

THE  
CUISINE  
OF  
LATVIA





# THE CUISINE OF LATVIA

Latvia is located in a temperate climatic zone with fairly long and cold winters and warm, short summers. Due to the harsh climate and relatively poor soil quality Latvians have always worked hard to provide food for themselves and their families. Food has thus always been assigned great value by Latvians.

Bread has a special place in the Latvian consciousness, and respect for it is encouraged from early childhood.

Although Latvian cuisine has traditionally been based on agricultural produce, meat also features prominently in the Latvian diet. People living along the 500 km of Latvian coastline have always been involved in fishing, and fish has been an integral part of their diet. Fish are also caught inland, but these freshwater species are considered more of a delicacy, in the same way as crayfish are.



## FOOD PREPARATION

Women were the cooks in traditional Latvian homes and responsible for feeding the household three times a day. Longer days in summer meant that people worked for longer, and thus ate four meals a day. At first, food was prepared in clay pots which were placed in the fire or on the open hearth. Over time, cauldrons hung above the hearth and bread ovens for baking leavened bread became popular.

Latvian foods are characteristically bland, without a use of strong spices, and have a reasonably high fat content. As a result of the territory of Latvia

being ruled by the German aristocracy for seven centuries, Latvian peasants learned to use new ingredients and to prepare food in different ways. For example, one of the most popular Latvian foods today – sautéed sauerkraut – is a tradition inherited from the Germans.

## ANCIENT COOKING TRADITIONS

If we look back over 1000 years, then we learn that the Baltic and Finno-Ugric tribes inhabiting the territory of Latvia subsisted mainly from grains – rye, wheat, barley, oats, millet and hemp.

pork. Of course, game meat – beaver, deer, wild boar, duck, goose – and over 25 different species of fish were also eaten. As there are no sources of salt in Latvia, it was obtained through trade or barter and was used sparingly. Food was also made more flavoursome through the



**Crushing grain using a rubbing stone.**



**Baking rye bread on hot stones.**



Porridges, patties and leavened bread were made from these grains. People also ate peas, beans, turnips, black radishes, linseed and its oil, wild carrots and garlic. Stock farming developed alongside agriculture, and the Latvian diet thus also consisted of fowl, beef, horse meat and

use of caraway seeds, onions, garlic and white mustard. It is probable that if we tasted these ancient foods today, they would seem to us to lack salt and other spices. The only sweetener used was honey, but the most popular desserts were probably wild berries and hazelnuts.



## COOKING 100 YEARS AGO

More detailed information about the traditional Latvian diet stems from the 19th century. At this time a plant from North America was spreading quickly – the potato. Thanks to potato farming,

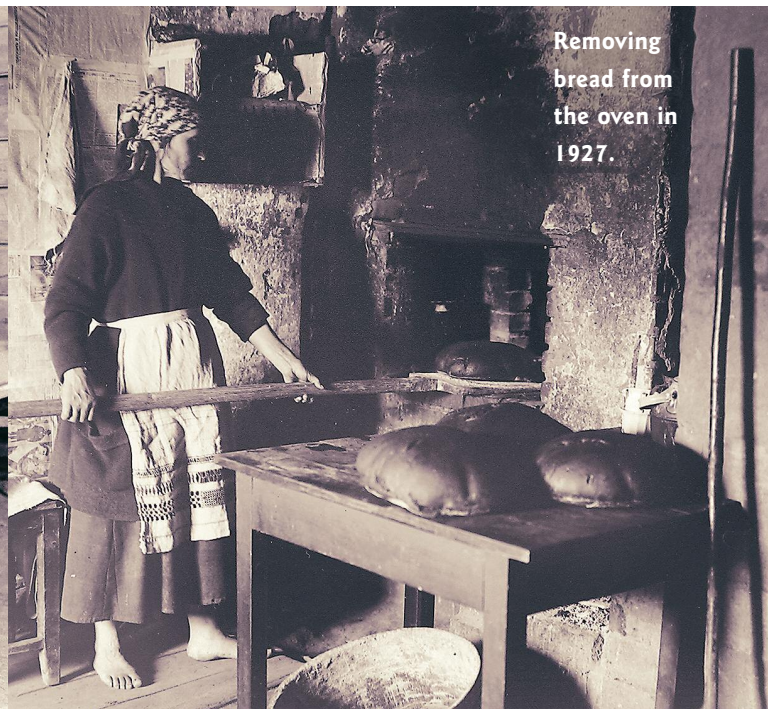
Today potatoes, prepared in different ways, are still a very popular component of the Latvian diet.

In autumn, the cellar of each farm was used to store dried sausages and pork, and barrels of salted cabbage, cucumbers, mushrooms, meat and herring. These

home such as rye bread, cottage cheese, *rūgušpiens* (curdled milk), and sometimes also fried meat or patties. After lunch, people would usually have a nap before beginning work again. On returning home in the afternoon, soup or porridge was eaten with a drink of *rūgušpiens*. On



Churning  
butter in  
1926.



Removing  
bread from  
the oven in  
1927.

Latvian peasants no longer had food shortages in winter and spring, when stores of grain had been depleted. It is believed that the most common meal for Latvian coastal fishing families in the 19th century was boiled potatoes with cottage cheese and herring or pilchards.

were used as ingredients for meals throughout winter.

