

Gratinated Pasta Casserole

Gratinated pasta casserole known as Šunkofleky are easy, quick and cheap dinner. It tastes best with pickled gherkins. You can use all types of small pasta and improve recipe with cheese or meat of your choice.

Ingredients

- 500g of pasta (quadretti, macaroni)
- 5 eggs
- 300g of smoked meat or ham/sausage
- oil
- salt, pepper

Directions

1. Boil pasta in salted water with few drops of oil.
 2. Meanwhile cube boiled smoked meat or sausage.
 3. Mix pasta and meat together in a pan.
 4. Put to preheated oven for 15 minutes at 220°C.
 5. Whisk eggs and season with salt and pepper. Pour eggs over pasta. Reduce temperature to 180°C and bake for another 10-15 minutes.
 6. Serve with pickled gherkins.
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Homemade Liver Sausage

Jitrnice (liver sausage) are essential product of every pig slaughter and they are produced in all of Czech Republic. Depending on region, their preparation changes. In some parts of Moravia, people add semolina instead of buns. Boiled rice is also used and groit. During boiling we watch carefully if the water is not boiling heavily – sausages could tear up.

Ingredients

- 1 kg of brisket
- 350g of pork jowl
- 500 g pork lungs
- 350 g pork livers
- 500 g buns
- 0,5 l pork broth
- 80 g salt
- 3 g marjoram
- 1,5 g ginger
- 1,5 g minced allspice
- 45 g minced garlic
- 1 g pepper
- 8 m of sausage casings
- wooden sticks (skewers)

Directions

1. Boil brisket and jowl until semitender and lungs until tender. Cube buns.
2. Grind boiled lungs and grind raw livers twice. Remove bones and cartilages from brisket and cube brisket

and jowl.

3. Put cubed buns in a bowl and pour part of broth, add livers, garlic, lungs and rest of broth. Salt and season and mix thoroughly.
4. Then add meat from brisket and jowl and mix again. Season to taste if necessary.
5. Cut thin casings to 20 cm (8 inch). Close one end of casing with skewer and fill with mixture. Then close the second end with skewer.
6. Boil in hot water (90°C) for about 15-20 minutes. Wash boiled sausages in cold water and let cool of on wooden plate. Turn them after 15 minutes.

Traditional South Bohemian Mushroom Soup

Kulajda is typical soup from mushrooms, dill and cream made in South Bohemia. Our great-grandmothers made it from milk, which was sour. Today we use sour cream. Recipes for this soup are many, because every family designed the soup according to their taste. Somebody prefers sweet cream over sour cream and others don't use dill. Even mushrooms are used fresh, dried or pickled. We have a traditional recipe for this thick creamy soup and you can improved as you want.

Ingredients

- 6 medium large potatoes
- 1 can of sour cream
- 1 cup of mushrooms

- 4 eggs
- 1-2 spoons of vinegar
- 3 allspice
- 3 peppercorns
- 1 bay leaf
- caraway
- 2 spoons of flour
- butter
- dill
- salt

Directions

1. Clean and slice the mushrooms. Melt butter in pot and stir-fry mushrooms.
2. Add cubed raw potatoes, spice and salt and pour water so potatoes are under.
3. When potatoes soften, put out the spice add sour cream with flour and boil.
4. Season soup with vinegar, salt and add chopped dill.
5. At last we prepare eggs. Break an egg and put it gently in boiled water with a spoon of vinegar. Slowly boil it for 3-4 minutes. Then put egg out and put in cold water.
6. Put egg in plate with soup.

Pork Greaves Spread

Greaves spread is typical for pig slaughtering. Main ingredient are well sputtered greaves. The best are homemade, freshly made. Their making is pretty simple and you'll also

get delicious homemade lard. You can use lard for frying or you can put part of greaves into glass and pour with lard. When it's cold, it's a delicious snack to bread, that can last in fridge for a very long time. Greaves spread on its own has many variations. Here's basic recipe, that can be enriched by boiled eggs or pickles and garlic.

