



Baltic
Country
Holidays

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LATVIAN CUISINE

Traditional and modern
**LATVIAN FOODS
AND BEVERAGES**



LATVIAN CUISINE

Latvia has a wealth of culinary traditions, because the country is at the crossroads of Europe, and so influences from other nations have come from the East and the West over the course of centuries. Latvian cuisine is distinctly seasonal, because we have four seasons, and each of them offers specific products and tasty treats.

During the springtime, Latvians eagerly await the availability of birch juice. They grow green onions on windowsills. Onion skins are used to dye Easter eggs. Sorrel is sought out in gardens or meadows. Tarts with rhubarb are baked.

The summer begins with wild and garden strawberries. Summer Solstice would not be Summer Solstice without caraway seed cheese and beer. Summer also involves new potatoes, cherries, tomatoes from the garden, ice cream, fresh honey, herbal teas and aromatic apples. Cranberry fool is whipped. Mushrooms are roasted and marinated. Mushroom hunting and fishing are nearly cult rituals or examples of meditation for Latvians. Meat is grilled over hot coals, and fish soup is cooked. Soured cream and dill can be added to nearly every dish. Pretzel-shaped pastry is baked for birthdays, and tarts are baked for weddings. People can pickles and jams, and they dry and freeze various goodies from the garden and the forest, because a long, hard winter is coming.

During the autumn, Martin Day's rooster or goose is roasted in the oven, with apple cake or poppy seed pastry for desert. Work sessions are held during the autumn, and potato pancakes are served. Fish, pork, sausages and even cheese can be smoked. Fresh butter is smeared on a slice of rye bread. Cranberries are used to produce lemonade. People buy and sell summer produce at annual markets.

The Christmas table will groan under bacon pierogi, gingerbread, roast meats and sauerkraut. The Christmas table on New Year's Eve, people roast fish and put fish scales in their pocketbooks so as to ensure money in the new year. All of the peas on the table are eaten so as to ensure no tears in the coming year. People believe that at least nine dishes must be served on New Year's Eve to ensure that the next year will be a good one.

Latvians are hospitable, and they will bring gifts when they come visiting and always give you one for the road when you're leaving.

Welcome!



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MAIN SEASONAL HOLIDAY DISHES:

Easter: Coloured eggs

Summer Solstice: St John's cheese

St Martin's Day: Roast rooster

Christmas: Grey peas with bacon



Rye bread has a powerful taste, and it provides strength. Dough is made of a starter, caraway seeds are added, the dough is properly kneaded, and then the bread is baked in a very hot oven. Rye bread remains fresh for a long time, and people

often bring it along when they travel. Rye bread is tasty with hemp butter, honey and milk, ham, or a bit of smoked fish. An old belief is that if bread falls to the ground, one must blow upon it to clean it off and kiss it.



Hemp butter is made of hemp seeds. It is very nutritious and with a powerful nutty taste. The seeds are first toasted a bit until they are crispy. Then they are ground up until they turn into a dark mass to which

butter and salt can be added. Hemp butter is usually eaten with rye bread. Hemp is also used to produce candy or as an ingredient in salads. Hemp oil is also valuable.





Milk in Latvia comes from cows and goats. Various fresh and aged cheeses are made. Sweet, salty, spicy and aromatic ingredients can be added to cheese – seeds,

nuts, dried fruits, clover or mixtures of dried herbs. Cheese is often smoked, while fresh cheese is served with garlic and herbs or aged in oil.



POTATOES WITH HERRING AND COTTAGE CHEESE



LATVIAN CUISINE

Cottage cheese is a popular dairy product in Latvia. It is often eaten for breakfast with soured cream, added to salads, and used for cakes and desserts. Cottage cheese

with boiled potatoes, lightly salted herring, soured cream, onions and greens – that is a traditional luncheon dish in Latvia.





