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## **Tasty Events.**

### **On Culinary Events in the Silesian Voivodeship**

**Abstract:** The topic of reflection undertaken herein are public events having an evident culinary character. In the first part of her essay, the author proposes a typology of culinary events, with special focus on those events which appear in the public space the most often. Their number and considerable complexity are associated with the target participant group, the current patterns of consumption, gastronomic styles, and finally with functions which have been ascribed to those events. In the second part, she discusses selected culinary events organised in the Silesian voivodeship which have characteristic dishes (e.g. *wodzionka*, *moczka*, *kołocz*) associated with the local cuisine as their Leitmotif. These events are usually in the form of open-air festivals with contests for the best-prepared dish as their regular feature.

**Key words:** culinary events, Silesia, tradition, regional cuisine.

“The pleasure of eating is the actual and direct sensation of satisfying a need. The pleasures of the table are a reflective sensation, which is born from the various circumstances of place, time, things and people who make up the surroundings of the meal” [Brillat-Savarin 2009: 189–190]. This passage from *The Physiology of Taste*, written almost two centuries ago, express the essence of culinary sensations, at the same time accentuating the fundamental and unchangeable truth: food and pleasure are inseparable. The range of circumstances in which food may be enjoyed is nowadays broader than ever and it constantly expands, determining new forms of activity and spending free time, shaping new lifestyles. Food has acquired new kinds of meaning, expressing not only human needs

and desires, but also cultural changes, consumption trends and access to foodstuffs as such. Lastly, the pro-food fashion arrived at the academic world (*food studies*), becoming the subject of inter-disciplinary scientific discussion [e.g. Curtin, Heldke 1992; Sutton 2001; Ashley, Hollows, Jones, Taylor 2004; Freedman 2007; Belasco 2008].

### **Culinary events – a proposal for a typology**

It does not take an expert to notice – if only on the basis of observation conducted in one's closest environment – that cuisine often becomes the *Leitmotif* for many events or, strictly speaking, celebrations and festivals. It adds splendour to gatherings of varying formality; from local initiatives on football pitches or culture centres to large projects sponsored by government institutions. Food itself, and its abundance and variety, are a magnet which draws people of diverse social backgrounds, professions and ages. Eating is arguably the best attraction; Anna Wiczorkiewicz discusses this issue in relation to tourism and travelling:

National cuisines [...] can be considered convenient props used in creating the realm of tourist attractions. Culinary attractions are created in order to enhance the tourist assets of a given place. Notes about local dishes, regional markets where local delicacies can be bought, culinary fairs or wine trails are often included in tourist information folders, along with descriptions of cultural events and historical monuments [Wiczorkiewicz 2008: 208].

These observations refer directly to culinary events, where a significant portion of the participants are, in fact, tourists visiting the place of the “gustatory spectacle”. Europe offers a wide range of culinary festivals, e.g. the truffle fair in the Italian city of Alba, the Oktoberfest in Munich, La Tomatina in Buñol in Spain, the Festival of New Beaujolais (Beaujol’Ympiades) in Lyon and Les Sarmementelles in Beaujeu [Sawala, Krawczyk, Bednarski 2005]. Outdoor events are organised in such a way that anybody can participate, even tourists from halfway across the globe, who are unfamiliar with the place and come there precisely to have fun and spend their time in engaging and new ways [Świtłała-Trybek 2007: 348].

Events centred around food, or with culinary aspects “in the background”, may assume forms that are as numerous as they are diverse. The typology presented below is based on a preliminary analysis of the phenomenon. It focuses primarily on the events that are most often observable in the public space. Their profusion and complexity is related to the location, the target group of participants, the predominant consumer models, gastronomic styles, and finally the functions ascribed to them. Some may be open (for all participants), others are targeted at a specific group of designated consumers; the duration varies from one day to a longer period of time (a week, a month). The majority of “festivals of flavour” is organised on non-working days or on the so-called long weekends (when bank holidays fall on a Monday or Friday), which has a direct influence on the turnout of visitors [Turkiewicz 1997: 25].

