



TRAKAI AND VILNIUS
DISTRICTS
CULINARY HERITAGE





TRAKAI REGIONAL TRADITIONAL CRAFT CENTRE

GPS: 54°38'55"N 24°55'56"E

Address: Karaimų str. 41, Trakai town, Trakai eldership, Trakai district municipality

ABOUT

The Centre of Traditional Crafts of Trakai Region introduces a colourful cultural heritage and provides an excellent opportunity for everyone to choose and learn a wide range of crafts. In the early 15th century, at the invitation of the Grand Duke Vytautas, people of different nationalities came to Trakai, including Karaites, Tartars and others. The city was enriched by their various cultural traditions, customs and useful crafts.

The main goal of the Centre of Traditional Crafts of Trakai Region is to preserve the cultural heritage of various nations (including the traditions and customs of festivals, and specific kitchen and other crafts), to ensure the continuity of ancient traditions and to introduce Trakai residents and visitors to them. One way to achieve these goals is through educational programs (i.e., practical sessions lasting from one to several hours) that provide the opportunity to learn something new or to further develop existing skills. The variety of activities that are available allows interested people to choose the activity that they like—from baking bread or kibinai to wool felting, from the manufacturing of soap to straw decorations, and from tea preparation to the weaving of sashes and carpets. Decorative art works created during these lessons (such as straw hanging gardens and toys,

small angels carved from wood or grass-inlaid wooden sculptures) may beautify the home. During a "stone whispering" lesson, the meanings of the Balt signs and colours are introduced. And participants of the educational workshop "Dream Dolls" have the unique opportunity to delve into the history of doll making, the traditional national Lithuanian costume and the mysteries of the world of dreams.

Educational programs are paid, and can be conducted in Lithuanian, Russian, Polish or English. In order to attend lessons, you need to register via phone or on the website. Each participant of the educational program receives a certificate as an apprentice craftsman.



CUISINE CORNUCOPIA

In order to get acquainted with the peculiarities of Dzūkija, Tatar, Karaites and Georgian cuisines, culinary lessons can be attended all year round at the Centre of Traditional Crafts of Trakai Region. During these classes, opportunities are provided to master the baking secrets of the Karaites *kibinai*. You will also learn what kind of dish the Tatar *chak-chak* is, as well as the Georgian *khachapuri* or *khinkali*. You are invited to get acquainted with the baking traditions of Dzūkija baking the bread of Dzūkija, buckwheat *babka*, homemade gingerbread or pretzels. If you want to prepare a festive table in accordance with ancient traditions, the Centre of Crafts invites you to educational sessions that are specially organized around annual festivals. During the winter, it is recommended to learn about the dishes, customs and games related to Christmas, and to learn how to bake *kūčiukai*, which is also known as *prėskučiai*. Around Easter, you can take egg painting lessons and learn about the symbolism of the colours and patterns of the various patterns, as well as other interesting things. And as the shortest night of the year (*Joninės*) approaches, the "Tea Laboratory" educational session will charm you with its flavours and ancient tea preparation recipes.

EDUCATIONAL HIKING TRIPS

In addition to educational lessons, the Centre of Traditional Crafts of Trakai Region organizes various types of educational hiking trips on foot, by bike or by boat. Those interested can take a walk on the frozen Lake Galvė during the winter, and acquaint themselves with the abundance of tales and folk stories created about the lake and its islands. For those who want to master the ancient craft of beekeeping, it is suggested to visit the quiet Dzūkija village of Tiltai via a calm forest path. Hikers led by an experienced bee keeper will be thoroughly acquainted with the life of bees and bee keepers. For those wishing to visit the manor of Count Tiškevičiai, the Centre of Traditional Crafts of Trakai Region organizes biking trips. Three manors — Trakų Vokė, Lentvaris and Užutrakis — are reached by riding the hills, gravel roads and meadows.



