

Czech Christmas Table

Vánoční Stůl

“Christmas Favorites
from

Czech, Bohemian, Moravian & Slovakian Lands”

Menu

Small Cheese Bites

Wine Punch

Christmas soup: Kapustnica

Rye Bread

Fish Loaves - Czech Style

Chicken with Wild Mushrooms and Garlic -

Czech Style

Potato Salad

Cucumbers in Sour Cream - Slovakian Style

Peas with Gingerbread Topping

Fried Cauliflower

Apple Strudel

Christmas Souška

Moravian Christmas Cookies

Bohemian Christmas Crunch Cookies

Walnuts & Dried Apricots

Coffee & Tea

Dobrou chuť! - Enjoy your meal!

Small Cheese Bites (Mala Sousta Se Syre) Serves 4.

1 large cucumber, cut into 18 – 20 thick slices
1¼ cups cheddar cheese, thickly sliced
2 tangerines, peeled and sectioned, or grapes

Place a slice of cheese on each slice of cucumber. Place a piece of tangerine or a grape on top and fasten with a toothpick.

Wine Punch Serves 6

1½ cups dry red wine, 1½ cups water, 1½ cups sugar, juice of 2 lemons, ¾ cup brandy. Mix the sugar and water and heat until sugar dissolves. Pour all ingredients into a punch bowl or large pitcher to serve.

Kapustnica, a traditional Christmas soup Serves 6

2 pounds boneless pork, trimmed of fat
1 smoked ham hock
2 smoked sausages
4 ounces dried mushrooms
24 to 30 ounces sauerkraut
12 ounces canned chicken broth
2 garlic cloves, minced
2 onions, diced
1/2 cup white wine
4 large potatoes, peeled, diced
1 teaspoon caraway seeds
1/2 teaspoon dried marjoram
thick noodles, homemade or purchased, cooked just prior to serving the soup

Zaprazka: In a small saucepan, mix 1 tablespoon oil, with one teaspoon white pepper, 2 teaspoons paprika and 2 tablespoons flour. Cook and stir about one minute. Stir in about 1/4 cup water, to make a fairly thick paste, cooking until mixture thickens. Use this later to thicken the soup.

Combine 12 cups of water in a very large stock pot with the pork, smoked ham hock and the smoked sausage. Bring the ingredients to a boil and skim off any foam that floats on top of the water. Add the dried mushrooms and simmer until the meat is partially tender, about 1 hour.

Add the sauerkraut and juice to the pot and simmer the soup for 30 minutes. Add the onions, garlic, chicken broth and white wine. Simmer for 30 minutes.

Remove the pork and ham hock. Cut the pork into 1/2" pieces. Separate the meat and fat from the ham hock bones. Return meat to the soup. Cut up the smoked sausage into bite-sized pieces and return the sausage pieces to the soup. Bring the soup to a strong "simmer".

Stir the prepared "zaprazka" into the simmering soup. Add the potatoes; simmer until potatoes are tender. Taste soup and adjust the flavor by adding more paprika and pepper, according to taste. Add caraway seeds and marjoram.

Meanwhile, prepare the thick noodles and keep them warm.

To serve immediately, place about 1/4 cup of cooked noodles into individual soup bowls and ladle the soup over the noodles. If the soup is made ahead and allowed to mellow, cook the noodles just before serving the soup.

Rye Bread from Gene & Beth Stelcik, CGAC members

3 cups potato water*	3 tablespoons sugar
2 cups water	3 tablespoons oil
2 teaspoons salt	1½ tablespoons yeast
1 tablespoon caraway seeds	2½ cups dark rye flour
	4 cups white flour or more

*Save 3 cups of water in which potatoes have been boiled. Heat the potato water, the plain water and the caraway seeds to about 115°F. Take ½ cup of the warmed water and add a little sugar, a little flour and the yeast. Mix well and let mixture rest until bubbly.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the rye flour and salt. Mix in the caraway seeds and warm water. Add the oil and use an electric mixer to make a smooth, tepid batter. Add the yeast mixture and mix well. Let the dough rise until it has doubled in volume.

Gradually stir in the white flour. Place dough on a floured board and while kneading it, add in more flour until dough no longer sticks to the board. Allow the dough to rise until doubled in volume. Punch dough down and then shape it into three bread loaves, buns, and/or braided rolls.

Bake at 375°F for about 35 minutes for bread, or about 14 minutes for buns or rolls.

Cucumbers in Sour Cream - Slovakian Serves 6

2 medium cucumbers, peeled and sliced thinly
4 tablespoons sour cream
1 clove garlic, chopped
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon vinegar
1 medium sweet onion, thinly sliced
1 dash paprika, for color

Combine the cucumbers, garlic and salt in a colander.

The Following is Important: Place the colander in the sink and let stand for 30 minutes. Squeeze out as much water as you can with your hands.

Place cucumbers in a bowl and add the sour cream, vinegar and sliced onions. Mix well and sprinkle with paprika for color.

