

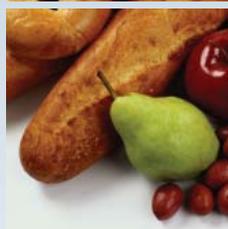
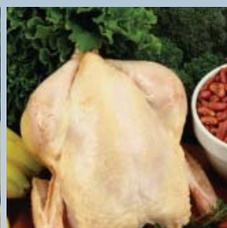
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# Synthesis report No 6: Traditional Foods in Europe

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## **1. Introduction**

Traditions are customs or beliefs taught by one generation to the next, often by word of mouth, and they play an important role in cultural identification. Each culture, ethnic group or region has specific traditions. Some traditions, such as religious customs, overlap different cultures, ethnic groups or regions.

Specific eating habits play an important role in the traditional habits of many cultures. The use of particular food ingredients and food preparation methods has been passed on from one generation to the next, and are nowadays referred to as 'traditional foods'.

Traditional foods have played a major role in traditions of different cultures and regions for thousands of years. They include foods that have been consumed locally and regionally for an extended time period. Preparation methods of traditional foods are part of the folklore of a country or a region. Unfortunately, throughout Europe, some traditional foods are at risk of disappearing due to altered lifestyles. Therefore, it is important to study and document traditional foods to sustain important elements of European cultures.

Most people can probably name at least one traditional food of the region they come from. Searching the internet for 'traditional foods' shows that numerous collections of traditional food recipes are available from countries worldwide. However, defining traditional foods is not as easy as it might be presumed. There are very few definitions available, and most of them have been developed relatively recently. One of these definitions has been prepared by EuroFIR. This EuroFIR definition is presented in chapter 2 and other definitions of 'traditional foods' can be found in annex 1. Chapter 3 summarises results of a consumer survey on the perception of traditional foods carried out in European countries.

In chapter 4, an overview of traditional foods in selected European countries can be found. This includes a brief history of traditional foods in these countries, i.e. which other cultures influenced the traditional cuisine or which historical events (e.g. the discovery of the 'New World') had an impact on traditional foods in Europe. Examples of five selected traditional foods from each country are presented in this chapter.

In the last part of the report, health aspects as well as the need to include traditional foods in European food composition databases are discussed. Also outlined in this Synthesis Report are the effects of globalisation on traditional foods and eating habits in Europe and consumers' perception of traditional foods.

The aim of this report is to give an overview of traditional foods across Europe.

## **2. What are traditional foods?**

Although the term 'traditional foods' is widely used, and everybody has a rough idea of what is meant by it, there are hardly any definitions that clearly define traditional foods.

### ***EuroFIR definition***

One of the main aims of the European Food Information Resource (EuroFIR) Network of Excellence has been the establishment of a pan-European food information resource in the form of a portal, allowing access to online food composition data across Europe. The importance of including composition data for traditional European foods has been recognised, and therefore a work package concentrating on traditional foods was set up at the onset of the project.

A first step of the EuroFIR Traditional Foods work package was the development of a definition of the term 'traditional foods' (Trichopoulou *et al.* 2007). A clear definition was essential to select and further collect information about traditional foods, such as ingredients, preparation methods and food composition data.

The EuroFIR definition of traditional foods was acknowledged by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) at the 26th FAO Regional conference for Europe in Innsbruck, Austria, on the 26th-27th June 2008.

### ***EuroFIR definition of 'Traditional food'***

- **TRADITIONAL FOOD**

Traditional means conforming to established practice or specifications prior to the Second World War. Traditional food is a food with a specific feature or

features, which distinguish it clearly from other similar products of the same category in terms of the use of 'traditional ingredients' (raw materials of primary products) or 'traditional composition' or 'traditional type of production and/or processing method' as defined below.

□ TRADITIONAL INGREDIENT (RAW MATERIAL OR PRIMARY PRODUCT)

Raw material (species and/or varieties) or primary product, either alone or as an ingredient, which has been used in identifiable geographical areas and remains in use today (taking into account cases where use was abandoned for a time and then reinstated) and its characteristics are in accordance with current specifications of national and EU legislation.

□ TRADITIONAL COMPOSITION

The uniquely identifiable composition (in terms of ingredients) that was first established prior to the Second World War and passed down through generations by oral or other means (taking into account cases where composition was abandoned for a time and then reinstated) and when necessary is differentiated from the composition defined by the generally recognised characteristics of the wider food group to which the product belongs.

□ TRADITIONAL TYPE OF PRODUCTION AND/OR PROCESSING

The production and/or processing of a food that:

- Has been transmitted from generation to generation through oral tradition or other means and
- Has been applied prior to the Second World War and remains in use (taking into account cases where composition was abandoned

for a time and then reinstated) despite its adjustment to binding rules from national or EU food hygiene regulations or the incorporation of technological progress, under the condition that production and/or processing remains in line with methods used originally and that the food's intrinsic features such as its physical, chemical, microbiological or organoleptic features are maintained.

Further definitions of traditional foods and products can be found in annex 1.

### **3. Consumer perception of traditional foods**

Definitions of traditional foods may not necessarily reflect the opinions of consumers. In the course of TRUEFOOD, an integrated project aiming to introduce suitable innovations into the traditional food industry, a survey examining the perception of traditional foods among consumers was carried out in 6 European countries (Belgium, Italy, France, Spain, Poland and Norway). In each country, around 800 participants aged 20-70 years were interviewed (Vanhonacker *et al.* 2008).

The TRUEFOOD working definition of traditional foods, which is based on local production, authenticity, commercial availability and gastronomic heritage (see annex 1), was largely confirmed in this quantitative pan-European study. The study revealed that European consumers seem to define traditional foods as well-known foods, that one can eat often and that were already eaten by grandparents. In contrast, attributes such as natural and low-processed were less strongly associated with traditional foods. The least cross-country differences were found for statements related to the common character of the product and its long existence; these are the statements most strongly associated with traditional foods. The highest between-country discrepancies were found for specific characters of the product such as specific sensory properties. These were strongly associated with traditional foods among Polish consumers, and were associated to a lesser degree in Italy, France and Spain. The weakest associations between specific sensory properties and traditional foods were found in Belgium and Norway. The same trend was found for the association of traditional foods with special occasions and those that contain a story (Vanhonacker *et al.* 2008).

Overall, the image of traditional foods seemed to be very positive in all the examined countries. More detailed results of the survey can be found in table 1.

**Table 1: Consumer perception of traditional food products in Belgium (BE), France (FR), Italy (IT), Norway (NO), Poland (PL) and Spain (ES).** Expressed as mean association on a scale of 1-7 (1= don't agree, 7= totally agree). The highest association is black bold, the lowest grey italic.

Item	BE	FR	IT	NO	PL	ES
When I think about traditional food, I think about food products that my parents and <b>grandparents already ate</b>	<b>5.84</b>	5.75	5.67	<b>6.10</b>	6.14	<b>6.05</b>
I consider traditional food as <b>well-known</b> food	5.58	5.46	5.59	5.79	5.74	5.84
The availability of traditional food is strongly <b>dependent on the season</b>	5.49	<b>5.90</b>	5.68	5.11	5.19	5.65
According to me, traditional food is typically something one <b>can eat very often</b>	5.37	5.53	5.18	4.98	<b>4.79</b>	5.45
Traditional food has an <b>authentic recipe</b>	5.07	5.49	<b>5.78</b>	5.26	5.84	5.80
To me, a traditional food product is associated with <b>specific sensory properties</b>	4.93	5.57	5.71	5.17	5.95	5.73
Traditional food has an <b>authentic origin of raw material</b>	4.80	5.36	5.44	5.24	5.61	5.39
A traditional food product is typically produced ' <b>in grandmother's way</b> '	4.70	5.39	5.36	5.17	5.87	5.55
Traditional food has an <b>authentic production process</b>	4.65	5.04	5.39	4.98	5.39	5.21
The key steps of the production of traditional food must be done <b>locally</b>	4.45	5.05	5.20	<b>4.10</b>	4.90	5.31
When it comes to food products, for me traditional food means <b>natural, low processed</b>	4.40	4.82	<b>4.41</b>	4.24	4.84	5.17
A traditional food product must <b>contain a story</b>	3.90	4.98	5.51	4.53	<b>6.16</b>	5.37
When I think about traditional food, I think about <b>special occasions</b> and/or celebrations	<b>3.89</b>	<b>4.71</b>	4.86	5.07	5.30	<b>4.38</b>

Source: Vanhonacker *et al.* 2008

## 4. Traditional foods across Europe

### *Historical influences on traditional foods*

*“The history of a society’s food is useful in highlighting the interdependence, delicate balance and, at times, tension over efforts to safeguard cultural identity whilst allowing and promoting cultural diversity”*

Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe  
(Davis 2005, p.9)

When speaking about the traditional cuisine of a country, we actually refer to something that is rather diverse. There are some foods and dishes that may be traditional across a whole country, but usually a variety of local traditional foods exist. Thus, the traditional cuisine of a country includes and reflects a collection of traditional foods from different regions. The vegetable stew *Ratatouille* for example originates from the south of France, whereas the famous *Crêpes* originally came from Brittany. However, both dishes are nowadays widely consumed across the whole country, and – in the context of the EuroFIR definition of traditional foods – they are considered traditional foods consumed throughout France, although they originate from a more restricted geographical area.

Over time, traditional foods have been influenced by many factors. One of these factors is the availability of raw materials; traditional food is thus influenced by agricultural habits and location. Regions at a lower altitude, for example, have different vegetation compared to regions at high altitudes; countries without access to the sea usually have a lower availability of fish and seafood compared to those with a large coastal area. However, not only the location of a region, but also its history has influenced the dietary patterns of its inhabitants.

Even typical local recipes are often the result of cultural exchange. The typical half-moon shape of the French *Croissant* for example was introduced by Marie Antoinette, Austrian Archduchess and later wife of Louis XVI, imitating the traditional Viennese *Kipferl*. In this case, however, the recipe of the dough itself did not change. The Italian wife of a Polish King, Bona Sforza d'Aragona, introduced new vegetables from her home country to Poland, which influenced traditional Polish cooking.

Many European countries have experienced numerous occupations by different cultures over the centuries – the Celts, the Romans, the Turks and many others. All of these peoples, particularly if they stayed in a country for some time, left their culinary traces. But also cultures that came to Europe without occupying a country, such as Jewish people, have influenced the traditional foods in many regions.

