

# POLISH SAUSAGES

## AUTHENTIC RECIPES AND INSTRUCTIONS



STANLEY MARIANSKI, ADAM MARIANSKI  
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Polish Sausages, Authentic Recipes and Instructions

Stanley Marianski

Adam Marianski

Mirosław Gebarowski

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# Introduction

In November 2004, a Pole, Mirosław Gebarowski, became so dissatisfied with the deteriorating state of Polish meat products that he decided to do something about it. He started a Polish forum on the Internet dedicated to the proper methods of meat preparation and the idea took off like a roller coaster. At that time Stanley Marianski lived in the USA and one day at a party he was arguing with his friends over some Polish sausage recipes. He jumped on the Internet and started to look for more information but the information he found in English was far from satisfactory. Finally in desperation he formed the question in Polish and imagine the surprise when he found his answer on the newly created forum.

That started the relationship that continues to this day. The Forum became so popular that in February 2005 its web presence was established [www.wedlinydomowe.pl](http://www.wedlinydomowe.pl) (Polish version) and the English site [www.wedlinydomowe.com](http://www.wedlinydomowe.com) (presently [www.meatsandsausages.com](http://www.meatsandsausages.com)) soon followed. At present, with 30,000 members, the Polish site is the biggest site of its kind in the world. The explanation for this incredible popularity of the site was the general dissatisfaction with the steady decline in quality, of once great meat products which can be traced to the collapse of the communist system in Poland and joining the European Common Market. The country opened up to Western Europe and this introduced new chemicals and preparation procedures which were designed to produce products in the fastest and cheapest way. Unfortunately, those changes resulted in processed meats of lower quality.

The home based sausage maker does not face those problems and for him the quality of his sausage is of the utmost importance, after all he and his family will eat it. Besides, for most people sausage making is a hobby from which they derive pleasure and the time spent is not a limiting factor. Having unlimited time and putting his heart into the process, he can create a product that is superior to the one available in the supermarket. In the pages that follow you will find everything about the production of sausages, covering topics like meat technology, curing, home style smoking, and even some old-fashioned tips and advice.

By carefully reading the material presented in this book and making different sausages, one can become an accomplished sausage maker in no time at all. He will be able to produce superior quality sausages and they will be made without chemicals. We can proudly say that this book represents over 500 years of sausage making, as well as all Polish sausage recipes. The following recipes are not just another invention of someone who likes to drink beer and make sausages. They are time proven recipes compiled, checked and enforced by the Polish Government Standards as applied to making meat products after World War II. With their vast resources and university educated meat professionals, the government became the final authority on the subject and took control of enforcing the standards.

## Why did the Polish Government Regulate Sausages

The answer is as old as the world itself: the money. When the war ended Communism was forced on Poland which had been a free country before. That isolated the government from the rest of the world and prevented Poland from receiving any assistance from the West.

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The country was in ruin, some cities were 80 % damaged, every fifth person in the family was dead and the Polish currency “zloty” was not convertible. In other terms, nobody in the free world would accept that currency. The government was not able to purchase goods from other countries nor obtain loans or credits.

That forced the country to go back in time and start selling natural resources like coal, vodka, fruits and meat products. Those products had to be of an exceptional quality if they were to be accepted in the West and the Government spared no effort.

The Communistic doctrine says that everything belongs to the state and all independent meat plants were nationalized (became the property of the state). That also applied to sausage making plants and here is where the government excelled. The party members run the meat plants now and they spent half of their time drinking vodka and eating well. Being generally smart, well educated and opportunistic people they could easily determine which sausages tasted the best and they became good judges of quality. The Department of Meat Industry (*Centralny Zarząd Przemysłu Mięsnego*) was established and those creative people came up with the great idea of standardizing Polish meat products. College educated meat technologists wrote great guides about making meat products which covered processes like meat aging, meat curing, smoking and cooking in great detail. The first 300 page long manual was written in 1958 and contained step by step instructions for making meat products and 70 sausages. The guide was for internal use only and the general public had no access to it. But at least the meat plant managers now had a set of instructions for making quality meat products and those norms were rigidly enforced by the government meat inspectors. This set of regulations was revised in 1964, 1974, 1978 and the years that followed. Even today the Polish Government publishes standards for making Polish sausages.

Unfortunately the latest norms are just a shadow of the detailed instructions from the past and basically they list the meat type and the list of ingredients that should go into a particular product. Today the meat industry consists of hundreds of independent plants and as there is no enforcement from the government, the standards are loosely obeyed. The present products are just echoes from the past.

