



# The Culinary Art of Hungary

- by - LOUIS SZATHMARY



## RIZES KACSA (DUCK WITH RICE)

There is a saying in Hungary that the duck is the most stupid bird. A roast duck for one person is too much; for two, not enough.

In Hungary, the ducks we are talking about weigh around 5 pounds. The way they are fed and treated, the most important part is the duck fat. It is used in many households almost exclusively as shortening, supplemented perhaps with a little butter or oil.

I remember fondly times when the six of us at home ate one duck, and even had some left over. We believed that the way it was cooked was strictly Hungarian. When, as a growing boy, I started to travel, I realized that other countries had dishes very similar to ours.

But still, I think that Rizes Kacsa, meaning duck with rice, is — at least the way we prepare it — a very Hungarian dish, and a marvelous winter dish. Although most of the time we made it with duck, once in a while it was fixed using 4-5 pounds of chicken parts, or, occasionally, the wings, neck, gizzard, heart and liver of a turkey or a goose. The exception was that the goose liver was never used in such a plebian way.

Following is the recipe. It serves 6 Hungarians comfortably, or 8 people from any other nation. To accompany the dish, we usually served dill or garlic pickles, or small yellow peppers stuffed with red or white cabbage, and preserved in jars. In cities with Hungarian neighborhoods, you may be able to get these relishes in some delicatessens. If not, good quality, Polish or German-style pickles will be a good substitute.

If you want to serve it with a hot vegetable, sweet and sour red cabbage would be appropriate. So, as a New Year present, we add the recipe for sweet and sour red cabbage, as well as for the Chef's Salt used in the duck with rice preparation.

### DUCK WITH RICE

#### 8 servings

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 duckling, 4 1/2 to 5 pounds             | 1 cup water                             |
| 1 tablespoon Chef's Salt<br>(see recipe)  | 3 cups washed rice                      |
| 4 tablespoons lard of duck fat            | 6 cups boiling water                    |
| 2 cups chopped onion                      | 2 teaspoons Chef's Salt<br>(see recipe) |
| 1 cup sliced carrot                       | 1 teaspoon marjoram                     |
| 1/2 cup sliced celery                     | 1/2 cup fresh parsley, chopped          |
| 1/2 cup sliced parsnip or parsley<br>root | 1 cup sliced mushrooms                  |
|   | 2 tablespoons butter                    |

1. Cut up the duckling into small pieces. Use neck, giblets, and heart. Set the liver aside and sprinkle Chef's Salt on all other pieces. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. In the skillet heat half the lard or duck fat. Add the onions over high heat, and stir until they start to brown. Add carrots, celery, and parsnip and stir until they start to brown. Transfer the browned vegetables into a large ovenproof casserole. Add salted duck pieces, stir, and pour in about 1 cup of water. Cover and place in oven for 45 minutes. After 30 minutes, skim off as much fat as possible, stir, and add more water if necessary.
3. Meanwhile, add remaining shortening to the skillet. When the shortening is smoking hot, add the washed rice. Stir the rice with a wooden spoon until it starts to brown and crackle.
4. Remove casserole from oven. Carefully lift the lid, add the fried rice and 6 cups boiling water. Stir. Add Chef's Salt, marjoram, and half the parsley. Cover and return to the oven. Bake for another 30 to 45 minutes, or until the rice is cooked and the meat is tender.
5. Meanwhile, gently sauté mushrooms in butter. Just before serving, sauté the duck liver, cut in slices, in the same butter.
6. Remove the duck and rice to a serving platter, cover with the sautéed mushrooms and duck liver, and sprinkle with remaining parsley. Serve immediately.

### SWEET-SOUR RED CABBAGE

Serves 8

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>3 heads firm red cabbage,<br/>about 3 pounds total</b> | <b>1/2 cup sugar</b>                                  |
| <b>3 tablespoons lard, chicken fat,<br/>or duck fat</b>   | <b>1/4 bay leaf</b>                                   |
| <b>1 tablespoon finely minced onion</b>                   | <b>very light sprinkling of nutmeg<br/>(optional)</b> |
| <b>1 teaspoon salt</b>                                    | <b>1 teaspoon caraway seeds</b>                       |
| <b>freshly ground black pepper<br/>to taste</b>           | <b>1/2 cup vinegar or more, to taste</b>              |

Remove the outside leaves of the cabbage. Split each head in half and remove the core from each half. Split the halves into quarters. Place the quarters with a cut side flat on the cutting board and cut them into 1/4-inch strips, or thinner, crosswise. Quickly wash the cut cabbage in cold water. Place in a colander and shake off all the water.

Melt the lard or fat in a large pot. Add the onions and cook until they turn glossy. Add the cabbage, salt, pepper, sugar, bay leaf, nutmeg, and caraway seeds. Pour in the vinegar. Gently toss the mixture together as you would toss a salad. Cook the cabbage over medium heat, uncovered, until it starts to steam.

Continue cooking over medium heat, stirring. When the liquid that develops starts to boil, reduce the heat to low and cook until tender, stirring occasionally. All the liquid must slowly evaporate; this is the only way to make the cabbage sweet-sour, tender, and a pretty purple. Pick out a few strips once in a while, let them cool a little, and taste them. You may wish to add more sugar or more vinegar.

### CHEF'S SALT

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>1 cup salt</b>                                      | <b>1/4 teaspoon ground white<br/>pepper</b>              |
| <b>1 tablespoon paprika<br/>(Hungarian or Spanish)</b> | <b>1/4 teaspoon celery salt<br/>(not garlic powder!)</b> |
| <b>1 teaspoon black pepper, freshly<br/>ground</b>     |  |

Mix above ingredients well and keep in a jar. Use instead of salt.