Borders across Europe have changed repeatedly over the centuries. The Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy for example, included at its peak the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, parts of Romania, Montenegro, Poland, Ukraine, Italy and Serbia besides Austria and Hungary. This multi-cultural empire led to a great deal of cultural and culinary exchange between these different nations.

The discovery of the New World and the development of international trade, and thus the availability of foods that had not been previously available, have also influenced traditional foods across Europe. Potatoes for example – nowadays the basis of many European traditional dishes – first found their way to Europe from South America in the 16th century, started to spread across Europe in the 18th century, and potato cultivation reached its peak in the 19th century (Toussaint-Samat 1987). Also other foods that are nowadays frequently used ingredients of many European traditional dishes were introduced from the New World, such as maize, sunflowers, pumpkins (marrows), sweet potatoes, Jerusalem artichoke, vanilla, and tomatoes – a fruit now found in many traditional Mediterranean dishes.

Traditional foods and dishes have also been influenced by religious habits and beliefs. Certain culinary rules have always been a part of different religions. In Europe, where Christians, Muslims and Jewish people have lived next to each other for centuries, each religion has defined itself in terms of diet and food taboos (Parasecoli 2005).

Although playing an important role in cultural identity, traditional foods have experienced continuous modifications, which reflect the history of a country or a region.

### ***A selection of traditional foods in European countries***

The number of traditional foods throughout Europe is almost endless; each country and region has a variety of traditional recipes. The thirteen countries participating in the EuroFIR Traditional Foods work package had to select five traditional foods, which were analysed for their nutritional composition (see table 2).

The analytical data are now available for inclusion in national food composition tables and databases. This provides a better documentation of traditional foods, and at the same time fills gaps in food composition databases.

**Table 2: Food components analysed**

---

*EuroFIR funds*

- Water
- Ash
- Total N – proteins
- Total fat
- Individual fatty acids (SFA/MUFA/PUFA)
- Cholesterol
- Total starch
- Total sugars
- Individual sugars (glucose, fructose, galactose, sucrose, maltose, lactose)

- Oligosaccharides
- Dietary fibre
- Minerals (Na, K, Ca, Mg, Fe, Cu, P, Se, Zn)

*Non-EuroFIR funds*

- Vitamin C
  - Quercetin
  - Luteolin
  - B-Sitosterol
  - Caffeic acid
- 

The selection process to choose the five traditional foods to be analysed had to be the same in each partner country. Therefore, standard procedures for a systematic investigation of traditional foods across Europe were developed and then applied in the participating countries. The selection process was based on three main steps: documentation, prioritisation, and evaluation and selection (Trichopoulou *et al.* 2007; see table 3).

Each selected food was prepared using a traditional recipe, traditional ingredients and traditional preparation methods from the region it is traditionally consumed. In most cases the recording of the traditional recipe took place at a local household, although in some cases elsewhere, such as a local butcher shop. Traditional techniques and recipes were followed in all

situations. The recipe and preparation methods were documented on paper and with pictures; video-taping was optional. Samples of the traditional foods were collected and sent to laboratories for analysis.

**Table 3: Systematic study of traditional foods**

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1) DOCUMENTATION

- Description of each food
- Documentation of the traditional character of the food according to the EuroFIR definition
- Consumption data on the food or the wider food category
- Availability or not of compositional data for the food
- Coded references linked to all above fields of information.

2) PRIORITISATION

- Documentation of traditional character
- Availability and quality of composition data
- Consumption data
  - or 'frequent' and 'not frequent'
- Health implications
- Marketing potential.

### 3) EVALUATION AND SELECTION

- Lists of foods per country were evaluated based on the above criteria
  - Prioritised list of traditional foods per country was elaborated
  - From the prioritised list, 5 traditional foods per country were selected to represent the various elements of a meal:
    - 1 starter
    - 2 main dishes
    - 1 dessert
    - 1 other special traditional food.
- 

Based on these three main steps, the final five traditional foods were selected by each partner. Although these are not representative of the traditional cuisine of a whole country, a first step was made towards better documentation of traditional foods in Europe.

## ***Austria/Österreich***

### *Traditional Austrian cuisine*

Austrian cuisine is often confused with the traditional Viennese cuisine. This is because many traditional Viennese dishes, such as the *Wiener Schnitzel* (Viennese Schnitzel), *Apfelstrudel* (apple strudel) or the *Sachertorte* (chocolate cake created by the renowned traditional restaurant/hotel *Sacher*) are internationally well-known and are regarded as typical Austrian dishes. However, there is a huge diversity of traditional foods across the different regions, and the Austrian cuisine, like many other national cuisines, can be considered a collection of different regional traditional foods.

The numerous nationalities and cultures within the former Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy have influenced the Austrian cuisine to a large extent. Depending on the location of the Austrian regions, their cuisines have been influenced by different nations; the north of Austria was influenced by the Czech cuisine, the east of Austria shows major Hungarian influences, whereas the south of Austria has been influenced by Italy, Slovenia and other countries situated south of Austria. The cuisine of Vienna, having been a melting pot of all these nationalities within the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy, shows influences of all nationalities of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy. Even the emperor Kaiser Franz Joseph himself inspired Austrian cuisine; one traditional dessert was named after him (*Kaiserschmarrn*). According to a legend, a traditional dish was refined with some delicious ingredients to honour the Kaiser on one of his hunting trips to the Austrian region of Salzkammergut.

Traditional Austrian dishes are often meat based; mainly pork or beef, but wild game (mainly hare and deer) is also very popular. Because Austria has no coastal regions, fish plays a rather minor role in the Austrian cuisine, but can be found in traditional dishes of regions close to big lakes. In many Austrian households carp is traditionally served on Christmas Eve.

Vegetables commonly consumed in Austria are leafy and root vegetables and different types of beans and pumpkins. In traditional cooking, maize and rye are very popular as well. Austrian cuisine also includes a range of desserts and pastries such as *Apfelstrudel*, *Mohnkuchen* (poppy seed cake) or *Sachertorte*.

Selected Austrian traditional foods

● **Vegetable Soup/Gemüsesuppe**

This vegetable soup is made of vegetables that are typical for Austria, and are widely grown in most regions: cauliflower, Brussels sprout, carrots, celery, leek and green beans. The vegetables used can vary from region to region and from household to household. Salt and soup seasoning is used for flavouring.



● **Viennese Schnitzel/Wiener Schnitzel**

The *Wiener Schnitzel* is said to originate from the Italian *Cotoletta alla Milanese*. It was the favourite meal of General Radetzky who introduced it to Vienna. Traditionally, veal was used for the classic Viennese Schnitzel, but nowadays pork meat has become more popular and is regularly used. The typical crust is of flour, whisked eggs and breadcrumbs.



● **Cabbage noodles/Krautfleckerl**

This rather simple dish is based on noodles and cabbage with some added bacon and onions. White wine and caraway give it a very special flavour.



● **Potato dumplings/Erdäpfelknödel**

Very similar to the cuisine of bordering Bohemia, Lower Austria is famous for its dumplings. They are made of plain dough, which can be based on flour, breadcrumbs or potatoes, and are common side dishes to meat- or vegetable-based dishes. The only ingredients of potato dumplings are potatoes and salt.



● **Apple strudel/Apfelstrudel**

Apples mixed with a sweet breadcrumb mix including raisins are filled into a strudel pastry jacket based on wheat flour. Rum and cinnamon give this dish a wonderful flavour. As with Bohemian cooking, sweet meals (*Mehlspeisen*) are often served as main courses. Apple strudel can be served warm, often with custard, or cold.



**Belgium/België/Belgique**

*Traditional Belgian cuisine*

Belgium is a melting pot for two different language families: Germanic and Romance. The inhabitants of the south of Belgium (Wallonia) are French speaking, whereas the inhabitants of the north (Flanders) are Dutch speaking. A small part of Belgium near the German border is also German speaking. These three languages form the concept of three communities. To govern Belgium some powers are given to three different regions: Flemish region, Walloon region and the Brussels-Capital region. The Brussels-Capital

region is officially bilingual, Flemish and French are spoken. The regions that nowadays form Belgium have been invaded by different nations over many centuries: the Romans, Vikings, French, Spanish, Austrians, Dutch, English and Germans. These invaders have all left their traces and influenced the Flemish, Walloon and Belgian cuisine. Despite these influences, a cuisine of their own was developed and has existed since the Middle Age (Pappas 2008a). At times, however, the French cuisine has been dominant in Belgium (Jacobs and Fraikin 2005). The 'bourgeoisie' preferred to eat as in Paris (Scholliers 1993) and 90% of the first Belgian cookbook – don't forget Belgium has only existed since 1830 – is devoted to French cuisine (Cauderlier 1861). But some of the regional traditions were included, such as *Potage au lait battu* (milk soup), *Hochepot* (vegetable and meat stew) or *Bifteck aux pommes de terres frites* (beefsteak with fries). Today Belgian people proudly say that their food is cooked with French finesse and served with German generosity (Pappas 2008a).

Probably the most commonly known food originating from Belgium are fries. As they are called *French fries* in some countries, they are rarely associated with Belgium. They are called *Frieten* in Flemish and *Frites* in French. Belgium is also famous for its variety and quality of beers, their fine chocolates, their waffles, mussels and the Belgian endive, which is also known as chicory. The combination of bitter, sour and sweet in one dish is also characteristic of the Belgian cuisine. Typical Belgian dishes are *Konijn met pruimen en geuze/Lapin à la gueuze* (rabbit stewed in naturally fermented beer from the Brussels region), *Stoemp* (a dish based on mashed potatoes and vegetables, served with sausages), *Salade Liégeoise/Luikse salade* (salad with bacon, potatoes, French beans, onions and vinegar), *Hespenrolletjes met witloof/Chicon au jambon* (braised chicory, wrapped in ham in a cheese sauce topped with grilled grated cheese) and *Mosselen met frieten/Moules frites* (mussels and French fries). Other well known dishes include *Waterzooi* (soup/stew made of chicken, potatoes and vegetables), *Vlaamse stoofkarbonaden/Carbonades à la flamande* (stew made of beef, onions,

beer and mustard) and *Paling in het groen/Anguilles au vert* (fried eel in a sauce made of green vegetables and herbs).

*Selected Belgian traditional foods*

● **Shrimp croquette/Garnaalkroket**

Traditional shrimp croquettes are made with brown North Sea shrimp. The croquettes are served with a lemon wedge and some fried parsley. They are a traditional starter on many menus. Locally made shrimp croquettes can also often be bought in fish stores.



