Volume 21 Issue 42
Originally issued as C5



Global Journal of human-social science: C
Sociology & Culture
Volume 21 Issue 5 Version 1.0 Year 2021
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

Traditional Preparation of Baba Neagra, a Moldovan Culinary Treasure

By Eugenia Covaliov, Olga Gutium, Viorica Cazac & Coralia Babcenco

Technical University of Moldova

Abstract- It is known that food itself reflects the identity and culture of a region; becoming an important component of local heritage. Baba Neagra is an iconic dessert for Republic of Moldova, which has been passed down from generation to generation to Moldovan housewives, but forgotten by many, especially restaurants. In this sense, the aim of the current study is to emphasize some technological and cultural aspects attached to Baba Neagra in Republic of Moldova. The paper presents the full preparation of the Baba Neagra as it is traditionally carried out in north of Moldova and lists the main ingredients.

Keywords: *baba neagra, culture, republic of moldova.*

GJHSS-C Classification: *FOR Code: 200299*



Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:



© 2021. Eugenia Covaliov, Olga Gutium, Viorica Cazac & Coralia Babcenco. This research/review article is distributed under the terms of the Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). You must give appropriate credit to authors and reference this article if parts of the article are reproduced in any manner. Applicable licensing terms are at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/.

Traditional Preparation of Baba Neagra, a Moldovan Culinary Treasure

Eugenia Covaliov [α], Olga Gutium [σ], Viorica Cazac [ρ] & Coralia Babcenco [ω]

Abstract- **It is known that food itself reflects the identity and culture of a region; becoming an important component of local heritage. Baba Neagra is an iconic dessert for Republic of Moldova, which has been passed down from generation to generation to Moldovan housewives, but forgotten by many, especially restaurants. In this sense, the aim of the current study is to emphasize some technological and cultural aspects attached to Baba Neagra in Republic of Moldova. The paper presents the full preparation of the Baba Neagra as it is traditionally carried out in north of Moldova and lists the main ingredients.**

Keywords: baba neagra, culture, republic of moldova.

I. Introduction

Food usually reflects the traditional tastes formed by many generations, although it is no less important that, that in this field there is an intensive process of mutual enrichment of cultures, to which restaurants largely contribute today (Kim and Eves, 2012). Eating pattern is known as a kind of connection between the experiences of people from different eras, making it possible to explain the past through the present. At the same time, we must mention that each era brings both new foods and experience, inherited elements, which intertwine with the innovative ones. Unlike other elements of material culture, food loans do not constrain the national cuisine, on the contrary, they enrich it or their assimilation takes place (Tregear, 2003). On the other hand, gastronomy has become an increasingly important motivation for choosing a destination, offering a growing potential to stimulate local economies (De Jong et al., 2018). Although currently, culinary tourism is practiced only by a niche of tourists, it manages to attract more and more tourists passionate about gastronomy and more, because through local cuisine you can discover some of the culture and history of a particular area, food being a basic service in any tourist package (Razpotnik Visković and Komac, 2021).

Moldovan cuisine is the result of synthesizing, over time, the tastes, ideas and gastronomic habits specific to the Moldovan population (Gutium, Olga et al., 2020). It has greatly influenced the traditional cuisines of other peoples on its territory and at the same time has been complemented by elements of Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Gagauz, Russian, and in past centuries Greek and Turkish cuisines (Baltsiotis, 2014; Jianu and Barbu, 2018). Moldovan cuisine is diverse: it includes countless culinary customs and traditions, specific dishes, along with customs from the intersection of gastronomic culture with the traditions of other peoples, with whom Moldovans have come into contact throughout history (Sturza and Ghendov-Moşanu, 2021). Although throughout history, Moldova has been under the leadership of many peoples (Turkey, member of the Soviet Union, etc.); *pure* Moldovan dishes can be still found in the Moldovan gastronomic arsenal.

