

VOJVODINA'S INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE – THE LOAF (CIPOVKA)

BREAD SMILES AT THE MOON



Every region of Europe takes pride in its own, characteristic type of bread. These are not 'special occasion' breads made for a particular celebration or ritual. These are the breads served daily. All of these 'take-pride-in breads' are the result of a culture's baking skills and differ according to how they are prepared, type of flour used, shape, taste and smell.

In the south-east region of Finland it is Kalakukko (bread made with small lake fish); in Toscana, Italy, they are proud of Schiacciata, Galicia has Pan Gallego, in Northern Wales they make Bara Brith, Mallorca's is called Mallorca Ensaimadas, in Moscow they bake Borodinsky bread, and in San Francisco it is Sourdough bread.

Traditional, everyday 'take-pride-in' bread in Vojvodina is called Cipovka!

Vojvodina peasants, and later professional bakers, prepared white bread with yeast. Characteristic for this bread is its exceptionally pleasant smell and taste, easy digestibility and freshness of several days. The size of the bread depended on the number of household members and its average weight was 3 to 5 kg.

It is believed that the name 'cipovka' comes from a Hungarian word "cipo" (the rounded end of a loaf, in translation), and it is first mentioned in literature in the writing of Melhior Erdujhelji "The History of Novi Sad" (1894).

According to historical data, until the opening of first bakery shops in Novi Sad bread was made by housewives. They would then take it to the market and sold it as homemade bread.

Hungarian women also came to the market with their variety called 'pupushke' (rounded loaf ends).

There is even a ruling from 1799 allowing women to sell bread on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays and – during summers – Sundays.

One of the biggest Hungarian holidays is St. Istvan's Day, celebrated on 19th and 20th August. It is dedicated to the founder of Hungarian state, its first crowned king and who was proclaimed a saint after his death. At the same time, it is also a traditional holiday of 'New Bread Day' when 'cipovka' are made from newly harvested wheat.

The ingredients of a typical 'cipovka' are: white flour, yeast, luke warm water and salt. However, the secret is in the making, the skill of the baker passed on from generation to generation. First, yeast is put into luke warm water to soften. When soft, a little flour is added and a teaspoon of salt. After some time (about 15 minutes) when the yeast mixture is done, flour, sugar and lukewarm water are added.

The dough should be kneaded for quite some time by turning it constantly until it stops clinging to the hands and bubbles start appearing. When the dough becomes sourly it is re-kneaded by pressing.

After this, the dough is covered with a linen cloth and left to rise for about 45 minutes. Then it is re-kneaded, shaped into a bowl and left to rise once again, about 60 minutes.

The specific shape of a typical 'cipovka' is achieved by cutting in a ball-like piece of dough (at the top of the dough ball). The cutting is done by a sharp knife and on the side, immediately before putting the bread in the oven.

The bread is baked for about 60 minutes at 240 degrees C. The extra quality comes from indirect method of making bread, as well as from direct firebox of the oven where corn cobs and stalk were used for fire.

Once 'cipovka' is removed from the oven it is 'washed' with clean water and put on a wooden shelf to cool. Cipovka must have a thick, caramel colored crust in order to keep the humidity of the bread and remain fresh for several days.

That is how bread smiles at the Moon is made.