The first category of food-related events are **fairs of traditional and regional products**. The principle behind them is to promote produce characteristic for a given place (region or town).

The place of origin and production is a highly important feature of regional and traditional food. Its unique, specific quality results from the local climate, tradition, as well as the natural, cultural and culinary heritage, the skills and knowledge passed from generation to generation. All of this creates an unbreakable bond between the product and the region, often accentuated in the name of the food [Byszewska, Kurpińska 2012: 10]

Events of this type feature stalls selling cold cuts, bread, cheese, fruit preserves, honey, beer, liqueurs, wine etc., as well as folk art and craft products. The delicacies on offer at Polish fairs may be local, but some events also include products from other European countries; for this reason several events have been renamed “international fairs” (e.g. *Międzynarodowy Jarmark Produktów Regionalnych w Grodzisku Mazowieckim* – The International Fair of Regional Products in Grodzisk Mazowiecki). These are organised by open-air museums, town halls, commune authorities, local associations or shopping malls. However, it must be emphasised that nowadays the majority of such events organised on a regular basis (usu-

ally on a single weekend each month) takes place out of the initiative of supermarket chains. The malls offer their customers the possibility to shop for (or get familiar with) regional produce. Many such events are organised in the summer and autumn or shortly before Christmas and Easter. In the latter case, the stalls sell a larger assortment of goods, including prettily wrapped gift sets for children and adults and seasonal products made for the occasion, e.g. baked goods and sweets typically associated with Christmas or Easter, such as gingerbread, marzipan, the Easter shortcake *mazurek*, cheesecake, lambs and bunnies made of sugar, etc.

The **Christmas markets** constitute a special subcategory of regional fairs. They are organised in the Advent, following the model of similar fairs in Germany, Austria, Belgium or France, and usually in large cities. It is now hard to imagine the cityscape without the characteristic wooden stalls decorated with colourful lights, ornaments and presents, standing in market squares and the streets leading to them, or in centrally located piazzas. They draw the eye with their inviting outlook, the smell of fresh food, their warm atmosphere. In a word, they are a “feast for the senses”.

With their spectacular visual setting, Christmas markets have become desirable tourist attractions visited by millions of people. The ones with the longest tradition, organised for centuries (e.g. in Vienna, Augsburg and Frankfurt, as well as the *Striezelmarkt* in Dresden named after the characteristic Christmas strudel), attract crowds of visitors from all over the globe. Fairs of this type are popular in Poland as well; organised e.g. in Wrocław, Warsaw, Cracow (in 2008 “The Times” listed the Cracow Christmas Market as one of the best in Europe) [<http://www.witajwpodrozy.pl/inspiracje/jarmarki-bozonarodzeniowe.html>], Łódź, Toruń, Gdańsk and Olsztyn. It must be added that, in many towns in the Opole Silesia region, fairs of this specific type, involving the sampling of homemade cakes, pea soup and beverages such as mulled wine and beer, are instituted and organised by the local German minority institutions and German teachers from schools of all levels [Smolińska 2011: 194–195].

**Taste festivals** form another distinctive category of culinary events. Organised with much flair, they attract large groups of people interested not only in eating, but also in the methods of preparing various dishes and in

taking part in various cultural activities. The largest festivals in Poland take place in cities, including Cracow (*Małopolski Festiwal Smaku*, “Małopolska Taste Festival”, since 2005), Gruczno (*Festiwal Smaku*, “Taste Festival” since 2006), Ostrzeszów (*Ogólnopolski Festiwal Paszтетników i Potraw z Gęsi*, “National Festival of Pastry Makers and Goose Dishes”, since 2006), Poznań (*Ogólnopolski Festiwal Dobrego Smaku*, “The Festival of Good Taste”, since 2007), Lublin (*Europejski Festiwal Smaku*, “The European Festival of Taste”, since 2009), Wrocław (*Europa na Widelcu*, “Europe on the Plate”, since 2009), Warsaw (“Good Food Fest”, since 2012) and in the Silesian Voivodeship (*Festiwal Śląskie Smaki*, “Silesian Tastes”, since 2006, annual events in different locations). The fashion for taste festivals has been present in Poland for only a decade; it may be surmised that the trend will develop, as it did in Western Europe.