SPIT CAKE (ŠAKOTIS)

Since ancient times, the Lithuanian festive table has featured a unique baked product — a spit cake (*šakotis*). This is a tall, branchy, hollow, sweet, floury baked product prepared for weddings and other festive occasions. The shape of a spit cake resembles a Christmas tree, and when cut across it is possible to see how many times the dough has been poured. A spit cake baked in the traditional way requires a special oven stoked with birch firewood, and a special roller. The unique form of the pastry is obtained by turning the heated roller while dough is gradually poured on top of it with a wooden spoon. With each scoop, the baked product is covered with new "thorns." This systematic growth of the pastry takes about one and a half hours, with the baker constantly pouring the dough across the entire roller and maintaining the heat the entire time.

Baking a spit cake not only makes a delicious meal, but also fosters the traditional heritage of ancient festivals. It is not necessary to have traditional dishes on the table every day, but during the major holidays they should not be forgotten. In order to bake a single spit cake, you will require butter, sugar, flour and sour cream (one kilo of each), and a lot of eggs—45, on average! First you need to whisk the butter into a soft mass with a wooden spoon, then pour the

sugar and, together with the butter, whisk it into a fluffy mass. After separating the egg yolks from the whites, the latter should be whipped to fluffiness, while the yolks should be placed one by one into the whisked mass of butter and sugar, while also constantly adding spoonsful of flour.

When all these ingredients have been added, the cream and whisked whites are poured into the dough, all the while stirring vigorously. Continue to stir all of the ingredients until they form a well-mixed dough.

At the same time, prepare the oven. Only dry, finely chopped birch firewood may be used to heat the oven when making spit cake.

Before starting the baking process, a cloth sack has to be pulled onto a special roller. The roller then has to be placed in the mouth of the oven, and heated to the required temperature. The heated roller is turned with one hand while dough is gradually poured with the other using a wooden spoon.



CHEESE

When Lithuanians want to surprise their guests, they often put a sweet milk cheese on the festival table. Natural cow's milk cheeses are slightly sweet, and can be seasoned with raisins, poppies and dried fruits. When looking for a more savoury taste, they can be seasoned with caraways, garlic or herbs. Curd cheese was produced in the Lithuanian manors even in the Middle Ages. The traditional way of making curd cheese is by heating the milk and then stuffing it into triangular cheese sacks made of coarse cloth. The wider end is tied with a knot (this way the cheese gets its specific shape—a triangle prism with rounded corners). This traditional way of making cheese has been preserved to this day. It is an integral part of the Lithuanian culinary and national heritage. Lithuanian curd cheese is one of the few products that are classified as being part of the Lithuanian cultural heritage. In 2013, the European Commission included it in a list of protected products. Curd cheese became the third Lithuanian product to be protected by the European Union. Based on the ancient recipe, it is made by heating fermented cow's milk (sometimes mixed with sweet milk) until it reaches the consistency of curd. The obtained curd can be seasoned with sour cream or caraway. Salt may be added to keep the cheese fresh longer. Then the mass is stuffed into cheese sacks and pressed with weights. This cheese has a

slightly acidic taste. A bit later, cheeses made of only sweet milk became popular. These are made by adding curd or sour cream that was prepared earlier into a heated sweet milk, seasoning the mass with eggs, cream and spices, and then stuffing the mixture into the cheese sacks. This type of cheese is slightly sweeter, and its colour is a bit more yellow. (Especially if eggs are used, the cheese can be prepared with sweet additives such as nuts, dried fruits or berries, and poppies). Fresh and delicious curd cheese can be made at home. One medium-sized cheese will require one litre of natural cow's milk, 200 grams of sour cream, three to four eggs, plus salt and the desired additives for seasoning. Pour the milk into a pot and boil it. Whisk the eggs separately from the foam, then add the cream and salt and whisk until it becomes a solid mass. Pour this blend into the milk heated on low flame. Do not forget to stir. Heat for about five minutes until the curd starts to form. Stuff the curd into a cheese sack, press it and leave it for an hour to drain. Then take out the mass and add the salt, and season with any desired additives, mixing well. Stuff the prepared curd back into the cheese sack and cover it for a few hours.