Some may argue that today’s products are healthier. Well, we agree with that but this is not a diet book. This is a book about making the best tasting products possible. Imitation butter is also healthier than butter but no respectable chef will take a risk of making creamy sauce with an imitation butter. He will be out of the door in a minute as there is no way to replace butter’s great flavor. The same applies to mayonnaise, cream cheese, milk and other products. There is a choice to be made between eating well and eating healthy.

During the war Mr. Goebels, the German Minister of Propaganda used to say that if the lie is repeated often enough it would become the truth. If you and your wife will start repeating every day that imitation mayonnaise or lean meat sausage taste better because it is healthy, most likely you will eventually and sincerely believe in it and for you it will become the truth. But your friends will hold a different opinion. We are not claiming that the sausages must always be made the way our recipes call for. We are simply offering those recipes with detailed instructions on making them so they will never be forgotten.

## **Why Did We Make Better Sausages Before?**

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The general consensus in Poland is that Polish meat products were absolutely the best in the years 1950 - 1990 and that statement will probably hold true for other European countries as well. We have the utmost respect for the latest in science and computers but we do think that making meat products might be an isolated case where the technology has lowered the taste of the product. Sausage making has been a dying art and there is almost no way to obtain quality products unless they are home made.

That does not mean that our meat plants are not capable of making quality products. After all, in 1969 we put a man on the moon, the Internet has been running for 40 years, and computers allow us to change the very rules of nature. So why can't we make a decent sausage? We can't because everything is controlled by the dollar, including sausages. They must be made in the most efficient manner, and that means cheap and fast. As long as supermarkets keep on renewing orders, and the Food and Drug Administration does not object to the ingredients, quality plays a secondary role. The job of the FDA is to regulate what chemicals can be added into a product and in what quantities they can be safely used when added to meat. The FDA was not created to judge products according to taste and flavor.

Well, we understand that you cannot change the latest technology as it follows the commands of economics which in turn follows the laws of finance. And those laws dictate that money must be made as this is the nature of business. There are hundreds of marketers that would explain why we produce foods differently today and they will all argue that it is done for the good of the consumer. We also know that there is a growing number of people who don't care what's good for the consumer, they care about what's good for them and that is why they make their own products.

## How Our Book Differs From Others

**1. Factory procedures.** This is probably the only written book on sausages that provides factory floor step by step instructions on making different products. It is like revealing the most treasured internal secrets and recipes to the world at large. And this is exactly what we have done: we have revealed sausage recipes and instructions on their making which have been strictly guarded for generations. Go to any sausage making plant and ask the manager for the recipe and detailed instructions of the products his company makes. You will be shown the door.

Just by studying those recipes and instructions one can develop a good feel of the subject. You will see how every part of the animal was utilized to make different types of sausages. *And these are not recipes that were copied from a neighbor or found somewhere on the Internet.* These are recipes and production processes of the products that have been made in Poland for centuries and those products were distributed all over the nation for the public to consume. Studying this material a newcomer to the business can easily open his own commercial sausage kitchen and even experienced people will fine tune their skills by just reading this book.

**2. Meat Curing for Sausages.** This book introduces the concept of meat curing for sausages as it has always been practiced in Poland by the general population and the meat plants. This extra processing step improves the looks, texture, taste and the flavor of the product. And this is not a secret, everybody in Poland knows that meat for sausages must

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be cured. This is something that is almost sacred and not even open for discussion. Even if you decide to continue making sausages without curing meat first, it would be nice to know how it should be done properly.

Yes, meat plants cure hams, butts, loins, bacon and other large pieces of meat. And we have million dollar machines that inject those meats with commercially prepared solutions. But if one opens a sausage book he finds that there is total silence on curing meats for sausages. And curing meats for sausages is not limited to Poland but is practiced in Russia and Germany, both countries famous for their meat products and sausages.

**3. “Whys”.** You will find many books that provide valuable information like: remove visible air pockets by pricking casings with a needle, shower smoked products with cold water, boil some sausages and bake others, stuff casings firmly or stuff them loosely, etc. We provide this general information as well but at the same time we go into extreme detail to explain to the reader why it is done that way and not the other. And all those “whys” are what will help you fully understand and master the art of sausage making.

## **For Whom is This Book Written**

Anybody that makes or intends to make Polish sausages or any kind of sausage will greatly benefit from this book. Even Polish butchers that make sausages all over the world should make it a point of reference. We have a label from the popular Polish Kabanosy meat stick made by a butcher plant in New York that calls for beef in addition to pork. For 200 years Kabanosy was always made with pure pork so why mess up the 200 year old recipe?