The appeal of taste festivals is slightly different than that of the Christmas markets. The term ‘taste’ used in the name serves as a pretext to discuss food in a broad context, offering the visitors not only the chance to buy a given dish, but also to take part in cooking shows (usually presented by renowned chefs familiar from the mass media), workshops and contests for children and adults, conferences, film screenings, meetings with the authors of books on culinary subjects, concerts and other attractions arranged by the festival bodies. The idea of such events falls within the scope of the term ‘festival’, defined as “a cyclical event composed of artistic performances (often also contests) and meetings, allowing the participants coming from different places to establish cultural, and sometimes even political contacts” [<http://www.slownik-online.pl/kopalinski/0B0086BD59031BC7412565CB0079CA6D.php>].

Another popular type are **thematic culinary events**. They are centred around a single ingredient (e.g. potatoes) or a specific dish (e.g. *pierogi*, *bigos*). In fact, any foodstuff may become the subject of attention; all that is needed is for its potential to be fully utilised. Field observation and materials presented in the social media (e.g. advertisements and invitations for culinary events) suggest that the initiators and organisers of such “gustatory projects” normally choose a product that is in some way connected with a given place (a commune, a town, a region), for instance:

- **a type of vegetable or fruit growing in the area** (e.g. *Święto Truskawki*, “The Feast of the Strawberry” in Buczek; *Święto Jabłka i Gruszki*, “The Feast of the Apple and the Pear” in the Raciechowice Commune; *Charsznickie Dni Kapusty*, “Charsznica Cabbage Days”; *Szparagowe Święto*, “Asparagus Festival” in Trzciel; *Winobranie*, “Grape Picking” in Zielona Góra, etc.);
- **locally bred species of animals** (*Święto Gęsi*, “The Feast of the Goose” in Biskupiec Pomorski; *Święto Karpia*, “The Festival of the Carp” in Zator; *Święto Pstrąga*, “The Festival of the Trout” in Żłoty Potok, etc.);
- **characteristic dishes and products prepared in a traditional manner** (eg. *Święto ciapkapusty*<sup>1</sup> in Kochanowice; *Święto Ciulimu*<sup>2</sup> i *Czulentu* in Lelów; *Święto Kartacza*<sup>3</sup> in Gołdap, *Święto Kielbasy Lisieckiej* – “The Feast of Lisiecka Sausage”, etc.).

Another group that can be distinguished are the so-called **universal** products, often appearing as the *Leitmotif* of culinary festivals. The most popular vegetable is unquestionably the **potato** (the oldest potato fiesta in Poland has been organised in Mońki since 1979; other events include *Dzień Kartofla* in Chorzów, *Kartoflada i Winnetou* in Chudów, *Kartofel Fest* in Świętochłowice, *Kartoffelfest* in Cyprzanów, *Święto Ziemniaka bez GMO* in Oleśnica, *Święto Pieczonego Ziemniaka* in Tomaszów, etc.), whereas the title of the most acclaimed meat dish goes to **pork knuckle** (*Święto Golonki* in Bielsk, Częstochowa, Crackow, Szczyrk, etc.). The immense popularity of these two foods is certainly related to the significance these products have enjoyed in Polish cuisine in the last few centuries. Potatoes began to be grown in Poland on a large scale only in the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and were popularised in the reign of Augustus III (1734–1763). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, potatoes joined soups as the basic element of everyday fare, the “trademark” of plebeian cuisine. Their suc-

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1 *Ciapkapusta* is a Silesian dish of mashed potatoes and cabbage (translator's note).

2 *Ciulim* is a dish of potatoes, meat and spices similar to the Jewish cholent (translator's note).