You can enjoy freshly squeezed curd cheese with honey and fresh cucumbers, as well as fruits and berries. Sweet curd cheese can be enjoyed as a dessert with a cup of coffee or tea.



BUCKWHEAT *BABKA*

Since ancient times, buckwheat has been grown in the Trakai region, which was historically not very fertile. Dishes from buckwheat were the daily meals for this region. Pancakes known as *babka* were baked from it, and porridge was also made using the locally grown staple.

Every housewife knew how to bake *babka*, a round, yellow buckwheat and honey dish. It was a daily meal, suitable for eating with fresh milk, sour cream, buttermilk or soup. If cold, it was eaten like bread, which was very useful when working hard in the fields.

When baking *babka* it is important for the buckwheat to be dry. First of all, it is dried for a bit by roasting it in the oven. Then, through the use of millstones, buckwheat had to be peeled, sifted and ground. Buckwheat flour ground in this way is naturally coarse.

Buckwheat for *babka* has to be soaked on the evening of the day before, typically in soured milk or buttermilk. In the morning, add coarsely ground flour and well whisked eggs. Mix everything together, then put the mass into a greased baking tray and bake in a heated oven. This is how *babka* was prepared during times of fasting.

When baking for festivals, butter or onion-fried pork scratchings

were added (or alternatively sour cream). The dish may be sweetened with honey, although without it *babka* still has a slightly sweet taste.

If you want to bake a buckwheat *babka* at home, you will need one cup of buckwheat, one cup of coarsely ground buckwheat flour, one cup of soured milk, two to three eggs, 100 grams of sour cream, spices (salt, pepper, bay leaves) and your desired additives (we suggest 150 grams of pork scratchings with onion, or onion fried in a few spoonfuls of melted butter). The dough is mixed with a wooden spoon and a clay or metal bowl. *Babka* is baked in round trays in an oven, which needs to be well stoked (for about two hours) prior to the preparation of the meal. It is best to stoke the furnace with birch or alder fire wood. *Babka* should be baked for one or one and a half hours. It is said that the dish is perfect if its top does not crack. Hot buckwheat *babka* is eaten with milk, soured milk, sour cream, pork scratching sauce or alone. It may be eaten cold with tea.



BREAD

Bread is one of the oldest and most basic food products for human beings. People began to eat it when crops were first discovered. The grain from the initial crops was harvested, ground and roasted back when people had not yet learned how to cultivate the land, but had discovered how to light fires. In ancient times, bread was baked in a variety of ways. Until the oven was developed, it was baked on heated stones, cinders and hot ashes, by the fire, or in pits above which fires were stoked. The bread was widely consumed by our ancestors in familial ceremonies, especially during weddings, christenings and funerals. Matchmaking also often involved ritual bread. When wishing happy and rich life for the newlyweds, parents met them with bread and salt at the door. Until the middle 20th century, rye bread was the main dish in the Lithuanian village. It was baked in each house, by each family. In the times when serfdom was common, the peasants baked it from non-sieved grain, which is why it was called non-sieved bread. Pure rye bread was baked only for festivals. After the abolition of serfdom, low-quality non-sieved bread disappeared from the rural household.

In the late 19th century, people started to mixed other crops or the flour of other plants into the dough. The bread was baked simply

and scalded, and its leaven was handed down from generation to generation. It was strictly forbidden to lend it or donate it to others. Most often, the leaven was given by the mother to her daughter. After each baking of bread, a small "bob" of dough was left in the bread dough bucket to fuel the fermentation process for future loaves of bread. It was covered with a linen towel and a bread dough bucket lid, and stored in a cool room for no longer than two weeks. Over the course of several days, the "bob" became more liquid, started to foam, and was eventually coated with film. In order to bake bread, it had to be fermented again. Around a litre of warm water was poured into a fermented "bob", the dough was mixed and then the rye flour was added. It was mixed until a consistency similar to sour cream was obtained. Then, after covering with a towel, the bread dough bucket was left in a warm environment to ferment for a day. During the fermentation process, the bread leaven foamed, popped and rose. After the fermentation ended, the dough could be prepared, and loaves could be formed to bake in the oven. The loaves were baked between one to one and a half hours, depending on the size. The bread was then removed from the oven on a wooden paddle, moistened with water and covered with a towel.



