Magiczny Kraków

Kirmess dinners of Jagiellonian University professors

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The so-called kirmess dinners of Jagiellonian University professors which were organised in the Middle Ages have earned historic significance.

The dinners were held by professors on the anniversary of the foundation of St. Florian's church in Kleparz. The professors were canons of the collegiate church of St. Florian for doctors and masters living in Collegium Maius. The dinners took place in Collegium Maius and up to 20 guests were arranged at up to three tables. The prebendary at St. Florian's chapter was responsible for organising the dinner and he was given the kitchen, servants, and cooking utensils of Collegium Maius to use at his disposal. The preparations began several weeks before the dinner. Wines were bought "to try", poultry was fed to get fatter (chickens, capons, geese). Everything was precisely calculated and when a goose suffocated with dumplings on the eve of the dinner in 1557, a new one had to be urgently bought.

The room was adorned with carpets, flowers and herbs, including marjoram and white roses, which were laid on the table. Guests brought their own cutlery with them and meals were served individually to each guest on a separate plate straight from the kitchen; only some dishes were put on the table on platters. Dinners consisted of 5 or 6 dishes and were generous (during one such feast, each person was served three portions of capon stew with barley, chicken in gravy, a veal roast, a roast chicken, apricots with meat, wild strawberries with quark).

People feasted on roasted and boiled meats: poultry, beef, veal, pork and mutton roasts as well as veal heads, tongues and tripe. Meats were seasoned with peppercorns, raisins, capers, ginger, cinnamon, mace, saffron, onion, parsley, beer or wine vinegars, home-made wine, cloves and paprika. Other condiments included sorrel, almonds (in 1557, a goose was sprinkled with a pound of almonds), dried apple and mustard.

Menus featured boiled chicken stew with spices and raisins, roast chicken, apricots with pork, goose meat stew, rice with butter and paprika, boiled beef, tongue in caper sauce, geese casserole made with blood and cloves, rice milk pudding with sugar, turnip greens with mutton.

Meats were served with gravy and "sopors" (probably from the Italian word *sapori* meaning flavours), salted cucumbers, turnip greens, barley, split peas with lard, apricots, bread rolls, bread and rice.

Puddings included fresh peas in pods, wild strawberries, wild or sweet cherries, pears, apricots, plums, wafers and fried dough. Besides desserts, there were also cheeses: nuggets, round-shaped *małdrzyk* made of sweet cream and *kossyk* that, as Karbowiak presumes, were cheeses matured in baskets (*koszyk* in Polish).

People drank wine and beer. Karbowiak writes that during one meal, each person drank on average more than two quarts of beer and nearly two quarts of wine .

Leftovers were either given away or ... kept until the next year. Of course that only applied to precious spices (pepper and ginger) or sugar. And seeing that the prebendery of St. Florian's church in the middle of the 16th century was quite frugal, accounts from the dinners reveal many such savings.

Source:

„Obiady profesorów Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego w XVI i XVII wieku” Antoni Karbowiak, Kraków 1900 dostępne na https://polona.pl/item/obiady-profesorow-uniw-jagiellonskiego-xvi-i-xvii-wieku,MTA1Mzc3MDg/0/#item