Baba neagra (Black baba) (Figure 1) is a traditional Moldovan food, which housewives in northern Moldova have been preparing for years and which is considered the "queen" of the 5 traditional Moldovan dishes (along with *sarmale*, *placinte*, *mamaliga* and chicken *zama*) without which a holyday meal is not considered complete and guests are looking forward to enjoying it at the end of the meal (Alozie, 2016). The name *Baba neagra* is used in Moldova and Romania. Regarding the word *baba* (grandmother, old women) there are some opinions, the most common of these is that grandmothers cooked this sweet dish for their grandchildren, hence the allegory. In some regions of Ukraine the desert is known as *kapronka*, due to its elasticity and porous structure. Nowadays, the *baba neagra* is less and less common on Moldovan tables, even if it is distinguished by the simplicity of the ingredients and a special taste and appearance. In this sense, the purpose of the current study is to revive the importance of this dessert, emphasizing some technological and cultural aspects attached to Baba Neagra in Republic of Moldova.

II. Technological Aspects

It is very difficult to say what this dessert looks like: not a cake, and not a toffee, and not a gingerbread, and not a biscuit, but just something really magical and bewitching. Moderately sweet, moist, very porous and firm dessert. It contains simple ingredients, even trivial at first glance, but the preparation technique is important and needs to be strictly followed. The taste of the dessert is balanced - moderately sweet, moderately moist, interesting and unusual, although it is made from the most common products. It is baked at low temperature for a full 6 hours, during which the sugar

Author α: Department of Food and Nutrition, Technical University of Moldova, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova.
e-mail: eugenia.boaghi@toap.utm.md
Author σ ρ ω: Technical University of Moldova, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova. e-mails: olga.gutium@toap.utm.md, coralia.babcenco@mail.ru, viorica.cazac@dtp.utm.md

© 2021 Global Journals

turns into caramel and gives the cake a rich brown color and delicious taste.

Unlike other desserts, the black baba goes through strange metamorphoses. It is about the fact that there are no dark products between its ingredients. On the contrary – all the ingredients- are all white as snow. And in order to obtain the necessary consistency and, even more importantly, the coveted small bubbles in the dough, the sequence of operations with the ingredients must be strictly observed.

a) Ingredients

As mentioned, the black grandmother is an old dessert, and the housewives of that time did not have to go to the store or the market for products to prepare it. Everything they needed for *black baba* could be found in the household: milk (500 ml), sour milk (300 ml), eggs (10 pcs), oil (200 ml), wheat flour (300 g), sugar (300 g), brandy (50 ml), and baking soda (8 g).

b) Preparation

First, the dried products are mixed - sifted flour and a similar amount of sugar or powdered sugar, to which baking soda is added. To this mixture, vegetable oil is added and mixed until a homogeneous mass is formed. Then the warm sour milk is gradually added - it serves as a catalyst for baking soda and easily starts the quenching reaction, which during baking will materialize in small bubbles frozen on cooling (Fordtran et al., 1984; Lansky, 2004). After sour milk, it's milk's turn, up to half a liter can be added. The last liquid ingredient is brandy or vodka, which is considered to compensate for the specific pronounced taste of baking soda in the final product. In the last stage, ten eggs must be beaten until a fluffy and frothy mixture is obtained. Then the beaten eggs are carefully placed in the dough.

Baba is baked in a bowl with a thick bottom, covered with a lid, for example a cast iron cauldron, which is richly greased with butter over which breadcrumbs are sprinkled, after which the mixture is poured into the bowl and covered with a lid or staniol foil (Figure 2). The bubbles that form during baking (Figure 3) are the result of adding the right amount of baking soda and vodka, or any other tasteless and odorless alcohol. During baking, carbon dioxide gas made from baking soda (or if you use vodka - alcohol vapor), helps to grow/lift the dessert up (Sumnu, 2008). For this reason the lid is not removed during baking, it helps to block the gases inside and to form bubbles, or craters specific to this dessert. Once upon a time, in the Moldovan villages, the black baba was baked in the brick oven - the cauldron was put in the oven in the evening on hot coals and was taken out only in the morning. In the contemporary oven in the first hour and a half the baba bakes at a temperature of 200 ^{0}C, and in the next 90 minutes at 100 ^{0}C.

The caramelized brown color is not from cocoa, but is due to the interaction between baking soda, sour milk and oil during the long cooking time. Also on one hand, due to the high baking temperature from the first baking stage, the caramelization of carbohydrates present in milk and sugar takes place. On the other hand, presence of baking soda speeds up the Maillard reaction that takes place due to egg proteins and sugars (Lersch, 2012).