● **Flemish stew/Vlaamse stoofkarbonaden**

*Vlaamse stoofkarbonaden* or *Carbonades à la flamande* is a recipe that dates back to medieval times. This sweet-and-sour stew is made with an old Flemish brown beer. Stored in oak barrels this brew is known for its sour taste. Beef and onions are, beside beer, the main ingredients.



- **Meat loaf, meat balls/Vleesbrood, vleesballetjes**

Meat balls served with sour cherries used to be a traditional dish during outdoor fairs. The sour cherry sauce is typical for Belgium. Main ingredients of this dish are minced meat (either beef/veal or beef/pork), eggs, breadcrumbs and onions. The sour cherries are poached in sugar syrup. Instead of meatballs the meat mixture can also be baked as a loaf and cut into slices before serving.



- **Gratin of Belgian endives with ham and cheese sauce/Gegratineerde hespenrolletjes met witloof en kaassaus**

Belgian endives, also known as chicory, were first cultivated in Schaarbeek (Brussels) in the middle of the 19th century. However, recipes featuring the white chicory sprouts can be found in cookbooks as early as 1560. Braised endives are wrapped in cooked ham, covered with cheese sauce, and baked in the oven. They are traditionally served with mashed potatoes.



● **Belgian (Brussels) waffles/Brusselse beslagwafel**

Waffles, baked on hot irons, are traditionally eaten on certain holidays and at local village fairs. The art of waffle making is so prevalent in Belgium that almost every household has a waffle iron in the home. The main ingredients of this recipe are flour, eggs, milk, water, butter/margarine, sugar and yeast.



**Bulgaria/БЪЛГАРИЯ**

*Traditional Bulgarian cuisine*

Bulgaria is situated in the south-east of Europe, with borders to Greece, Turkey, Serbia, Romania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Bulgarian cuisine is mainly proto-Bulgarian, Thracian and Slavic, but shows Turkish, Greek and Middle Eastern influences. It is a blend of European, Oriental and Mediterranean cuisines. The Ottoman Turks occupied the Bulgarian Medieval Kingdom, and they brought to the Balkans many new fruits and other varieties of existing local crop (Gavrilova 2005).

The climate in Bulgaria is very temperate and thus ideal for the cultivation of a huge variety of fruits, vegetables and herbs. This allows a particular diversity in the Bulgarian cuisine. Salad served with every meal and cold and hot soups are typical of this south-eastern European country. Bulgaria has a diversity of dairy products, including *Kiselo mliako* (a yogurt), white brined cheese and also a variety of wines and other local alcoholic drinks, such as *Rakia*, *Mastika* and *Menta*.

## Traditional Foods in Europe

Traditional Bulgarian foods include bread and pies, pulses (legumes), fresh and pickled vegetables, salads, soups, stews, casseroles, stuffed vegetables, kebabs, spicy sausages (*Pastarma*, *Lukanka*) and cheese dishes. Meat (pork, chicken, lamb and beef), fish and vegetarian dishes are served with staple foods such as rice or bulgur wheat. Typical dishes include *Banitsa* (Bulgarian pastry), *Lyutenitsa* (pepper relish), *Sladkish ot tikva* (pumpkin pie), *Tarator* (cold soup), *Hotchpotch* (vegetable and meat stew), stuffed cabbage/vine leaves, and *Moussaka*, which shows the Greek influence. *Baklava* – reflecting the Turkish influence – is a popular dessert.

### Selected Bulgarian traditional foods

#### ● Cold soup Tarator/Tarator

*Tarator* is a traditional Bulgarian starter, and popular on warm summer days. Its main ingredients are cucumber, yogurt and walnuts. Garlic and dill are used for seasoning. In some versions of *Tarator* the cucumber is substituted by other vegetables such as marrow, celery, lettuce, salad or carrots.



● **Veal ‘Priest’s’ stew/Teleshko ‘Popska’ yahnia**

This meat stew can be cooked with veal, mutton, beef, poultry or rabbit. The basis of *Teleshko ‘Popska’ yahnia* includes shallots, fatty meat and various spices that give the dish a pleasant taste. Because of the large amount of shallots used, it is also called ‘onion stew’. The name ‘Priest’s’ is associated with the national holiday rituals in autumn, for ‘Petkovden’, where traditionally cooked food is consumed.



● **Nettle with rice/Kopriva s oriz**

During the feasting period before Easter Bulgarians regularly consume leafy vegetables such as nettles, dock, spinach and sorrel. Nettles are used throughout the country, but are cooked differently in different regions and are combined in various ways with other products. The combination of nettles with rice is a typical seasonal vegetarian dish.



● **Pepper relish/Lyutenitsa**

Pepper relish is a vegetable mash (sauce) made of tomatoes, peppers and spices. Some newer recipes also add aubergines, carrots, potatoes, or onions. Pepper relish can be served as an appetiser or a garnish. In the past it was often combined with leeks, white beans or cheese and was eaten as a main dish in the Bulgarian menu.



● **Pumpkin pastry/Sladkish ot tikva**

The autumn in Bulgaria provides a rich variety of fruit and vegetables. Among them pumpkin is one of the most popular. For decades pumpkins have been present at Bulgarian tables as pumpkin pastry *Sladkish ot tikva* – even at Christmas. Together with compote of dried fruit, milk with rice, semolina pastry and yogurt, pumpkin pastry and pies are typical national desserts.



## ***Denmark/Danmark***

### *Traditional Danish cuisine*

The cuisine of Denmark is comparable to that of other Scandinavian countries and reflects the relatively cold and wet climate. Up to the middle of the 19th century most households in Denmark lived on local, home grown food that could be stored without a refrigerator. Important preservation methods were salting, pickling and drying. Rye, barley, dried peas, salt pork,

pickled herring and cured dried fish were the basis of the traditional cuisine at that time. In winter, kale was the only fresh vegetable, but later on Dutch cabbage, carrots and other root vegetables, and potatoes were introduced. Retail trade expanded and fresh food became available (Boyhus 2005).

In the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, roast meats with gravy and potatoes, and consommé with flour and meat dumplings followed by boiled beef in a sweet and sour horseradish sauce with currants became standard. The sweet and sour flavour was characteristic for this period. Different meats such as goose, pork or duck were roasted with apples and prunes, accompanied by sweet and sour red cabbage and caramelised potatoes. Milk became readily available in larger quantities, and many dishes were and still are based on a milk based sauce. In particular, vegetables are often served in a 'white sauce'. Minced meat also became popular during this period. Old preservation methods for fish, such as curing or cold-smoking, were replaced by hot-smoking, and smoked fish became another speciality. Sweet soups, such as apple soup or fruit soup, are probably the foods that most distinguish the Danish cuisine from other international cuisines (Boyhus 2005).

Being one of the world's largest exporters of pork and pork products (e.g. ham and bacon), pork and pork by-products such as liver play an important role in the Danish diet. Thus, *Leverpostej* (liver paste) and *Spegepølse* (fermented sausage, salami) are staple foods in most Danish households. Likewise, cheese production is extensive and comprises traditional products like *Rygeost* (a smoked fresh cheese with caraway seeds). Denmark is well-known for its Danish pastries (known in Denmark as *Wienerbrød* – Vienna bread), *Smørrebrød* (open sandwiches) and *Frikadeller* (fried meatballs).

Although international and French cooking became known in Denmark, it was the people in Danish homes that influenced the traditional cuisine rather than chefs of great international hotels.

*Selected Danish traditional foods*

● **Patty shells with chicken and asparagus/Tarteletter med høns i asparges**

Patty shells are little pots made from wheat flour. These are baked and then filled with a thick stew of asparagus and chicken.

● **Hamburger steak/Hakkebøf**

This traditional Danish food has been cooked in almost all Danish homes for a long time. The way of preparing it varies from family to family and from one area to another. The steaks are made from minced beef, are breaded in flour and then fried. They are served with potatoes, and topped with gravy and fried onions.



● **Fried plaice/Stegt rødspætte**

Stegt rødspætte has been served for many decades. Pieces of plaice are breaded in egg and breadcrumbs, and then pan-fried. They are usually served with potatoes and browned butter, parsley butter, parsley sauce, salsa verde or remoulade (similar to tartar sauce). Cold or hot potato salad, cucumber salad or gooseberry stew are typical accompaniments.



● **Strawberry stew with cream/Jordbægrød med fløde**

This dessert is made of strawberries boiled in water. Sugar and a thickener are added, and it is usually served with milk or cream. Vanilla can be used for flavouring.

● **Apple charlotte/Æblekage**

Apple charlotte is a famous Danish dessert. Apples are boiled and mashed; breadcrumbs and sugar are fried in butter. A layer of apples is then topped by a layer of the breadcrumb mix. Whipped cream and fruit jelly are used as garnish.



## ***Germany/Deutschland***

### *Traditional German cuisine*

Germany is the most populous country in the European Union with more than 80 million inhabitants. The German territory has not always been one single country but for many centuries it consisted of numerous small units, such as principalities, petty kingdoms, cities, counties and dioceses. Thus, it is not surprising that there is no such thing as 'German cuisine'. Germany has a variety of regional cuisines. The traditional cuisine of the south-west includes plenty of white bread and noodles, whereas many traditional dishes of the Baltic Sea coast include potatoes and a variety of spices and seasonings. Fish has been very popular along the Baltic and North Sea coasts and can be found in many traditional dishes, while traditionally fish has not been consumed in any quantity in regions further away from the sea. In Bavaria the traditional cuisine is rich in meat and meat products, in particular pork

(Hirschfelder and Schönberger 2005). These regional differences seem to be less obvious in the eating habits of Germans today.

The different regions across Germany were influenced by the countries surrounding it. The traditional cuisine in the north-west of Germany was influenced by the Belgian cuisine, whereas the east shows Polish influences, and in the regions close to the Czech border influences of the Czech cuisine can be found (Hirschfelder and Schönberger 2005). Many Bavarian dishes are similar to dishes commonly consumed in Austria.

The cuisines across Germany are generally rich in meat. In particular, sausages are very popular and can be considered a German 'fast food'. A variety of sausages with different seasonings and flavours are available throughout the country. Germany is also known for its variety of breads, which are an important component of the German diet. The breads are typically based on rye and/or wheat and are rather solid and dark. Apple desserts, such as apple cake, apple pancakes and apple strudel are popular. *Stollen* (sweetened yeast bread containing nuts and fruit) and *Lebkuchen* (richly spiced ginger biscuits sweetened with honey) are commonly consumed at Christmas time.

