



# The Culinary Art of Hungary

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## "NYÁRSONSÜLT PECSENYE" A HUNGARIAN MIXED GRILL OF GYPSY ORIGIN

In the past, there was a constant misunderstanding in the Western world by equating Hungarian food with gypsy food. Hungarian music with gypsy music. In fact, some even believed that Hungarians and gypsies were the same people.

Of course, if you check the facts, you may be surprised to learn that not only Spain, Portugal, Rumania and Bulgaria, but also England, France and other Western European countries have their gypsy populations, and that gypsy music had great influence not only in Hungary, but also in Spain (just think of flamenco), Rumania and France. Also, you'll find that certain gypsy dishes got mixed into the national cuisine of many countries besides that of Hungary.

May is the month when all over the United States serious barbecuing starts, first on porches, then in gardens, and later at beaches and weekend places during fishing trips and excursions.

So, I thought it would be timely to give an authentic recipe for a gypsy grill with a typical Hungarian dipping sauce, which used to be as popular as ketchup is here.

Ingredients are seldom as important as condiments. Be sure that you use the best available Hungarian paprika, a sweet, mild but pungent, fragrant, vivid red spice. If you like heat in the sauce, you have two ways to add it. In addition to the sweet, mild paprika, you can also buy a hot, very spicy Hungarian red paprika. Just carefully add a pinch or two to the sauce. Or you can add a little cayenne pepper. I prefer a few drops of Tabasco.

It is also very important what kind of white wine you use for this dipping sauce. I feel that the slight muscat flavor of some semi-sweet white wine adds a lot to the quality of this sauce.

In most of our states, it is possible to buy a Hungarian type of white wine called Goldener Stork, which comes from Burgenland in Eastern Austria. Among Hungarian wines, a Tokaji Szamorodni, or any other semi-sweet white wine, is also good.

I have been challenged several times on the authenticity of this recipe. People ask how come, if this is a real dish of the gypsies, the different ingredients are cooked in a frypan and not on a stick or skewer as you would expect.

I explain that several times in Transylvania and also in Hungary, I watched gypsies make this dish over the open fire in a longhandled frypan. Why? Very simple. Just because they are nomads, or even if they are settled, they live under not-too-luxurious circumstances. They are very good cooks, and they know that the pieces of the pork chop need a much longer time to cook than either the bacon or the mushrooms or the sausage that they use for this purpose.

If they fry it in a pan, why do they put it on a skewer? Very simple. Because this is an outdoor dish that is being eaten, even if it was cooked inside in a gypsy kitchen (which could happen in the winter, although not too often). When they sit down to eat, it is very handy to hold in one hand a big hunk of toasted or warmed bread and the skewer with the different ingredients on it, while with the other hand, they just hold the only eating utensil used, a pocket knife.

So, they cut off small bite-size pieces of whatever ingredient they want to, pierce it with the tip of the knife, dip it into the paprika sauce, then eat it with a hunk of bread.

Try it. I can assure you that it will be so different in flavor from anything else, that you will get really fond of it. Of course, if you have a modern outdoor grill, you can cook the ingredients on the grill, or on a charcoal broiler, and then assemble for serving.

In fact, I don't object even if, after being served, you take off all the pieces from the skewer, and eat them with a knife and fork from the plate. After all, this is a gypsy recipe, but that doesn't imply that the people who eat it are gypsies. Dipping the meat and mushrooms in the flour mixture will give them a beautiful surface and help them retain their juices.

## GYPSY GRILL

8 servings

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| <b>8 boneless, center cut pork chops,<br/>approximately 5 oz. each</b> | <b>3 tbsp. flour</b>                    |
| <b>8 slices ranch style bacon</b>                                      | <b>2 tbsp. cornstarch</b>               |
| <b>8 mushroom caps</b>   | <b>4 tbsp. Hungarian paprika</b>        |
| <b>8 thick slices ring bologna, knockwurst,<br/>or similar sausage</b> | <b>1 tbsp. granulated sugar</b>         |
|  | <b>1/2 tbsp. salt</b>                   |
|  | <b>1/4 tbsp. black pepper</b>           |
|  | <b>approximately 1/2 cup white wine</b> |

1. Cut each pork chop into 4 even pieces. Gently pound each piece until almost double in size.

2. Mix the flour with the cornstarch. Dip the flattened pieces of pork in the flour-cornstarch mixture.

3. Wash and dry each mushroom. Dip first in water, then in the flour mixture.

4. Cut each slice of bacon in half. Starting with a cold skillet, slowly fry the bacon until it is almost crisp. Remove.

5. In the bacon fat, quickly fry the pork chop pieces on one side until they turn a nice brownish color, then turn and fry on the other side. Remove and keep hot.

6. Now fry, together, the sausage and mushrooms. (If necessary, adjust the amount of shortening by adding more, preferably bacon fat or lard.) Place on absorbent paper to drain.

7. In a small bowl, combine the paprika, sugar, salt, and pepper. Drop by drop, stir in the wine until the mixture reaches a consistency similar to that of ketchup and mustard.

8. Put the pork chops, sausage, mushrooms, and bacon on skewers. Serve each person one skewer and offer the paprika-wine sauce instead of mustard.

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