

## Specialties of the Czech cuisine

### **Potato pancakes made from raw potatoes (*bramboráky*)**

A typical Czech folk dish, whose enticing smell you may catch coming from street stalls where they are sold. The raw potatoes are grated and mixed with flour and eggs and seasoned with garlic and marjoram. Bramboráky are rarely offered in restaurants as a main dish. And if so, it is usually in combination with raw sauerkraut. They are served rather in the form of small pancakes as a side dish with meat meals, usually restaurant specialties.

#### **Recipe:**

*1000 g peeled raw potatoes, 120 g flour, 1 egg, 4 cloves of garlic, salt, pepper, marjoram, fat (lard would be best for frying)*

*Grate raw potatoes, leave them to rest and then drain the excess liquid. Add the egg, flour, pepper, powdered marjoram, shredded garlic and salt. Blend all the ingredients together thoroughly. Ladle the dough into a frying pan with hot fat and fry until golden on both sides. Bramboráky taste best when served freshly fried and hot.*

### **Dumplings (*knedlíky*)**

Although their name suggests an affinity with German or Tyrol Knödeln, Czech dumplings are quite unique. A lump of dumpling on the end of a fork allows one to take a large portion of sauce or gravy. Combined with a lump of meat (and cabbage in some meals), it will melt in your mouth creating a gastronomic bliss of myriad flavors.

You will not encounter traditional Czech dumplings (a large boiled porous roll of dough, served sliced) anywhere else in the world. Although their preparation is quite simple, present households use predominantly ready-made dumplings which can be purchased in shops, or dumplings made from dumpling mixes which are worked with water into a soft dough, then formed into large rolls and boiled. We recommend that visitors who would like to present their families with this unique side dish purchase dumpling mix.

#### **Recipe:**

*500 g coarse ground flour (or a mixture of fine ground flour and semolina)*

*0,3 litre milk*

*1 egg*

*10 g yeast or a tea-spoon of baking powder*

*half tea-spoon of salt*

*2 bread rolls*

*Sift flour blended with salt into a bowl, add yeast or baking powder, milk with beaten egg and work the dough until moderately stiff. Cut the rolls into small cubes and mix them in the dough. Divide the dough into two parts, forming two large rolls, then boil them in salted water for approximately 25 minutes. Take the boiled dumplings out carefully, prick them with a fork to let the steam out and slice. Serve warm as a side dish to sauces and meat.*

## **Roast fillet of beef in cream sauce (*Svičková*)**

is the most famous representative of the rather complex burghers' cookery and a Czech specialty par excellence.

Marinated beef, threaded with strips of bacon, is stewed with coarsely chopped root vegetables and wild spices. The gravy from the meat is puréed, thickened and softened with cream. Served with sweet cranberries and a slice of lemon and garnished with whipped cream, this delectable dish with its unique spicy, piquant, sweet and sour flavor will certainly gladden every palate. *Svičková* is traditionally served with Czech dumplings.

### **Recipe:**

*600 to 700 g beef (undercut, sirloin or round), 200 g root vegetables, 1 onion, 1/4 liter sour cream, 50 g bacon, 50-80 g fat, 5 pepper corns, 2 corns of allspice, bay-leaf, thyme, salt and 1 teaspoon flour*

*Melt fat and brown the chopped vegetables in it, add onion and spices a little later. Add the meat threaded with strips of bacon and sautéed on all sides. Add hot soup or water and let the meat roast in the oven. Baste from time to time. After the meat is tender, take it out and purée the vegetables. Mix flour evenly into the juice and add cream.*

## **Vepřo-knedlo-zelo**

is the immediate response to an inquiry about a typical Czech meal. Officially called roast loin of pork with dumplings and cabbage (*vepřová pečeně s knedlíkem a zelím*), it consists of roast loin of pork (leg, shoulder or spare rib) seasoned with caraway seeds, warm cooked cabbage and dumplings, all sprinkled liberally with salted gravy. He who fails to sample this dish cannot claim to know what the Czech people like to eat. The same meal is popular in Moravia, the only exception being the style of cabbage which is prepared according to a somewhat different recipe. Needless to say that it is just as good as that common in Bohemia. To wash this palatable dish down with a beverage other than Czech beer would simply be a great mistake.

### **Recipe:**

*750 g loin, salt and caraway seeds*

*Place the pork meat seasoned with salt and caraway seeds in a roasting pan. Add some water and put to roast in the oven.*

*Brush with gravy liberally during the roasting (approximately 1 to 1 1/2 hours) so that the loin remains juicy.*

*Side dishes: any kind of dumplings - traditional Bohemian or potato dumplings and freshly prepared cabbage. The cabbage is cooked with chopped and browned onion. When the cabbage is tender, sprinkle it with flour and season with sugar and vinegar to achieve a sweet-sour flavor.*

## Sweet dumplings

Listed among typical national dishes, sweet dumplings are prepared from a variety of dough, including raised dough, semolina dough, potato dough and cottage cheese dough. They are stuffed with fresh or canned fruit, sometimes also with some preserve or plum-jam. Sweet dumplings are served sprinkled with melted butter and powdered sugar, cinnamon, grated cottage cheese or ground poppy seeds, or less typically, ground walnuts. Every family is accustomed to a different combination, tradition and preference. If you happen to encounter a menu featuring strawberry (*jahodové*), apricot (*meruňkové*) or bilberry (*borůvkové*) dumplings in summer or plum (*švestkové*) dumplings in autumn, do not hesitate to order them - you won't be able to try such a dish anywhere else.

*Courageous experimenters may try to prepare a rather simpler variant of sweet dumplings according to the following **recipe**.*

*Cottage cheese dumplings with fruit (tvarohové knedlíky s ovocem)*

*300 g cottage cheese*

*700 g coarse ground flour (semolina)*

*0,2 litre milk*

*3 eggs*

*100 g fat*

*100 g sugar*

*Pinch of salt*

*Mix softened fat with sugar and eggs, add cottage cheese, flour, milk and a pinch of salt. Work the dough and leave it to rest for a while. Make a roll and cut it into small pieces large enough to wrap around a plum (or another kind of fruit). Place the dumplings into boiling water and boil for approximately 6 minutes. Take the dumplings carefully from the water (using a sieve), prick them with a fork*

*to let the steam out and serve on plates sprinkled with powdered sugar and grated cottage cheese, browned bread crumbs or ground poppy seeds. Lastly sprinkle with melted butter. Bon appetite!*

**More special recipes from different regions of the Czech Republic see:**

<http://www.czechspecials.com/regional-specials/>

**Good taste!**