For centuries sausage recipes were not publicized. They were passed from the father to the son, but otherwise kept closely guarded. The government compiled all known recipes together and established manufacturing rules and instructions. They were, however, reserved for internal use only. In other words they were classified. Butchers who were licenced by the Official Trade Associations were issued those detailed sausage standards but to limit competition they kept them strictly to themselves.

We at Wedliny Domowe have every publication that was written on the subject by the long gone government and we have decided to open up this treasure chest of sausage recipes. There are Polish families living all over the world and kids are definitely introduced to sausages at an early age. One day when older, they will not be able to get the answer from their parents who will not be around forever. And if they decide to make their own Polish sausage this book will be of invaluable help.

There are many so called Polish sausage recipes floating on the Internet and many originate on some huge sites that employ who write well. This is what they do for a living, they fish for recipes and they place them in a particular category. They did not get the job because they studied meat science, they got the job because they write well. How many do you think have ever made a blood sausage, head cheese or cold smoked salmon?

A hard working mother of four does her shopping in a supermarket and buys sliced turkey breast and some sausages. The price is the main factor she’s concerned with. After a few days her kid says: “look Ma, this sliced turkey breast is still juicy”. And Ma acting in her best intentions will reply: “yeah, this is good stuff.” Little she knows that the



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phosphates and other ingredients have finally lost their binding power and all this juice (slime) is nothing else than the water that was injected with chemicals into the meat during production. Her ignorance is of an innocent kind because she simply does not know any better, but what is tragic is that there are generations of young people who will never find out what the real ham or smoked turkey should taste like. To sell mass produced and passable quality products to a hard working mother of four, all the supermarket has to do is to say: “save money” and “buy one get one free.” That is why we have all those flyers and manufacturer’s coupons.

This book is written for those people, to wake them up so they can realize that a pork loin, ham or a sausage can have a completely different taste to the one they have been accustomed to. They could order it by mail from some specialty suppliers, or they could buy it from some ethnic butcher stores if still present in the area they live in, or *they could make it themselves*. Our task is to preserve the legacy of those wonderful products, uncover original and authentic recipes and provide instructions on how to make them. That way they will not become a forgotten thing of the past but will live forever.

Our group consists of hundreds of professional and home based sausage makers who have been making those Polish products all their lives. They know how they were made and how they tasted 50 years ago and they can see the difference when they buy the product today. And they all agree as to the authenticity of the following recipes. Fortunately more and more people start making sausages and this book was written for them. Another reason is to preserve the centuries of knowledge and tradition that were instrumental for the development of so many wonderful products.

For the novice some recipes may at first look somewhat intimidating as they are loaded with technical information and detailed instructions for their making. We believe the real strength of this book lies exactly in those instructions and by just reading them one can develop a great feel for what sausage making is about. In this chapter we intend to simplify some of the steps used in the production process and make them more acceptable to the average sausage maker. This way he will be able to make any sausage from this book and the key is understanding the basic sausage making steps.

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# Chapter 1 - History of Polish Sausages

Even today in countries like Poland or Germany smoked meats and sausages account for about 60% of all meat products sold to a consumer. For comparison it is estimated that in the USA smoked meats account for about 30% of meats sold. And hot dogs constitute the largest portion of this number, though few people ever think of them as a smoked product. A meat department in an American supermarket pales in comparison with its counterpart in Poland or Germany where in addition to fresh and smoked meats there are dozens of different sausages and all kinds of smoked fish such as eel, herring, mackerel and others. The popularity of pork in smoked products can be attributed to a few reasons:

- Pork meat was most popular among the masses. Unlike pragmatic animals like cows and horses, pigs were not of much practical benefit besides the fact that they were the first sanitation system. In ancient Rome they roamed the streets at nightfall and ate any leftover garbage. In early Europe, there was a strong sentiment towards cows. They produced milk, which was processed into butter, cheese and cream. They were also used for labor, pulling ploughs and performing other chores. Upon death, they were buried, not eaten. On the other hand, pigs were not of much practical use, but they tasted good and were prepared in hundreds of different ways. The pigs were smart: when the times were hard they ran away to the forest where they ate nuts, acorns and berries. When the danger passed away they would return to villages where they would roam around and eat whatever was available.
- Pigs reproduced rapidly and ate everything.
- Pork meat was the best meat for curing and smoking.
- The pigs felt much safer living next to humans and became one of the first animals domesticated by man.

Countries in Northern Europe smoked meats well before America was discovered. In 1493 Christopher Columbus took 8 pigs into new territories and they were released in Cuba. Then in 1539 Hernando de Soto landed with 13 pigs in Tampa Bay, Florida and he deserves to be called the king of the pork industry in the USA. By that time the art of making sausages was in full swing in Europe.