In summer, when there was a lot of outdoor work to be done further away from home, people would eat a moderate breakfast, for example, milk porridge. Lunch consisted of food brought from

Sundays the diet consisted of stewed meat, white bread, *pīrāgi* (bacon rolls), pancakes, sweetened cottage cheese or berry jelly with milk.



## LATVIAN EATING CUSTOMS

Similar eating customs were widely spread in rural areas up until World War II. After the War, more and more country dwellers came to live in cities, and Latvians began to structure their eating schedules around work, as is the case in many other industrialised countries. Today people often no longer prepare meals at home. However, many ancient eating customs are still practiced today, and ancient foods are still eaten by Latvians daily and on special occasions. Latvians have always been great fans of dairy products. Milk, *rūgušpiens*, cottage cheese, cream, cheese and butter used to be eaten in every house almost at every meal, and this tradition has continued. Latvians have always been able to find many delicious edible foods in the wild:

## FOOD AT TRADITIONAL LATVIAN CELEBRATIONS

The most typical ancient foods eaten by Latvians are still found today at traditional Latvian celebrations. These celebrations are related to annual seasonal events, and to the rhythm of farming in the northern hemisphere, which is dependent on the solar year. This is why Latvian food and drink at traditional celebrations are those which are the most convenient to prepare at any given time of year. Food and drink were also traditionally assigned mythological significance, although few Latvians would be able to talk about this significance today.

foods that do not need to be cultivated, only gathered. Since long ago people in Latvia pick berries in the summer time – wild strawberries, bilberries, raspberries, loganberries – and cranberries, mushrooms and nuts in the autumn. Many Latvians like to eat honey, and bee-keeping traditions have developed over the centuries. Today Latvian farms often have their own bee hives, and honey production is the business of many farms. In turn, among coastal dwelling families, smoking fish at home is still popular, and in many areas people eat smoked eel-pout, flounder, eel, lamprey and cod.

## THE HARVEST FESTIVAL

In autumn, when the harvest had been brought in and food was abundant, farms would usually celebrate the harvest festival. Because of this, weddings were usually held in autumn. After the harvest, a piglet or ram was often slaughtered and a feast was organised. The new season's sauerkraut was eaten and bread was baked from the newly harvested grains. Bread baked from the flour made from the first harvest was assigned particular powers. When eating this bread, a wish was made, which would be fulfilled. Whenever a domestic animal was slaughtered, the meat which could not be eaten straight away was salted and dried, or made into sausages. Blood and pearl barley were used to make special blood sausage, and brawn was made by boiling meat off-cuts.

*Pīrāgi* (bacon rolls) filled with diced fatty bacon and onion are still baked today for almost all Latvian celebrations. Various sweet platter breads are also baked, which are topped with rhubarb, apples, berries in summer and sweetened cottage cheese or dried apples in autumn.





## CHRISTMAS DINNER

Special foods were eaten at the winter solstice, a celebration to mark the days becoming longer. Many of these foods can still be found on contemporary Latvian Christmas tables. A popular dish used to be a boiled pig's head with boiled pearl barley, although today the most popular traditional Christmas dish is boiled grey peas with pieces of fried meat and fatty bacon, usually eaten accompanied by a drink of *rūguš-*

Christmas, another tradition inherited from the Germans. Today one of the most popular Christmas meals is roast pork with sautéed sauerkraut. A modern festive table also often includes carp, and fish scales are placed in pockets and purses, so that the new year brings a lot of money. According to Latvian tradition you should eat nine meals at Christmas for the coming year to be rich, although today this ritual is performed only rarely.



## CELEBRATING THE SUMMER SOLSTICE

Today the most popular celebration in Latvia is *Jāņi* or the summer solstice. This marks the shortest night of the year, when throughout Latvia special *Jāņi* folk

*piens* or *kefirs* (curdled or cultured milk). This dish can be found in many restaurants and cafés in Latvia all year around. All of the peas boiled at Christmas must be eaten by the morning, otherwise there will be a lot of tears shed in the new year. Another special Christmas food is the once-popular blood sausage with pearl barley, because its rounded bend is reminiscent of a circle, symbolising the solar year. In western Latvia a traditional Christmas snack is *sklandu rauši* (tarts filled with a mashed potato and carrot). In the last 100 years it has also become popular to bake gingerbread at

## EASTER EGGS

At the time of the spring solstice, or Easter, food stores would usually have been running low, so eggs were saved for some time before Easter. Boiled eggs, coloured with brown onion skins and decorated with scratched designs have been the main Easter food for many centuries. Many families still boil and eat their own home coloured eggs at Easter. Another once popular Easter food – sprouted grain – today no longer appears on the table as a festive delicacy, but is used as décor instead.

songs are sung, floral wreaths are made, and countless bonfires burn until the morning. The main *Jāņi* foods are fresh caraway cheese and beer, which is found on every *Jāņi* festive table. Usually the table will also be laden with *pīrāgi*, sweet platter breads, various meats and many other modern foods, which suit contemporary Latvian celebrations. Because it is an outdoor celebration, an increasing list of modern picnic foods are being eaten at *Jāņi*, for example, fried sausages, barbecued meat and various salads.



## AT THE LATVIAN WEDDING TABLE

Another Latvian celebration that should be mentioned are weddings, which since ancient times have been associated with an abundance of food. Also today food is a large component of a Latvian wedding.

A scene from the film *Latvian Wedding in Nīca* (Latviešu kāzas Nīcā), produced in 1931 by A. Rusteikis and K. Linde.