KARAITE KIUBETE

A flour dish native to the Karaite cuisine, *kiubete* was usually baked in a single large piece for the whole family, and was eaten during festivals. Upon being removed from the oven, the pie brought the whole family to the table due to its pleasant smell. After a brief prayer at the table, the upper part of *kiubete* was trimmed at the side braid. After being divided equally between all members of the family, it was eaten together with a broth.

Translated from the Karaite, *kiubete* means "warrior's shield." It symbolizes the roots of the Karaite people, who were militant in ancient times. It is also a symbol of unity, consensus and family, because the pie is divided equally between all members of the family. Furthermore, the round shape symbolizes the sun, which was worshiped by all nations in ancient times.

Kiubete is always served hot — steaming and inviting with its delicious aroma. It is a bringer of joy and success, and turns the day into a festival. It is baked with a variety of fillings, including lamb, beef or chicken. The meat is chopped into small pieces and seasoned with finely chopped onions, and other additives such as rice, beans and potatoes are added. *Kiubete* recipes are not widely shared, and to this day it is baked according to the original family tradition, passed down from generation to generation.

If you want to make *kiubete* at home, you will need flour, butter, fatty sour cream and eggs. For the filling, you will need chicken breast, rice, onions, oil to roast the onions, broth, chicken fat and spices. You will also need eggs to coat the dish. In order to prepare the dough, add warm butter into the flour and mash well until you get small crumbs. Add whisked eggs, sour cream and a little salt. Mix carefully to make the dough homogeneous, and place it into the fridge.

Cut the chicken breast intended for the filling into large cubes. Cool the cooked rice. Roast the finely chopped onions. Mix all the filling ingredients, then add the spices, broth and chicken fat.

Split the cold dough into two parts. The lower part of the pie will require about 2/3 of the dough, while the remaining dough will cover the top of the pie. Roll two circles around 0.8-1 cm thick. Place the prepared filling on top of the rolled dough foundation, the edges of which should be raised. Cover with a smaller circle of dough and press the edges nicely, forming a braid pattern. Make holes in the top, then coat with a whisked egg and bake at 220-250 degrees C in the oven for 40 to 50 minutes.



CENTRE OF TRADITIONAL CRAFTS AT THE HOUVALT MANOR IN MAIŠIAGALA

GPS: 54°52'01"N 25°03'44"E

Address: Algirdo str. 4, Maišiagala town, Maišiagala eldership, Vilnius district

ABOUT

The traditional crafts centre, established in the so-called Houvaltas Estate located in the town of Maišiagala, 25 km northwest of Vilnius on the way to Panevėžys, is the main attraction of the town. This is the gathering place of the local community, and is popular among visitors seeking unique experiences. The classic Houvaltas Manor at the bottom of the Maišiagala Castle mound has been recognised as a cultural monument of local significance. The goal of the traditional crafts centre is to protect the traditions, customs and old crafts in Vilnius area. It seeks to ensure the accessibility of the crafts by reviving them, presenting them to the visitors of the centre and holding special classes. Educational classes are meant for both children and adults. Those who want to get more closely acquainted with traditional folk art and culture can attend additional meetings with craftspeople and culture personalities, exhibitions and crafts fairs, where they can purchase traditional hand-crafted items and various delicious treats.

