

# Czech Bread Dumplings

If there's any side dish Czechs love, it's most definitely dumplings. Bread dumplings go perfectly with traditional Czech sauces like tomato sauce, dill sauce, *svíčková* (cream sauce) and of course goulash.

## Ingredients

- 500ml of milk
- 1kg of fine wheat flour
- 2 eggs
- 20g of yeast
- 20g salt
- 2-3 old rolls
- teaspoon of sugar

## Directions

1. Warm the milk to be tepid but not hot.
2. Pour 100ml of milk into bowl, add crumbled yeast and sugar. Let leaven rest in warm place.
3. Cut rolls into small cubes.
4. Sift flour into clean bowl and mix with salt. Add eggs, warm milk and leaven (point 2).
5. Knead thoroughly and at last blend in rolls.
6. Cover bowl with cloth and let rise for 1 hour in warm place.
7. After that divide dough into 3 or 4 parts. Knead again and form into long shaped rolls.
8. Put in boiling water for about 20 minutes.
9. Pierce with skewer to know they're cooked.

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# The Magic of Silesian Cuisine

The **Silesian cuisine** is quite rich regional cuisine of the **northern part of Moravia** and the area of southern Poland near the borders with Czech Republic. Local cuisine is influenced heavily by **Polish and German cookery** but also by Pomeranian and East-Prussian regional cuisine. Some of the specialities which have origin in the **Silesian region** are now cooked predominantly in Germany. Regional dishes are quite simple yet very tasty. Their preparation is based on local ingredients and culinary skills which are passed on from generation to generation.

## Potatoes everywhere



One of the traditional ingredients in **Silesian cuisine** is **potatoes**. These serve as a **side dish, for potato soup**, or as the main course in form of **potato pancakes**. Other ways of preparing potatoes include various mashes, dumplings or small gnocchi-like potato bits. Potatoes are cooked both peeled and unpeeled – in dependence on the recipe. They could be boiled in water, baked or fried. People usually drank fermented milk, buttermilk or usual fresh milk. Potato pancakes were made with raw potatoes, usually grated, and milk, eggs, flour, and to taste people usually add lots of garlic and marjoram which give these pancakes its unique flavour. The basic ingredients could be enriched by some kind of smoked meat like sausages or even bacon.

Various kinds of potato gnocchi and dumplings also have a long

tradition not only in Silesia and the Czech Republic but also in Slovakia. Potatoes are used in dough which is then rolled up and boiled in a form of small cylinder and then it is sliced and served with meat and cabbage. Another way is to prepare the dough and by tearing it off with your fingers making small bits which are thrown into boiling water. When cooked, these small pieces of boiled potato dough are served with sheep cheese called bryndza or with cabbage, fried onion and bacon.

## **Bigos and Silesian Heaven**

A **traditional Polish appetizer** prepared also in the border areas among Poland, Czech Republic and Germany is **Bigos**. This speciality is also known as the hunters stew and is made with cabbage and meat. Typical ingredients are cabbage or sauerkraut, whole or puréed tomatoes, honey, mushrooms and various cuts of meat and sausages. The meat used in bigos can be pork, ham, bacon, sausage, veal, beef and, since it is considered a *hunter's* stew, it may include venison, rabbit or other game. Leftover cuts find their way into the pot as well. It may be seasoned with pepper, caraway, juniper berries, bay leaf, marjoram, paprika, dried or smoked plums, and other ingredients. Bigos is usually served with mashed potatoes or rye bread. As many other stews, this meal can be kept in a cool place and later reheated.

A very original meal, called **Silesian heaven**, is prepared with smoked bacon and dried fruit, cinnamon and lemon peel boiled in water. Then roux is prepared and made into a sweet sauce served with slices of bacon and the dried fruit. Silesian heaven goes well with potato dumplings.