It is hard to imagine a Latvian wedding without the ancient festive dishes – *pīrāgi*, sweet platter breads and beer. There are also usually at least five types of salad on the table, various meat-based snacks and a lot of fruit. It is traditional to eat ground meat *pīrāgi* together with broth or meatball soup as a first course at weddings. This is followed by the main

course, which at a Latvian wedding and birthdays can be sautéed pork ribs, pork chops, schnitzel, roast, steak, rolled veal or rissoles with boiled potatoes and sautéed sauerkraut. These are served with a sauce made from a milk or cream base. Dessert is usually made of berries or a milk jelly with a sweet sauce. After midnight the guests are offered the “New Wife’s Torte”, which is served with coffee.

If you find yourself at a large Latvian party, then assume that you will have to do a lot of eating, drinking and singing. In many homes you will have the opportunity to drink herbal tea (made from a range of herbs, not just peppermint or camomile), which will possibly have been gathered by your hosts during the summer.

## THE CONTEMPORARY LATVIAN MENU

On an average day Latvians usually eat a moderate breakfast before going to work. People drink a morning coffee or tea and eat sandwiches with cheese, sausage, tomatoes or cucumber.



For many Latvians the day is not imaginable without a drink of milk, which is usually drunk at breakfast. A boiled egg or omelette is also a popular breakfast dish for many.

Lunch in Latvia is eaten between midday and three: this is dependent on what time the day has begun. People usually eat a hot lunch, which consists of a type of fried meat (pork chops, rissoles, sautéed fillet, steak, chicken) or fish (salmon, trout, cod, pilchard), potatoes (boiled, fried, or mashed), boiled rice or buckwheat, and a fresh salad. Sour cream is



usually eaten as an accompaniment, or a sauce using cream as a base. Some people also eat soup as an entrée, which in Latvia is usually made with pork (or can also be made with a fish stock), adding onions and carrots. Meat soups may also contain potatoes, beets, sauerkraut, beans, peas, sorrel or fresh nettles. Many different kind of desserts are eaten. These usually are made of dairy products and fruit, with gelatine or potato starch added.

At lunch time Latvians drink fruit juices, *kefirs* (cultured milk), milk, tea or coffee. On arriving home from work, a second lunch, or supper, is made. This is eaten around six or seven in the evening. At this time there is a large diversity in the Latvian home – supper can consist of

## DRINKS

Many Latvians drink innumerable cups of tea or coffee during the day, usually without milk. Fruit juices or spring water are also drunk. Spring water has now become so popular that it can be found in almost every office. In the last ten years more



**On traditional seasonal holidays special food is often served in restaurants. Would you like to taste a *Mārtiņi* roast goose?**

soup, various salads, or can be a hot meal (similar to lunch), or a more traditional food, for example, a milk-based soup. However, many people who do not wish to spend a lot of time preparing food after work buy ready-made or frozen foods, or eat a number of sandwiches or buns together with a cup of tea. Latvians also enjoy eating pastries and other bakery products, and pizza has also become a popular and easy meal to prepare.

and more families do not purchase spring water from the shop, but rather collect water for the whole week from natural springs instead. Two of the most popular traditional Latvian drinks today are *rūgušpiens* (curdled milk with no other additives) and *kefirs* (cultured milk). Other popular traditional drinks include *kvass* (a non-alcoholic drink made from yeast), fresh or fermented birch juice and beer.

Beer is a traditional Latvian beverage – it is impossible to imagine ancient or contemporary Latvian celebrations without it.



Beer is the most commonly mentioned drink in Latvian folklore, and has innumerable folksongs dedicated to it. In Latvia beer was traditionally brewed from barley and hops. Honey was also often added during the brewing process, and the product was then called *medalus* (honey

meet in a tavern in the evening, celebrate a wedding or the summer solstice.

Another special strong alcoholic beverage made in Latvia is *Rīga Black Balsam*, first made in the 18th century and based on an ancient recipe used by Rigan pharmacists. The ingredients include various herbs, and because of this the liqueur is dark, has a thick consistency, is fragrant and is considered medicinal.

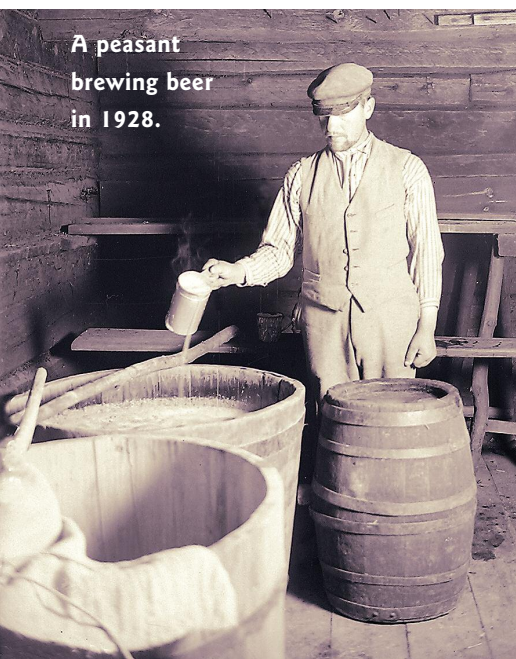
and in many homes, when cutting the first slice from a loaf of bread, the end is called a 'farmer's son'. Young women compete to eat this slice, so that they may marry a 'farmer's son' – someone who has their own home and farm. Another belief is that a loaf of bread should be sliced from the fatter end, in order for the eldest daughter to be the first to marry.