*Selected German traditional foods*

● **Black Forest smoked ham/Schwarzwälder Schinken**

The *Schwarzwälder Schinken* is a specialty from the German Black Forest. This ham has been produced for centuries in the Black Forest region and its recipe has been passed on by word of mouth from generation to generation. The meat used is leg of pork; it is cured with salt and herbs, cold-dried and smoked using fir wood.



- **Thuringian fried sausage/Thüringer Rostbratwurst**

The *Thüringer Rostbratwurst* was first mentioned in 1432, where butchers proposed a law of 'purity requirements' for several sausages. The *Thüringer Rostbratwurst* is a long (20 cm), thin (2.6-2.8 cm diameter) fried sausage made of natural gut filled with pork meat.



- **Swabian ravioli/Maultaschen**

*Maultaschen* are a Swabian specialty with centuries of tradition. There are many legends around their origin, which have been passed on orally from generation to generation, and have been fixed in text only recently. *Maultaschen* are quadratic or half-moon in shape and comprise two-layer pasta dough forming a bag. They are usually filled with seasoned ground meat and spinach.



- **Dresden fruit loaf/Dresdener Stollen**

Baking a fruit loaf is an old tradition in Dresden, a city situated in the east of Germany. The history of the *Stollen* can be traced back to the 14th century. It is typically made around Christmas and symbolises Jesus wrapped in a blanket. The *Dresdner Stollen* is a sweet Christmas pastry, made of yeast dough, raisins, almonds, candied lemon and orange peel.



● **Pumpernickel bread/Pumpernickel Brot**

Pumpernickel bread is one of the most famous and typical German breads. It has been baked in the North-Rhine Westphalia region for centuries. It is made from sourdough based on rye, and it is extremely dark and aromatic.



**Greece/Ελλάδα**

*Traditional Greek cuisine*

Greece has been a cross roads of people and civilisations for millennia, and this together with the climate has shaped the Greek cuisine. Traditional Greek dishes can be traced back to ancient Greece, the Hellenistic and the Byzantine periods. Greek cuisine has also incorporated influences from other civilisations, such as the Persian, the Roman and the Ottoman food cultures. Many names of Greek dishes reveal Turkish, Arabic or Persian sources, such as *Moussaka*, *Baklava*, *Tzatziki* or *Kefthetes*. Some of these dishes, however, may have existed prior to the Ottoman times, but given a Turkish name later on. Modern Greek cuisine is an integral part of the past and the present, with many of its aspects traced in the traditional practices of distant times.

The traditional Greek diet is generally considered to be healthy. The cultivation of fruit, vegetables, legumes and cereals is favoured and, therefore, these foods are consumed in large amounts. Olive oil is a staple food used with most meals, often in abundant amounts. Fish and seafood are consumed frequently, particularly in the coastal regions and on the numerous Greek islands. Meat, predominantly lamb, goat or pork, has in the past been consumed mainly on special occasions, although now intake has increased considerably. Wine is an important part of the Greek lifestyle, and is

consumed regularly but in moderation, most often as a part of a meal. Dairy products are usually consumed in the form of cheese and yogurts; feta cheese is a world famous traditional Greek food.

*Selected Greek traditional foods*

● **Leek sausages/Λουκάνικα με πράσο**

Sausages have been eaten in Greece since ancient times. They are prepared throughout the country but the recipe may vary from region to region. The recipe described here uses leeks and has a distinct organoleptic character obtained through the maturation of the pork meat with several spices.



● **Rabbit stew/Κουνέλι στιφάδο**

Κουνέλι στιφάδο (*Kouneli stifado*) is the Greek name for rabbit stew. The word *stifado* comes from the ancient Greek word *tifos*, meaning smoke or steam. It refers to a food preparation method that is based on the simmering of meat (usually rabbit, hare or beef but may also apply to non-meat dishes) with plenty of onions and various seasonings in tomato sauce.



● **Chickpea soup/Ρεβίθια σούπα**

The cultivation of chickpeas in Greece goes back to the 3rd – 4th millennium BC, and ever since, chickpeas have been prepared and eaten in various ways. The chickpea soup represents a recipe widely known throughout Greece today. The main ingredients are chickpeas, water, onions, olive oil and lemon juice.



● **Must jelly/Μουσταλευριά**

Fresh must, collected by pressing grapes, can be used either for wine-making or, after a process known as the 'cutting' of the must, for the preparation of a variety of sweet dishes such as marmalades, spoon sweets, *Petimezi* (thick syrup of condensed must), must cookies and must jelly. This must jelly is made from 'cut' must, semolina, almonds, flavoured with cinnamon and topped with sesame seeds.



● **Cherry tomato of Santorini/Τοματάκι Σαντορίνης**

The cherry tomato was introduced to the island of Santorini at the end of the 19th century. The local environment, the genetic profile of the specific cherry tomato plant and the empirical agricultural methods developed by the inhabitants of the area contributed to the production of a distinctive food commodity widely used in a variety of ways in the contemporary local cuisine.



## ***Iceland/Ísland***

### *Traditional Icelandic cuisine*

Iceland is located immediately south of the Arctic Circle, and it is its location that is the major influence on its traditional foods. Icelandic people were very poor in the Middle Ages, as were so many in Europe; fighting for survival was a way of life for nearly all Icelanders (Jónsson 2005). Although the winters are not as cold as many people think, rainfall is high and the growing season during the summer months is rather short. The vegetation of Iceland is subarctic, with mainly grasses and lichens, and very limited woodland (1%). In Icelandic cuisine, meat, dairy products and fish predominate. Icelandic traditional foods are thus based on meat (lamb, lamb offal), fish (stockfish, shark, skate) and dairy products (soft-cheese, whey). Until the 19th century there was almost no cultivation of vegetables (only cabbage, turnip, rutabaga and potato), no cultivation of cereals (any supplies had to be imported), and the only fruits growing were wild berries. Other products included traditional bread varieties and Icelandic moss and dulse.

Due to the limited woodland and hence fuel for cooking in earlier times, Icelanders had to eat most of their meals uncooked. The limited woodland also affected the availability of salt. Although it could be produced from sea water, wood needed as fuel for its production was scarce. Due to the lack of salt, traditional preservation methods commonly used in Iceland were drying, pickling in acid whey, fermentation and curing. The typical taste of traditional Icelandic foods is very much influenced by these preservation methods (Jónsson 2005).

At the beginning of the 17th century the Danish King imposed a trade monopoly on Iceland, which lasted nearly two centuries. The Danes brought new knowledge to Iceland that still can be seen in the Icelandic cuisine.

Today, fish is Iceland's most important food resource, so unsurprisingly, fish (particularly haddock and cod) features prominently in Icelandic traditional cuisine. Fish is eaten in a number of ways, but traditionally it was mainly consumed dried. Smoked lamb (*Hangikjöt*) is a popular traditional meat product. Dairy products also play an important role in the Icelandic diet. The only traditional cheese, *Skyr* (skimmed milk curd), is similar to thick yoghurt. It is usually eaten during breakfast or as a snack.

Selected Icelandic traditional foods

● **Cured Greenland shark/Kæstur hákarl**

Cured shark is regarded as a supreme delicacy by many Icelanders, preferably consumed with a shot of Icelandic aquavit, *Brennivín*. However, people who have never eaten shark before may find the sharp, ripe taste almost repugnant. The curing of shark is considered an art, requiring know-how and talent, as well as the right climatic and environmental conditions for the desired outcome.



● **Smoked lamb/Hangikjöt**

*Hangikjöt* is a traditional holiday food, and for most Icelanders the aroma and taste of cooked smoked lamb marks the beginning of the Christmas season. The boiled meat is cut into thin slices and served either warm or cold. Boiled potatoes in white sauce, along with red cabbage and canned green peas, are the traditional accompaniments.



● **Pickled blood sausage/Súršaður blóðmör**

Pickled blood sausage signifies two important aspects of Icelandic food tradition: the use of whey for pickling and food preservation, and heavy reliance on sheep products for sustenance. *Súršaður blóðmör* is mostly eaten with oat meal porridge or with *Skyr*, a yoghurt-like product. It may also be fried, often with some sugar sprinkled on top and served with potatoes and mashed swede.



● **Skyr**

*Skyr* is a type of fresh cheese that evolved in Iceland as a way of preserving milk and maximising its food value. It is made from skimmed milk, leaving the cream to make butter. *Skyr* is still a popular traditional food and for centuries it has been one of the most commonly consumed dairy products in Iceland. Even though *Skyr* is by definition a type of cheese, it is a yoghurt-like product. Nowadays, sweet varieties with fruit are very popular.



● **Stockfish, haddock/Harðfiskur, hert ýsa**

Dried fish, or stockfish, was for centuries one of the staple foods of the Icelandic diet. Preparation takes place during the autumn or winter months. The fillets are washed in brine then hung up on hooks in an open shack by the seaside. The fish is kept hanging for 4-6 weeks, depending on the weather. Before consumption the fish is beaten in order to soften the hardened flesh.



## ***Italy/Italia***

### *Traditional Italian cuisine*

As in most other countries, the Italian cuisine has also experienced various influences from neighbouring regions, foreign reigns and the discovery of the New World. The Italian cuisine can claim roots going back to the 4th century BC. During the Roman Empire, the Romans employed Greek bakers to produce their breads and they imported sheep cheese from Sicily because its inhabitants were known as excellent cheese makers. Contrary to earlier beliefs, pasta was not introduced by Marco Polo importing it from China, but it was introduced by Arabs during the invasions of the 8th century to conquer Sicily. They also introduced spinach, almonds and rice. The Normans later introduced stockfish, which is still very popular in Italy. Commonly used preservation methods during the Middle Ages were curing, drying and the use of brine and salt. The northern region of what is nowadays called Italy showed a mixture of Roman and Germanic influences, whereas the southern parts continued to reflect the Arab influences, which is similar to what we nowadays know as Mediterranean cuisine.

In the past, parts of Italy were governed by Spain, France and Austria, and their influence on the cuisines of the respective regions can still be found in many dishes. In fact the tomato, one of the most important ingredients in Italian cuisine, was introduced to Europe by the Spanish from the Americas. It grew easily in Mediterranean climates and soon became very popular. Initially, this fruit was used merely as a table decoration in some areas but later it was incorporated into the local cuisine.

