

Tasty Way to Health

Consumption of Polish fruit and vegetable juices is expected to grow in this country, while exports are forecast to increase as well.

Juices provide the same health benefits as the fruit and vegetables they are made from. They are a source of antioxidants and provide vitamins and minerals. Juices and other fruit drinks known as nectars contain provitamin A, which ensures healthy skin, eyes and mucous membranes, and vitamin PP (niacin), which helps regulate the metabolism, strengthens the nervous system, and has a beneficial effect on the skin. Fruit juices are rich in vitamin C, which helps the immune system function properly, especially during strenuous physical effort, and plays a part in the production of collagen. Vitamin C is needed for the proper functioning of blood vessels. Juices also contain vitamin E, which protects cells from damage caused by oxidation, helping to slow down the aging process and to prevent atherosclerosis.

Juices and nectars are a rich source of potassium, which helps regulate blood pressure, muscle tone and the nervous system. They also contain fiber, whose beneficial effect on the digestive system is well known. Many juice varieties

contain pectin, which regulates glucose levels in the bloodstream and helps maintain a healthy level of cholesterol. Juices also contain folic acid, which is needed to produce blood cells and maintain an efficient immune system. Cells need folic acid to grow, which is what makes it particularly important during pregnancy. Since the human body is incapable of producing folic acid on its own, the substance needs to be supplied in food.

Physicians and dietitians recommend a glass of juice with a 100-percent fruit or vegetable content as a healthy start to the day. Free from any artificial colorings, flavor enhancers and preservatives, such juices owe their color and taste solely to the fruits and vegetables they contain.

On average, people in Poland drink around 20 liters of juices, nectars and non-alcoholic beverages a year. In comparison, the average German drinks 40 liters, but Poland still tops the Eastern European statistics in terms of juice consumption. A survey by the AC Nielsen company shows that Poles spend around 21.3 billion a year on soft drinks, juices, nectars and fruit-flavored drinks. The size of the Polish market for these products is estimated at 723 million liters a year and experts believe that the consumption of juices and other fruit and vegetable-based drinks will increase in both Poland and Europe.



The most popular juice and nectar flavors in the EU are orange at 38.5 percent, followed by multi-fruit drinks at 19.9 percent, apple at 13.3 percent, peach at 3.7 percent and pineapple at 3.6 percent. Consumer choices are a little different in Poland and while orange juice takes the lead at 24.6 percent, carrot-based juices come in second in Poland at 21 percent, followed by apple juice (14.5 percent), multi-fruit drinks (12.3 percent) and grapefruit (10.3 percent). Poland is the largest producer of concentrated apple juice in Europe.

Polish juices have made a name for themselves on many markets abroad. For example, Polish carrot-based juices have become popular in Britain, where they were virtually unknown until recently. Polish fruit juices are also popular in Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Russia.

Market experts believe exports of Polish juices will increase and domestic sales are expected to go up as well. In a bid to stimulate juice consumption, Poland has launched an EU project called "5 Portions of Vegetables, Fruit and Juice" funded by the Fund for the Promotion of Fruit and Vegetables and the Polish Association of Juice Producers. Aimed at children in grades one to three in elementary schools, this nationwide campaign was first conducted in the 2010/2011 school year and became a major success, backed by both educational and healthcare institutions. It covered around 300,000 children in more than 4,100 schools across Poland.

The primary objective of the campaign is to promote a healthy and balanced diet among schoolchildren. The limited awareness among the public of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle particularly affects children. The sooner kids learn about maintaining a healthy diet that abounds in fruit, vegetables and juices, the more likely they are to develop healthy eating habits.

According to the Polish Association of Juice Producers, the 2010/2011 campaign did not promote any specific brands and producers, as the objective was to foster healthy eating habits among children. To this end, teachers and students at participating schools received educational materials for use during special classes on healthy lifestyles. Teaching aids were also handed out to parents. At the end of the project, students were able to take part in an art competition with healthy lifestyles and eating habits as the leading theme. In order to evaluate the campaign's effect on children, teachers were required to conduct polls before and after the special classes. Almost 90 percent of children were aware that they needed fruit, vegetables and juices to be healthy, strong and full of energy. At the same time, they started to eat and drink more fruit, vegetables and juices, which showed that their parents had become more aware of the importance of a healthy diet.