TRADITIONAL CRAFTS

The traditional crafts centre is a gathering place for masters of traditional folk art, providing them with everything needed to exhibit, practice and teach their art. The centre has the technical

framework needed for traditional crafts and specially prepared workshops. Folk artists and local folklore connoisseurs offer various educational classes to visitors. Specialists of more than 10 different types of crafts help children and adults get to know the useful crafts of this region, delving deep into their subtleties. A wood carver, a paper-cutter, a soap manufacturer or a carpenter will gladly share knowledge of their craft. You can also learn the subtleties of candle making, straw weaving, felt making or ceramics. Anyone interested has the opportunity to learn the art of making Easter palms, which are unique to the Vilnius area, or learn more about traditional festive dishes and customs of the region.

THE COMMUNITY OF MAIŠIAGALA

Mention of Maišiagala can be found in written sources dating back as early as 1254, and it was once home to Algirdas, the Grand Duke of Lithuania. After the 14th century, the territory belonged to the rulers of the country, and it became the property of the nobility after another few centuries. Today, the community of Maišiagala's approximately 1,800 residents are active protectors of the ancient traditions and culture.



DOUGHNUTS

Yeast doughnuts have earned their place in the Polish culinary tradition as one of the oldest and most important dishes. Although it is a rather greasy pastry, according to the tradition, it should be eaten in large amounts (albeit not very often). This custom is particularly strong in the Polish regions of Vilnius. The tradition is to fry and eat doughnuts on the last Thursday before Lent, making it easier to diligently fast for the upcoming 40 days of Lent. The day has even earned a name for itself: Fat Thursday. On this day, Poles eat doughnuts everywhere they go — at home, at work, at school, on the street and even on public transport. Moreover, it is said that a person following the custom should eat at least four doughnuts on this day.

Fat Thursday is an important event for doughnut bakers, with all-night preparations made beforehand, as people tend to buy a few dozen doughnuts at once. Long queues form in front of the vendors, but people say this is how it should be, as queueing on Fat Thursday is a family tradition. Poles tend to follow the custom and eat as many doughnuts as they can on this day, regardless of the fact that one such doughnut contains around 200 calories, which would require a person to run for 20 minutes or walk for 54 minutes to burn. The elders say that if you don't eat at least one

doughnut on this day, you will suffer from bad fortune for the whole year. According to unofficial data, around two million doughnuts are eaten in Warsaw on Fat Thursday, and 100 million throughout Poland. There are even special doughnut eating contests.

Interestingly, doughnuts used to be one of the favourite treats of the priest prelate Józef Obremski, who spent many years at service in Maišiagala. On 19 March, which is now the day of Saint Joseph, his house would always smell of doughnuts. On that day, parishioners would flock to his home, and the priest would treat them to doughnuts and other desserts. This tradition started by Józef Obremski himself is now continued by the staff of the museum operating on the premises of the former rectory. Each year, St. Joseph's Day is an open day at the museum, and the visitors are treated to traditional doughnuts.



ROOSTER LOLLIES

Rooster-shaped lollies have become a sweet childhood memory for many. The shape of the lolly and the stick are quite interesting, while the rest is very simple. This candy is made with special metal moulds convenient for pouring in caramel and popping in the stick. The process for making the candy is truly simple: Simply mix a spoonful of sugar and a splash of water in the right proportions, and keep heating the mass until it takes on a brown hue. Sugar is the main component in all sweet treats, and the secret behind caramel, toffee, sugar paste and mousse is that the characteristics of sugar change when you heat it.

When boiling the sugar solution, it is important to set the right temperature so that the syrup attains the desired consistency. Professional confectioners have advice on what temperature you boil the sugar at. Would you like to try out new candy recipes, but don't have a special thermometer? You can easily determine the temperature of the syrup using cold water. Drop a few drops of the syrup into ice-cold water, and by rolling the drops into ball between your fingers, you will be able determine the stage that the product is at.

If you decide to make your own lollies, you should prepare some sweet caramel. It can be made from powdered sugar and water

(at a ratio of three to one), and a couple tablespoons of honey or maple syrup. If you'd like, you may substitute water with your favourite juice, changing the taste and colour of the lolly. You can even move away from the original recipe and add cream or milk to make milky caramel. Or you may add a splash of lemon juice or vanilla, or any other aromatic essence you like.