Italian cuisine is probably one of the most popular cuisines throughout the world. In many countries Italian restaurants with typical Italian dishes such as pizza and pasta can be found in nearly every town. However, the Italian cuisine has much more to offer than the dishes typically available outside of Italy, and there are also major differences between Italian regions. In the north of Italy, an alpine region with a considerable proportion of German speaking people, less olive oil, pasta or tomato sauce are traditionally consumed compared to the southern regions of Italy. Butter, rice, corn (for polenta), cheese and cheese sauces are preferred foods in this region. Much of what the rest of the world considers typical Italian food comes from Central and Southern Italy. Central Italy is renowned for its olive oils, savoury cured meats, cheeses (mainly from sheep's milk) and rich tomato sauces. Beef dishes are consumed more often than in other regions of Italy, and wild boar is very popular in the hills of Tuscany and Umbria. The south of Italy offers countless types of pasta, rich and spicy tomato sauces and pizza. Olive oil is the predominant oil used in cooking and seasoning. Italy is surrounded by the sea, and it is therefore not surprising that fish and seafood are very popular foods. In regions that are not close to the sea, particularly in the north, fresh water fish such as perch, white and salmon trout are commonly consumed (Demetri & Nascimbeni 2008; Istituto di Servizi per il Mercato Agricolo Alimentare 2008).

Italian cuisine encompasses generous use of numerous fragrant fresh, dried, ground or grated herbs and spices to prepare or to complete sauces or dishes: basil is the main herb in pesto sauces, oregano is used to

complete tomato sauces or pizza, and rosemary goes excellently with meat, potatoes or *focaccia*. A mixture of onion, garlic, carrot, celery and oil (usually olive oil), called *Soffritto*, is the first step in the preparation of many dishes, such as stews, soups and sauces.

*Selected Italian traditional foods*

● **Ricotta stuffed roll/Cannoli Siciliani**

The traditional *Cannoli Siciliani* consist of tube-shaped shells of fried pasta, filled with sifted sheep ricotta combined with vanilla, chopped extra dark chocolate and pistachios, *Marsala* wine or other flavourings. In the Catania area chopped pistachios are used for final decoration, in Palermo the cannoli are decorated with fillets of candied orange peel.



● **Vicentina cod/Bacala' alla Vicentina**

*Bacala* is air-dried cod without addition of salt. Dry fish has been a good alternative to fresh fish, which is perishable and can be expensive. Traditionally, *Bacala' alla Vicentina* – dried cod stuffed with onions, flour, grated cheese, finely chopped parsley and sardines, and cooked in milk and olive oil – is served with slices of *Polenta gialla* (yellow corn porridge), providing a dish that is ideal for the cold season.



● **Pizza Napoletana Margherita**

*Pizza Napoletana Margherita* was created in 1889 as a tribute to the Queen of Italy, Margherita di Savoia, on a visit to Naples. The authentic recipe for *Pizza Napoletana Margherita* includes local ingredients such as *San Marzano* tomatoes and *Mozzarella Campana*, made with milk from cows or buffalos raised in the plains of Campania. The base is made of wheat flour, yeast, water and salt.



● **Braised beef with Barolo wine/Brasato al Barolo**

*Brasato al Barolo* is a typical dish of the Piedmont culinary tradition. Originally, large ox cuts were used, which needed to be cooked slowly, but nowadays a piece of about 1 kg is used. Before being cooked, the meat is soaked in about 2 litres of *Barolo* wine for 12 h, together with vegetables and herbs.



● **Tuscan costagnaccio/Castagnaccio**  
**Toscana**

*Castagnaccio* is traditionally a dessert of the Tuscan cuisine. The ingredient that characterises this recipe is the chestnut or, more specifically, chestnut flour. Together with water and olive oil a basic dough can be made, and optional ingredients such as pine nuts, raisins, walnuts, orange peel or rosemary can be added.



## ***Lithuania/Lietuva***

### *Traditional Lithuanian cuisine*

For many centuries Lithuanians across the whole country have cultivated cereal and vegetable crops, and have engaged in animal husbandry, fishing, bee keeping, and growing fruits and vegetables. Mushrooms, berries, wild fruit and nuts have been gathered in the forest. The regional cuisines of Lithuania, however, show some differences. In the north-west of Lithuania porridge and gruel are commonly consumed. The cuisine of the central and north-east regions includes a variety of pancakes and dishes made of cottage cheese, whereas in the south-east countless dishes based on buckwheat are prepared. Those living in the woodlands collect mushrooms and berries that can be found in the forest. These can be found in many dishes of this region. In the south-west of Lithuania, smoked meat dishes and fatty pork are foods commonly eaten. Along the sea coast, fish is commonly consumed (Imbrasiene 2005).

Lithuanian cuisine has features in common with other Eastern European cuisines. Also some German traditions have influenced the Lithuanian cuisine, introducing pork and potato dishes. The fifty years of Soviet

occupation in the 20th century also had a major impact on the eating habits of Lithuanians. Many foods, including meat, cereals and vegetables were less available, and potatoes became a main ingredient and were consumed almost every day. Also mushrooms and wild berries became important staples during this era (Imbrasiene 2005). After the restoration of independence in 1990, Lithuanian traditional dishes using traditional ingredients were once again commonly consumed.

*Selected Lithuanian traditional foods*

● **Cheese 'Džiugas'/Sūris 'Džiugas'**

Cheese 'Džiugas' is a medium-fat (~40%), very hard cheese, made from homogenised, pasteurised cow's milk, treated with enzymes and ripened. It is produced in the western part of Lithuania (Žemaitija), in the region of Telsiai. The name comes from a local mountain called Džiugas.



● **Cold fresh beetroot soup/Šaltibarščiai**

The first cold beetroot soup recipe in Lithuania was documented in 1936. Cold beetroot soup is widely eaten in all Lithuanian counties. It is made of milk, kefir, beetroot, sour cream, eggs, spring onions and fresh cucumber, and is usually served with potatoes.



● **Boiled 'banger'/Kaimiškos dešrelės**

This product is widely eaten throughout Lithuania, especially in the Suvalkija region. *Kaimiškos dešrelės* are made of beef and pork meat and lard, seasoned, and filled into pig or sheep gut. They are then boiled for 20-25 minutes and eaten immediately after cooking.



● **Zeppelins with meat/Cepelinai su mėsa**

*Cepelinai*' (or *Didžkukuliai*) has been a Lithuanian national dish for a long time. It is made from grated potatoes, usually containing ground meat, although sometimes dry cottage cheese (curd) is used instead. The potato dish resembles a Zeppelin in its shape, and is served with sour cream sauce or bits of bacon.



● **Lithuanian biscuits 'Twigs'/Žagarėliai**

*Žagarėliai* are widely eaten throughout Lithuania, especially in the Aukštaitija and Dzūkija districts. They are delicate pastry biscuits that have been deep fried in fat. Lard or oil are usually used for frying. The dough is made of flour, butter, eggs and sugar.



## ***Poland/Polska***

### *Traditional Polish cuisine*

Polish cuisine is complex, like its history, which has had a major impact on the foods that are traditionally eaten. Traditional Polish cuisine combines elements of the culinary traditions of the neighbouring nations Lithuania, Czech Republic and the Ukraine, to name a few. It also shows oriental influences, acquired through both peaceful contacts and conflicts, and was also strongly influenced by Austria, Prussia and Russia, which occupied Poland in the past (Krzysztofek 2005).

Earlier, Bona Sforza d'Aragona from Italy, the wife of a Polish King in the 16th century, also enriched the Polish culinary traditions (Lemnis and Vitry 1981; Adamkowska 2008). She introduced types of vegetable and fruit that were unknown before and popularised other products and dishes from her country of origin. At the end of the 18th century French influences started to spread. Many other western influences are also reflected in Polish culinary traditions. Potatoes, an important staple in the national diet, were brought from Germany and became popular in the second half of the 18th century (Adamkowska 2008). Polish cuisine has also been influenced by Jewish inhabitants over the centuries.

Contemporary Polish cuisine was eventually formed at the beginning of the 19th century and survived in this shape until the Second World War (Adamkowska 2008). During the period of Socialism following the war, cultivation of culinary traditions was difficult due to food shortages and periods of food rationing. The variety of foods clearly decreased, some traditional dishes seemed set to disappear. Krzysztofek (2005) surmises that it may be due to traditional 12 course Christmas Eve meals that many traditional foods were preserved until after 1989. Political, social and economic changes revived awareness of food as a part of Poland's tradition.

Regional diversity constitutes an important feature of Polish culinary traditions. The main meal is traditionally served in the afternoon and starts with a soup, followed by the main dish, and sometimes by a dessert. This main meal is traditionally still consumed at home. Traditional foods and dishes are important in the Polish cuisine and dietary habits. One of the national dishes is *Bigos* (type of stew). There are various recipes for *Bigos* and the typical ingredients include sauerkraut, different meats, sausage, dried mushrooms and prunes. Pork is still the preferred type of meat and fried pork chop served with boiled potatoes and boiled white cabbage is one of the most popular dishes. Despite regional differences in food habits, a high consumption of bread, *Kashas* (grits) and other cereal-based dishes, dumplings and potatoes is typical of the whole country. Pickled foods such as vegetables (cucumbers), fish (herrings) and wild mushrooms are popular as well. Traditional cakes include gingerbread, poppy seed cake, *Faworki* (crisp cakes), Easter *Mazurkas*, doughnuts and *Sękacz* (tree cake).

Renaissance of the traditional, regional cuisine has been clearly visible in the last decade. Many restaurants are serving traditional foods and dishes again. Culinary traditions are also promoted by regional governments.

*Selected Polish traditional foods*

● **Cold soup ‘Chłodnik’/Chłodnik**

Cold soup is very popular in the Polish cuisine. This soup is either made with soured beetroot juice or the juice of soured cucumbers, which is mixed with sour cream or sour whole milk. Minced dill and chive are used for seasoning.



● **Pork chop/Kotlet schabowy**

Pork is by far the most popular type of meat consumed in Poland and a joint of pork or pork chop, traditionally prepared, are among the most popular dishes. Pork chops are dipped in flour, eggs diluted with water, and bread crumbs. They are then fried and served with cabbage and potatoes, and topped with the frying fat.