## **The Importance of Christmas and Easter Holidays**

When Poland became a Catholic nation in 966, it affected the ways people ate and behaved. There was an unusually large number of days when people had to fast and of course on those days meat consumption was not allowed. Even today most Catholics do not eat meat on Friday. But there were two periods when people were allowed to celebrate and eat to their hearts content, and that was Christmas and Easter.



**Photo 1.1** As every year Dziadek (Grandpa in Polish) starts Christmas production. He makes it all: smoked hams, loins, sausages, liver, blood sausages, and head cheeses and when he is done not a single scrap of meat remains.

A pig would be slaughtered and processed a few weeks before Christmas or Easter, and the noble cuts of meat like ham, butt, and loins would be cured and smoked. Remaining scraps of meat such as the liver, tongue, heart, skins and blood were reserved for headcheeses, liver and blood sausages. Bacon and fatback would be smoked, some of the back fat would be rendered to make lard. A pig is a very unique animal where nothing is wasted. Even the bones will be used to make soup stock. Those products had to last over the winter and often until summer when it was time to gather crops and the ready to eat sausages would become food and snacks out in the field. For a common person eating meat was still limited to holidays or family occasions like weddings. Even relatively well off people would eat meat only on Sundays.



**Photo 1.2** This is what separates sausage makers like “Dziadek” from others. He can do it all.



**Photo 1.3** Finished sausages.

They might land a good paying job in a large factory taking care of some department, but to make it from A-Z by yourself is a different matter. Pig slaughter was not just a kill, it was a long awaited event, a kind of social gathering where in addition to the host and his family, his friends and neighbors were also invited.

Christmas Eve dinner traditionally would be served after sunset, then many people would attend Midnight Mass. The table would be set up close to the beautifully

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ornamented Christmas tree and the gifts would be placed under it. People would walk to one another, break a little part of holy wafer and make wishes for the new year. Then the dinner was served although no meat was allowed. Fish was fine and the carp was traditionally prepared in different ways. But on the first day of Christmas all restrictions would be lifted and people would try to make up for all those days of rigid fasting. This is when some serious eating took place and meat products and sausages played an important part.

During Easter Holidays meat products became the most important item on the menu. For those that did not witness it first hand, it is hard to imagine hundreds of people standing in a line that began outside of the meat store and waiting their turn to get the provisions they need. And that continued non-stop for 12 hours a day. This is how Christmas and Easter have been celebrated in Poland for a thousand years and these holidays definitely sustained the popularity of sausages until today.

In Poland people eat sausages all the time, most of them smoked. The commonly eaten “White Sausage” is a not smoked fresh sausage which is traditionally served with soup called “żurek” at Easter time.



**Photo 1.4** Leaving church.

A day earlier people prepared a wicker gift basket that contained items like bread, eggs, horseradish and of course sausages.

This basket was taken to the nearest church where it was blessed by the priest during a short mass. This blessed food was arranged on the breakfast table among hams, bacon, and countless varieties of sausages.

A holy wafer was used to make wishes at Christmas and sliced egg was used to make wishes at Easter. People walked to one another and shared a piece of quartered egg

exchanging wishes.



**Photo 1.5** The Catholic priest blessing food in Brooklyn, New York City.



**Photo 1.6 & Photo 1.7** Large and small family tables. On Easter Day the sausages are everywhere.

## **History of Polish Sausages - the Middle Ages**

Until the late 900's when Poland became a unified country, there were no written records on Polish customs or everyday life. We do know from archeological sites that trade merchants from Rome and other countries visited Polish territories reaching as far north as the Baltic Sea as early as 500 B.C. They followed what was known as the Amber Route to get amber (thousands of years old crystallized tree resin or sap) that was held in high esteem and was washed ashore by the Baltic Sea. Besides valuable amber the local tribes provided merchants with fine furs.

On the other hand the merchants displayed manufactured goods such as gold and silver jewelry, silver and bronze dishes and drinking cups, gold medallions with the likenesses of Roman nobles and coins. In addition they brought swords, knives, spices and dry

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sausages. Romans liked pork and made the whole assortment of sausages. Without a doubt the art of making sausages had originated in Rome and reached other areas by trade merchants and Roman military legions.

