Four Slow Food Zones soon in Krakow

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- Special Slow Food Zones, a big step on the way to creating a new tourist offer, are to make Krakow associated with high-quality regional products - says Katarzyna Opoczka, project manager of Slow Food Central Europe in Krakow.

Since 2017, the City of Krakow has been a partner of the international project Slow Food Central Europe under the Interreg Central Europe program, promoting local culinary heritage, the idea of Slow Food and creating a tourist offer based on them. What are the current activities carried out by the City of Krakow focused on?

Katarzyna Opoczka (project manager of Slow Food Central Europe in Krakow): Our current goal is to support six local products and present the rich history of the region through them. We are looking at *obwarzanek* [a traditional braided ring-shaped bread], kiełbasa piaszczańska [a semi-dry cured pork sausage], Ojców trout, Prądnik bread, Galician garlic and głąbik krakowski [a variety of stem lettuce]. The histories of the products are completely different, in each case we also face different challenges: from problems with availability to poor knowledge among tourists and residents.

What challenge accompanies a product as well-known as *obwarzanek*?

This kind of bread product has a long tradition. It was marked with a protected geographical indication in 2010, which means the *obwarzanek* should be baked according to a specific recipe and within the administrative boundaries of the city of Krakow and the Krakow and Wieliczka poviats. The certificate, however, does not prevent the serious problem of counterfeiting the obwarzanek. As an office, we cannot prohibit such a practice, but we can conduct educational activities and make customers aware of how to recognize a true *obwarzanek*. We also run *obwarzanek* making workshops to show how simple their composition is. We would also like the residents to view the *obwarzanek* not only as a quick snack on the way to a train or to work, but as a kind of bread you can use to prepare great sandwiches. For this reason we came up with the following slogan: "*Obwarzanek* not only on the run", and we engaged, among others, the Live Obwarzanek Museum in Krakow, in the campaign.

The *obwarzanek* is ubiquitous. It is different in the case of Prądnik bread, also protected by a certificate, which is not easily granted.

The first certificate was obtained by Krakow bakery legend Antoni Madej. At present, the bread is baked by another, certified company, and we make Krakow bakers aware that such a certificate is definitely worth getting. We hope that other bakeries will take up this challenge and the Prądnik bread will also appear on open air markets and in other places where more conscious customers, looking for high quality food, do their shopping. If another producer appears in the near future, we will consider it a measurable success of the information campaign conducted as part of the Slow Food-CE project.

The Ojców trout is a brand well known to both chefs and conscious consumers. Its producers, in a very professional way, promoting their brand, have been promoting our region for several years, not only locally, but also at international events. How

does the Office intend to support the product?

We care about the decentralization of tourist traffic, and the Ojców National Park, where trout is bred, will become one of the places that we will be promoting as a great destination for both residents and tourists - as well business travelers who look for an original way to spend their time. We want Krakow's culinary heritage routes to be connected with the Malopolska Region tourist routes. The beautiful natural environment and great food along with the opportunity to hear the story behind the product constitute a great way to spend a day in Krakow and the surrounding area during a day or weekend trip.

Many Krakow residents have heard of the Lisiecka sausage, *kiełbasa piaszczańska* is definitely less known.

The products are quite similar in terms of structure and the seasoning method, they obviously differ in their place of origin. Our basic challenge is to make the residents of Krakow aware of the history of the recently certified product. The legend of kiełbasa piaszczańska, also called kijacka, is well told by Mr. Szczepan Gawor who undertook the effort of certifying it. The residents of Piaski, now a district of Krakow, complained to King Kazimierz the Great of Krakow that the butchers forbade them from selling their products in the capital. The king promised to grant them a permit to sell their products, provided that they smuggled the sausage through the well-guarded city gates. The residents hollowed long sticks and hid sausages inside. Hence, they were later named *kijaki* [which referred to sticks - *kije* in Polish]. This is one version of the legend. In fact, the name *kijak* was due to the fact that the traders hung their products on sticks, an integral part of their outfits. At present, we hope that - as in the case of the Prądnik bread - *kiełbasa piaszczańska* will be also produced by other meat processing plants.

Kiełbasa piaszczańska leads us to the Galician garlic, used in the sausage production process.

The Galician garlic - with a characteristic aroma and slightly purple color - is the youngest certified product. Unfortunately, it is also commonly counterfeited - garlic of other origin is sold instead. So we will try to educate residents and encourage them to reach for a local product, possibly more expensive, but proven.

***Głąbik krakowski* is probably the least known on this list, it practically disappeared from the Krakow menu.**

Fortunately, there are still people who remember it from their own homes. We not only hope to bring it back to Krakow's tables, but also to create a new culinary tourist product. We started with a campaign involving chefs and conducted jointly with HORECA. We hope that this culinary novelty from the past will reach local farmers and głąbik will be available at open air markets in a season or two. For each of these products, we also talk to restaurateurs and hoteliers, hoping that the products will find their way to restaurants, even as part of their breakfast menu, where they will be highlighted and described. We want - in the culinary field – to start to be associated primarily with high-quality regional products. Special Slow Food Zones, a big step on the way to creating a new tourist offer, will also assist in this. We are currently planning four such zones: Kazimierz / Podgórze, Kleparz, Plac Centralny and North. Work on them will last until the end of

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April. With their help, we will promote slow food products, places where you can eat well, or just relax in the spirit of slow life. We want to encourage tourists to get off the beaten paths and discover the city from a different, culinary, perspective.