Fish Loaves – Czech Style

Serves 6

3 pounds boned and ground fish (carp, salmon or trout)
1½ cups bread crumbs, soaked in 1 cup milk
3 beaten eggs
1 peeled garlic clove, mashed
Salt and pepper to taste
1/3 cup melted butter

Preheat the oven to 350°F. In a bowl, mix all the ingredients except the melted butter. Shape the mixture into two loaves and place them in a shallow baking pan. Brush the loaves with half of the melted butter and pour the remainder into the pan. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes. Serve warm.

Chicken with Wild Mushrooms and Garlic – Czech Style

Serves 6

2 ounces dried porcini mushrooms	1 cup dry white wine
3 tablespoons oil	juice of one lemon
6 chicken breasts, boned	2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
1 onion, finely chopped	1 teaspoon marjoram
4 cloves garlic, crushed	2 tablespoons flour

Soak the mushrooms in one cup of warm water for 15 minutes. Remove the mushrooms and reserve the soaking liquid. Scrub the mushrooms and strain the liquid through cheesecloth to remove any debris. Chop the mushrooms.

Heat oil in a skillet. Add the chicken and brown well on both sides. Add the onion and garlic and sauté 4 to 5 minutes. Add the wine, liquid from mushrooms, lemon juice and mushrooms. Sprinkle mixture with parsley and marjoram and bring it to a boil. Turn the heat down and simmer, partially covered, 30 minutes, turning the chicken once.

Thicken sauce by whisking flour with 2 to 3 tablespoons of water. Mix in some of the cooking liquid and then stir the mixture back into the simmering sauce. Cook until the sauce thickens, about 3 minutes. Serve sauce with chicken.

Potato Salad

Serves 8-10

From Czech Family Cookbook - Cooking With the Klimas., by Dr. Marcella Klima, available from the Czech Center Houston

2 to 3 large carrots, peeled
1 to 2 parsnips, peeled
½ head celery root (celeriac), peeled, or 3 to 4 ribs celery
6 to 8 large white potatoes
1 large onion, finely chopped
1 to 2 apples, finely chopped
3 medium-size pickles, finely chopped
1 tablespoon capers
Salt & black pepper, to taste
1 cup vegetable broth
½ cup mild vinegar
1 to 2 teaspoons sugar, to taste
1 to 2 cups mayonnaise, to taste (or use 1 cup oil, instead)

Place carrots, parsnips and celery root, in a pot of salted water to cover. Bring to a boil and cook about 3 minutes. The vegetables should be firm, but cooked. Leave the vegetables in the hot water.

Meanwhile, place the potatoes, unpeeled and uncut, in cold, salted water. Bring to a slow boil and cook until just tender.

Mix the onion, apples, pickles and capers in a bowl; set aside. Drain the hot water from the cooked vegetables. Chop them into small pieces and add to the onion-apple mixture. Peel the hot potatoes, cut into small cubes and add to vegetables. Gently stir all together, season with salt and pepper, and cover.

In a small pot, bring the broth, vinegar and sugar to a boil. Pour the mixture over the potato salad. Marinate at least 1 hour and up to several days.

When you are ready to serve the salad, drain any excess liquid, and gently stir in the mayonnaise, or oil, to taste.

Peas with Gingerbread

Serves 6

1 pound frozen peas
1 tablespoon sugar or honey
5 gingerbread cookies, crumbled

Just before serving the meal, cook peas according the package instructions. Drain well.

Pour peas into a serving dish and add sugar or honey over the peas. Sprinkle the gingerbread crumbs over the top and serve.

Fried Cauliflower

Serves 6

1 head large cauliflower
salt to taste
2 to 3 cups boiling water
2/3 cup milk
2 eggs
About 1 cup flour, possibly more
Salt and pepper to taste
3 cups vegetable oil

Clean the cauliflower and break it into small flowerets. Drop them into boiling salted water and cook about 5 minutes. Drain them thoroughly.

In a bowl, beat the milk, eggs and flour, salt and pepper together to make a fairly thick batter. Dip cooked flowerettes into the batter.

Heat the oil in a deep pot or deep-fat fryer to 375°F. Fry the batter-coated flowerettes until they are golden brown.

Drain the fried pieces on paper towels. Serve immediately.

Apple Strudel (Jablecny zavin)

Makes 2 strudels

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STRUDEL DOUGH

2 cups flour	1 tablespoon. butter
1/4 teaspoon salt	3/4 cup lukewarm water
1 whole egg	

Mix flour, egg, butter, and salt. Add lukewarm water and mix. Place on board and knead dough for 10 minutes. The more you knead the dough the better it will be to work with. Place in a greased bowl. Cover and let rest for 1 hour.

How to Stretch Dough: Divide dough into two pieces. Spread a table cloth large enough to hang over the sides of the table. Sprinkle cloth lightly with flour and place dough in center. With a floured rolling pin, roll out 1 portion of dough into an 8 inch circle. Slide hands gently under dough and let dough rest on the back of your hands, with your palms down. Now pull the dough gently toward you. Stretch and pull dough as you go around the edge. Dough should be thin as tissue paper. Fill first strudel and then stretch dough for the second strudel.