Today people still hold a number of beliefs about salt. Each Latvian knows that if a food has too much salt added, the cook is in love. If salt is spilled on the table or on the floor, then there will be a quarrel in the house.

Sitting down to a meal is a serious business, which requires people to be calm and act with decorum, to demonstrate respect for the food and for those who have worked to put it on the table – the ploughman and the cook. The place of honour is at the head of the table, where the head of the house usually sits. Those who sit at the corner of the table should be afraid of being cursed – that they will not be married for seven years. And everyone knows that if a spoon or fork fall to the ground, a female visitor will arrive, whereas if a knife falls, the visitor will be a male.

You are welcome at our table and we wish you

**LABU APETĪTI!**



A peasant brewing beer in 1928.



The taste of Rīga Black Balsam will take you back to the 18th century.

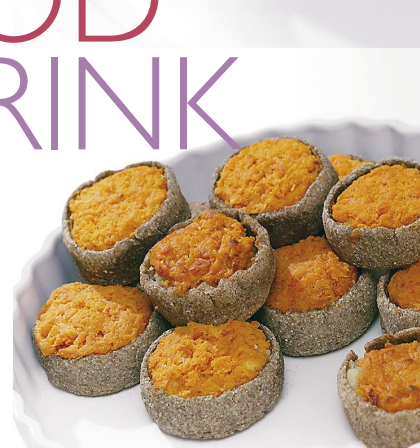
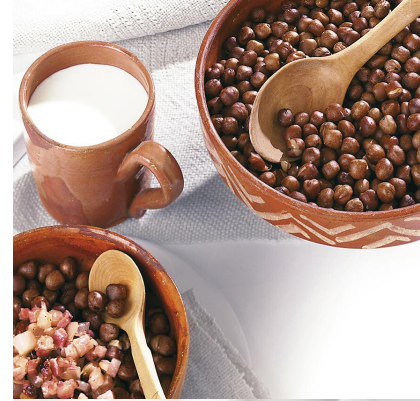
beer). Juniper berries or wormwood were also added to give the beer flavour. Today there are many types of beer which are products of breweries throughout Latvia. The most popular are *Aldaris*, *Cēsu*, *Piebalgas*, *Tērvetes*, *Užavas*, *Bauskas* and *Lāčplēša* beers. Beer is the most popular alcoholic beverage drunk when friends

## BELIEFS ASSOCIATED WITH EATING

There are many beliefs and customs associated with food and eating in Latvia. One of the most important features of Latvian "eating etiquette" is to offer food to others around you if you yourself are eating. Latvians are enthusiastic bread eaters,



# TYPICAL LATVIAN FOOD AND DRINK RECIPES





# PORK IN ASPIC



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*1kg (2lb., 3oz) pork,*

*50g (1.75oz) flavouring vegetables  
(onion, carrot, parsley,  
celery),*

*pepper, bay leaves, salt.*

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Choose meat from a young, relatively fatty piglet (knuckles and a piece of side or shoulder). Chop knuckles in half, cut up the side or shoulder. Wash all of the meat. Place in a saucepan and add cold

water to cover meat. Cover saucepan and bring to the boil, skimming off any foam. Add peeled flavouring vegetables and salt, then simmer on low heat with the saucepan partly covered. Add pepper and bay leaves towards the end of cooking. Remove from flame when meat separates easily from the knuckles.

Remove meat from broth, separate from bone and cut into cubes. Strain broth, let

it settle, and skim fat from the top. Rinse bowls in cold water. If you wish for the aspic to have a garlic flavour, add a clove of minced garlic to each bowl. Arrange boiled carrot and parsley in the bowls. Add meat and pour over broth. Place in a cool room to set. Before serving, upturn the pork in aspic on a shallow dish. Serve with vinegar, mustard and horseradish. Veal in aspic is prepared in the same way.



# “HERRING IN A JACKET”

THE CUISINE OF LATVIA

COLD APPETISERS

## HERRING WITH VEGETABLES

<i>1</i>	<i>salted herring,</i>
<i>150g (5.25oz)</i>	<i>boiled vegetables (carrot, beetroot, green peas),</i>
<i>100g (3.5oz)</i>	<i>sour cream,</i>
<i>10 g (0.35oz)</i>	<i>horseradish,</i>
	<i>salt, sugar to taste, spring onions.</i>

Soak herring and peel off skin. Slice fillet into angled pieces. Dice vegetables and arrange to cover a fish plate in a slight mound. Arrange the pieces of herring on top of the mound with the points coming together in the centre. Mix sour cream, horseradish, salt and sugar and pour diagonally over the herring. Spread chopped spring onions. Cut hollow cone shapes from a boiled carrot to decorate the centre or one side of the dish.

THE CUISINE OF LATVIA

COLD APPETISERS

# JĀŅI SUMMER SOLSTICE CHEESE

1 kg (2lb., 3oz)	skim milk dry cottage cheese,
	5l milk,
100g (3.5oz)	sour cream,
	2 eggs,
100g (3.5oz)	butter,
	salt, caraway seeds.