3 *Kartacz* is a type of dumpling made of diced potatoes and stuffed with minced meat (translator's note).

cess was due to the fact that they yielded large crops, were easy to store (in clamps) and could be used for many different purposes: as food for people and fodder for animals, or for the production of alcohol. Potatoes were eaten almost daily, on weekdays and special occasions alike. They were the staple of nearly every meal and also became the basis for new, distinct dishes [Szelągowska 2008: 255]. Nowadays, the consumption of potatoes in Poland is steadily decreasing, yet they still constitute, along with red meat, the most common component in the menu of an average Pole. In the recent decade the farm yield of this vegetable has also shrunk; in 2000 it amounted to 1360 kilograms per hectare, in 2005 – 652 kilograms per hectare, while in 2010 – only 528 kilograms per hectare [Rocznik Statystyczny Rolnictwa 2011: 145].

The latter dish – pork knuckle (*golonka*), full of fat and rich in calories, is a delicacy mostly preferred by men. Ham hock has a high energetic value; in Poland it is often served with cooked sauerkraut or with cabbage cooked with peas, sometimes with mustard or horseradish as seasoning. In Polish cuisine, fatty and abundant meals were for a long time considered the most appropriate; the relatively high status of pork knuckle as a dish is partly a result of this thinking. The appeal of the dish is determined not only by its taste, but also by the fact that it is often consumed on special occasions, usually with friends or family. One example of such “meetings in a closed circle” are the beer feasts, organised for miners on the day of their patron Saint, Barbara [Świtłała-Trybek 2011: 236].

A separate category in the typology of events centred around food is reserved for **culinary contests**. Competitions aimed at selecting the best recipe for a given dish, cake, etc. are held for example during the already mentioned taste festivals, often becoming their main event. The contests tend to focus not on rivalry, but on entertainment. The people “battling” for the title of a master chef are mayors, community leaders, school principals, in other words, important personages well-known in the local circles. Contests addressed to country clubs, whose members include professional cooks, are more serious in nature. In this case, the requirements the participants need to meet are steeper, while the jury assesses the dishes not only in terms of their taste. The majority of the

contests are related to the cultural heritage of a given region; the organisers emphasise the need to preserve and propagate knowledge about the daily fare of our ancestors.

**National contests**, sponsored by institutions or even the government, are slightly different in character. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Voivodeship Marshals have sponsored a contest named *Nasze Kulinarne Dziedzictwo – Smaki Regionów* (Our Cultural Heritage – Flavours of the Regions) since the year 2000. It is organised by the Polish Chamber of Traditional and Regional Products in cooperation with the Association of Polish Voivodeships. The contributing partners of the event include marshal offices and agricultural advisory centres in various regions. The aims of the project include

the identification of regional products and their promotion, [...] preparing producers for integration into food quality systems both on the national level and within the EU. The contest also attempts to encourage inhabitants of rural areas, especially those with adverse economic conditions, to seek alternative sources of income [<http://www.produktyregionalne.pl/nkd.html>].

The contest is open; any maker of regional and traditional products may become a participant. It consists of two stages. At the end of the first stage – the regional finals – the jury selects winners in four categories (products of animal origin, products of plant origin, beverages and mixed products), as well as the best regional and traditional dishes. In the second stage, the National Chapter of the Contest chooses the best among the products regionally nominated for the prestigious “PERŁA” award, which is presented at the Grand Finale of the contest, during the Polagra International Trade Fair for Food in Poznań. The regional finals, usually held in institutions concerned with documenting cultural heritage (e.g. open-air museums) or in highly accessible public spaces (e.g. pedestrianised streets, market squares) make the events very popular among food lovers.

Another category on the list of culinary events are **attempts at breaking food-related records**, i.e. preparing a dish in a size (or weight, volume, length) appropriate for it to be listed in the Guinness Book of Records.