Ingredients

- 3 kg of lard
- 2 large onion
- 3 spoons of mustard
- 100 ml of water
- caraway
- salt

Directions

1. Cube lard to 1 cm large pieces. Put them in large pot and pour water, so it doesn't burn at start. Fry lard very slowly and stir a lot, till greaves are about half the size and brown.
2. Then we take the greaves out and squeeze the oil to glass. Season with glass and caraway.
3. Ground cold greaves add chopped onion, mustard and mix together.
4. Put spread on fresh bread and garnish with chopped chives.

Advent Traditions

Advent is a start of liturgical season of 4 Sundays before Christmas. People happily expect Christmas and the coming of Saviour. Even the word "advent" come from Latin word adventus, which means "coming". It's time of meditation and charity. Earlier it was time of Lenten, when celebrations, dancing and singing were banned. Advent Lenten disallowed eating meat, only fish were allowed. This Lenten ended with shining of first star on Christmas Eve. Today this season is connected with preparations to Christmas, buying gifts, sweets baking, chores and house decorating.

Czech Advent and Christmas Markets

For many Czechs it's a magical time scented with cinnamon, vanilla and mulled wine. In bigger cities, Christmas markets take place and with their atmosphere they are the longest markets of the year. In many stands you can buy gifts for your closed ones. Handmade scarfs, hats and gloves with colourful motives, homemade soaps, candles, ceramics, wickerworks and wooden toys. There's also presentation of traditional crafts. Right on front of your eyes you can have your text or image engraved on glass and smith can make you a horseshoe for luck. In other stands you can taste roasted almonds, chestnuts, trdelník, potato chips and local specials. People would drink mulled wine, hot mead or punch while watching at Christmas tree.

Customs and traditions

With advent season there are several traditions and customs in Czech Rep., which survive to this day with small changes.

Advent wreath

Advent wreath is the most common tradition and you can find in every household. People often make them themselves from twigs and decorate it with cones, bows and rowan. Crucial part are 4 candles, which are lighted every Sunday. On first Sunday, the first candle of prophets is ignited. On the second Sunday, the candle of Bethlehem is lighted. On the third Sunday, the candle of shepherd and on last Sunday, the candle of Angels. Advent Sundays are also known as iron, bronze silver and gold.

Advent calendar

Advent calendar is also among old traditions. Originally it was carved art where children found verse form Bible or pictures. Today calendar is filled with chocolate or sweets.

St. Barbara

For single girls it's a popular fest. On St. Barbara day, 4th of December, girls gather twigs form cherry-tree and put them in water. If twig blooms on Christmas Eve, girl would get married in a year.

St. Lucy

St. Lucy is a patron of dressmakers and spinsters. This day they would stop all work. If not, Lucy would destroy threads and yarn.

Christmas Gingerbreads

Gingerbreads are unforgettable part of Czech Christmas.

Preparation is not difficult, you just need to put baked gingerbreads aside for 2 weeks and wait till they soften. That's why you can start baking at the start of December. You can cut different shapes of animals and motives from the dough. Also you can prepare sections and build a house or tree. Advent wreath from gingerbread is also amazing. After baking we can decorate them with sugar topping.

Ingredients

- 500g of soft wheat flour
- 250g of powdered sugar
- 3 eggs
- 100g of honey
- 50g of butter
- 1 tsp of baking soda
- 1tsp of cinnamon
- 3 dried cloves
- 1 tsp of anise
- 1 allspice
- lemon peel

Directions

1. Lightly warm up honey and crush spice in mortar.
2. Mix all ingredients together and knead into a dough.
3. Put dough in bag and let in fridge for 2 days.
4. Take small parts one by one and roll them thin. Cut shapes of your choice and lay them on baking paper.
5. Bake in preheated oven 180°C for 3-5 minutes.