Only make as much caramel as you need to fill the moulds, because it hardens fast. Heat the sugar, water and honey in a thick-bottomed pot, and remember to keep stirring. This should be done over medium heat until the sugar melts completely and the mass begins to bubble. Then add the optional lemon juice or spice, and simmer for a few more minutes, depending on what kind of lollies you want. The longer you simmer it, the deeper the taste the sugar will take on. Finally, pour the mass into the moulds and add the sticks. Let the lollies cool.



GINGERBREAD

The old traditions of the Vilnius area are reflected in the baking of gingerbread cookies and “pierniki.” These pastries of various shapes and sizes are enjoyed by both children and adults. You can spice up any celebration by writing various wishes or names on gingerbread cookies.

The gingerbread tradition has been alive since the Middle Ages. This was perhaps the first confectionery to become wide-spread and popular throughout Europe. In many countries, gingerbread figurines are made during the Christmas season. In Lithuania, they are not only made for Christmas festivities, but also sold at markets during church festivals and feasts.

Real gingerbread cookies are made using recipes handed down by parents and grandparents, and every baker tries to give them the most attractive, interesting shapes, often decorating them with colourful glazing. Among the most popular are heart and star shapes, as well as horse, bird and human figures. The so-called Vilnius gingerbread is made with natural honey and butter, while a variation of it called “pierniki” — traditional light-coloured gingerbread cookies with a special shape — are made without honey, and are sometimes glazed. The first “pierniki,” associated with the Toruń region, were baked by Lithuanian girls held in

captivity by the Teutons. The grand magister realised that keeping captives is a tough job, and in 1312 decided to build a Benedictine monastery for the Lithuanian women to settle in. One of these humble women was Katarzyna (known as Kotryna back in Lithuania), who used to bake gingerbread cookies with various spices once every month.

Since ancient times, it has become customary to bring back a special gingerbread cookie, the “Heart of St. Casimir,” after visiting the major festival in Vilnius area, known as St. Casimir’s Fair. These can be had in all shapes and sizes: brown with honey, white with mint leaves or even pink with cranberries. You can also get one with the name of your loved one written in glazing. Moreover, some gingerbread cookies have long inscriptions — the most beautiful wishes and confessions of love. Examples include: “Little berry, please take my heart”; “I have no gold, so I gift you heart”; “Tell me, dear, may I knock on the door to your heart?”; “I miss you, tell me whether you’ll be mine...”; “You are the only one for me!”; “Kiss me....”



The famous ethnographer Balys Buračas, who visited the fair in 1940 with a group of culture lovers from Kaunas, wrote in the newspaper "Our Tomorrow": "The most famous item at St. Casimir's Fair are the little hearts. It should be noted that Vilnius hearts have such a respectable reputation and success in the fair for a reason: they are very nicely made. And they are so varied! Some are made from regular cake, glazed in sugar flowers and loving words — sweet and cute to look at — while others are made from white cake, with painted-on writings, as if embroidered. There were also some nicely embroidered fabric hearts, or ones carved out of wood, with painted-on flowers."

The famous gingerbread was once baked by Orthodox Russians, and their craft was later continued by the Bun Bakers' Guild established in 1672. In order to bake gingerbread at home, you will need 200 grams honey, 150 grams butter and brown sugar, almost half a kilo flour, one teaspoon each of baking powder, cinnamon, ginger, and nutmeg, a pinch of clove, a pinch of salt and one egg. Heat up the honey, butter and brown sugar in a saucepan. Once the mass boils, let it cool down to a caramel-like consistency. Sift the flour, baking powder and spices in a bowl and mix everything together. Add an egg to the flour and pour in the

syrup after it cools.