● **Stew made of sauerkraut, meat and dried mushrooms/Bigos**

*Bigos* is one of the most famous and popular dishes of the Polish cuisine. This stew is made of a large quantity of sauerkraut and a variety of meats and meat products. Onions, dried mushrooms, red wine and different herbs and spices are also added. Prunes give this dish a slightly sweet taste.



● **Tree cake/Sękacz**

The name of this pastry comes from its typical shape, which resembles a tree trunk. It was initially named *Baumkuchen* and was most probably of German origin. *Sękacz* was evident in Polish recipe collections at the turn of 19th and 20th centuries.



● **Smoked ewe's milk cheese/Oscypek**

*Oscypek* is a typical Polish cheese made of ewe's milk. It has been a valuable source of energy for shepherds spending several months a year in the mountains. The cheese is put into brine and then smoked, which gives it its typical taste and colour.



## ***Portugal/Portugal***

### *Traditional Portuguese cuisine*

The Portuguese cuisine is characterised by a variety of rich, filling and fully-flavoured dishes. It is a Mediterranean cuisine, with Atlantic characteristics (high consumption of fish and seafood) and influences from different places around the world.

More than five hundred years ago, Portugal was one of the first countries to explore the 'New World'. During adventurous journeys, new places and people were discovered, and new trading routes were established. There is no doubt that many regions that have been explored or conquered by the Portuguese have influenced the Mediterranean cuisine of this country. In particular, the wide variety of spices used in the Portuguese cuisine reflects the influence of its colonies. The cuisines have in fact been influenced in both directions; many of the colonial regions, such as Brazil or Goa, show similarities with the Portuguese cuisine (Costa 2005). Many Japanese desserts and the *Tempura*, typical of the Japanese cuisine, were brought to Japan by Portuguese tradesmen in the 16th century.

The presence of Romans, Arabs and Moors on the Iberian Peninsula has also left its traces in the Portuguese cuisine. Many of the typical Portuguese

pastry varieties originate from monasteries and convents, such as the renowned *Pastéis de Belém* and *Queijadas de Sintra*, which date back to the 13th century. Also, many desserts, cakes and pastries rich in sugar, for example, illustrate the Arabian influence on Portuguese cooking. The Moorish influences are particularly found in the southern regions and are visible in the use of almonds, honey and orange blossom (Costa 2005).

Olive oil produced in Portugal is commonly used throughout the whole country. Olive oil is the basic oil used for cooking in the Portuguese cuisine. It is also used to make oil and vinegar salad dressing, which is the most commonly used dressing for boiled legumes and fresh salads. Another food that is consumed in many Portuguese regions is salt cod, which is a staple ingredient in many Portuguese dishes. However, salt cod does not originate from Portugal. Cod is fished in northern climes and then salted; this is a tradition dating back to the first Portuguese expeditions to Newfoundland more than five centuries ago (Costa 2005).

The cuisine across Portuguese regions and islands is varied. The food eaten in the north tends to be heavier compared to other regions. Residents of Porto have been known as *Tripeiros* or tripe eaters for centuries. The cuisine is lighter in central and south Portugal with plenty of local fish and vegetables. The traditional dishes of the Portuguese islands include a wide variety of tropical fruits and local meat and fish. Portugal also has many traditional cheeses that are consumed across the whole country. The most common are made from sheep or goat's milk, such as the famous *Queijo da Serra* from Serra da Estrela.

Selected Portuguese traditional foods

● **Green kale soup/Caldo verde**

If Portugal has a national dish, it is without doubt this potato-thickened soup made with chopped kale and seasoned with a dash of olive oil and a slice of *Chouriço*. Due to its simplicity and lightness, it is usually served at the beginning of a meal or as a late supper. The main ingredients of this soup are potatoes, *Galega* kale, onion, garlic and *Chouriço*, and it is often served with corn bread.



● **Cod with chickpeas/Bacalhau com grão**

Dried salt cod, or *Bacalhau*, is very popular in Portugal; it is on every restaurant menu and it is cooked in every home. In this traditional Portuguese dish the dried cod is served with chickpeas and potatoes, sprinkled with onions, garlic and parsley, and seasoned with olive oil, vinegar, pepper and paprika (optional). The dish is garnished with boiled eggs.



- **Portuguese boiled dinner/Cozido à portuguesa**

*Cozido à portuguesa* is a robust one-dish meal of boiled beef, chicken, pork and smoked sausages, and a variety of vegetables. It was originally a favourite food of the affluent farmer and later reached the tables of the urban bourgeoisie. It is a well known national dish in Portugal, and is often consumed as the family lunch meal on a Sunday. Ingredients can vary depending on the region.



- **Oven-roasted goat kid/Cabrito assado no forno**

*Cabrito assado no forno* is a main dish, traditionally served at family gatherings in northern Portuguese regions, especially at Easter time. Traditionally cooked in a wood fire oven, the goat kid is placed on a bay stick grill over an earthenware casserole dish which contains the rice and the broth. The unique taste is obtained by the meat juice falling on the rice during cooking.



● **Egg sweet from Murça/Toucinho de céu de Murça**

This is one of Portugal's rich egg-yolk and almond sweets. It is a traditional sweet from the Benedictine sisters; after the monastery ceased to exist, one family kept the recipe for more than 120 years. The process is carried out with the same care as in the past, using iron pans over a wood fire to cook the Malabar gourd and a wood fire oven to cook the sweet.



## ***Spain/España***

### *Traditional Spanish cuisine*

Spanish cuisine has experienced many influences over the centuries. Many invaders came to Spain including Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans and Arabs. The olive was introduced by the Phoenicians, and the Arabs introduced oranges, a fruit that Valencia is world-famous for, and many other fruits. Following the discovery of the Americas, Spain imported from this continent vegetables and fruits, such as potatoes, tomatoes, courgettes and peppers – foods that are nowadays widespread throughout the country and also across Europe, and which are the main ingredients of many traditional Spanish dishes.

The Spanish traditional cuisine is full of typically Mediterranean ingredients such as olive oil, tomatoes and a wide variety of fruits, vegetables and legumes. In Spanish cuisine, meat plays an important role. The types of meat consumed vary depending on local farming and regional traditions, but the most commonly consumed meats are chicken, pork, lamb and veal. Fish and seafood are also regularly eaten in many parts of Spain due to a long

coastline. The most popular flavouring in Spain is garlic; it is an ingredient that is used in numerous traditional dishes.

Eating habits are rather similar throughout the country, but each Spanish region has its own traditional dishes. The cuisine of the north-western region Galicia reflects a Celtic heritage. Meat and fish pies are popular dishes; scallops and veal are commonly consumed as well. The region further east is known for its legume dishes and a strong blue cheese (*Queso Cabrales*). In the Basque country, fish dishes play an important role in traditional eating habits. In Cataluña fish, meat and poultry are commonly consumed. In Valencia rice is a staple – the world-famous *Paella* comes from this region. The south of Spain is an arid area, best suited to olive trees and grape vines (Pappas 2008b).

Tapas, little snacks in between or before a meal, are typical of Spain and are very popular in many countries of the world. Traditional Spanish dishes include *Tortillas* (omelettes, especially potato omelettes or Spanish omelette), *Pulpo a feira* (Galician style octopus), *Pescaíto frito* (small fried fish) or *Pimientos de padrón* (miniature roasted green peppers served with olive oil and salt – a few of them are very hot). The internationally known *Paella* or the refreshing *Gazpacho* (cold tomato-based soup) are also key features of Spanish cuisine.

Selected Spanish traditional foods

● **Hot vegetable sauce/Mojo picón**

*Mojo picón* comes from the Canary Islands, where it is a staple food. It is served on the side of nearly every meal, and is very popular in combination with *Papas arrugadas* (potatoes boiled in salt water). This spicy sauce is a paste of garlic, cumin, sweet paprika, chilli pepper, sea salt, olive oil and vinegar.



● **Cardoon in almond sauce/Cardos en salsa de almendras**

Cardoon (artichoke thistle) in almond sauce is a traditional dish served at the Christmas Eve dinner in Aragon (Spain) and also in the south of France. The main components are cardoon and pieces of pork belly in a sauce of almonds, seasoned with garlic.



● **Roasted pepper & aubergine salad 'Escalivada'/Escalivada**

*Escalivada*, a roasted pepper and aubergine salad, is a typical Catalan dish which includes several types of grilled vegetables. It is usually made of aubergines, sweet red peppers, tomatoes and sweet onions. Only olive oil and salt are used for seasoning.



● **Galician octopus/Pulpo a la Gallega ‘a feira’**

*Pulpo a la Gallega ‘a feira’* is a typical dish of Galician cuisine. It is usually served at traditional fairs and markets of the rural Galician hinterland, though its consumption has been extended throughout Spain. Its main ingredients are octopus, potatoes and onions, and it is seasoned with salt and sweet and spicy paprika.



● **Almond cakes/Soplillos**

*Soplillos* are a typical dessert from the region Las Alpujarras, Granada. While many Andalusian dishes reveal a Moorish legacy, nowhere is it more apparent than in their sweet dishes, which are typically flavoured with aniseed, cinnamon, sesame, almonds and honey. The basic ingredients of this cake are almonds, sugar and egg white.



## ***Turkey/Türkiye***

### *Traditional Turkish cuisine*

Turkey is a cross roads between different cultures and regions, with borders to Central Asia, the Middle East and the Balkan region. Over the centuries, traditional Turkish cuisine has had many different influences. The Turks were originally from Central Asia and migrated towards Asia Minor, where they were influenced by the Persian culture. Once they settled in Asia Minor, the Turks were influenced by other cultures that had been there before. Hittites

and Byzantines left their traces in the Turkish cuisine, influencing not only their food habits but also their kitchen utensils. New foods of Mediterranean origin, such as legumes or vegetables (cabbage, cauliflower or parsley) were introduced. Later, the Ottoman Empire, which lasted for more than 600 years, also influenced Turkish cuisine considerably. The most rapid progress in Turkish cuisine was observed during the reign of Fatih Sultan Mehmet (Mehment II the Conqueror) (Baysal *et al.* 2006).

The Islamic religion has also considerably influenced the Turkish cuisine. Pork is forbidden by the Koran, and so is alcohol. Also other foods, such as reptiles, frogs and foxes, are forbidden. When the Turks accepted Islam as their religion, there was a clear Arabic influence; in particular, the south and south-east of Anatolia were influenced by Arabic cuisine (Baysal *et al.* 2006).