The ties between Poland and Rome strengthened when Poland accepted Christianity as a nation in 966. In 1000 Otto III, a highly educated Holy Roman Emperor and a fervent Christian, travelled to Poland where he became friends with Polish King Boleslaw I the Brave (Boleslaw Chrobry). Both nobles exchanged gifts and dined for three days. Contacts of this kind were helpful in learning social customs and culinary arts between different countries and new ways of meat preparation were of great interest to all. The Catholic Church required many days of fasting and that influenced the way people dined. On many days not only meat, but even eggs, butter or milk were prohibited and the penalties were severe. Adding to it the fact that meat was very expensive and beyond the reach of an average peasant, we can conclude that sausages were mainly consumed by the privileged class and clergy. The monasteries were cultural centers where most of the science research was conducted and those places were familiar with methods of meat preservation or beer and wine making.

In the second part of the Middle Ages (X - XVI century) the individual castles or large households were the centers of cultural life and culinary arts. Of course they were owned by noblemen who also owned entire villages. All of them were self-reliant on food. The peasants that lived in a particular village were also self-reliant and they prospered quite well. It was not unusual when some of them owned cattle or horses. Polish cuisine of that era was simple and based on meats, sausages, fish, bread, grouts, vegetables, fruits and honey that was commonly used in place of an expensive sugar. The food warehouse or kitchen pantries were stocked with items like wheat and rye, flour, bread, buckwheat and barley groats, peas and beans, vegetable oils, dry and pickled mushrooms, sauerkraut, salted and smoked meats, sausages, salted and smoked fish, cheeses, butter, eggs, wooden barrels with beer, honey and fruit wines. The most popular vegetables were cabbage, onion, garlic, cucumbers, carrots, parsley and caraway. The dishes were simple but the plate had to be large and full of food.

In the Middle Ages as the cities grew larger in size and the food markets developed, this culinary exchange of ideas progressed even further and people got acquainted with new dishes and recipes. Some regions became well known for the type of sausage they made and many sausages of today still carry those original names. Those independent households gave origin to the regionally prepared foods and sausages were no exception.

In 1646 Polish King Mieczyslaw IV married French Ludwika Maria Gonzaga, the daughter of Prince Charles Gonzaga and that brought sophisticated French cuisine into Poland. Liver sausages and pâtés became popular and not the size of a meal, but its looks and presentation became more important.

The next 50 years were very turbulent as the country was invaded by the Swedish, Russians and Turks and had to deal with mutiny by Cossacks. Although Poland repelled those invasions, it emerged from those wars terribly ruined and depopulated. The wars were accompanied by plagues and famine. The population which before 1645 amounted to some 10 million, decreased to 6 million at the end of the century. Trade shrank, currency lost in value and economic reconstruction was slow.

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In XVIII century we find first mention of the word “*kielbasa*”. It describes a thick sausage, dark in color (heavily smoked) and a few feet long. This sausage was an ever present item on the tables of noblemen and better off knights. Merchants would carry it during their long travels, knights would be seen riding horses and carrying sausages at the belt. In those times the favorite hobby of the royalty was hunting and venison with wild birds was served regularly on the menu. So it comes as no surprise that wild boar, deer or rabbit meat was often combined with pork and new spices were introduced, thus creating new sausage varieties. In time the kielbasa diversified into regional brands and new recipes were created. Copying customs of the rich households, the peasants in villages started to make sausages, first for their own enjoyment, then for the trade and sale.

## **Lithuanian Products**

There was a region in the Northeastern part of Poland that we have to mention as it produced magnificent products. This region known today as Lithuania was once a part of Poland. It became famous for its smoked products that would last for 2 years at room temperature (76°F, 25°C) without apparent loss of flavor. The meat was carefully chosen from 12-15 month old pigs that were fed mainly rye, barley and potatoes. In some cases the pig was fed exclusively with flour. Different methods of slaughter were employed; the pig was killed by inserting a knife into its heart and the wound would be immediately closed with a wooden plug. That prevented blood loss and imparted a dark-red color to the meat. For the same reason the pig was not hung but lay stomach down. To remove the hair, the pig was not scalded with hot water as this would have made skin and meat too soft. Instead the pig was burned all over its body with burning hay and then the hair was scraped with knives. Then the entrails would be removed and the pig would be carved into pieces.

Large meat cuts would be cold smoked for 2-3 weeks and smaller products for 10-12 days. Unusually tall smokehouses with a free standing source of smoke were employed to produce cold smoke. Then the finished products were covered with a 2 - 3 mm (0.1”) layer of wax to prevent drying. What must be mentioned is that juniper twigs (“juniperus”-gives gin its characteristic flavor) were commonly added to wood logs during smoking to create a specific flavor. Sometimes juniper berries would be added but those most often would be added directly to meat, either in whole or ground form. Juniper sausage (“*jałowcowa*”) had been made in Poland for as long as anybody can remember.