Heat milk, stirring occasionally, until the temperature reaches 90-95°C (194-203°F). Grind or process cottage cheese and add to milk. If the cottage cheese is sweet, mix with *rūgušpiens* (curdled milk) for the whey to separate more easily. Continue to heat at 85-90°C (185-194°F) for 10-15 minutes. When a clear whey separates, remove from heat, and allow cheese to sit. Pour off liquid. Place cheese into a dampened linen cloth. Holding corners of the cloth together, roll cheese back and forth to allow any extra liquid to separate out before the cheese cools down. Put cheese in a bowl. Mix sour cream with eggs, salt and caraway seeds and gradually add to cheese, mixing with a wooden spoon. Add the mixture to a saucepan with melted butter, and stir continuously over a low flame for 10-15 minutes, until cheese is smooth and shiny, and has a temperature of 75-80°C (167-176°F). (The lower the temperature and shorter the heating time, the softer and more crumbly the cheese will be. A higher temperature and a longer heating

time will make the cheese harder). Place cheese in a dampened linen cloth. Gather corners of the cloth together and tie, smooth out any folds, and place under a weight in the refrigerator. When cheese is cool, remove from cloth, place on a shallow dish and slice.

*Jāņi* cheese is served with butter or honey or as a snack with beer. If you wish to store the cheese for a longer period, rub with salt, wrap in paper or plastic wrap and store in a cool, dry place. The cheese can also be spread with butter and baked in a hot oven until brown.





# SORREL SOUP



NOTE: the dark green sorrel leaf resembles spinach in look and taste. However, sorrel has a lovely tart flavour that can't be replaced in this recipe.

250g (8.75oz)	pork,
800g (28oz)	water,
300g (10.5oz)	sorrel,
30g (1.05oz)	carrot,
20g (0.7oz)	onion,
10g (0.35oz)	parsley,
20g (0.7oz)	fat,
20g (0.7oz)	pearl barley,
1-2	eggs,
	salt, sour cream,
	dill and parsley.

Soak pearl barley for 6-8 hours in cold water. Dice pork. Put pork and grits in a saucepan, add water to cover and cook until the meat is almost tender. Chop sorrel, onions and carrots and sauté in butter. Add sautéed vegetables, parsley and salt to the saucepan, and continue cooking until meat is tender. Before serving, sprinkle with chopped dill or parsley and add sour cream. You may substitute 200g (7oz) of diced potato instead of pearl barley. Boil potatoes with the meat. Steam sorrel separately and add it to the soup when the meat and potatoes are tender. Decorate with a boiled egg.



THE CUISINE OF LATVIA

HOT FOODS

# GREY PEAS WITH BACON

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200g (7oz) grey peas,

60g (2.1oz) smoked or unsmoked  
streaky bacon,

40g (1.4oz) onion,  
salt.

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Soak peas, then cover with hot water and boil until tender. Dice bacon and onion and sauté. Serve drained peas in individual clay bowls, adding fried bacon mixture to each serving. Serve with a drink of *rūgušpiens* (curdled milk). Beans with fresh bacon are also prepared in this way.



THE CUISINE OF LATVIA

HOT FOODS

# SAUTÉED SAUERKRAUT

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400g (14oz) sauerkraut,

water,

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50g (1.75oz) carrot,

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30g (1.05oz) onion,

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50g (1.75oz) butter,

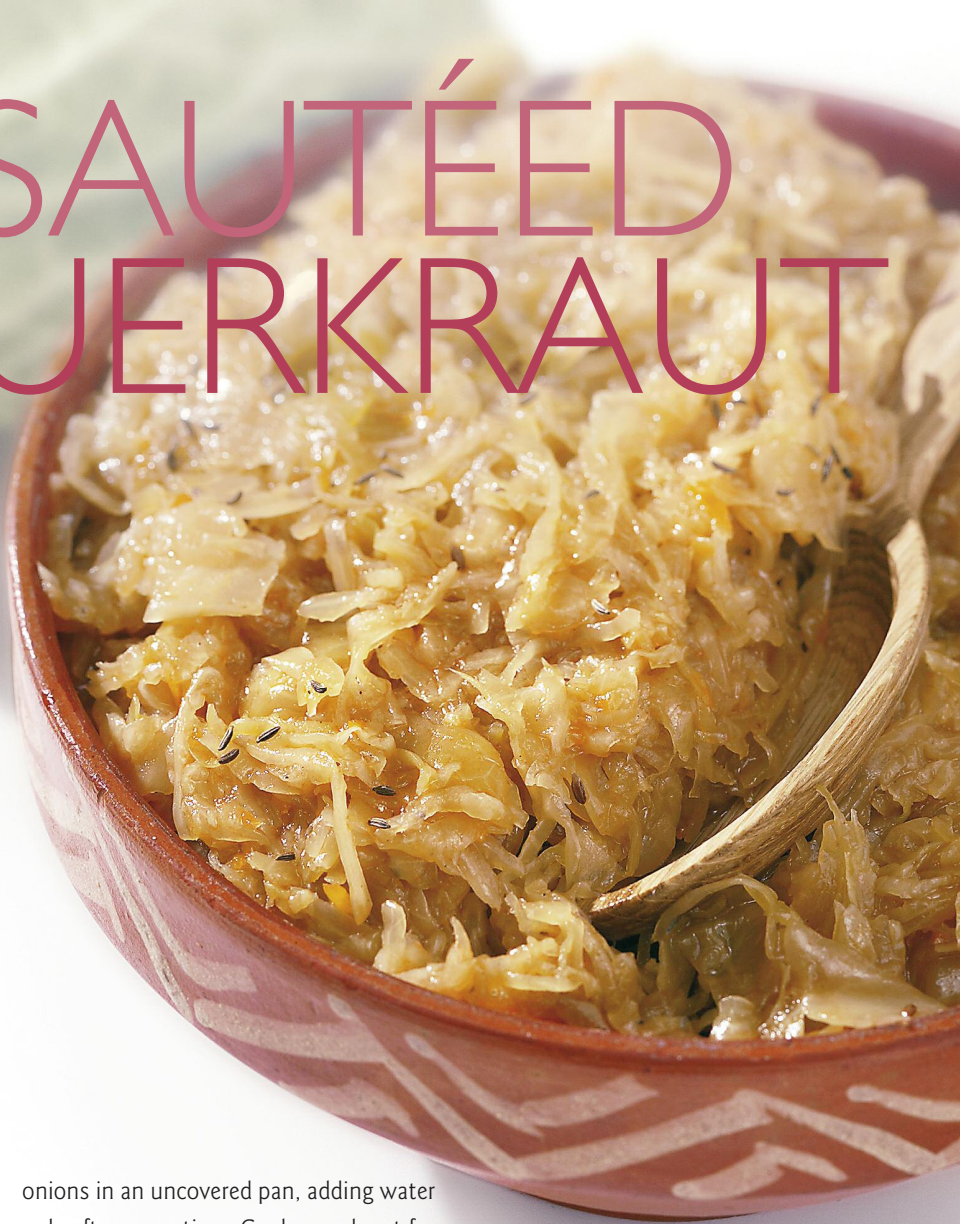
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salt, sugar.