The "5 Portions of Vegetables, Fruit and Juices" initiative was one of the largest and most effective campaigns to promote healthy living in Poland. It has recently been relaunched. AR



Regional and Traditional Products

Żur Kujawski: Sour Soup from Kujawy

Żur kujawski is one of the most popular Polish soups. It is a dish that has been known and eaten in the Kujawy region, north-central Poland, for centuries, especially in rural areas. It has been said of *żur* that it is a meal for poor and rich alike—depending on how much cream and fried pork rind or sausage is added.



The name *żur* comes from the German adjective *sauer*, which means sour or pickled. As late as the 19th century the soup was a staple breakfast dish in Kujawy. Many households had a special clay pot called a *żurownik* in which soured rye flour (similar to sourdough) was kept all the time. The sourdough is made from whole rye flour; sometimes a little old sourdough or rye bread crust is added to speed up fermentation. In some locations around the region the sourdough is also made from rye bran.

The soup's history is described in a legend about a woman who wanted to make dinner but had no ingredients. She poured water over some leftover rye flour and left it on the stove. A while later she decided to cook some potatoes she found in the field. When she bent over the stove she smelled a sweet-sour smell. She remembered about the flour and water left in the pot and decided to add the liquid to the boiled potatoes. When a tempting aroma spread around the kitchen, she came up with the idea of adding some of the pork rind she had hanging over her stove. The final dish was extraordinarily tasty and filling. The woman's husband came in from the field counting on nothing more than a few potatoes in their skins but was unexpectedly served a delicious soup instead.

Żur used to be cooked daily for breakfast because it was tasty, filling and, above all, affordable for every housewife. More affluent cooks started adding fried bacon and onions and whitening the soup with milk or cream.

Żur is made in many different ways. It was a daily dish, but on festive occasions it tasted completely different because it was made from the stock left over after boiling smoked ham. Slight differences appear in different areas of Kujawy. What is common to all is that the sourdough is made in a clay pot called a *siwak*. The sour liquid is poured into boiling water and cooked with white sausage, then enriched with cream and smoked pork. The soup is also flavored with pepper, onions and marjoram. It is eaten with potatoes cooked separately or boiled in the *żur*. The soup is eaten for breakfast or supper, more often in winter than summer because it gets the body warm and is very filling.

Today *żur* is usually no longer made daily, but is popular at Easter or other festive occasions. Products that are added include white sausage, smoked pork bits, hard-boiled eggs and mushrooms, and often there are no potatoes. This has turned the historical *żur* into today's popular *żurek*, served inside a loaf of bread (see photo), a favorite dish with many Poles. A.R.



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EU Entry Boosts Polish Food Industry

Polish agriculture and the food industry have benefited hugely from the country joining the European Union 10 years ago.

Poland's food industry, which has been almost fully privatized, has changed completely over the last 25 years, a period that saw the emergence of a free market economy in the country, followed by adjustment to EU standards. There has also been a radical change in terms of the products offered: the range is now very wide and the quality is attractive to consumers. However, a key characteristic in the development of the sector is not a rise in the volume of processed agricultural products, but a higher degree of processing and more value added. So-called secondary food processing has developed at the expense of traditional sectors.

Structural changes accelerated the modernization of the Polish food industry. Investment projects worth billions of euros, in which foreign capital played a big part, brought about a thorough modernization of food processing and packing methods.

The most progress in the Polish food industry was seen in the run-up to Poland joining the European Union in 2004. The adjustment process, in terms of technology and organization, took several years, cost a lot of money and effort, but ended in success. Financial support from the EU helped Polish businesses in their efforts to modernize and to be able to compete on the international market.

The modernization of food processing was previously financed under the Rural Development Plan for 2004-2006 and the Sectoral Operational Program entitled "Restructuring and Modernization of the Food Sector and Rural Development for 2004-2006." At present, the funding mechanism is the Rural Development Program for 2007-2013, the biggest ever such program, with a budget of around zł.70 billion. It is the most important source of funding for projects

designed to improve the competitiveness of farms and processing plants, and support job creation in rural areas. The money available under this program has made it possible for hundreds of food processing companies to modernize.