In those times sausages were originally made by cutting meat into smaller pieces and stuffing them into casings through a suitable funnel, often called a stuffing horn. Most old-timers are familiar with the “Finger Sausage” (*Palcówka*), that derives its name from the word fingers (*palce*) which were used to stuff the sausage.

There were continuous wars in XVII, XVIII and XIX centuries and only after the end of WWI in 1918 we see making sausages becoming an art. The country was a capitalistic state now and many great sausage making businesses opened up and flourished. The first books on regional cooking and sausage making started to appear.

## **Between the Wars Period - 1918-1939**

After the first World War ended in 1918 there was no centrally organized meat industry.



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There were hundreds of small meat plants and butcher shops across the country which made products in a slow traditional way using primitive equipment. The city owned slaughter houses provided services to individual butcher shops. Large slaughter houses had some cooling facilities but smaller houses located in little towns did not.

The Czerniewice Meat Plant was one of the first large industrial meat plants and started working in 1912 exporting bacon to England. The plant would buy pigs from local farmers and process meat into finished products. Another known plant located in Motycz specialized mainly in the production of bacon. Bacon would go to England, hams to America and canned hams and dry sausages to Africa. That was a typical method of operation for about two thousand Polish plants in the years 1930-1938. From 1932 and on, more and more factories started to make canned hams and butts for export although the production was still taking place in little plants.

## **World War II - 1939-1945**

Due to Poland's very unique geographical location (the East meets the West) there were always wars taking place on its territory. Always problems with the Russians and the Germans. When Napoleon tried to conquer Russia his armies marched through Poland on the way to Moscow and when he retreated the Russians chased him again through Poland. The same happened during WWII, the war did not stop in Poland for a second and either Germans were chasing Russians, or the Russians were chasing Germans with Poles fighting them both. Poland was the buffer zone, a boiling pot where fighting never seemed to stop. When the war ended 20% of the Polish population (6.5 million) was dead and some cities were completely destroyed.

The horses and cattle were decimated but the pigs escaped to the forests and returned back when it was safer. As there was no industry and no farm machinery the agriculture had to be rebuilt using horses and cattle. Pork was the meat of the necessary choice and the products had to be cured and smoked to be preserved for later use as there was no refrigeration. During the war Germany took over Czerniewice meat plant to produce meats for its military. In 1950 the plant was back in Polish hands and it resumed its meat production. Better equipment was installed and the plant started producing the whole assortment of meats and sausages for export and for the local market. In the 1990's after the fall of the government the plant was in deep trouble and declared bankruptcy in 2000. A year later the plant was taken over by the Polish company "Mat" and has been continuing its operations until today.

## **The Glory Years (1945-1989)**

During WWII (1939 - 1945) most meat plants were destroyed and the re-birth was very slow. In 1948 only about 600 slaughter houses were in operation. Creating a new, modern and prospering meat industry became a necessity for the government. The country's currency "zloty" was not convertible, the government needed hard currency and the only way to get it was to export raw (coal) materials or finished goods (vodka, meat products). The government spared no effort to create the best meat industry. A peculiar characteristic of the new regime was its fondness for long-term planning:

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- 3-year plan (1947-1949) - re-building war damages and re-growth of animal herds.
  - 6-year plan (1950-1955) - modernization and development of the meat industry. Mechanical methods of slaughter were introduced, new plants were built and older ones were modernized. More types of meats, sausages and canned products were produced, both for export and for local needs.
  - 5-year plan (1956-1960) - further modernization and development of the meat industry. Specifically designed machines were introduced to facilitate faster and more economical cutting and carving of animals and newer methods of production were implemented. Huge diversification of meat products was visible. Assembly line production concept was introduced. *Meat technology manuals with manufacturing instructions and detailed recipes were written to be used in meat plants in order to produce a consistent and high quality product.* That was the beginning of the Golden Era of Polish Sausages.

Until 1945 a sausage of the same name had many variants and although the basic recipe remained the same, different regions used different spices which led to different flavors of the product. The typical example was the sausage known as Kabanosy that in 1920-1930 started to appear in all areas of the country. In 1945 someone in the newly organized government came up with a brilliant idea of standardizing Polish meat products using traditional time proven recipes.

