



The Culinary Art of Hungary

- by - LOUIS SZATHMARY



A 'SLIP' OF THE CABBAGE PANCAKE

This year, I think the minds of all Hungarians, wherever they live, are turning more towards Transylvania than ever.

I am thinking back to the Christmas of 1943 when I arrived, after ten days in a hospital, in the small town in Transylvania where I lived at that time. The military hospital let those who could travel go home for Christmas. My parents lived too far, so I just went back to the place where I rented a nice little room.

I arrived unexpectedly mid-morning on the day before Christmas. The landlady was surprised. She wanted to please me, and asked me to invite a couple of friends for lunch. She would prepare something quickly for us from ingredients she had on hand.

And she did. She made "slipped cabbage" pancakes.

They were the best I'd ever had. I watched her in the kitchen while she was making them.

The next year, on December 24, I prepared the same dish for my parents in a small village near the Austrian border, where I caught up with them as they were fleeing from the onslaught of the Soviet army.

In 1945, I lived in a tiny, sublet room in crowded Salzburg, which, at that time, had a regular population of 55,000 plus 125,000 refugees. I made the pancakes on a small electric hotplate in my room, and I invited some Transylvanian guests for lunch.

Slipped cabbage pancakes are not really a traditional Christmas dish, but are prepared often as a filling lunch on the 24th, and on the 31st, that we call Szilveszter Day.

Merry Christmas, Happy New Year.

SLIPPED CABBAGE PANCAKES

- 1 quart cabbage, chopped or shredded into pieces about 1/4 by 1/4 inch**
- 3 to 4 tablespoons lard or bacon drippings**
- 1-1/2 teaspoons salt 1/4 teaspoon black pepper**
- 2 tablespoons sugar 2 eggs 1 cup milk**
- 1-2/3 cups sifted flour more or less to make a batter similar to regular pancake batter**
- 1 teaspoon baking powder**
- 1/4 to 1/2 cup shortening for frying**
- 4 to 6 ounces smoked Polish or Hungarian sausage or smoky links, slices very thin**
- 1-1/2 cups sour cream mixed with 1/2 cup milk or buttermilk**

Rinse cabbage under running cold water in a colander. Shake out water, empty cabbage into a clean kitchen towel, gather corners and edges, and shake until water is absorbed. Put cabbage into a heavy pot. Add lard, 1 teaspoon salt, pepper and sugar. Cook uncovered over medium heat for about 15 minutes, then cover and cook for about 30 minutes.

Remove cover, increase heat to high and stir until cabbage turns limp and yellow and starts to brown on the edges and all liquid evaporates. Remove from heat and keep warm.

While cabbage is cooking beat eggs together with milk. Sift flour with baking powder and 1/2 teaspoon salt and

slowly stir into egg mixture until smooth. Let batter stand until cabbage is cooked.

Place 6- or 7-inch skillet over medium heat. Add shortening for frying and heat it through for about 5 minutes. Pour shortening into a container and return skillet to heat. Pre-heat oven to 250.

Stir cooked cabbage into batter. Put about a teaspoon of hot shortening into skillet and spread it around. Then pour about 1/4 of cabbage batter into skillet and cook over medium heat. With a spatula, ease edges away from sides of skillet. Put a little more fat between pan and edge of pancake, moving spoon with fat in it along inner edge of skillet.

Evenly spread 1/4 of sausage on top of pancake. When surface is no longer runny and looks like a regular pancake, "slip" it without turning into a round ovenproof dish (a glass pie dish is good for this purpose).

Place dish with first pancake into warm oven. Add some shortening to skillet and second 1/4 of batter. While it cooks, lace first pancake's surface with some of sour cream and milk mixture.

When second pancake is done, "slip" it on top of first, again without turning. Lace with sour cream mixture. Repeat twice more until all batter, sausage and most of sour cream mixture are used.

Increase oven temperature to 300 and heat 4 pancakes for about 15 minutes. Remove, cover with remaining sour cream mixture, slice into 8 wedges, and serve with thick tomato slices in vinaigrette. Serves 8.