Mix everything together and knead the dough until it becomes soft and smooth. Leave it in a fridge overnight. Roll it into thin sheets and cut out the cookies using different cutters or templates. Arrange them on a baking tray lined with baking paper, and bake for 10 minutes in an oven preheated to 180°C.



CABBAGE STEW

Perhaps no other dish has played such a large role in the traditional Vilnius area as cabbage stew, also called bigos. Since ancient times, it has been eaten both in the peasant's shack and the king's palace. The dish was described and praised in the famous poem by Adam Mickiewicz, "Pan Tadeusz."

Most often, traditional bigos is made for Užgavėnės, when it is important to have a fatty, satisfying meal before the 40 days of fasting. It is a calorie-rich stew of sauerkraut, fresh cabbage and meat, also enhanced with dried boletus, bacon, sausage, fried onion, and dried plums. Making the dish takes quite a while — the stew bubbles on low heat for three hours.

To make bigos, you will need two kilos sauerkraut, one kilo fresh cabbage, 300 grams smoked bacon, half a kilo sausage and 800 grams various meats. You may also include a handful of dried plums, dried mushrooms, three onions, bay leaf, non-crushed black pepper, fat and other spices. Stew the sauerkraut in its juice in a large pot. Chop fresh cabbage, add boiling water and stew separately until soft. Fry finely diced bacon and sausage in a pan, then put it into the sauerkraut. Add spice to taste. Sometimes just a bay leaf, some caraway seed and black pepper are enough. Soak the plums and mushrooms, cut into strips, and add to the

cabbage. Also add the water the mushrooms soaked in. Cut fresh meat into medium-sized chunks and fry it. Then add diced onion, fry a little longer, and put into the pot. Once the fresh cabbage becomes soft, add it into the pot as well. Stew everything for a little longer on low heat, then leave in a cold room for a while. Simmer for another hour on low heat, stirring to avoid sticking. Add salt and sugar. You can also put in a mashed tomato and two to three cloves of garlic. Afterwards, put in a cold room again. Some housewives heat up and cool down the bigos four to five times, saying that this helps it mature and become more delicious. Remember to stir well all the way down to the bottom every time you heat it up. The bigos is usually served in small bowls as the main course, and eaten with bread or potatoes.



GINGERBREAD COOKIES

As autumn approaches, and especially when the weather becomes cold, the aroma of gingerbread cookies emanates from many homes. These cookies are often baked for Christmas. Gingerbread cookies allow you to unleash your creativity by decorating them with glazing, and also feature a long shelf-life.

One of the most popular types of gingerbread cookies is a part of the Lithuanian national heritage. These little "mushrooms" are well known to every Lithuanian, and primarily associated with weddings and other important family celebrations. The brown chocolate hat and white sugary glazing of the stem on a freshly baked gingerbread cookie looks like a true boletus mushroom!

Pretty gingerbread cookies bring a festive mood to any table. Using natural products results in delicious, aromatic biscuits that can be stored for a long time without losing their flavour. Gingerbread cookies are not only a great dessert, but also a unique decoration (for example, for a Christmas tree).

A gingerbread cookie takes many shapes (such as little cottages). If you would like to make these cookies at home, you will need three eggs, half a cup sugar, 100 grams butter, 200 grams honey, 600 grams flour, and two teaspoons baking powder, cinnamon and gingerbread spice. For decorations, you will need 100 grams

chocolate, two tablespoons milk, two egg whites and three cups powdered sugar. Heat the honey, sugar and butter in a cup until they form a uniform mass. Once it cools, add eggs and flour mixed with the baking powder and spices. Knead the dough and roll into seven mm sheets. Using various shapes prepared in advance (lambs, angels, Christmas trees, stars, etc.), cut out the cookies. Bake them on a baking tray lined with baking paper in an oven preheated to 170 degrees C. Right before the festivities, decorate the little gingerbread cookies with chocolate melted in milk, and egg white glazing. The glazing may be coloured using natural products such as mint syrup, beetroot, aronia and sea buckthorn juice, making the pastries even more playful.

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