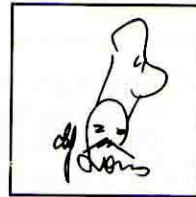




The Culinary Art of Hungary

- by - LOUIS SZATHMARY



It is interesting how few people know that potatoes originated, not in Ireland as many Americans believe, but as the spadework of native American Indian agriculturalists in pre-Columbian times.

Yes, American Indians domesticated, from a so-called "semi-orchid" or "nightshade" plant, a common weed, three very important plants: the potato, the tomato, and the green pepper. The three arose from a common ancestor, and the most important of them is the potato.

Had you lived in Hungary within the last 150 to 200 years, you probably

would have believed that Hungarians had been potato eaters for ages, if not forever. This is not so. The first, very rare potatoes were planted in our old country in the first few decades of the 19th century. During the time of Louis Kossuth's uprising against the Habsburgs in 1848-49, potatoes were just starting to be known, but had really not become a significant food for the population.

Later, their usage spread tremendously, and at the turn of the century one could not imagine Hungarian cuisine without potatoes.

We developed some very special

Hungarian potato dishes — among them, perhaps one of the most loved is Rakott Krumpli, or layered potatoes. Here is the recipe. As a rule, at this time of the year it is served with pickles from the jar, or with red beet salad, or Hungarian winter cabbage salad.

Readers who would like a recipe for the beets or the cabbage salad should send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Chef Louis, The Bakery Restaurant, 2218 N. Lincoln Avenue, Chicago, IL 60614, and we will mail it within a week.

LAYERED POTATOES

3 pounds medium-sized potatoes
6 eggs
1 teaspoon salt
1 pound Hungarian or Polish-Style sausage, ring bologna, or hot dogs

2 cups sour cream
2 cups buttermilk
¼ cup butter
salt and pepper to taste
1 cup grated American Cheese (optional)

1. Scrub potatoes but don't peel. Place in cold water to cover over medium heat. Cover and bring to a rolling boil. Boil 5 to 6 minutes; remove. Pour off water, replace lid, and let potatoes stand covered for at least an hour.
2. Place eggs in a saucepan with enough cold water to reach about one inch above the eggs. Sprinkle a teaspoon of salt into the water, bring to a boil, and gently simmer for 10 minutes.
3. Drain and cool at once under cold running water for at least 5 minutes. Break the egg shells under the water by hitting the eggs gently against one another, and peel.
4. Cook the sausage or use it as it comes, depending on the variety. If you get real Hungarian or Polish smoked sausage, you don't have to cook or heat it. Whatever sausage you use, slice it on the diagonal into even, thin, oval slices.
5. Mix sour cream with buttermilk. Brush the inside of a three-quart oven-proof casserole with some of the butter. Preheat oven to 300°F.
6. Peel potatoes and slice enough thin slices to cover the bottom of the casserole. Slice enough eggs (1 or 1½) to distribute evenly over the potato slices. Cover with another layer of potatoes, then about ¼ of the sausage. When you have used half the ingredients, cover with a layer of potatoes and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Spoon on top a bit less than half the sour cream-buttermilk mixture.
7. Continue with layers of potatoes, eggs, and sausages until all ingredients are used. The top layer should be potatoes. Gently press down all the layers, then dot with butter and spoon about half the remaining sour cream-buttermilk mixture on top.
8. Cover and bake 30 minutes.