


# Magdalena Dobromila Rettigová and her legacy

Every country has its **culinary tradition** and typical cuisine. Family and national recipes are passed on from generation to generation similarly as folklore stories. These recipes contribute largely to the national identity and are treasured accordingly. As well as folklore tales have their collectors, so do **traditional recipes**; and as well as collectors of tales, the gatherers of traditional recipes also publish their work from time to time.

## Woman of many sides

**Magdalena Dobromila Rettigová** lived between 1785 and 1845.  She was a Czech revivalist and **author of cookbooks**, poems, plays and short prose. Magdalena, by maiden name Artmannová, married a Czech lawyer, patriot and writer J. A. Rettig. She was brought up in German environment and her first writings were also in German. Under the influence of her husband and Czech writing society, she started to write in Czech and her “silly verses and weepy stories” were gaining in popularity.

Rettigová was historically the first woman to show **great interested in women**, in regards to their position in society. However, she did not struggle for equality of women but endorsed their feminine qualities. She started to teach young women **how to cook or sew** and she showed them the manners and rules of dining and conduct. Her activities resulted in publishing the first literature on cookery. The most significant book Rettigová wrote is undoubtedly her **Home Cookbook** from 1826. This was not only a collection of traditional recipes for meals prepared with local crops and meat from locally bred domestic animals such as pork and beef. It contained also a code telling women how to be good

housewives to deserve respect for their femininity.

The focus of this enlightened woman was put also on sharing her knowledge with others. She was trying to propagate education and patriotic sentiment among other women. She was lending books to these women and then openly discussed their content and the women's opinions.

## Unhealthy yet tasty tradition

“A Household Cookery Book or A Treatise on Meat and Fasting Dishes for Bohemian and Moravian Lasses” by the first Czech propagator of cookery became a **true bestseller in the 19<sup>th</sup> century** and was published in many editions. The latest editions come from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although the meals prepared by the recipes in this book are often quite unhealthy and expensive – mainly when you really want to make them properly using quality ingredients, there are many salads and around fifty other vegetable recipes. The book could serve to anyone, it contains meaty meals which can be really quite expensive and not exactly healthy – her family could afford various ingredients, but also meals affordable for the less wealthy and the poor, because the land had gone through an after-war crisis and not everywhere were many types of food affordable or at hand.

Healthy or not healthy, **Czech cuisine** is definitely tasty and rich. M. D. Rettigová managed to collect the best and most **traditional recipes**. She put together the most practical and useful advice not only on how to prepare each of the meals properly and dutifully, she also provided countless practical **advices for women** on how to take care of their kitchen and, more importantly, of themselves.

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# About Czech Republic

Czech Republic is Central European country for which is nicknamed as the Heart of Europe. Czech beautiful cities and landscapes are as rich as the history that comes with them. No wonder that you can find **12 UNESCO heritage sites** in this stunning country.

Czech Republic borders with four countries: Germany, Austria, Poland and Slovakia, which was part of Czechoslovakia before it split up in 1993. It has area of 78 886 km<sup>2</sup> and population of 10,2mil. Czech Republic has mountain ranges along borders with every neighbour and highest peak is Sněžka with 1602m in Krkonoše. This conditions result in huge popularity of skiing and winter sports among Czechs. The country has **three traditional territories Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia** but administratively it has 14 regions. The capital city is well-known Prague which is considered to be one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Other large cities are Brno, Ostrava and Pilsen, which is famous for the beer industry. In fact it has given name for the *pilsner*.

## History of Czech lands

**History of Czech lands** dates back to the 9<sup>th</sup> century when Great Moravian Empire emerged from Slavic tribes. After collapse of Great Moravia in year 907 the centre of progress moved to Bohemia and Prague began to flourish. During the **reign of Charles IV. in 14<sup>th</sup> century** the Czech lands experienced great growth and many gothic and renaissance sights were built thanks to this king and Roman emperor. From 1526 House of Habsburg



began to rule the country till the end of 1<sup>st</sup> World War. On 28<sup>th</sup> October 1918 the Czechoslovakia was established and was one of the most advanced countries in the world. Dark times started in 1938 when Hitler claimed Sudetenland and short after the whole country as Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. After the war Communist Party took over government and for 40 years stayed in charge of everything. Rule of this Party ended with Velvet Revolution in 1989 and modern history of Czech Republic started. Soon after that Czechs and Slovaks split up in 1993. Today Czech Republic is modern advanced country with focus on automobile and, of course, beer industry.

## UNESCO Heritage

„In 1991 Czechoslovakia ratified the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and since then a total of twelve sites in the Czech Republic have been inscribed in the World Heritage List.“ (czech-unesco.org)

In Czech Republic you can visit *Historic Centre of Prague, Český Krumlov, Telč, Kutná hora, Pilgrimage Church of St John of Nepomuk at Zelená Hora, Lednice-Valtice Cultural Landscape, Gardens and Castle at Kroměříž, Holašovice Historical Village Reservation, Litomyšl Castle, Holy Trinity Column in Olomouc,*

*Tugendhat Villa in Brno and Jewish Quarter and St Procopius' Basilica in Třebíč.*

**More information in short video by CzechTourism.**

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