Polish culinary history is primarily based on accounts from native chroniclers and foreign travelers. The first Polish cookbook is commonly considered to be "Compendium ferculorum, albo zebranie potraw" published in Krakow in 1682, written by Stanisław Czerniecki. What dishes landed on the tables of royal, noble, and landowning estates over the centuries? It's astounding how late common food items reached us today.

**Ancient Polish Cuisine**

Ancient Polish cuisine was based on simple dishes made from a few ingredients. Grain crops such as millet, rye, or wheat, various types of porridge, as well as fruits, herbs, spices, and meat from wild and domesticated animals were primarily served. Ancient Polish cuisine was characterized by high caloric content and extensive use of salt. Meals were washed down with beer and mead.

**How did the food on Polish tables change in subsequent epochs? See in the gallery.**

Polish cuisine underwent a significant change in 966 when Mieszko I adopted Christianity. The experiences of other peoples who accepted baptism show that its adoption was a gastronomic shock for countries in Northern or Eastern Europe. People who had been eating bacon, milk, porridge, and occasionally game for hundreds of years suddenly found out that for nearly half the week—on Friday, Wednesday, and Saturday—they had to fast; that they had to eat fish - Jarosław Dumanowski, culinary historian from Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń.

With the religious transformation, the menu also included:

• wine

• olive oil

• white bread

These were luxury products, but their connection to Mediterranean culture, and consequently - to Christianity, was inseparable. Without them, it was impossible to celebrate Mass or sacraments, so their presence in Polish cuisine became obligatory.

**What was the menu of Duke Mieszko I like?**

Thanks to the work of archaeologists, it was possible to recreate the menu of Mieszko I. As it turns out, it was far from a vegetarian diet. Although fasting in the Middle Ages was much stricter than it is now—because it excluded the consumption of dairy—fish were introduced to the menu.

Herring was brought straight from the Baltic Sea to the princely table. Freshwater fish were caught from Lake Lednica, on which the ruler had his court, specifically on an island called Ostrow Lednicki. On days not covered by fasting, court feasts were rich in meat from animals such as deer, bison, roe deer, and birds. Barley and peas also dominated in the princely kitchen, accompanied by dishes made from wheat and millet. How do we know all this? During archaeological excavations on the soil of Ostrow Lednicki, roasted grains and pollen from plants used in Mieszko I's kitchen were found.

**Diet from a Century Ago**

Let's go back in time a bit. How did our great-grandparents eat, and what dishes did our great-grandmothers serve? 100 years ago, in the interwar period, heavy meals were consumed. Caloric dishes, flour-based dishes, and mushrooms dominated. The repertoire of products used in the kitchen was quite narrow: dishes were supposed to be simple but nutritious. The issue of healthy eating did not occupy the minds of our ancestors - large amounts of fat and animal protein were commonplace.

The affluent consumed all kinds of meats and fish:

• game

• poultry

• herring

• eels

• burbots

• carp

• pike

• catfish

• salmon

• zander

• crayfish

As for the food of the poorer classes living in agricultural areas, they mainly ate what could be sown or grown themselves. In the repertoire of rural cuisine from 100 years ago, we find:

• potatoes

• cereals

• flour

• cabbage

• broad beans

• poultry