Without support from this program, it would have been hard for Polish farmers to produce food of very high quality. They have been helped by an initiative called "Farmers' Participation in Food Quality Systems." Food processing businesses have received more than zł.1.9 billion, which has enabled them to invest in the modernization and expansion of their plants.

Investment in the expansion and modernization of food processing businesses is still significant. In 2011, investment by the sector came to zł.7.6 billion, zł.500 million shy of the record set in 2008. Investment in fixed assets exceeded zł.6.7 billion in 2012 and totaled around zł.6 billion in 2013. Companies processing animal products have invested the most in recent years. In the dairy, meat, fruit and vegetable processing sectors, Poland is a global leader in terms of technology.

Thanks to EU money, a significant part of the Polish food industry is among the most modern in Europe. The food industry is one of the most important sectors of the Polish economy. There are few other Polish industries which have managed to raise production levels and improve financial results to the same extent.

Poland is the sixth biggest food producer in the European Union, accounting for around 7.4 percent of its overall production volume. Exports are key, with around 30 percent of all food produced in Poland sold abroad. A majority of Polish producers have quality certificates, thanks to which Polish food products have gained recognition across the world.

In 2013, Poland exported food worth 19.9 billion euros, the highest figure ever. The food trade balance was positive at 5.4 billion euros. Food exports grew 11.5 percent compared with the previous year, outpacing the 6.5-percent growth in overall Polish exports.

Agri-food exports also played a bigger role in overall exports, rising from 12.5 percent in 2010 to 13.1 percent in 2013 in terms of value. The role of agricultural raw materials in exports is on the decrease, while the role of highly processed products is growing. Polish food products are of a comparable quality to those produced in Western countries and are also tasty, healthy and often produced from more natural raw materials.



Rural Tourism

Kujawsko-Pomorskie Province

Drwęca River, Brodnica Lake District

Kujawy-Pomerania province in central-north Poland has huge potential to develop a strong rural tourism sector, taking advantage of the region's natural beauty and colorful traditions.

The province offers a host of tourist attractions ranging from vast woodlands, picturesque lakes and clean rivers to traditional countryside, historic towns and health resorts. Kujawy-Pomerania is a perfect destination for people seeking to improve their health and fans of aquatic sports and horse riding, and it also has a variety of historic buildings and sites, many of which date back to the Gothic period.

One of the province's most remarkable tourist sights is the Bydgoszcz Canal, which connects the inland navigation systems of Western and Eastern Europe. Built at the end of the 18th century, this 27-kilometer-long canal stands out with a unique set of hydraulic structures.

One of the province's two principal cities, Toruń, is home to the most valuable places of historical interest in Kujawy-Pomerania. Regarded as a gem of Gothic architecture, Toruń received its city charter almost 800 years ago and its Old Town is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Old Town is one of the most beautiful surviving examples of urban medieval architecture and includes around 200 Gothic and Gothic-influenced townhouses. One of them is the famous Copernicus House that in 1473 was the birthplace of Nicolaus Copernicus, the great astronomer who revolutionized our understanding of the solar system.

Many visitors to Kujawy-Pomerania province are impressed by the medieval castle in Golub-Dobrzyń, west of Toruń, whose foundations and lower levels are made of Gothic bricks laid by the Teutonic Order of knights in the 14th century. In those days, the castle served as a fortress and a monastery.

Some 30 kilometers southeast of Toruń lies the town of Ciechocinek, which is one of Poland's best known and most beautiful health resorts. This is the place for those who want

to relax and for those seeking health and beauty treatments. Ciechocinek has a wide variety of hotels, sanatoriums, physiotherapy centers and treatment facilities. The town sits on brine deposits that gave rise to three mighty graduation towers that are the landmark of Ciechocinek. Built of wood and blackthorn, the almost 16-meter-tall towers are used to evaporate water from brine, producing a cloud of vapor that is reputed to have a host of health benefits. The air around the towers has a delicious smell and is rich in iodine.