FROM A KITCHEN TABLE TO A FACTORY: THE WEISS NOODLE COMPANY

— By —

STEPHEN W. PAULOVITCH

In 1921, Gasper and Bertha Weiss left Hungary and arrived in the United States. Back in Hungary, Weiss' father had owned an inn famous far and wide for its noodles — *Tesztá*, *Kluski*, and *Nokedli* — dumpling noodles. But in the United States, hampered by a lack of knowledge of the language, the Weisses had a hard time getting by. Finally, in 1923, Bertha, working in her own little kitchen in Cleveland, Ohio, began making noodles as she had back home. She would give the noodles to her neighbors; Gaspar, in the meanwhile, canvassed local stores to interest their owners in handling this splendid, pure domestic product. After some slow going, things began to improve dramatically, especially when the store owners and particularly the owners of local restaurants tasted Bertha's handiwork.

"First," recalls Mrs. Weiss, "we moved to making noodles in the attic. Then we had to use the basement, too, for drying. I put down our door screens and covered them with my tablecloths. That's where we put the rolled-out dough to dry before we cut it."

The Beginnings

Within a very short time — a few weeks, actually — they had to rent their first "factory" — a loft on East 123rd Street in Cleveland, Ohio — and they hired neighborhood women to help make the home-made noodles. Since the idea of "packaged" noodles was a new one at the time, sales began to rise. This was particularly true because of the large Hungarian and Slav population of the area.



By 1928 the noodle making was removed from the Weiss' home, and they set up a factory on Woodland Avenue in Cleveland. In order to keep up with the demand, an automatic noodle-rolling machine had to be specifically constructed. Interestingly, the one of the original models of this machine now stands in the foyer of the Weiss Noodle Factory in Solon, Ohio.

A Growing Concern

By the end of the 1940's there were twenty people working in the factory, and the company was growing rapidly. Al Weiss, the Weiss' son, and his wife Jane, began to run the company. One of their innovations was the introduction of packaged dry soup mixes, retaining the genuine spices and blends to preserve the true Hungarian flavor.

When, in 1959, a fire totally destroyed the Woodland Avenue plant, Al Weiss, now President of the firm, decided to relocate in the city of Solon, Ohio. Here he established a completely modern facility, equipped with "state-of-the-art" machinery. The secret of the Weiss' success, however, is still that the noodles appear as though they were rolled, shaped and dried by hand. And, of course, they still contain the "secret" Hungarian ingredient, especially in the *teszta* (egg noodles) — which is simply plenty of eggs!

A Modern Success Story

The Weiss Noodle Company, now sixty-five years old, turns out more than fifty thousand pounds of noodles per day, and has distribution throughout more than forty-five states.

Al Weiss, President until his death in the late 70's, was particularly proud of the "rolling" technique

employed in the plant.

"Rolling is part of the secret of a good noodle," said Weiss. "It allows air bubbles to stay in the dough so the noodle puffs and is tender when you cook it."

The Company, now under the ownership of American Specialty Foods, Inc., still has, as its premium brand, Aunt Bertha's Noodles.

An International Flavor

Most of the packages of Weiss' noodles contain American and foreign recipes. Noodles common to various nationalities are identified in several languages: the *Egg Farvel* is also egg barley, *tarhonya*, *zeczeki* and egg drops. The short, wide noodle, called "Ha-Lush-Ka" is designed for such Jewish dishes as *Lukshen*, Hungarian-Slavic *Kaposztas*, German-Swiss *Nudel*, and French *Nouilles Antoine*.

These variations on the basic theme show how the Weiss Noodle Company remains on the cutting edge of modern culinary art, accepting Al Weiss' precept that, "The modern housewife is a much more experimental cook than her mother was."

The great success of the Company is a fantastic realization of Gasper and Bertha Weiss' earliest hopes: "Sometimes it all still seems like a dream," wonders Mrs. Weiss.

And all of this remains yet another token of the creative and innovative force brought to this country by ambitious, hard-working Hungarian-Americans.

Weiss Noodle Company
31313 Aurora Road, Solon, Ohio 44139
Tel: 216-248-4550