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Melt butter in a large saucepan. Chop onion and sauté it in butter until light brown. Chop sauerkraut into smaller pieces and add to the saucepan. If you want the sautéed sauerkraut to be light in colour, cover sautéing onions with boiling water, cover the saucepan immediately and cook over a low flame. If you want the sauerkraut to be darker, sauté

onions in an uncovered pan, adding water only after some time. Cook sauerkraut for 2-3 hours. In the last 20 minutes, add grated carrots. When sauerkraut is tender, add salt and sugar to taste. (If the sauerkraut is not as dark as you would like, add caramelised sugar to the pan). Serve with roast pork, chops and other fatty meat dishes.



THE CUISINE OF LATVIA

HOT FOODS

FOR 10 PEOPLE

1,5-2kg (3.2-4.3lb.) pork

(the side, with ribs),

50g (1.75oz) onion,

50g (1.75oz) carrot,

25g (0.875oz) parsley,

salt, ground pepper.

# BAKED PORK RIBS

WITH  
SAUTEED SAUERKRAUT  
AND BOILED POTATOES

Make a series of 6-7 cm long cuts diagonally across ribs or cut membrane across each of the ribs, so that meat can be easily divided after roasting. Rub with salt and pepper and bake for 1 hour as you would a pork roast. If meat is fatty, remove skin and layer of fat. After baking, divide into portions (two ribs to each serve), place in a serving bowl, pour over the pan juices and serve with boiled potatoes and sautéed sauerkraut.



THE CUISINE OF LATVIA

HOT FOODS

# FISH COOKED IN MILK

WITH  
BOILED  
POTATOES

500g (17.5oz)	fish (mackerel, perch, pilchards, etc.),
140g (4.9oz)	flavouring vegetables (onion, parsley, carrot),
260g (9.1oz)	milk,
2 tablespoons	vegetable oil,
2 tablespoons	sour cream,
	chopped parsley or dill,
	salt, pepper, bay leaves.

Cut fish into pieces, cut onion into rings, coarsely grate carrot, chop parsley. Layer fish pieces with vegetables in a saucepan, sprinkling each layer with vegetable oil, salt and pepper. Pour over hot milk, add bay leaf and simmer over low heat for 10-15 minutes. Add sour cream at the end of cooking.

Serve fish with the cooking liquid and boiled potatoes. Sprinkle with chopped herbs before serving.

DESSERTS

# DEBESSMANNA

## WHIPPED CRANBERRY DESSERT WITH MILK



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75g (2.65oz) *cranberries*  
(or other berries),

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200g (7oz) *water,*

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50g (1.75oz) *sugar,*

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30g (1.05oz) *semolina.*

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Rinse cranberries. Crush and squeeze out juice. Place cranberry solids in a saucepan, cover with water, boil for five minutes and strain. Add sugar. Gradually add semolina, stirring constantly. Heat until semolina thickens, then add cranberry

juice. Pour mixture into a bowl and cool rapidly. Whip mixture until it becomes light and airy and has doubled or tripled in volume. Serve in deep dessert dishes with cold milk.



DESSERTS

# LAYERED RYE BREAD DESSERT

VERSION 1:

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75g (2.625oz) *dry rye bread,*

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50g (1.75oz) *loganberry jam,*

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20g (0.7oz) *sugar,*

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60g (2.1oz) *cream,*

---

*cinnamon,*

*vanilla essence.*

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Finely grate rye bread, mix with cinnamon and half of the sugar. Beat cream, adding sugar and vanilla essence gradually, until mixture forms stiff peaks. On a shallow dish arrange layers of bread, jam and whipped cream, finishing with a layer of bread which is decorated with whipped cream. Serve with a drink of milk.