**Various soups** are an inseparable part of each meal in this regional cuisine. They are made with pretty much everything you find in a Silesian garden, but the most favourite ones are **garlic soup, potato soup and cabbage soup**. Cabbage, by the way, is also very popular and




served as a side dish to various meals. As a dessert you can have local **Ears of Štramberk** (Štramberské uši), which is a kind of gingerbread pastry rolled into a shape resembling ears and, as the name suggests, it comes from nearby Štramberk. Silesian cuisine is undoubtedly very rich and has had great influence on the surrounding regions of Germany, Czech Republic and Poland and some of the meals from this region have become traditional parts of national cuisines of these countries.

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## **Magdalena Dobromiła 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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## Potato Salad

Potato salad is traditionally served with Schnitzel and cannot miss at Czech Christmas dinner table with carp. Every family prepare potato salad by their own recipe according to their taste and customs.

### Ingredients

- 2kg of potatoes
- 3-4 carrots

- 1 celery root
- onion
- 5 pickled gherkins
- 4 hard boiled eggs
- canned peas
- 300g of ham
- spoon of mustard
- mayonnaise and tartare sauce (according to your taste)
- salt, pepper

## Directions

1. Boil unpeeled potatoes in water with salt and let cool off. Then peel potatoes and cut to small cubes.
  2. Boil root vegetables in water with pinch of salt and vinegar. Let cool off and cut to small cubes and mix with potatoes.
  3. Same way add chopped onion and gherkins, cubed boiled eggs, peas, cubed ham and mix together.
  4. Blend mustard and mayonnaise, season with salt and pepper. You can also pour a little of brine from pickled gherkins.
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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 where 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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## Traditional Czech Bread

If you ask the Czech expats, students or simply people who spend a lot of time outside the Czech Republic, what they miss the most, many of them will tell that it is the **traditional**

**Czech bread.** It really is the cornerstone of Czech culinary tradition and cannot be found anywhere else. What makes the **Czech bread** so special? Is it the shape, colour of the crust or its typical sourness? Or is it the caraway which is **traditionally used in Czech bread**? It is all of the above and something more.

## **Rye flour makes the difference**

The basic ingredients used for the **Czech bread are rye and wheat flours.** Depending on the proportion of the two we then call the bread either **rye-wheat bread** (more rye flour than wheat flour) or **wheat-rye bread.** The proportion of these two flours in the typical Czech bread varies and depends to a large extent on local customs. The most balanced option is a 1:1 ratio with slight predominance of wheat flour. The difference, when compared to standard white, purely wheat bread is really obvious.



Rye has a long tradition as crop in Central Europe – it dates back to the Middle Ages. Rye has quite different characteristics than wheat. It contains much less gluten which affects the stickiness, firmness and taste. In order to achieve the desired results we need to help the dough a bit and add leaven – preferably homemade. The leaven consists of pre-yeasted flour and water.

## **Leaven is the secret**

The need to prepare bread this way due to the addition of rye flour gave birth to a new tradition. The leaven is in fact a living organism producing CO<sub>2</sub> and making the dough all fluffy which is the reason for its bubbled structure. The **original**

**Czech leaven** which has been a part of the **Czech culinary tradition** for generations is considered a little miracle. It has all you need to make good bread. This, water and more flour depending on the amount of bread you wish to bake. It has the yeast necessary for the dough to rise nicely and lactic acid bacteria giving the classic sour taste. What is more, it is completely natural which contributes to its wonderful typical smell and long lasting freshness.



The credit for this process goes to enzymes, bacteria spores and yeast cells which are naturally contained in flour. The enzymes then simply begin degrading the flour starch into lower sugars. This provides a perfect culture medium for bacteria and yeast cells which start to

reproduce themselves uncontrolledly.

The last thing necessary when preparing this type of bread is to carefully balance the ingredients. Although too much yeast can help the rising, the bread may not be so tasty. The **ratio of rye flour and wheat flour** has also influence on the whole process.

Various ways of preparing the leaven have been developed, because each baker tended to accommodate his own needs and tastes. But proper preparation of good leaven takes some time and since time is money, many baking companies developed quicker but more artificial ways of making the dough rise. This, of course, affects the quality of bread in supermarkets and it is getting still more difficult to find proper bread made in the traditional way. Luckily enough, the number of people baking their own bread is still on the increase, so let's hope that the tradition never dies.