Similar events involve **record-breaking consumption** of a given dish or beverage. Such projects are usually initiated by trade companies, restaurants, confectioneries, bakeries or, less frequently, by private individuals. For example, in 2011 the warehouse chain MAKRO Cash & Carry and the restaurant **Magillo entertained the inhabitants of Cracow with an attempt to break the world record for the longest pizza (ultimately the piece measured 1 kilometre 10 metres and 28 centimetres)**; Krzysztof Górski, the chef from the Łódź restaurant Teatr Kulinarny, made the largest amount of tomato soup in the world – twice (3500 litres of hot broth in 2002 in Wisła, and 3680 litres in 2013 in Dwikozy); in 2011 in Rzeszów the owners of the confectionery **Orłowski&Ra baked the largest pyramid-shaped gateau in the world (it graced the 5<sup>th</sup> International Ecological Food and Products Fair “Ekogala” in 2011)**. Each attempt at breaking a record is attractive enough to draw crowds of people willing not only to witness the making of the unusually large dish, but also to have a taste of it.

The typology of culinary events presented above reflects the increasing interest in food expressed by various institutions, companies and private individuals who attempt to utilise its potential to organise a food-centred event aimed at the larger group of consumers possible. A brief analysis of the closest environment will reveal an increase in the number of “gustatory events”. On the one hand, this signifies the existence of a trend directed at sensations and experiences connected with food, but unrelated to satisfying hunger; on the other – food is a subject with which every person is familiar and therefore constitutes relatively easy “material” that may meet the needs of the organisers of various initiatives.

### **Culinary events featuring food from Silesia**

The Silesian Voivodeship boasts a varied cuisine, partially due to the fact that its present borders encompass not only the historic region of Upper Silesia, but also the western part of Malopolska, including the Dąbrowa Basin, the Cracow Basin (Jaworzno), the Żywiec region and the Częstochowa region in the north. In the course of the last centuries, each of these areas has developed its own culinary heritage. It must also be noted that with the development of industry the regions experienced an influx of immigrants,

who brought their own food-related customs. The present article focuses on a selected number of events centred around dishes associated with Silesian cuisine that took place between 2006 and 2013, the majority of which the author of the present article has attended.

### ***Wodzionka* and *żur* – nutritious soups at the foreground**

Two soups feature prominently in the fare of Silesian people: *wodzionka* and *żur*. The former is also known as *zupa z chleba*, *brotzupa*, *sznelka/szelka* and, in older sources, as *kura górnicza* (literally: “miner chicken”; it was treated as a substitute for chicken broth, as it was as fortifying as chicken soup and contained both fat and garlic). *Kura górnicza* is mentioned already in documents dating from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century [Szromba-Rysowa 1978: 108]. The basic ingredients for this soup are hot water, diced stale bread, garlic, fat (traditionally tallow, nowadays usually smoked speck or butter) and salt; in modern times it is also seasoned with Maggi or a similar sauce. *Wodzionka* is considered a nutritious dish; it is often consumed together with roast potatoes (*bratkartofle*). It might be added that in the past, the soup was believed to have medicinal properties. It was recommended for the sickly and for women in childbirth (99 bowls of the soup had to be eaten “for strength”). The popularity of the dish has not wavered, especially among the middle-aged and the elderly.

Since 2007 the town of Świętochłowice holds a *wodzionka* festival, which takes place in the summer (late June/early July). The cyclical event is organised by the town authorities and staged in the local Sports and Leisure Centre “Skałka”. The soup is prepared by chefs from local restaurants competing for the title of the “*Wodzionka* King”. Each year the event includes a demonstration of cooking this traditional soup. *Wodzionka* also became the *Leitmotif* of the culinary event entitled *Wieczór z Wodzionkom* (An Evening with *Wodzionka*), organised in 2008 in the Municipal Culture Centre in Ruda Śląska – Bielszowice. A year earlier, this same institution held a meeting entitled *Bon na żur* (A Voucher for *Żur*), dedicated to another soup popular in Silesia and in other parts of Poland. The frequency of *żur* consumption was noticed by German scholars at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; they remarked that it was a typical dish enjoyed by Silesian

people [Szromba-Rysowa 1978: 71]. There were two traditional ways to serve this soup: *żur żeniaty/żonaty* (the “married” *żur*) contained potatoes (diced in large cubes) and some greaves of speck or bacon (nowadays the soup is usually cooked on smoked ribs and some sausage is added), while *żur samotny* (the “lonely” *żur*) was served with cooked potatoes and greaves on a separate plate [Sztabowa 1990: 81]. The soup is still highly popular today; in many Silesian families it is eaten on Saturdays for dinner. The Silesians are also familiar with the saying: *Z żuru chłop jak z muru* (A man who eats *żur* is [strong] as if made of brick), which is often quoted to confirm the nutritional properties of the aromatic soup.