The prepared dessert is as fine and soft as a classic soufflé. At the same time it is elastic and restores its shape when it is finger pressed.

III. Cultural Aspects

Several large portions of baba neagra are baked at once, because Moldovan feasts are a general gathering of numerous relatives, godfathers, friends. Baba neagra is served both at weddings, christenings and funerals. In this sense it can be called ritual food. It is served on the table with baba alba (white grandma) from homemade noodles on a wide platter, cut into cubes. White and black grandmothers complement each other, symbolizing the unity of opposites, the beginning of the feminine and masculine.

Specifically, it was served because it is currently being prepared less and less. And the food outlets that have it on the menu can be counted on fingers. It is difficult to find a justification and an explanation for this trend, because for many of the inhabitants of the country, the black grandmother is associated with the nostalgic taste of childhood.

Acknowledgment

The study was done within the State Project 20.80009.0807.17. “Education for the revitalization of the national cultural heritage through traditional processing technologies used in the Republic of Moldova in the context of multiculturalism, diversity and European integration”, running at Technical University of Moldova.

References Références Referencias

1. Alozie, E. C., 2016, Advertising in developing and emerging countries: the economic, political and social context.
2. Baltsiotis, L., 2014, The discovery of new Greeks. The cases of Gagauz in Moldova and Pontians in Turkey: International journal of Science Culture and Sport, v. 2, no. 8, p. 6–6, doi: 10.14486/IJSCS211.
3. De Jong, A. et al., 2018, Gastronomy Tourism: An Interdisciplinary Literature Review of Research Areas, Disciplines, and Dynamics: Journal of Gastronomy and Tourism, v. 3, no. 2, p. 131–146, doi: 10.3727/216929718X15281329212243.
4. Fordtran, J. S., S. G. Morawski, C. A. Santa Ana, and F. C. Rector, 1984, Gas Production After Reaction of Sodium Bicarbonate and Hydrochloric

© 2021 Global Journals

Acid: Gastroenterology, v. 87, no. 5, p. 1014–1021, doi:10.1016/S0016-5085(84)80059-1.
5. Gutium, Olga, Siminiuc, Rodica, Grosu, Carolina, and Cazac, Viorica, 2020, SARMALE - SYMBOL OF MOLDOVAN GASTRONOMY: doi:10.5281/ZENODO.4296393.
6. Jianu, A., and V. Barbu, 2018, Earthly Delights: Economies and Cultures of Food in Ottoman and Danubian Europe, c. 1500-1900: BRILL, doi: 10.1163/9789004367548.
7. Kim, Y. G., and A. Eves, 2012, Construction and validation of a scale to measure tourist motivation to consume local food: Tourism Management, v. 33, no. 6, p. 1458–1467, doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2012.01.015.
8. Lansky, V., 2004, Baking soda: over 500 fabulous, fun, and frugal uses you've probably never thought of: Minnetonka, MN, Book Peddlers, 108 p.
9. Lersch, M., 2012, Thirteen. Maximizing Food Flavor by Speeding Up the Maillard Reaction, *in* C. Vega, J. Ubbink, and E. van der Linden, eds., The Kitchen as Laboratory: New York Chichester, West Sussex, Columbia University Press, doi: 10.7312/vega15344-014.
10. Razpotnik Visković, N., and B. Komac, 2021, Gastronomy tourism: A brief introduction: Acta geographica Slovenica, v. 61, no. 1, doi: 10.3986/AGS.10258.
11. Sturza, R., and A. Ghendov-Moşanu, 2021, Food, nutrition, and health in Moldova, *in* Nutritional and Health Aspects of Food in the Balkans: Elsevier, p.249–262, doi: 10.1016/B978-0-12-820782-6.00021-9.
12. Sumnu, S. G., 2008, Food Engineering Aspects of Baking Sweet Goods.: Hoboken, Taylor & Francis Ltd.
13. Tregear, A., 2003, From Stilton to Vimto: Using Food History to Re-think Typical Products in Rural Development: Sociologia Ruralis, v. 43, no. 2, p. 91–107, doi: 10.1111/1467-9523.00233.



Figure 1: Baba neagra just baked

© 2021 Global Journals



Figure 2: Prepared cauldron with white dough for baba neagra



Figure 3: The section appearance of the black baba

© 2021 Global Journals