One of Kujawy-Pomerania's biggest attractions is the village of Biskupin, or more precisely, the local archeological open-air museum with structures and artifacts of the Lusitanian culture (around 1400-500 BC). Tourists and archeologists alike are interested in the well-preserved remains of technologically advanced structures from 2,700 years ago. What today is a peninsula on Lake Biskupińskie used to be an island with a fortified town on it, inhabited by 700-1,000 people. The town has been painstakingly reconstructed and is the most impressive part of the local museum, complete with houses, streets, embankments and gates. Every year in the third week in September, the Biskupin museum hosts an archeology festival (*pictured below*) attended by visitors from different corners of the world.



Natural delights

Kujawy-Pomerania province is famous for its natural beauty. The Tuchola Forest is the second largest woodland area in Poland. The forest comprises 320,000 hectares of woods, meadows and clean waters. Its most valuable wilderness areas have been designated as nature reserves and scenic parks, including the Tuchola Forest National Park, spanning 4,800 hectares of protected woods and lakes. The Tuchola Forest is dotted with 900 lakes and ponds, of which 40 are more than 1 square kilometer in size, the biggest ones being Lake Wdzydze (1,500 hectares) and Lake Charzykowskie (1,400 hectares). The region's main rivers, the Wda and Brda, flow through many of the lakes, offering picturesque canoeing routes.

The Brodnica Lake District in the northeastern part of the province has over 100 lakes that abound in fish. Cutting across the lake district, the Drwęca River is a fish reserve along its entire length, providing shelter for trout and sea trout, salmon, the vimba bream and the European river lamprey. The Drwęca River Gap between the town of Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and the mouth of the Brynica River is a particularly attractive tourist region with a deep valley whose upper section, the Drwęca Marsh Valley, is a bird sanctuary.

Rural attractions

Kujawy-Pomerania province has seen rural tourism growing in popularity. Local rural tourism farms draw people keen to get away from the city hustle and bustle and savor the region's bucolic scenery and traditional cuisine. Located amid lakes, forests, rivers and vast farmlands, such farms offer plenty of recreational opportunities.

The province has the potential to support many different forms of tourism, including rural tourism, according to a report by the Polish Tourism Development Agency entitled *A Study of the Potential of Rural Tourism Products in Poland and their Competitiveness on the Regional, National and International Markets for Tourist Services*. The local attractions include the traditions that live on among the different ethnic groups in the region. Many of these cultivate traditional cuisine, arts, crafts and dying professions such as blacksmithing and pottery.

Experts from the Polish Tourism Development Agency believe that in the future the province should mainly focus on existing attractions and combine them into rural tourism products.

Kujawy-Pomerania province has many good rural tourism farms with original products and activities for guests. Two of these have been put on the "Greatest Hits of Rural Tourism" list compiled by the Polish Tourism Development Agency.

One is Agroturystyka nad Jeziorem Sopiń (Rural Tourism Farm by Lake Sopiń) in the village of Mały Głębczek, Brodnica county. A member of the Polish Educational Homesteads Network, the farm offers simple, country-style food made from produce grown locally and at nearby farms.

The other "greatest hit" of Kujawy-Pomerania province is Osada Karbówko (Karbówko Village), perched in the picturesque valley of the Drwęca River, one of Poland's most beautiful rivers. The village offers cozy rooms and suites in thatched-roof cottages, a wellness and spa center, conference rooms and ballrooms, a Mysliwska (Hunter's) Inn and a bowling alley. Those who like active forms of recreation can go horse riding, take a ride in a quad or an all-terrain vehicle and embark on a canoeing or biking expedition.

One other notable rural tourism farm is called Stelchno, located on a lake of the same name in the village of Jezewo in Tuchola Forest. This small, family-run farm is ideal for families with young children. Accommodation is provided in a lavishly furnished Dutch cottage on an enclosed plot of land adjacent to the lake. There is an outdoor barbecue and a playground and guests are free to use boats and similar equipment at no extra charge.