The Turkish cuisine has some common specialities that can be found throughout the country, but taken as a whole it is not homogeneous. In the eastern region with its highlands, livestock farming is prevalent. Here, butter, yoghurt, cheese, honey, meat and cereals are local foods. The heartland of the Turkish region is dry steppe with endless stretches of wheat fields, and its cuisine includes dishes such as *Kebab*, *Börek*, meat and vegetable dishes, and *Helva* desserts. The temperate climate in the western parts of Turkey allows the cultivation of a variety of fruits and vegetables, and also olives; olive oil is thus a staple and used in both hot and cold dishes. The cuisine of northern Turkey is very much influenced by its adjacency to the Black Sea; a small fish similar to the anchovy, the *Hamsi*, can be found in many traditional dishes of this region. The hot and desert-like south-eastern part of Turkey offers the greatest variety of kebabs and sweet pastries; the dishes here are spicier. The traditional foods of the south-western regions in Turkey – including Marma, the Mediterranean and the Aegean – show basic characteristics of the Mediterranean cuisine; they are rich in fruits, vegetables, fish and lamb (Sancar 2005).

## Traditional Foods in Europe

Many Turkish traditional dishes, such as *Pilaf*, use currants, cinnamon, pine nuts, chilli peppers, mint, parsley, dill or cumin as flavourings of meats and seafood. *Tarhana*, rice, lentil and offal soups are very popular. There is a variety of vegetables grown across Turkey, including aubergines, artichokes, beans, beetroot, chard, chick peas, cucumbers, mushrooms, onions, peppers, spinach and tomatoes. One popular way to consume these vegetables is as *Dolmas* (stuffed vegetables) consumed with yogurt.

### Selected Turkish traditional foods

#### ● **Pastirma**

The term *Pastirma* originates from *bastirma et* and means pressed meat. Since ancient times Turks have stored excess meats using brining and drying techniques. For the preparation of *Pastirma*, veal, flour, hot chilli powder, dried garlic and salt are used.



#### ● **Dried fermented soup 'Tarhana'/ Tarhana**

*Tarhana* is a traditional Turkish ready to eat/dried fermented soup, made from cereal and yoghurt. With its acidity and low water activity characteristics, it preserves milk proteins effectively for long periods. It is one of the most commonly consumed dishes in Turkey. The preparation of *Tarhana* soup varies between regions.



● **Anchovy stew/Hamsi bugulama**

*Hamsi* (anchovy) is one of the most economically important fish species of the Black Sea. There are various ways to consume *Hamsi* in the traditional Turkish cuisine, and *buğulama* (stewing) is one of the favourites. *Hamsi buğulama* is made with *Hamsi*, tomatoes, potatoes, onions, and lemon, cooked with olive oil and served as a main dish for lunch or dinner.



● **Kebab with yogurt**

Kebab with yoghurt is one of the best known meat dishes of north-western Turkey. It is a kind of kebab prepared from thinly cut grilled meat served with tomato sauce over pieces of *Pide* bread and a generous amount of melted butter and yogurt.



● **Baklava**

*Baklava* is one of the most famous Turkish desserts and is consumed throughout the country. The dough of this sweet pastry is made of wheat flour and eggs; the filling is a mixture of sugar, semolina, milk and pistachios. Before baking, melted butter is poured over the *Baklava*.



## Traditional foods recipe cards

More detailed information about the illustrated traditional foods in this report can be found on recipe cards available at [www.eurofir.net](http://www.eurofir.net). These include information about the recipe, ingredients, preparation process and contents of selected nutrients of the traditional foods.

The recipe cards have been produced to document these traditional foods and to promote them to consumers and industry. They can be used by individuals for cooking, by schools to promote traditional foods to pupils, or by the food industry for the development of traditional products.

The recipe cards are available in English and in the official language of the country of origin.

Figure 1: Examples of recipe cards

Traditional foods recipe cards Belgium

### Meatballs (Vleesballetjes (frikadellen))



**Recipe 4.** Preparation time is about 1 hour.  
Belgians are known as meat gourmets. Almost every village has its own kermis or local fair. Frikadellen served with sour cherries used to be a traditional dish during such outdoor fairs. Other traditional dishes that would be served might be meatballs in tomato sauce or tomato soup with tiny meatballs, but the sour cherry sauce is uniquely Belgian.  
*Note:* Instead of meatballs the meat mixture can also be baked as a loaf and cut into slices before serving.

**Ingredients**  
800g Ground meat (beef/water or beef/pork)  
3 Eggs  
3 Bites of bread/crumbs or 3 crumbed rusks (European bread)  
1 Onion or a few shallots  
Salt and pepper  
Rumflog  
Buttermargarine  
1L of preserved sour cherries, or  
1kg Fresh sour cherries  
250g Sugar  
1 Lemon.

**Preparation**  
Mix the ground meat with the eggs, bread/crumbs and chopped onion. Season with salt, pepper and rumflog. Form meatballs (3-4 cm diameter). Brown the meatballs in fat and let simmer. Turn the meatballs frequently and remove excess fat.  
**Sour cherry sauce:**  
Prepare sugar syrup with 250g sugar and 750ml water. Place the fresh cherries in the sugar syrup until tender. Add the juice of one lemon at the end of the cooking.  
*This dish can also be eaten cold, served with bread.*

Nutritional information per 100g of edible portion	
Energy (kcal / kJ)	175 / 730
Protein (g) (N x 6.25)	16.6
Total fat (g)	11.2
of which saturated fatty acids (g)	3.9
Carbohydrates (g)	1.9
of which sugars (g)	0.9
Dietary fibres (g)	0.1
Sodium (mg)	n/a

Values obtained from recipe calculation

For more information on Belgian traditional foods contact Ghent University, Department of Public Health, Research Unit, Nutrition and Food Safety.  
This work was completed on behalf of the EuroFIR Consortium and funded under the EU 6th Framework Food Quality and Safety Programme. Project number FP5-01964.

Recept uit de traditionele keuken België

### Vleesballetjes (frikadellen)



**4 personen.** Ongeveer 1u.  
Belgen zijn gekend als culinaire leueningelieten. Elke ok dorp heeft zijn eigen kermis. "Frikadellen" geserveerd met kersensaus is traditioneel gerecht tijdens zulke feestdagen. Ook vleesballetjes in tomatensaus of tomatensoep met kleine vleesballetjes zijn traditionele gerechten. Het serveren met kerselen is een typisch Belgisch gerecht waarbij het hartje van het vlees wordt gecombineerd met het zoete en het zure van de kerselen.  
In plaats van het gehakt te verwerken tot vleesballetjes kan het ook gebakken worden als een vleesbrood. Het wordt dan voor het opdienen in vijf sneeden versneden.

**Ingrediënten**  
800g Gehakt (rundvlees of rundvarken)  
3 Eieren  
3 Eetlepel paneermel of 3 beschuitjes  
1 stuk van een paar sneetjes  
Zout en peper  
Muskatnoot  
Boter/margarine  
1 liter kerselen op sloep of 1 kg verse kerselen  
250g Suiker  
1 Citroen.

**Bereiding**  
Meng het gehakt met de sneden, het paneermel en de fingshakte stukjes ajahn. Knudt met zout, peper en muskatnoot. Creul vleesballetjes tussen de palm van je handen (3-4 cm diameter). Bak de vleesballetjes voorzigtig gaar in vetolie. Creul de vleesballetjes regelmatig om tijdens het bakken en verwijder overtollig vet.  
**Kersensaus:**  
Maak een suikerstroop van 250g suiker en 750ml water. Pocheer de kerselen in de suikerstroop zonder ze te laten afkoken. Voeg op het einde van de bereiding het sap van 1 citroen toe.  
Of: geventri kan stoveld warm als koud gegelaten worden.

Voedingswaarde per 100g eetbaar deel	
Energie (kcal/kJ)	175 / 730
Eiwitten (g) (N x 6.25)	16.6
Vetstoffen (g)	11.2
van welke verzadigde vetten (g)	3.9
Koolhydraten (g)	1.9
van welke suikers (g)	0.9
Voedingsvezels (g)	0.1
Natrium (mg)	n/a

waarden berekenen na recept berekening

Meer informatie betreffende de Belgische traditionele koken is te verkrijgen bij de Universiteit Ghent, afdeling Menschelele Geneesmiddelen - onderzoekseenheid Voeding en Voedseltoelating.  
Dit werk werd afgewerkt onder het EuroFIR Consortium en is gefund door de Europese "Zesde Kaderprogramma" met steunnummer FP5-01964.

## **5. Why include traditional foods in European food composition databases?**

Food composition data are used for many purposes, such as food labelling, nutrition and health research, and policy making. Despite increasing globalisation, traditional foods still contribute a fair amount to food intake in most European countries. It is thus essential to have information about the macro- and micronutrient composition of traditional foods. This information is useful for determining the role of traditional foods in the dietary patterns and nutrient intake of a population.

However, many national databases are currently lacking nutrient data on country-specific traditional foods (Trichopoulou *et al.* 2007). To fill these gaps, traditional foods need to be systematically investigated and information on their nutritional composition needs to be included in national food composition tables and databases.

Further information on the use of food composition databases can be found in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Synthesis Report 'The Different Uses of Food Composition Databases' (Williamson 2006; download at [www.eurofir.net](http://www.eurofir.net)).

## **6. Health aspects of traditional foods**

There is a diversity of national and regional traditional foods made with a variety of ingredients, usually reflecting the traditionally produced local ingredients. Due to huge variations in the cuisines across European countries and regions, it would be misleading to make general statements about the association between traditional foods and health that is valid for all European traditional cuisines. The fact that foods are traditional does not automatically mean that they provide any particular health benefits.

The impact of traditional foods on our health depends on their nutritional composition. A cuisine including high amounts of starchy foods, fruit and vegetables, and moderate amounts of fish and meat will provide more health benefits than a dietary pattern high in meat and fat, and low in fruit and vegetables.

Traditional Mediterranean diets incorporating a high proportion of fruit and vegetables, olive oil and a relatively high consumption of fish are considered healthy (Trichopoulou *et al.* 2006). In these countries, traditional foods are thus associated with better health. However, in other countries traditional foods may be perceived as rather unhealthy. In some European countries the traditional cuisines are rather rich in meat and fat, and so in these countries traditional foods may, overall, be considered less favourable from a health perspective. It is therefore difficult to draw general conclusions about the health benefits of a certain cuisine or the associated traditional foods.