Every farmer in Latvia knows how to smoke meat with the smoke of alder wood so that it is juicy, aromatic, and neither too lean nor too fatty. These are talents that have been developed over the course of centuries and

are very much appreciated. Smoked meat is part of cold buffets, eaten in sandwiches, cooked with eggs, added to soups, or enjoyed with sauerkraut, root vegetables, peas or beans.



Smoked fish is characteristic of Latvia's seashore – the famous Baltic Sea sprat, lamprey, bream, flounder and salmon, often brought from more distant seas. Dried perch, mackerel and other fish are common, too. Smoked sprats are one of Latvia's main

exports, and fish are both cold-smoked and hot-smoked. The taste and aroma of such fish are so expressive and self-sufficient that they can be eaten without anything as a side dish.





Round-mouthed lampreys are caught in Latvia's rivers with special equipment and then grilled over hot coals. Pressed lampreys are marinated to create a delicious jellied dish.

Lampreys have a very mild and specific taste. They are served with fresh bread and butter, and sometimes lemon and herbs are added.



Baltic Sprat is mostly prepared at home. During the spring, when leaves are appearing on the trees, fishermen look for so-called leaf herrings. A bit of salt, a dip

in flour, and then onto the pan to produce a golden fish with a crispy tail. Baltic Sprat is eaten with boiled potatoes and green salad with kefir and soured cream.





Traditional Latvian Meat salad Rasols includes peas, carrots, eggs, pickles, roast meat or sausage, and a creamy mayonnaise dressing with mustard and horseradish. The potatoes and carrots are not peeled before

they are cooked for Meat salad Rasols, and that creates the special taste of the dish. No Latvian party could ever be imagined without it.



Cold soups are prepared as soon as the weather gets hot during the springtime. Traditional Latvian cold soup is light, refreshing and a bit spicy. Cold soup is made from kefir or curdled milk with boiled beets, chopped

radishes, fresh cucumbers, boiled eggs and various greens. The taste must be balanced in terms of sourness, saltiness and sweetness.





Latvia's pure lakes and rivers are just waiting for fishermen, because they are full of bream, pike, roach, catfish, eels and other fish. The catch is used to cook tasty soup on a campfire. First the smaller fish are used to

produce a stock. It is strained, and then the cook adds pieces of fish, potatoes, carrots, herbs and greens. Dill and soured cream can also be added.



SORREL SOUP



Sorrel is among the first plants to appear in gardens and meadows in the springtime. Sorrel soup involves pearl-barley, root vegetables, smoked ribs and boiled eggs. To

boost the vitamin content, the cook can replace the sorrel with spinach or young nettles. Sorrel can be gathered until mid-June.





Mushroom picking is a national hobby for Latvians. Mushroom soup is cooked with clear broth or as creamed soups. Boletus soup has a particularly elegant taste. The taste of the soup will depend on the types

of mushrooms that are used – many different kinds of wild mushrooms are found in Latvia. Mushrooms are also dried or frozen for use in the winter.



MUSHROOM SAUCE



Various types of boletus or chanterelles are the tastiest for mushroom sauce that also involves onions, garlic and sweet or soured cream. Mushroom sauce is eaten

with boiled new potatoes and lightly salted cucumbers as a basic dish. Smoked bacon is often added.





Grit sausage is a true dish for the autumn and winter. The filling is made of boiled grits or pearl barley and bits of bacon that are mixed with pig's blood. Before serving, the

sausages are baked in a pan until they are crispy. Sweet-and-sour lingonberry jam is great with grit sausage.



Broad beans are a true delicacy during the summer. They are boiled, peel shelled and eaten with salt. Soured milk or buttermilk can be used to wash them down. The beans

can also be baked, sautéed and boiled. During the winter, Latvians prepare hearty dishes with dried, frozen or conserved legumes. Bean or pea soup is common.





So-called “bukstiņputra” is a classical luncheon dish in Latvia, made of barley grits, milk and potatoes. Some cooks whip the porridge to add air to it. The porridge is

served with roasted streaky bacon, onions, and sometimes also lingonberry sauce. Oatmeal is a favourite for breakfast.