VERSION 2:

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80-100g (2.8-3.5oz) *dry rye bread,*

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20g (0.7oz) *sugar,*

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15g (5.25oz) *butter,*

---

50g (1.75oz) *loganberry jam,*

---

60g (2.1oz) *cream,*

---

*vanilla essence.*

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Finely grate rye bread, add half of the sugar and fry in melted butter on the pan, stirring frequently. Allow mixture to cool. Beat cream with remaining sugar and vanilla essence. Layer rye bread, jam and whipped cream in serving dishes, sprinkle rye bread on top and decorate with whipped cream. Serve with a drink of milk.





THE CUISINE OF LATVIA

BREADS AND  
PASTRIES

# RYE BREAD

A large, dark, round loaf of rye bread sits on a wooden cutting board. A thick slice has been cut and is placed to the right of the loaf. The slice is topped with a pat of butter. A wooden-handled knife with three rivets lies horizontally across the board in front of the loaf. In the foreground, a small white square dish contains a portion of butter. The background is a white, textured fabric.

NOTE: This recipe is intended for baking bread in a traditional wood-fired bread oven. However, you can also bake the bread in an electric or gas oven using a baking tray.



TO BAKE APPROXIMATELY  
10 LOAVES OF BREAD:

10kg	coarse rye flour,
~ 5-7l	water,
	pinch of salt,
	caraway seeds to taste.

FOR THE STARTER:

250g (8.75oz)	coarse rye flour,
250g (8.75oz)	buttermilk,
50g (1.75oz)	sugar.

NOTE: The amount of ingredients can be reduced as long as the parts ratio is maintained.



Before baking, sift flour and leave at room temperature. When baking bread for the first time, you must make the starter. Add sifted flour to buttermilk (both must be room temperature), stir in 50g sugar, cover and allow to ferment in a warm place for 8-12 hours. Then add 500-700g flour to near boiling water and beat thoroughly to form a porridge of medium thickness (to make the mixture thicker, you can gradually add more flour). Add the starter, beat, cover and leave to ferment in a warm place for 8-9 hours or until the mixture sours.

When the starter is ready, make the leaven. Mix one third of flour intended for baking with hot water and beat with a wooden spatula until the mixture is smooth. Cool to 35-40°C, then add starter and continue to beat until the mixture is smooth again. Sprinkle over thick layer of flour, cover and put in a warm place to rise for 10-12 hours.

When the leaven has a pleasant sour taste and has increased in volume, begin to knead, slowly adding all of the flour, until it has all been kneaded in and the dough is elastic and does not stick to your fingers or the container. The dough must be firm, because as it rises it will become softer. Smooth dough, cover and put in a warm place to rise, until it has increased in volume by one third or half of its original volume. Let it rise for

THE CUISINE OF LATVIA

## BREADS AND PASTRIES

1-1.5 hours, the time will depend on the sourness of the dough and the season. After baking the bread the *abrķasis* (a small piece of left over dough which is made hard by kneading in extra flour) is left for a week in a cool place. Next time this will become the starter. To assist its fermentation, dissolve in warm water before use.

The oven is lit when the dough begins to rise. To check if the oven is too hot, throw in a handful of flour. If the flour immediately burns to a black colour, then the oven must be cooled. The oven is the right temperature for baking when the flour becomes brown in 5-6 seconds. Each loaf is made to have a weight of 2-4 kg. Sprinkle flour on the bread-shovel, then with wet hands take enough dough for one loaf, place on the bread-shovel and form it into a loaf shape. Smooth the top with wet hands, and score 2-3 lines into the sides, so that the loaf does not crack. There must be no less than a palm width space between each loaf when baking.

Bake bread for 1-2 hours, the length of time is determined by the size of the loaves. You can tell if the loaf is ready by listening to the sound when knocking on the underside of the loaf. After removing loaves from the oven, wet the tops with water, cover with a linen cloth and allow to cool.

BREADS AND  
PASTRIES



# SKLANDU RAUŠI

## VEGETABLE TARTS

400-500g (15.75-17.5oz) coarse rye  
or wheat flour,

200g (7oz) water,

50g (1.75oz) lard or margarine,

10g (0.35oz) sugar, salt,

1 egg.

POTATO FILLING:

250g (8.75oz) potato,

25g (0.875oz) milk,

15g (0.525oz) butter,

salt.

Sift flour onto a pastry board, rub through lard or margarine. Heat water to 20-25 °C (68-77°F), add sugar and salt (10-15g (0.35-0.525oz) of yeast can also be added), and knead into a stiff dough that can be easily rolled. Roll dough into a sheet of 2-3mm thickness, cut out round shapes 10-15cm (4-4.8 inches) in diameter. Fold up edges of each round to a height of 1-1.5cm (0.4-0.6 inches), and place on a greased baking tray.

Fill each case with potato filling and then carrot filling. Brush with beaten egg and bake in a moderate oven for 10-15 minutes, until the top has browned and pastry is dry and crusty.

Potato filling: Boil peeled potatoes in salted water, drain, mash through a sieve. Add boiled milk and butter and mix well.

Carrot filling: Boil unpeeled carrots, then peel, mash through a sieve. Add salt, sugar, sour cream and flour and mix well.

*Sklandu rauši* can be baked with only the potato or only the carrot filling. Alternatively, add grated fresh carrot, salt, sugar, eggs, sour cream and flour to mashed potato and mix well.