The official list of products was drawn and the Department of the Meat Industry started to work out details. In 1959 the first official guide for making meat products and sausages was issued. The publication was known as # 16 *Collection of Recipes and Instructions for Making Meat Products and Sausages* and it was reserved for internal use only. At three hundred pages long it had sections on meat curing, making brines, grinding and emulsifying, cooking, methods of smoking, the whole factory process was described in details. It covered 31 smoked products (hams, butts, loins, bacon, 46 sausages, 11 head cheeses and 13 liver and blood sausages. In 1960 the # 17 version was issued which was a slightly revised version of # 16. Then in 1964 the Polish Government issued an expanded version called # 21 *Collection of Recipes and Instructions for Making Meat Products and Sausages*. It was 760 pages long and included: 39 smoked products (hams, loins, bacon, ribs), 119 sausages, 12 headcheeses, 19 liver and blood sausages and 11 pâtés and meat loaves. In total 200 meat products were covered and ONLY ONE chemical was used.

The additive was potassium nitrate which had been used for centuries and is still used today although it has been replaced by its easier to administer cousin - "sodium nitrite." In fifty years millions of pounds of meat products and sausages were made without the use of chemicals. Just quality meats and spices. Those government manuals helped to create the best meat industry that ever existed anywhere though its life was only about 50 years. Those manuals were not written by restaurant cooks or college students, but by the best professionals in meat science the country had.

*The recipes presented in this book come from these manuals and they were never published before.* The project was government funded and no effort or money was spared. This standardization allowed Poland to produce sausages of high and *consistent* quality. Moreover it taught people what to expect from a particular sausage as its taste, texture, color and flavor were basically the same in all areas of the country. All meat plants and

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retail stores belonged to the government and meat inspectors rigidly enforced the regulations. Suddenly the Kabanosy or Krakowska Sausage tasted exactly the same even when produced in different regions of the country. In 1948 Kabanosy were officially approved as the product name that would be sold in Polish meat stores. In 1954 production instructions were worked out and in 1964 taking under consideration the traditional recipes of the product, the Government adopted the standard recipe that became a legally binding document that could not be changed.

Although those products were of such high quality, their recognition and popularity was mainly limited to Poland. The country was behind the Iron Curtain, its communist system was the worst evil the world has ever known, there was always a possibility of a new war and the Polish currency was not convertible. Those were not helpful conditions for trading sausages between countries of opposite political systems. From that time until the collapse of the system in 1989 Kabanosy and other meat products were always made the same way. This uniform quality enforced by the government meat inspectors made them very famous Polish sausages. Some sausage makers were lucky and rich enough to bribe their way out to getting a passport, others simply defected crossing the border between Yugoslavia and Italy, those people brought the taste of Polish sausages to the USA and other countries.

The war damage and general poverty did not provide the right conditions for fast rebuilding of agriculture. Farmers raised pigs in traditional ways, feeding them with potatoes, grains and kitchen leftovers.

The chemical industry was in its infancy, there were no fertilizers so cow's manure was used and this made all products organic and healthy. Those were not conditions that would favor the growth of the economy but *they were the ideal conditions for raising animals of the highest quality meat possible*. Those high quality meats, great recipes without chemicals and proper manufacturing practices allowed the production of great products. Those government manuals covered not only sausages but also hams, bacon, loins, butts, ribs, picnics and all meats that could be boiled, baked, smoked or dried. There are still master butchers and sausage makers from that era and they have been holding on to those publications all their lives. We are very fortunate to have them as members of our site [www.wedlinydomowe.pl](http://www.wedlinydomowe.pl) and our discussion forum. Those people are walking encyclopedias of sausage making knowledge and to them we are deeply indebted.

The Polish ham "Krakus" brand became the best ham in the world and the sausages that were exported had to conform to the highest standards. At that period, between the end of the war and collapse of the communist system Polish meat products were made the best ever. The decline in Polish meat products is synonymous with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent collapse of communism. This opened Polish borders to the free trade with the West and created new business ventures between Poland and other European countries.

Poland became a new undeveloped market and capital started to flow in. European standards for making meat products were more relaxed than those in Poland and some countries feared competition from Poland once it became the member of the group. As we mentioned the only chemical used in Polish meats and sausages was potassium nitrate even though the list of food additives allowed in Europe was long and impressive. It starts at E 100-Curcumin and ends at E1518-Glyceryl Triacetate. In total 1418 different

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ingredients can be introduced to the food we consume.

The story goes that when Poland was invited to join the Common Market it was granted an exception and was permitted to use any quantities of food additives to its sausages. Kind of a catch up game: “jump on the waggon guys and start putting chemicals in your products.” Soon many meat processors established joint ventures loaded with capital and new partners. That allowed them to bring the latest technology meat machines and the products were made faster and cheaper. Factory prepared curing solutions were injected into meat to shorten curing time and to increase gain of the product. This peaceful revolution came so suddenly that the new government was not able to control all that was happening. The meat industry imported the latest machinery and chemicals from other European countries and started to follow the same standards of production.