It must be noted that the initiators of these two festivals strove to make them more attractive and paid attention not only to gustatory sensations, but also to the decoration of the interiors where the meetings were held. The rooms were deliberately furnished to resemble traditional Silesian kitchens: *bifyje* (dressers) with old porcelain stood all around, the shelves were full of small *boncloki* (clay pots for leaven), old coffee mills and pepper grinders, as well as other utilitarian dishes, the walls were adorned with tapestries with characteristic mottoes. The participants of the event were presented with little books containing the recipes for preparing *wodzionka*, *żur* and other Silesian dishes. The sampling was accompanied by a varied artistic programme. The aim of the meeting was clearly defined in the interview given by one of the organisers:

It was to make people aware of old Silesian traditions: of what dishes were cooked, how the kitchen looked like, what was inside it. Since *wodzionka* and *żur* are the most popular soups in Silesia, we wanted to show their traditional flavour to the people. A *żur* based on leaven, which must be put away for a few days to mature, tastes differently than the soup one may buy at a huge shopping mall. Our leaven was made by an elderly, experienced cook from Sośnica. We took care to gather a team of people who still remember the old ways of cooking *żur*. We wished to consolidate and renew young people’s memories of ancient practices and customs. Each of our participants was given printed cloth and little books with recipes for Silesian dishes.

We sent our invitations to the inhabitants of the city; we were curious who would come and whether such a form would be effective. The outcome surpassed our expectations. A lot of people showed up; entire families with children. This reassured us that such events are needed, that people wish to participate in them.<sup>4</sup>

*Żur* became the centrepiece of yet another cyclical open-air festival organised in Stanica (Gliwice County) since 2010. The event, entitled *Festiwal Żuru*, features a contest for making the best *żur*, open to members of country clubs. The winning team is awarded with a Golden Ladle and the title of the First *Żur*-maker.

### The festival of *makówki*

*Makówki* is a type of a dessert served on Christmas Eve. The ingredients include ground poppy seed, white bread (challah, buns or hardtack) and dried fruit [Sztabowa1990: 24–26, Świtała-Trybek, Świtała-Mastalerz 2010: 107]. An event called the *Makówki Festival (Święto Makówek)* has been organised in Czerwionka-Leszczyny since 2009, shortly before Christmas. Several dozen kilograms of the sweet delicacy are prepared by the members of country clubs from various towns and villages (Czuchów, Przegędza, Bełk, Stanowice, Dębienieko, Książenice) and subsequently eaten by the visitors at the festival.

We are always making one and the same type of *makówki*. We hear, when people come to our stand, they say “you’ve got the best ones, after all”. I don’t know, but that’s how it is. Maybe the other ladies cook the poppy for too long and it’s a bit burnt, and then it tastes different? Our *makówki* are like this: poppy in milk, butter, raisins, nuts, almonds, we add honey and maybe it is because of the honey that they say that these *makówki* are so delicious. This is our secret.<sup>5</sup>

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4 Genowefa Gawlik, a former director of the Municipal Culture Centre in Ruda Śląska – Bieleszowice, interviewed in March 2014.

5 A member of the Country Club in Przegędza, recorded in 2013.

Ladies from the country clubs also prepare other holiday specialties (gingerbread, crumb cake, *strucla* with poppy, cinnamon cookies, etc.) and various Christmas dishes (cabbage with peas, cabbage with mushrooms, fried carp, etc.); they also make folk art and craft products (holiday ornaments, table cloths). Aesthetically arranged in the stalls, these items may be purchased by the visitors at the festival. The profit is donated to charity, e.g. to finance the treatment of children with cancer.

Each year the Makówki Festival abounds in all kinds of entertainment – there are concerts and contests for children and adults, and a Christmas-tree giveaway. The exact location of the festival has been changing in recent years; due to the large number of visitors, the event is now organised in the market hall in Leszczyny.