CARROT FILLING:

350-400g (12.25 -14oz) carrot,

50 g (1.75oz) sugar, salt,

25g (0.875oz) sour cream,

2 eggs,

15g (0.525oz) flour.



BREADS AND  
PASTRIESYEAST  
DOUGHFOR PĪRĀGI  
BACON ROLLS  
AND SWEET  
BREADS

Sift flour. This removes any impurities and aerates to assist the growth of the yeast fungus. Mix yeast with warm water and flour and put in a warm place to rise for 15-20 minutes. Dissolve salt and sugar in water or milk which has been heated to 30-35°C (85-95°F). add beaten eggs, yeast, sifted flour (leave approximately 5-6% of flour for kneading and shaping) and stir to form an even dough. Add melted butter and knead, until the dough springs back from your hands and edges of the bowl. Pat down the dough, sprinkle with flour. Cover the bowl with a lid or clean cloth and put in a warm place to rise. After 1 hour the dough will have nearly doubled in size. Punch down dough to release carbon dioxide, which hinders growth of the yeast fungus, and continue to rise for 1 hour. Best results will be achieved if the temperature of the dough is 25-30 °C.

The dough is ready when its volume has increased by 2-2.5 times, and if when pressing the dough, the impression slowly fills out, and if the dough has a pleasant smell and taste. If the dough is left to rise for too long, its consistency becomes thinner, and it tastes and smells slightly fermented. The bread often collapses while baking, or can taste sour. Dough that has over-risen can be corrected by adding a little liquid and flour and re-kneading.

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*100g (3.5oz) yeast.*

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*150g (5.25oz) water or milk.*

---

*25g (0.875oz) flour.*

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*1-2 eggs.*

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THE CUISINE OF LATVIA

BREADS AND  
PASTRIES

# PĪRĀGI

## BACON ROLLS



Prepare dough without a starter (see above). After dough has risen, divide into 30-35g (1.05 – 1.225oz) pieces, roll into round balls and leave on a pastry board for 10-15 minutes to rise. Press each piece flat, place bacon filling in the centre, press together edges of dough above or at the side of filling. Roll with both hands to even out filling; make the shape long with slender ends and bend into a half-moon. Place on a greased baking tray, leave to rise, brush with beaten egg and bake in a hot oven. Brush with melted butter once removed from the oven.



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450-500g (17.5oz) flour,

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250g (8.75oz) milk or water,

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25g (0.875oz) yeast,

---

75g (2.625oz) margarine,

---

25g (0.875oz) sugar,

---

5g (0.175oz) salt,

---

1 egg.

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### FILLING:

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350g (12.25oz) smoked streaky bacon,

---

50g (1.75oz) onion,

---

ground pepper.

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### Bacon filling:

Cut rind off bacon. Dice bacon and onion and sauté (sauté only for a short period, so that fat does not run off), add pepper and mix well.



BREADS AND  
PASTRIES

DOUGH:

450-500g (15.75-17.5oz) flour,

250g (8.75oz) milk,

25g (0.875oz) yeast,

100g (3.5oz) butter or margarine,

100g (3.5oz) sugar,

2 eggs,

5g (0.175oz) salt,

cardamom.

TOPPING:

800g (28oz) apples,

50g (1.75oz) sugar,

2g (0.07oz) ground cinnamon,

50g (1.75oz) butter,

icing sugar.

Prepare dough without a starter (see above). Roll risen dough into a sheet 1 – 1.5cm (0.4 – 0.6 inches) thick. Place on a greased baking tray, smooth and allow to rise. Peel apples and slice. Arrange slices in neat rows on dough. Brush with melted butter. Mix cinnamon and sugar and sprinkle over apples. Bake in a moderate oven

until crust has browned and apples are soft. When cool, sprinkle over icing sugar and slice into square or rectangular pieces. Dried apples may be substituted for fresh apples, in this case the apples must be soaked before use. The dough may also be spread with a thin layer of sour cream and sugar before adding apples.



# APPLE SLICE



BEVERAGES



CARAWAY SEED  
TEA

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5g (0.175oz) *caraway seeds*  
(*Carum carvi L.*),

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15g (0.525oz) *sugar,*  
250g (8.75oz) *water.*

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Add caraway seeds to boiling water. Boil gently for five minutes, allow to steep for 10-15 minutes. Caraway seed tea can be served with milk or cream.

LINDEN BLOSSOM  
TEA

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3g (0.105oz) *dried linden blossoms*  
(*Tilia cordata Mill.*),

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15g (0.525oz) *sugar or honey,*  
250g (8.75oz) *water.*

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Pour cold water over linden blossoms. Bring to the boil, steep for 10-15 minutes. Strain. Sweeten with sugar or honey.



VITAMIN  
TEA

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1 *tablespoon drogas*

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3 *parts dried nettle leaves*  
(*Urtica dioica L.*),

3 *parts dried carrot,*

3 *parts dried rosehips,*

1 *part dried blackcurrants.*

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300g (10.5oz) *water.*

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Add drogas to cold water, boil for 10 minutes, allow to steep for 2-4 hours in a well sealed container in a cool place. Strain.

Drink 1 glass 2-3 times per day.



# HERBAL TEAS



The Latvian Institute promotes knowledge about Latvia abroad.  
It produces publications in several languages on many aspects of Latvia.

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