Unfortunately those standards were much lower than the high quality sausage standards that were enforced by the former Polish regime. When Poland officially joined the Common Market in 2004 the situation deteriorated even further. Now the country had to conform to new European regulations and that did not make sausages any better. For example in the 1900's the Polish government allowed 1.5 mg (150 parts per million) of phosphates to be added to 1 kg of meat (phosphates increase meat's water holding capacity). New standards allowed 5 mg of phosphates and of course manufacturers loved the idea as it amounted to higher profits. On the other hand now an average Polish consumer had to swallow three times more chemicals than before and was buying a product with more water in it.

Common Market policies have affected other countries as well. For instance, Germany never allowed the use of liquid smoke in its products. When Germany became a member of the European Common Market it had to conform to new regulations and liquid smoke was added to meat products.

Unfortunately, hundreds of smaller sausage makers who made wonderful products, could not compete with larger companies and went out of business. Very few managed to survive by charging higher prices for their superior products and catering to a more demanding consumer.

## **Trade Associations (*Cechy*)**

In XIII-XVIII century Poland there were trade associations (*cechy*) which enlisted highly trained and experienced members in their particular field. Membership was highly sought as those organizations provided many benefits to their members who in turn gained financial wealth. They also performed the following functions:

- Provided exclusive rights to supply and sell products in a particular city or geographical area.
- Enforced proper manufacturing methods to make sure that their products were of the highest quality.
- Enforced that delivered meat conformed to standards.
- Estimated market demand and accordingly controlled supply.
- Provided specialized training to new would-be members.

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The trade organizations structure remained basically the same. What varied was the amount of power they held. Originally they were very strong monopolistic organizations that protected interests and markets of their members. This type of structure continues to this day though it may be called a worker's or trade union. The first sausage making trade organizations were established in XIII century in Kalisz and Torun (birthplace of Nicolaus Copernicus), then in XIV century in Wroclaw and Szczecin. In XV century such organizations prospered in every larger city. At the end of XV century the trade unions made it very difficult for new members to join it. The apprenticeship was made longer, membership fees were higher and no new seats were created. That was done to limit competition and to stabilize prices at the same level. Unfortunately this course of action largely backfired as more people got involved in the sausage making trade by by-passing trade unions.



**Photo 1.8** Sausage Makers Trade Association still functions inside Belchatow City Chamber of Commerce building. It was re-established after the war and its first function was to work on new government standards for sausages.



**Photo 1.9** Crest of the City of Belchatow Trade Association.

Then came centuries of very turbulent history and trade unions lost much of their enforcing power. Eventually they became training centers and issuers of the trade licences. Although they could not control the market the way they once did, they provided a great service by educating and licensing people who chose sausage making as a career. All individually owned businesses had to belong to the regional trade association that held jurisdiction over that area. Only there they could sign up for new courses, take exams and become members of the group. That allowed them to buy materials that were not available at the market at large, but were centrally distributed by the government to licenced establishments. They were also issued new recipes and only they were authorized to make those sausages. For the struggling economy, materials like fuel, meats and sausages were of utmost importance for the country's survival. The meat industry and its distribution were centralized and so important for the government that any deviation in the recipe or adding food additives not called for was punishable by law. There were few larger affairs where dishonest operators introduced cheap meat substitutions to increase profits and we know of two cases where those responsible were sentenced to death and executed. The Polish Government still issues latest guidelines for making processed meats and sausages. However, they include all chemicals and additives as permissible by the European Common Market Law.

## **Which Way Are We Going?**

There is an enormous interest in the traditional methods of food preparation. A customer is well aware of the present state of the meat industry and expects his products to be healthy. There is a universal dislike towards chemicals and people want to know what goes inside. And they start to make those products at home if only once or twice a year. After just one year our organization Wedliny Domowe has grown so much that its First National Convention took place in August 2006. In addition to hundreds of attendees a number of professional courses and demonstrations were offered. This three day gathering became so

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popular that it became a yearly celebrated event. Our 8th National Convention took place in August 2013.

Due to many requests from our members in February 2009 we have established our own sausage making school in Lazy. The main objective is to preserve traditional ways of sausage making and save traditional recipes from becoming extinct. These 3 day hands-on experience courses have become a popular event and are offered every month. There are also advanced sausage making, salami making, processing wild game and cheese making courses.



**Photo 1.10** Wedliny Domowe First National Convention in 2006. Left-a woman meat technologist discusses a freshly made sausage. Middle-a young sausage maker tries to figure it out.



**Photo 1.11** Wedliny Domowe 8th National Convention in 2013.



**Photo 1.12** A young sausage maker learning trade under supervision.



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