### **Cakes for special occasions**

Since the year 2004, the Commune Culture Centre in Zebrzydowice holds a “Regional Contest for Baked Goods for the Carnival and Easter, *dorty, kołocze, krepiki* and other cakes” (*Regionalny Konkurs Wypieków na Zapusty i Wielkanoc dorty, kołocze, krepiki i insze placki*). According to the organisers, the contest is intended to promote “our cultural heritage and to present and describe baked goods from our region, especially the ones prepared on the basis of old, disappearing recipes” [an excerpt from their information leaflet, 2012]. This “sweet festival” takes place directly before Easter and draws a large crowd of visitors. Most of the contestants are members of country clubs from the Cieszyn region of Silesia (from Ustroń-Centrum, Kończyce Małe, Zebrzydowice, Ustroń-Lipowiec, Markłowice, Cieszyn-Mnisztwo, Łączka, Zaborze) and the Czech Republic (e.g. from Bohumín, Karviná, Pétrovice), who prepare a dazzling variety of holiday dishes. The jury appraises two categories of specialties: the Easter table (baked goods: layered cakes – made of potatoes or carrots, of the *tort szlachecki* type, etc.; cakes – *babka*, *strucla* with nuts, Czech braided cakes, Easter lambs and wreaths; donuts) and the Easter basket. The festival was where the author of the present article had the opportunity to see and taste traditional *murzyn* cake, layered cake made of bread, Easter pie with cabbage, spiced carrot cake and many other regional specialties.

The *kołocz* cake a particularly important element of Silesian cuisine. Along with the popular dinner set of white dumplings, beef roulades and red cabbage, it is included in the foods served at festive occasions celebrated in a family, town or the entire region. It is a type of yeast cake baked in rectangular forms (traditionally the forms were round, hence the name *kołocz*, derived from the word *koło*, wheel). It has four basic variants: with *posypka* (crumbles) or with a filling of quark, poppy seed or apple. All of these varieties are equally valued; favouritism towards any of them results only from personal taste [Wijas-Grocholska 2013: 50].

*Kołocz* is a cake with a ritual significance. In Upper Silesia, custom still dictates that an engaged couple visit their relatives and acquaintances, regardless of whether they had been invited to the wedding or not, a few days before their marriage ceremony, carrying a *kołocz*. The tradition is called *chodzenie z kołoczem* (walking with *kołocz*) or *noszenie kołocza* (carrying *kołocz*). The couple calls upon the persons they or their parents feel to be worthy of being honoured [Gerlich 1984: 62; Wesołowska 1989: 234; Simonides 2007: 139]. *Noszenie kołocza* is an example of gift-giving [Maj 1986], it facilitates the emergence of basic social bonds, it is a “symbol; a sign of affection, respect, interdependence” [Zadrożyńska 2002: 55]. The act of gift-giving belongs to the so-called cultural universals [Grad 2004: 33]. As with other customs, this practice is governed by the principle of reciprocity, i.e. it is expected that the person thus endowed will return the gift of *kołocz* when they enter into matrimony themselves. The cake is also served at First Communion feasts, funeral wakes, during church fairs and harvest festivals, at Christmas and Easter.

In 2007, Silesian *kołocz* was added to the List of Traditional Products; it was also the first local specialty from the Opole region registered in the European Union as a product with a “Protected Geographical Indication” (2011). Twelve manufacturers from the Opole Voivodeship have obtained the certificate which allows them to produce the cake according to the legally registered recipe. Since 2011, *kołocz* has its own festival, namely the *Festiwal Kołocza Swojskiego* organised in mid-September in Żory. The idea for the event was put forward by Senator Adam Zdziebło, the Vice-Minister of Regional Development; it is organised by the Municipal

Culture Centre in Żory. The organisers intend “the Festival to be an event which unites generations and, above all, promotes Silesian culture and regional tradition” [excerpt from the festival poster]. The event is divided into two parts: a contest for members of country clubs from the Silesian Voivodeship (the jury appraises the cakes and the most elegant-looking stall) and a party with folk concerts, comedian performances, games for children, etc. The popularity of this culinary event may be illustrated by the fact that while in 2012 the contestants included twenty two country clubs, a year later the number had risen to thirty.