Chicken is sautéed in a cream sauce and with spices and herbs. It is eaten with potatoes or rice. Other fowl, as well as rabbit, is

prepared in the same way. Rabbits in Latvia are raised in organic farms, and the meat is very nutritious and healthy.





Pork chops are salted and peppered, dipped in egg, floured, and then baked in a pan until they are golden brown. This is a very popular dish in Latvia, and you will find

it in nearly every taverna, as well as on party tables in the countryside. Pork chops are served with vegetables, root vegetables or salads.



LOIN OF PORK WITH SAUERKRAUT



Slow-roasted loin of pork with sauerkraut are enjoyed in the autumn and the winter. Each lady of the house has her own perfect

recipe for sauerkraut, with the possible addition of sugar, salt, caraway seeds, cranberries or carrots.





Latvia's forests provide ecologically clean and tasty game – bucks, European elk, deer and wild boar. Juniper berries, rosemary, thyme, bird cherry, laurel leaves, on-

ions and garlic are added to game so as to ensure that it is juicy and savoury. Ground game can be used to make meatballs that are slowly sautéed in a sauce.



Particularly vivid culinary traditions are found in the eastern Latvian region of Latgale, where among other things you will find sweet cottage cheese pierogi that are made of yeast dough, baked, and then warmed up in melted butter or cream. Known as “guļbešņiki,” “buļ-

bu bļīni” or “kļockas,” these dumplings are eaten by hand, and tradition has it that you must wipe your hands on the apparel of your dearest neighbour. Anyone who is still perfectly clean after this kind of meal is probably not a good person, traditional lore tells us.





Savoury pancakes are eaten as an entrée, while sweet pancakes are enjoyed for breakfast or dinner or as a dessert. Savoury pancakes are eaten with salmon, cottage

cheese, caviar or ground meat. Sweet pancakes are served with forest berries, fruit or berry jam, or honey. Soured cream is delicious with all kinds of pancakes.



Berry fool is made of manna and sour berries or fruits. Cranberries are particularly often used for this purpose. After boiling, the dessert has to be whipped for a long time

to create a mass that is so airy that it easily floats in milk. Other popular desserts from fruit, berries, milk, cream and flour include stewed fruits, creams and jellies.





Ice cream in Latvia is made of milk, cream, and all kinds of ingredients. Typical flavours in Latvia include black currant, rhubarb, wild strawberry, cranberry and even toasted rye

breadcrumbs. Some cafés produce “salty” ice cream with horseradish, for instance. It is served with salads.



Layered rye bread is a traditional Latvian dessert, made of rye breadcrumbs, black currant or lingonberry jam, and whipped cream. Grated dark chocolate and/or cin-

namon is put on top of the dish, and it is often served with fresh berries and cottage cheese ice cream.





The aroma of bacon pierogi pervades every Latvian home before the Winter Solstice and the Summer Solstice, but they are also popular everyday snacks. Pierogi are made

of wheat or rye flour and yeast and stuffed with finely chopped streaky bacon and onions. Caraway seeds are sometimes added.



People bake tarts from sweet yeast dough on holidays or weekends, and atop the tarts there can be anything that is available during the relevant season – rhubarb, gar-

den and forest berries, sour apples, cottage cheese or jam. Whipped cream and egg and a crunchy topping are added, with cinnamon sprinkled on top for aromatic purposes.





Known as “sklandu rauši” in Latvia, this is a speciality of the region of Kurzeme. The bun is made of strong rye dough without yeast. It is rolled out into circles, and then the edges of each circle are crimped. The

filling is made of carrots, potatoes, cream and sugar. The buns are baked until the dough is crispy, the sugar has melted, and the tastes have melded.



Honey in Latvia has medicinal and healthy properties, because during the country's short summers, the nectar becomes very concentrated. Honey cake is very popular

and is offered at many bakeries. Aromatic layers of honey biscuit are filled with creamed soured cream and then decorated with crunchy toppings or nuts.





Various herbal teas that are made of plants that are wild or grown in gardens are popular in Latvia. People drink them as everyday beverages, as well as for reasons of health. Peppermint, linden blossom and chamomile teas are particularly popular.