APPLE FILLING:

4 lbs. of apples	1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 cup butter, melted	1½ tablespoon flour
1¼ cup sugar	

Peel apples and slice into a large bowl. Add sugar, cinnamon, flour and mix. Brush melted butter over dough. Spread 1/2 apple mixture over dough. Fold sides up and over the filling and roll. Pick table cloth up to roll. Shape roll to fit 9 x 13 inch pan greased with melted butter.

Brush the roll generously with melted butter. Bake at 350°F. for 45 minutes, until lightly brown. Repeat for the second strudel.

Serve strudel warm or cold with vanilla ice cream, vanilla custard, whipped cream or powdered sugar on top.

Christmas Houska from CGAC members Gene Stelcik & daughter, Beth Stelcik

1 cup whole milk, scalded	1 teaspoon lemon zest
½ cup sugar	¼ teaspoon mace, optional
¼ cup butter, softened	2 beaten eggs, room temp.
2 teaspoons salt	½ cup white raisins
1 cup flour, plus 4 ¾ cups	½ cup chopped nuts
1 packet yeast	½ cup butter, melted
¼ cup lukewarm water	

Scald milk by heating it in a thick-bottomed pan to near boiling, stirring to keep a skin from forming on the surface. Add sugar, butter and salt to the scalded milk and stir to dissolve the sugar. Cool the mixture to lukewarm. Then add 1 cup flour.

Mix yeast with lukewarm water and allow the yeast to soften, about five minutes. Add this to the lukewarm milk mixture. Stir in the lemon zest, mace, eggs, raisins and nuts. Allow the dough to rise until it is bubbly. Add about 4¾ cups flour gradually to make a soft dough.

Knead the dough on lightly floured board until smooth. Place the dough into a greased bowl. Cover the bowl with a lint-free towel. Allow dough to rise until it is doubled in volume.

Punch the dough down to remove the air. Divide dough into five equal parts. Let the dough rest for 10 minutes. Roll each portion into a long strand.

Place three strands of rolled dough onto a greased baking sheet. Braid the dough loosely, beginning in the middle. Twist together the two remaining strands. Place these on the top of the braided strands. Tuck the ends under and pinch them together to seal the ends.

Spread the top with butter, cover and let rise until dough has risen and looks "light." Bake at 350°F for 40 minutes. Top with frosting of choice, if desired.

Moravian Christmas Cookies, delicately thin and spicy

1 cup dark molasses
1 tablespoon baking soda
4 cups flour
½ cup brown sugar
½ cup butter
1 ½ teaspoon cinnamon
1 ½ teaspoon ground cloves
1 teaspoon ginger
1 teaspoon allspice
½ teaspoon nutmeg

Mix flour, sugar, butter, and spices together. Heat molasses until lukewarm and add baking soda to it. Add molasses to rest of ingredients and mix well. If necessary, add a little water to the dough to get it to a soft enough consistency to roll it. Roll the dough on a well floured surface, making it as thin as possible. (Paper thin, if you can!)

Cut the dough into desired shapes, and transfer them to a non-stick cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 6 to 8 minutes.

Bohemian Christmas Crunch Cookies

6 ounces semi-sweet chocolate chips; frozen
1 cup chopped pecans
1 cup butter
1¼ cup confectioners' sugar
1¼ cup all-purpose flour
⅛ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla

Freeze an old-fashioned meat grinder and the chocolate chips before beginning.

Using the medium blade of the meat grinder, grind nuts and chocolate chips together. To make grinding easier, put some nuts in first, then the chocolate chips. Repeat this process, until all the nuts and chocolate chips are ground.¹⁰

By putting the nuts in the grinder first, they help oil the meat grinder, making the chocolate chips grind with a little less effort. Refrigerate this mixture.

In a separate bowl, using sharp knives or a pastry cutter, cut the softened butter and confectioners' sugar together until it looks like pie dough. Cut in the flour salt, and vanilla.

Add the chocolate and nut mixture. Blend lightly with a fork. Do not cream this mixture and do not over mix this dough. You should be able to see tiny ground up lumps of butter, chocolate and pecans.

Fill a 1-inch cookie scoop or spoon with dough, and drop the dough onto a baking sheet. Using the base of your thumb, flatten the cookie ball to about 1/4-inch thickness. Keep the cookies about 3-inches apart on a cookie sheet. Refrigerate the flattened cookies on the cookie sheets for at least 30 minutes before baking them.

Bake at 250° F. for 40 to 45 minutes. **DO NOT OVERBAKE THESE COOKIES!** They should not be too soft and not too hard or well-browned on the bottom. When baked, the cookies get a certain sheen on top.

Remove cookies from baking sheets; cool and store in air-tight tins. If cookies become too hard, place fresh white bread in the tin. The cookies should still have a crunch.

NOTE: If you use a food processor to grind the pecans and chips, the cookies will taste good, but their coloring becomes very light and bland looking. They do not have the very dark and rich coloring that comes from using the meat grinder.

Source: Roberta Brisson. This recipe comes from my girlfriend's mother-in-law. This is a very old recipe and requires more work than most other cookies, but they are worth every bite! Posted to recipelu-digest Volume 01 Number 635 by QueenBerta@... on Jan 29, 1998

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