

Dumneazu

Ethnomusicological Eating East of Everywhere.

TUESDAY, JULY 19, 2016

Poland: Blood, Herring, and Pierogis.



Stuffed with love and bacon.

Ikh flee... sang Prince Nazaroff. *I fly...* And fly I did. I have had a case of jet lag that would floor an elephant. I did a couple of concerts with the Brothers Nazaroff in the States in June, although I spent most of the time enjoying being with my family in Jersey or hunting down the Chinese food that I obsessed about while on a diet here in Budapest. I was pretty good about the diet in the states - basically, if the plate in front of me wasn't some regional Guangdong specialty prepared by a monolingual Grandmother in the back of a tiny doorway lunch place, I didn't eat it. I made a couple of exceptions for Shake Shack, of course, but somehow I managed to not gain weight in the USA, which is more than I can say for most Americans. But then the real test was yet to come. A few days after arriving home in Budapest, I had to go to Krakow for the Jewish Music Festival for several days with the Brothers Nazaroff. Poland: *Land of Complex Carbohydrates*.



A light lunch: pierogis, stuffed cabbage, kaszanka blood sausage.

Poland is a land of Well Mannered Gentlemen, Elegant Ladies, fine art, tragic history, and potatoes served a hundred different ways. We were in Kazimierz, the old Jewish quarter of Krakow for the festival. The festival organizers - Janusz, Kasia, and Robert - are some of the most professional and warm hosts in the European Gigantic Culture Festival Business, and it is probably Europe's most relaxed festival hang between musicians, the hard core Yiddishists, and the visitors who come to hear the concerts and attend workshops. Everybody wanders around the old core of Kazimierz, and you get to knock back a lot of iced coffee with folks who like your music. Oh, and eat pierogis.

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Little edible bags of prepared food.

There is no doubt that Poland likes its carbohydrates. Not content with potatoes and bread, Poles eat a lot of buckwheat groats - *kasha* - the bane of my Bronx childhood. We Hungarian Jews weren't big on *kasha*, but everybody else was. *Kasha* was like the quinoa of Ashkenazic Europe. *Eat it, it will make you strong!* Fumie, being Japanese, loves buckwheat, but I have hard time loving grains that remind me of the late stone age. Luckily, the Columbian exchange introduced Poland to the potato. So what does one eat if not eating spuds in Poland? Well, there is pierogi. I love pierogi. I love them stuffed with meat. I love them stuffed with mushrooms and cabbage. I adore them stuffed with fruit, especially the tiny mountain strawberries that were in season while we visited. But lo-carb food they are not. So yes, I ate the pierogis.



Vincent's Pierogi Shop: Choose your poison.

How much damage could I do? after all one thing I discovered about Poland in late June was that the vegetables are some of the best I have ever seen offered in Europe. Yes, Polish tomatoes easily beat what I can buy in Budapest. I was buying bags of them like fruit (*diet hint: eat tomatoes instead of chips!*) The concert went well, as concerts often do when you are a band consisting of five leaders of different bands - imagine a small boat floating across the ocean crewed by five captains. Fun! the only thing that can top it is to visit a herring bar! Yes! A bar serving nothing but vodka shots and herring! Poland likes its herring - you can get it about a dozen ways but I always prefer simple herrings in oil with sliced onions. This is how you approach vodka at the [Maly Sledz](#) in Kazimierz:

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Reb Fishl of Kroke.

And then, after midnight, everybody would drift to the market square across the street from the Alchemia Club and chow down on sausages. Our favorite is *kaszanika*, a blood and liver sausage similar to the Hungarian *hurka*. It tastes good and it makes whoever you are sitting with squeamish at the same time.



Not Kosher. Not Kosher at all.

One tragedy: my Nikon Coolpix died while I was in Krakow. Its in intensive care now at a small Hungarian repair shop, and I am going to Romania in a few days, so I'm keeping my fingers crossed as to whether the Coolpix does a Lazarus on me or else it is going with a ten year old Canon camera... photo quality may suffer. Most of the photos here were made with the camera on my Nexus tablet. Taking pictures with a tablet looks like the stupidest posture ever developed for any pursuit of Art: *Look! I am holding a big square thing up! Thrill to my fuzzy photos!* And when photo quality suffers, we all suffer.

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