pure genius. Smoked *bundz* with nigella seed from the Kleparz market is another masterpiece!

A chef that inspires me: Pierre Gagnaire

I try to emulate him, I serve dishes in a similar way he does: on several plates, bowls. I spent three days in his restaurant. He works extremely hard. At 11pm, after a busy service, he can kneel and start cleaning the fridge. Here in Krakow, Krzysztof Żurek is the same. I would love to be like them.

Grzegorz Fic specialises in Mediterranean cuisine and modern interpretations of Polish cuisine. Member of the Chefs' Club Foundation and the Polish Hunting Association. Chef and co-owner of ALBERTINA Restaurant & Wine.