Birch juice is gathered during the spring, and it is drunk fresh to detoxify the body. The juice can also be fermented with various spices, making it sparkling and bubbly. Soured milk beverages such as kefir and soured milk are drunk with hot dishes.



Beer brewing has an ancient history in Latvia, with light and dark beer usually brewed with barley, yeast and hops. Live and unfiltered beer is particularly popular. The non-alcoholic drink known as kvass is somewhat similar to beer, and it is particularly popular when it is hot outside.

Winemaking is becoming more and more common in Latvia, with types of grapes

that are hearty enough to survive northern climes being developed. Wines are also made of raspberries, black currants, and other fruits and berries. Grape-based wine is produced in very small quantities, but Latvians also produce light and sparkling ciders. Farms often steep berries in vodka and produce vodka of their own.





LATVIAN CUISINE

MODERN FLAVOURS IN LATVIAN CUISINE



"3 Pavāru restorāns" restaurant

Understandings about tasty and nutritious food have changed over the course of time. Traditional recipes are adapted to reduce the amount of fat and to make the structure of dishes lighter. Restaurants in Latvia present dishes that offer the most surprising combinations of foods from Latvia's countryside, meadows, forests and bodies of water, thus preserving distinct seasonality in the ingredients that are used.

Latvia's best chefs and pastry chefs prepare dishes that resemble thoughtful artworks, playing around with elegant nuances of tastes and aromas, as well as with colours and textures. Each dish will take the diner on an adventurous trip through the Latvian world of taste.



The restaurant of Dikļi Manor

"3 Pavāru restorāns" restaurant



"3 Pavāru restorāns" restaurant



LATVIAN CUISINE

POPULAR EVERYDAY DISHES

STARTERS

- Garlic toasts
- Cheese plates
- Smoked meat
- Marinated mushrooms
- Smoked fish
- Dried fruits and berries

SOUPS

 - Latvians eat many seasonal soups

Spring, summer:

- Fresh vegetable milk-based soup
- Fish soup
- Cold soup
- Sorrel, nettle soup

Autumn, winter:

- Sauerkraut soup
- Bean soup
- Mutton soup
- Solyanka

ENTRÉES

- Pork chops
- Steak haché
- Kabobs
- Roast fish
- Potted dishes
- Roast pork
- Roast chicken fillet
- Hunter's sausage
- Stroganoff

SIDE DISHES

 - Potatoes, grits, rice, seasonal vegetables

Spring, summer:

- Green salad, dills, parsley, green onions
- cucumbers, tomatoes, carrots

Autumn, winter:

- Sauerkraut
- Marinated pickles
- Marinated beets
- Marinated pumpkin

BAKED GOODS

- Cottage cheese tart
- Honey cake
- Apple/rhubarb tarts
- Carrot buns
- Pierogi
- Biscuits
- Oatmeal cookies
- Caraway or poppy seed buns
- Pretzel-shaped birthday pastry
- Gingerbread

DESSERTS

Spring, summer:

- Berry or rhubarb fool
- Strawberry soup
- Blackberry dumplings
- Ice cream with berries

Autumn, winter:

- Layered rye bread
- Manna-based desserts
- Cottage cheese and chocolate creams

BEVERAGES

- Coffee
- Herb teas
- Fruit juices
- Birch juice
- Kefir
- Kvass
- Spring water

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

- Beer
- Home-brewed sweetened beer ("miestiņš")
- Vodkas
- Berry-flavoured vodkas
- Cider
- Homemade wine

This culinary map will be of practical assistance when you travel around Latvia, because it marks out dining facilities that prepare Latvian dishes in all of the country's regions.



Baltic
Sea

Latvia
Riga



We are all different but are bound together by the Baltic Sea. With this in mind we have joined forces to preserve and promote the local culinary traditions found all around the Baltic coastline, creating unforgettable food and drink experiences.

Baltic Sea Culinary Routes
Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Germany,
Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway



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