## Conclusion

The constraints of the present article make it impossible to enumerate all culinary events taking place in the Silesian Voivodeship. It may certainly be assumed, however, that many of them invoke the local culinary heritage, which the organisers regard as an exceptional value which, on a larger scale, needs to be remembered, practiced and popularised [*Slow Food. Collected Thoughts on Taste...* 2001]. It is noteworthy that the drive towards presenting aspects of the “homely” culture corresponds to the trend observable in other parts of the world. The practice is aimed, among others, at preserving the ancestral legacy through the development of local initiatives. In Europe, the origins of the fascination with culinary heritage may be traced back to the 1990s, when Sweden and Denmark introduced and implemented a project of popularisation and stimulation of the development of regional culinary identity. The European Network of Regional Culinary Heritage is currently composed of 32 regions, including nine Polish ones: the West Pomeranian Voivodeship, the Pomeranian Voivodeship, Warmland – Mazuria – Powiśle, Kuyavia and Pomerania, Greater Poland, Mazovia, Lower Silesia, the Opole Voivodeship, the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship. The status of a member may be obtained by producers of primary commodities in agriculture, horticulture and fishery, food processing factories, restaurants and other gastronomic establishments, hotels, wholesalers and retailers.<sup>6</sup>

6 The members of the network are entitled to display the logo of Culinary Heritage, recognisable in the entire Europe (a cook's hat with a knife and a fork against blue background and the

In most cases, culinary events spring from local and regional initiatives triggered by the social demand for such entertainment (as may be surmised from the large number of participants and visitors). They combine cultural and culinary enterprises and are perceived as a type of entertainment, i.e. a pleasant way to spend free time. "In the collective view, entertainment is regarded as a luxurious addition to the plainness of everyday life; it is synonymous with affluent, stabilised life in which there is time for small pleasures, for 'normality'" [Falkowska 1992: 201]. In the recent years, the "gustatory events" have been increasingly present in that "normality"; they allow people to fulfil their needs. Due to the positive associations which it evokes, food draws attention, intrigues, engages, and ultimately confirms the well-known truth that

Essentially, people have always consumed food in the company of others; it was hardly ever done in solitude. Even in offices, boarding schools, eateries, company canteens or homes, other people are encountered during a meal. [...] In feasting, people have used the mundane action of eating and culinary pleasures for social purposes, and – through this – for family, relaxation or even sexual purposes, or to manage economic and political matters [Zwoliński 2006: 326].

On the other hand, the issue of the authenticity of dishes and the phenomena that surround them cannot be overlooked. Questions about the authenticity of a observed or experienced phenomenon dominated the humanities in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Never before had the striving for authenticity been so pronounced. It is certain that the culinary realm belongs to the category of phenomena subject to various methods of **increasing its authenticity** and, as a result, their **attractiveness**. As Anna Wieczorkiewicz concludes,

the culinary heritage has a different quality than the heritage embodied by material relics of the past. It is strictly related to cultural life, incorporated

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inscription "Culinary Heritage"), thus reassuring the customers of the quality of their service. Owing to the initiative organised by the appropriate institutions, culinary heritage trails have begun to be laid. See: <http://www.culinary-heritage.com/index.asp?sprakid=4#.U3o94ShNjhs>.

in social practices, susceptible to external influence and to innovation introduced within a given group. Its authenticity or originality is, in fact, problematic, just as the issue of the property rights of a given region to certain elements of the culinary tradition [Wieczorkiewicz 2004: 205].

Yet references to ancestral heritage and culinary traditions are so common nowadays that

even if the views on the culinary matters, and the dishes themselves, are not truly the same as they used to be, they are still regarded and perceived as traditional simply (and solely) due to the fact that they are derived from the past [Karpińska 2013: 326–327].

Thus, only time will tell which new forms of culinary fascinations related to tradition we might still experience and observe.

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