

Svíčková na smetaně – Beef Sirloin with Cream Sauce

Czechs love heavy sauces with dumplings. Svíčková na smetaně (sirloin with cream sauce) is the most popular sauce of Czech cuisine. Tender meat with heavy sweet sauce is a challenge to every cook. To exaggerate, most Czech men judge their brides-to-be by their ability to make good sauce. But of course mother always does it the best way. And since the recipes pass from mother to daughter, there are as many different versions of this recipe as there are families. The cream sauce is not always served with beef, but also with pork and rabbit. Svíčková can be also considered as Christmas dish, since in some families it's served on First Christmas Feast (Christmas Day abroad).

Ingredients

- 1kg of beef sirloin
- 150g of bacon (not sliced)
- 150g of parsley
- 150g of celery root
- 300g of carrots
- 300g of onions
- 10 peppercorns
- 5 allspice berries
- 4 bay leaves
- hint of thyme
- 200ml of cream
- 2 spoons of mustard
- 80g of sugar
- lemon
- salt
- oil

- water or broth

Directions

1. Clean the meat and if you want interlard with part of bacon. Salt the meat.
2. Cut the rest of the bacon and with meat stir-fry on oil shortly. Then remove the meat.
3. Dice onion and root vegetable and fry on oil with bacon till it gets tawny.
4. Add peppercorn, allspice and bayleaf. Put sugar and let caramelize.
5. Add mustard and peeled sliced lemon.
6. Pour in water or broth. Put meat in sauce and stew for about 1,5 hour until the meat is tender.
7. Take out the meat from sauce. Remove peppercorns, allspice and bayleaves.
8. Blend vegetable in sauce with mixer and pour cream.
9. Season to taste with salt, sugar or vinegar.
10. Serve with bread dumplings. Garnish with lemon slice, cranberries and whipped cream.

Typical Czech Cuisine

Czech cuisine is famous for its varieties of meat, which plays the main role on a plate, and further for the variety of delicious sauces, dumplings and soups.

Local tastes



As in every country, the traditional cuisine of the Czech Republic is given by its location, its climate and crops which find favourable conditions in this area. It is no wonder then that in this moderate climate with large water areas, many rivers and forests the

typical meals consist of field crops, vegetables and game. The **Czech cuisine** is also rich in mushrooms, for the Czechs are quite keen mushroom pickers and the climate in this country, as well as in the most Central Europe, is just perfect for growth of mushrooms. When it comes to desserts then, the Czech land is rich in many kinds of pulp fruit and berries used in cakes together with curd cheese, walnut and poppy seed. One of the main characteristics of **Czech cuisine** is that the meal usually consists of a soup and a main course. The soup has quite often a form of broth with various ingredients, mostly vegetables according to the season, and pastinas. Thickened soups are also very common and traditional way of preparation. As a thickener the Czechs usually use roux of flour and the most typical ingredients are legumes, sausages or giblets. This kind of soup can be served as a main course with bread. **Traditional soups** include for example the potato soup, bean soup, lentil soup, cabbage soup, mushroom soup, fish soup – which many households hold for their **traditional Christmas soup**, and so on. Another typical feature of **Czech cuisine** is meat, the Czechs hardly pass a day without a proper portion of meat for lunch. **Traditional meat on a Czech table** is pork, poultry, beef, fish. Veal and mutton are rarer in use and in regions with gamekeeping tradition it is not a problem, in certain seasons, to have a nice boar or roe deer noisette. On

festive occasions, the Czechs mostly relish roast mallard or goose with cabbage and dumplings. As you can see, the range is pretty wide. The ways of preparation, on the other hand, are to a certain extent alike. It is mostly roasting or frying – as our **favourite schnitzel** or anything covered with breadcrumbs or as the typical and almost legendary **Czech fried cheese**.

Sauces and side dish



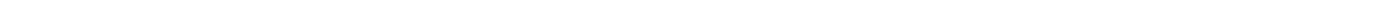
What mostly comes with meat is either potatoes, which have rooted in the **Czech cuisine** really deeply since they were brought from the US, or the already mentioned fluffy dumplings. **Czech cookery** is also known for its almost excessive use of various sauces. These sauces are prepared on béchamel-like basis

and the most traditional ones are the dill sauce, tomato sauce, mushroom sauce, paprika sauce and the very favourite cream sauce which is made with root vegetable and goes so well with sirloin, lemon and cranberries. Apart from these quite heavy on flour and cream sauces, there are variants as the side dish to meat. Mostly it is vegetables such as stewed spinach or cabbage.

Snacks and desserts

In pubs you can order also small snacks with your beer. The most traditional and omnipotent ones are a pickled bratwurst called the 'drown man', pickled camembert-like cheese usually with a pepperoni, very often you can also have a garlic toast, and of course that it would not be a proper pub without a proper goulash, although it is originally a Hungarian meal. As a dessert you can have a strudel, which is also borrowed, from Austria this time, but has long ago found its place on Czech tables. Typical are various kinds of cakes with fruit fillings made of plums, cherries, peaches, apples, blueberries and so on; or with poppy seed, walnut, curd cheese and raisins. In Wallachia you can find more kinds in one big cake called 'frgál' which was included in the European Commission's list of products with protected geographical indication quite recently.

So, as you can easily conclude, **Czech cuisine** is not of the healthiest ones. The amount of meat, cream based sauces, and also smoked meats and sausages, etc., makes it quite heavy but very, very rich in nutrition. Yet it has its tradition and if done really properly and well, it has its unmistakable magic. The traditional meals can be found in almost every restaurant. It is still good, though, to find a better place to taste the real sweet smoothness of cream sauce with a slice of sirloin, good roast duck with red cabbage and bread dumplings, or a really nice mushroom soup.



Prague Goulash

Goulash is originally Hungarian recipe, where under this name represents a soup. Czech goulash is more similar to Hungarian pörkelt. Commonly made from beef or pork, but during hunting season venison goulash is also served. You will definitely find it in every Czech restaurant served with dumplings.

Ingredients

- 700g of cubed beef (shin or leg)
- 500g of onion
- lard or oil
- 4 garlic cloves
- 2 spoons of paprika
- teaspoon of cumin/caraway
- salt, pepper
- marjoram

Directions

1. In large pot saute chopped onion in oil until it has golden color.
2. Add paprika and stir quickly otherwise it gets bitter. Add meat and stir-fry for few minutes.
3. Add salt and pepper and put about 200ml of water. Also add cumin, minced garlic and simmer until meat is tender. Stir from time to time and add more water if necessary.
4. Finally add marjoram.
5. If the sauce is too soupy, you can thicken it with a little flour.

6. Best served with bread dumplings, potato pancakes or bread and onion. Tastes best with cold beer.