Rural tourism in Kujawy-Pomerania province also includes a number of so-called theme villages. One of them, located in Krzywogoniec near the town of Tuchola, has forest mushrooms as the leading theme. It was established in 2005 and is the oldest theme village in the Tuchola Forest. Pictures of different mushrooms hang on every building and every year there is a Mushroom Festival that draws crowds of visitors. Tourists who want to taste local traditions and dishes should pay a visit to the U Heleny restaurant, which serves delicious potato pie with a mushroom relish, here known as *szandar*, and a local specialty, *borowiacki* bread, which is baked on site.

In Wielki Mędromierz near Tuchola is a "Honey Village," a project undertaken jointly by 10 apary owners in a bid to encourage young people to keep up beekeeping traditions. Visitors to the village can try and buy a variety of healthy bee products. The village conducts handicraft workshops during which guests can learn to make beeswax candles (a choice of 30 types), weave wicker, embroider and paint on glass. Educational activities include classes for young beekeepers.

Nature lovers should check out the "Forest Life" village, picturesquely located by Lake Mukrz in Lniano district in the Wda River Scenic Park. Activities in the village include classes in making brooms and jewelry from natural materi-



Mushroom Festival

als. Bordering a nature reserve called Cisy Staropolskie (Old Polish Yew Trees), the village is surrounded by forests and three lakes.

In the heart of the Tuchola Forest is the charming village of Jablonka, where ancient varieties of apple and pear trees still grow in private orchards. This local heritage has prompted the local Association for the Development and Promotion of Jablonka to establish a theme village called Jablkowa Kraina (Land of Apples.) Every year, Jablonka holds an Apple Tree Festival, during which visitors can try apple-based specialties such as apple pie, apple wine and puffy pancakes with apples.



Magdalena Szumilo

Visitors to Wioska Chlebowa (Bread Village) in Jania Góra, Świekatowo district, can learn how bread is made (see photo). Locals demonstrate traditional threshing methods, show how bread dough is prepared according to traditional recipes and then everybody joins forces to bake bread in an oven. During handicraft workshops, visitors can make Bread Village souvenirs for themselves. In September, a Bread Festival is held in the village with attractions such as an exhibition of traditional farming machines and household equipment, contests and games for children and a competition to select the most delicious leavened or yeast cake baked by housewives from the counties of Świecie and Tuchola.

Traditional cuisine

In the past, the traditional cuisine of the Kujawy region heavily relied on locally harvested ingredients. Many dishes were based on flour and groats, especially barley and millet groats. Most bread varieties were baked from wholemeal rye flour, whereas wheat bread was baked for holidays and family celebrations. Beverages which the locals drank on a daily basis included a drink reminiscent of coffee but made from roasted barley and chicory.

One of the best-known local specialties in Kujawy is *żurek* sour soup, made with leavened wholemeal rye flour. Many traditional and still popular dishes contain cabbage and sauerkraut, sometimes with peas and beans. Cabbage with peas is a staple dish served in Kujawy on Christmas Eve. Sauerkraut juice, in turn, is a popular ingredient used to sour dishes and make different kinds of soup.

Fifty-two food products from Kujawy-Pomerania province have been officially listed as traditional products by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. One of them is *biała* (white) pork sausage made from the *złotnicka psza* breed of pigs bred at organic farms.

The Agriculture Ministry's list also features bread from Stolno, made from wheat and rye flour. The bread owes its distinctive flavor to caraway, poppy and sunflower seeds added to the dough.

Popular dishes in Kujawy include *czarnina* soup, one of Poland's oldest soups. The Kujawy variation is made from duck or goose offal boiled with vegetables and dried fruit and contains duck blood mixed with flour and vinegar. It is also spiced up with marjoram.

Many gourmets relish the plum jam that has been made for hundreds of years in regions located along the Vistula River. This kind of fruit preserve became particularly popular after purple plum farming spread in the area. The plums were traditionally fried in copper cauldrons and stirred with large wooden ladles.

One famous delicacy, known in Poland for hundreds of years, is the *półgesek* goose dish (in photo). Served as a delicious starter in the past, it used to be popular across Europe. *Półgesek* is prepared from goose fillets with skin that are first marinated and then smoked.

Many local specialties and traditional dishes are available at Kujawy-Pomerania's rural tourism farms, where such dishes are often made on site. A.R.