Although some traditional cuisines may at first glance seem to have a rather unfavourable nutritional composition, for example with a high proportion of animal products and fat, it is worth noting that such a nutrient composition may have been advantageous in the past. Particularly in northern countries, due to low temperatures, energy expenditure used to be higher in winter time, before the advent of central heating. Indeed, a high energy intake may

have been crucial for survival. Further, in earlier times most Europeans were farmers or labourers. The physical effort was thus much greater than it is today. An easy way to increase energy intake was to increase the fat content of the diet. Thus, although some traditional dishes nowadays are considered to have a rather unfavourable composition, this may have been an advantage in the past.

Nowadays, nutritional requirements have changed. In particular, average energy requirements are significantly lower than in past centuries. To maximise the health benefits of a diet, it should therefore be adapted to the nutritional needs of a population. Traditional foods developed a long time ago, and many of them still have their place in a healthy diet today, whereas others may not meet nowadays nutritional needs because they are too high in energy or fat. Therefore, it may make sense to modify the nutrient composition of some traditional foods to make them more appropriate for the 21st century. However, that could mean that these foods are not considered 'traditional' anymore.

The Mediterranean diet, which has been shown to be beneficial to health, could function as a model when modifying less favourable compositions of some traditional cuisines, encouraging at the same time the use of local ingredients.

## **7. Open borders in nutrition habits?**

With the rising global exchange in many products including foodstuffs, the culinary borders are becoming more and more blurred. Food habits in many European regions have changed considerably since the Second World War, influencing the traditional cuisine of a country or region.

Particularly within modern day Europe, the food market has been opening in the course of the development and expansion of the European Union. Internationalisation of nutrition habits can be observed, not only because of worldwide trading but also because of assimilation of new lifestyle habits, adopted from other countries around the globe (Besch 2002).

Studies carried out in four European countries (Germany, Great Britain, France and Spain) examined the internationalisation of nutrition habits (Ziemann 1999; Besch 2002). The following trends were found:

- Traditional food products and meals are becoming less important
- Processed foods are replacing traditional foods
- Eating as a family is becoming less frequent
- Meals are being replaced by snacks
- Out-of-home consumption is increasing.

An increased internationalisation was found

- In urban areas
- On working days
- Among people in employment.

The biggest changes and internationalisation were observed in Great Britain. Change was of a lesser degree in Germany and France, and the smallest changes were observed in Spain (Besch 2002).

According to Trichopoulou *et al.* (2007), dietary patterns are influenced by the local availability of foods and the cultural and socioeconomic environment, but there is a trend for transfer and assimilation of new habits between countries. In the 1960s the diet of Mediterranean populations was characterised by a high consumption of fruits and vegetables, as opposed to the low consumption of these foods in Northern European countries. These large differences seem to be diminishing and contemporary patterns reveal Mediterranean populations straying from their traditional dietary choices, whereas in Northern European countries Mediterranean-style eating has increased in popularity (Trichopoulou *et al.* 2007).

Because of the increasing globalisation and internationalisation of the food market, many traditional foods are at risk of disappearing. The documentation of traditional foods and dishes is essential for sustaining traditional foods, which are an important part of cultural heritage.

## **8. Traditional foods within the EuroFIR network**

EuroFIR (European Food Information Resource) is a Network of Excellence funded under the EU 6th Framework Programme *Food Quality and Safety Priority*. This project started in 2005 and will be funded until the end of 2009. From 2010, EuroFIR will be self-funded and will be called EuroFIR AISBL (for further information visit [www.eurofir.net](http://www.eurofir.net)).

The overall aim of EuroFIR is to provide food information to different European stakeholders. One of the main objectives is to create a pan-European food information resource in the form of a portal, allowing access to online food composition data across Europe, by linking national food composition databases (FCDB) throughout Europe. Links have also been established to countries outside Europe.

Traditional foods play an important role in dietary habits of Europeans. Therefore, food composition data from traditional foods and dishes are necessary. To fill existing gaps in national FCDBs, one of the work packages within the EuroFIR project has analysed and documented selected traditional foods from the countries participating in this work package.

The documentation and analysis of traditional foods as it is done by EuroFIR may be very valuable for the food industry. The obtained information and data can be used for the development of new food products based on traditional recipes for example. EuroFIR particularly aims to work with small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

### ***The EuroFIR work package ‘Traditional Foods’***

This work package includes partners of 13 European countries, and has been led by Dr Helena Costa from the National Institute of Health, Portugal (INSA) since September 2006. Before Dr Costa took over, Prof Antonia

Trichopoulou from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens was the work package leader from the beginning of the EuroFIR project in January 2005 until August 2006.

The main objectives of this work package were to

- Define the term 'traditional' and determine the recipes or foods to be classified under this food group
- Establish a common methodology for the systematic investigation of traditional foods across Europe
- Provide new data on the nutritional composition of traditional foods for inclusion in national food composition tables with representative raw ingredients and recipes.

The partners in this work package include:

- University of Vienna (UVI)/Graz University of Technology (GUT), Austria
- Ghent University (RUG), Belgium
- National Centre of Public Health Protection (NCPHP), Bulgaria
- National Food Institute, Technical University of Denmark (DTU), Denmark
- The Federal Research Centre for Nutrition and Food (BFEL), Germany
- Department of Hygiene and Epidemiology, Medical School, University of Athens (NKUA), Greece
- Matis ohs (MATIS), Iceland
- National Institute for Food and Nutrition Research (INRAN)/Centro per lo Studio e la Prevenzione Oncologia (CSPO), Italy
- National Nutrition Centre (NNC), Lithuania

*Traditional Foods in Europe*

- National Food and Nutrition Institute (NFNI), Poland
- National Institute of Health (INSA), Portugal
- Centre for Superior Studies on Nutrition and Dietetics (CESNID)/  
University of Granada (UGR), Spain
- Tubitak Marmara Research Centre (TUBITAK), Turkey

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## **Annex 1**

### **Definitions of traditional foods and products**

#### ***European Union***

The EU has created product designations that are linked to geographical origin or traditional production methods.

Sometimes, foods and food products of a certain region acquire a reputation extending beyond their production region, and they can find themselves in competition with products which pass themselves off as the genuine article and take the same name. This may discourage producers and also mislead consumers. Therefore, in 1992, the EU created systems to promote and protect valuable food names; these systems were updated and improved in 2006 (European Commission 2007a).

The product designations created by the EU fall into two categories: those linked to a geographical region or territory, and those relating to a particular production method. The designations linked to a territory are:



#### *Protected Designation of Origin (PDO)*

PDO means the name of a region, a specific place or, in exceptional cases, a country, used to describe an agricultural product or foodstuff:

- originating in that region, specific place or country, and
- possessing quality or characteristics which are essentially or exclusively due to a particular geographical environment with its inherent natural and human factors, and

- the production, processing and preparation of which take place in the defined geographical area.

PDO products thus require all stages of the food production process to be carried out in the area concerned. Products registered as PDO include for example *Shetland lamb* from the UK, *Jamón Huelva* (ham) from Spain, *Allgäuer Emmentaler* (cheese) from Germany or *Wachauer Marille* (apricot) from Austria.



### *Protected Geographical Indication (PGI)*

PGI means the name of a region, a specific place or, in exceptional cases, a country, used to describe an agricultural product or a foodstuff:

- originating in that region, specific place or country, and
- which possesses a specific quality or reputation or other characteristics attributable to that geographical origin, and
- the production and/or processing and/or preparation of which take place in the defined geographical area.

PGI products thus require that at least one stage in the production process must be carried out in that area, while the raw materials used in production may come from another region. Examples of PGI include *Jambon d'Ardenne* (ham) from Belgium, *Esrom* (cheese) from Denmark, *Pomodoro di Pachino* (tomatoes) from Italy or *Džiugas* (cheese) from Lithuania.

A third designation is used for products that are linked to a particular method of production:



### Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG)

The specific features required by the TSG system include:

- use of traditional raw materials in production of a foodstuff, or
- traditional composition, or
- mode of production and/or processing reflecting traditional methods.

Thus, to obtain the TSG designation a product must possess features that distinguish it from other products and it must be traditional. 'Traditional' means proven usage in the EU market for a time period showing transmission between generations. For the EU this means a minimum of 25 years. This is a significantly shorter period than suggested by EuroFIR.

Contrary to the EuroFIR definition of traditional foods, TSG products are not linked to a geographical region, and can thus be used by any producer – no matter where from – provided the given specifications of a product are being followed.

Examples for products registered as TSG are *Panellets* (small biscuits or cakes) from Spain, *Moules de Bouchot* (mussels) from France, *Pizza Napoletana* from Italy or *Kabanosy* (meat product) from Poland.

According to the EU, traditional food products are often the result of agricultural practices that preserve and enhance rural environments. Their production is very much in line with current EU thinking on rural development, preservation of biodiversity and sustainability (European Commission, 2007b).

## **TRUEFOOD**

Truefood<sup>1</sup> is a European project that aims to introduce innovation into the traditional food production system and industry. In the course of this it brings research and the industry closer and facilitates effective collaboration and technology transfer. Due to the focus on production and industry, TRUEFOOD has developed a definition of traditional food products rather than traditional foods in general:

- Production

The key steps of the production must be local (national/regional/local). Once firms start to produce in other countries, the food is no longer considered as traditional.

- Authentic

The product has to fulfil at least one of the following criteria: authentic recipe (mix of ingredients) and/or authentic origin of raw material and/or authentic production process.

- Commercially available

The product has to have been available to the public for at least 50 years (which in practise means from 1950 or before) in stores or restaurants; it may happen that during that period the food product disappeared from the market, but was on sale at least 50 years ago.

- Gastronomic heritage

The product must have a story which is – or can be – written down in 2-3 pages.

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1 <http://www.truefood.eu/>

*Consumer based definition*

Another definition of traditional food products was obtained through qualitative consumer research conducted in the course of TRUEFOOD during 2007 in six European countries (Belgium, Italy, France, Spain, Poland, and Norway; see next chapter):

*“A traditional food product is ... a product frequently consumed or associated to specific celebrations and/or seasons, normally transmitted from one generation to another, made with care in a specific way according to the gastronomic heritage, with little or no processing/manipulation, that is distinguished and known because of its sensory properties and associated to a certain local area, region or country.”*

*(Vanhonacker et al. 2008)*

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