

“Ptasie Mleczko,” “Schabowy” or “Pierogi”? Polish Foods and Dishes in Ireland

Marzena Keating

Pedagogical University Krakow

Keywords

Ireland, Poland, immigrant food, Polish food

Extended Abstract

Although Poland is not a country that immediately comes to mind when internationally acclaimed cuisines are considered, traditional Polish dishes such as, for example, *bigos* (sauerkraut and meat dish), *pierogi* (dumplings), *schabowy* (breaded pork cutlet), and *żurek* (rye soup) can be named by many. Also Polish products such as *kielbasa* (sausage), *piernik* (ginger bread from Toruń), and Polish vodka are recognized world-wide. As a member of the European Union, Poland can take pride in some traditional and regional foodstuffs that have been granted entry into the exclusive realm of food products registered as protected designations of origin and protected geographical indication (37 products)¹ as well as traditional specialities guaranteed (11 products).² Many of these products and dishes have been additionally popularized by Polish immigrants; pierogi in the USA being a great example.

Not the USA, however, but Ireland will be the focus of this research. Following the accession of ten Central and Eastern European countries to the European Union in 2004, Ireland witnessed the influx of migrants, the largest group coming from Poland. Within a decade, Polish immigrants have solidified their position as the most significant immigrant community in Ireland, demonstrating clear indications of a desire for permanent residency. According to the Irish census of 2016, there were 122,515 Polish nationals living in Ireland in April 2016, the largest non-Irish population group at the time (CSO 2016). Having been deeply embedded in the societal structure of contemporary Ireland over the last two decades, have Poles, however, also marked their culinary presence on the Irish food scene? To cater for their culinary needs specialized shops and dining establishments started to emerge

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/eambrosia/geographical-indications-register>.

² <https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/eambrosia/geographical-indications-register/tsg>.

in cities and towns across Ireland. Well-established supermarket chains, such as, for example, Supervalu, Tesco and Lidl, began selling typical Polish food products that would appeal to this community. Various events celebrating Polish traditions, including culinary ones, have been organized throughout Ireland. Additionally, Polish recipes have often occurred in Irish local and national newspapers.

Although it may seem that Polish culinary influence has manifested within the Irish foodscape (Coakley 2010, 2012), Russell Alford and Patrick Hanlon note in their review of Polka Polish Cuisine Restaurant in Galway: “Having been so ingrained in the fabric of modern Ireland for the past 20 years, why isn’t Polish food more commonplace or understood? Why is it not as integrated? Apart from your local Polonez, Mroz or PoloStores (and maybe you’ve never been), how well do any of us know the cuisine, recipes, ingredients and techniques of our Polish pals?” (The Sunday Times, 10 September 2023, 10). Also in academia, there has been little discussion about Polish food on the Irish food scene (Coakley 2010, 2012), although there has been a growing amount of academic work focused on Polish migrants in Ireland (Olszewska 2011; Szmytkowska 2011; Mytykowski and Andrzejewska 2012; Bobek 2020). Hence, this research aims to fill this gap and to illustrate that Polish foods not only provide a taste of home for migrants, transporting them back in time, evoking memories and emotions, but also they leave traces on the culinary landscape of Ireland, reflecting the changing demographics and cultural diversity of the country. Based on various sources, ranging from Polish products available in supermarket chains, menus from Polish restaurants in Ireland, and recipes for Polish dishes featuring in Irish press, this study seeks to answer the following questions: What Polish products are widely available in supermarkets in Ireland? What dishes are served in Polish restaurants in Ireland? What recipes for Polish dishes are offered in selected Irish newspapers? The answers to these questions will help to reconstruct the representation of Polish cuisine in Ireland.

References

- Bobek, Alicja. 2020. “Leaving for the Money, Staying for the ‘Quality of Life’. Case Study of Young Polish Migrants Living in Dublin.” *Geoforum* 109: 24–34. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2019.12.006>.
- Central Statistics Office (CSO). 2016. *Non-Irish Nationalities Living in Ireland*. Accessed February 10, 2024. <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpnin/cpnin/polish/>.
- Coakley, Linda. 2010. “Exploring the Significance of Polish Shops within the Irish Foodscape.” *Irish Geography* 43, no. 2: 105–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00750778.2010.515138>.
- Coakley, Linda. 2012. “Polish Encounters with the Irish Foodscape: An Examination of the Losses and Gains of Migrant Foodways.” *Food and Foodways* 20, no. 3–4: 307–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07409710.2012.715968>.
- Matykowski, Roman, and Alicja Andrzejewska. 2012. “Polish Economic Migrants in Ireland, 2004–2007.” *Geographia Polonica* 85, no. 1: 33–43. <https://doi.org/10.7163/gpol.2012.1.3>.

3 Dublin Gastronomy Symposium

- Olszewska, Kinga. 2011. "Transgressing the Nation: Cultural Practices of Polish Migrants in Ireland." *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 53, no. 1: 25-43. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00085006.2011.11092664>
- Szmytkowska, Magdalena. 2011. "Polish Migrants in Urban Space of Dublin." *Bulletin of Geography. Socio-economic Series* 16, no. 16: 139-152. <https://doi.org/10.2478/v10089-011-0019-4>.