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SARMALE - SYMBOL OF MOLDOVAN GASTRONOMY

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Abstract. Moldovan cuisine is the result of synthesizing, over time, the tastes, ideas and gastronomic habits specific to the Moldovan population. Sarmalele or găluștele is a dish specific to southeastern Europe, with an older history. Găluștele occupy a special place in our national cuisine. They serve as a starting point or open the way for hot food at holiday tables. The preliminary study found a diversity of sarmale which is a varied preparation depending on several reference criteria - the filling, the type of leaf, the aesthetic shape, size, preparation technology, preparation vessels, etc. Knowing the terms, the ingredients used, the preparation technologies, the meaning and the traditions is an educational objective, but also a research that deserves attention in order to ensure its continuity.

Keywords: *Moldovian cuisine, traditional food, gastronomy, leaves plants, preparation technologies.*

Rezumat. Bucătăria moldovenească este rezultatul sintetizării în timp a gusturilor, ideilor și obiceiurilor gastronomice specifice populației moldovenești. Sarmalele sau găluștele sunt un preparat culinar specific sud-estului Europei, cu o istorie mai veche. Sarmalele ocupă un loc special și în bucătăria noastră națională. Acestea servesc drept punct de plecare sau deschid calea bucatelor calde la mesele de sărbători. Studiul preliminar a constatat o diversitate a sarmalelor care este un preparat variat în funcție de mai multe criterii de referință – umplutură, tipul frunzei de învelire, forma estetică, mărime, tehnologia de preparare, vasele de pregătire etc. Cunoașterea ingredientelor utilizate, a tehnologiilor de preparare, a semnificației și a tradițiilor este un obiectiv educațional, dar și de cercetare care merită atenție în vederea asigurării continuității acestuia.

Cuvinte-cheie: *bucătărie moldovenească, bucate tradiționale, gastronomie, frunze, tehnologii de preparare.*

Introduction

One of the most defining characteristics of a country, region or culture is its cuisine. Food represents a powerful part of the identity of a nation, region or people. Moldovan cuisine is the result of synthesizing, over time, the tastes, ideas and gastronomic habits specific to the Moldovan population. No traditional holiday takes place without cabbage rolls, cold cuts, poultry noodles, fries, baked goods, pies, spinach, vegetables, nuts, etc.

Gastronomy has always had a very important role in bringing cultures together [1, 2]. The cuisine is influenced by repeated waves of different cultures: the Greeks, the Romans, the Bulgarians, the Poles, the Russians. All of these influences gradually blended into the varied and delicious Moldovan culinary tradition. Furthermore, the usage of certain ingredients and specific cooking methods were transmitted from one generation to another and are known nowadays under the name of "traditional food". Traditional food played a major role in the traditions of different cultures and regions for over thousands of years. They include products that were consumed locally and regionally for a long period of time [3]. Moldova has a multitude of traditional culinary products, the main advantage being represented by the cooking methods and old traditions kept from the most ancient times.

1. History and etymology

Sarmaua is a dish specific to southeastern Europe, with an older history. It is believed that the Turks invented sarmalele, the term "sarma" comes from the Turkish word "sarmak", which means "roll" or "package", currently called "dolma". Turkish sarmalele are made from rice and raisins with ram chop, wrapped in cabbage leaves and do not look like Moldovan sarmale, which have a fairly large variety both in shape and content and as a coating [4].

Sarmalele are known not only in Moldova, but here they have acquired a special status of national heritage. They are known on the whole territory of the Republic of Moldova with the name of găluște, sarmale, galusci, găluși, galuskes, galușki, sarmali, sarma, stuffed straps (curechi împlut), golubtși, holubtși etc. They are also present in the food system of Ukraine (голубци), Russia (голубцы), Poland (golabki), Belarus (галубцы), Czech Republic and Slovakia (holubky), used in Turkey (dolmasi), Greece (dolmades), Iran (dolmeyer), Armenia (tolma) and Azerbaijan (dolmasi) - all designating sarmale.

Recipes and preparation may vary from country to country. In Croatia and Bosnia, brine contains minced meat and rice, as well as smoked beef. Croats use dried pork, bacon and sausages. In Dalmatia, however, there is a variant called "arambašići", which does not contain rice, and the meat is cut into small pieces, and is seasoned with lemon, cinnamon, cloves and hazelnuts. In Serbia, brine is cooked with sauerkraut, minced meat, rice and spices.

Poland's golabki, translating to "little pigeon feet" (named after the French dish that wrapped cabbage around cooked pigeon), stuffs the leaves with pork, beef, rice or barley, accompanied by sour cream and sweet paprika. Ukrainian holubtsi are typically vegetarian, filling pickled cabbage leaves with either buckwheat and wild mushrooms or a mixture of whole grains and root vegetables, braised in tomato juice or vegetable stock served with perogies. Some Ukrainians have introduced bacon into sarmale - it is either chopped or diced [5]. In Germany, sarmales are called "Kohlrollen", "Kohlrouladen" or "Krautwickel" and are also prepared with cabbage leaves. Egyptian mahshi kromb are simmered in an aromatic tomato-based sauce with mint, cumin and other Middle Eastern herbs and spices. In Azerbaijan, sarmalele are called "yarpag dolmasi" and are made from minced lamb (or a mixture of lamb and beef), combined with leeks and rice.

In Turkey, the country of origin of this wonderful delicacy, there are two categories of sarmale: those stuffed with a combination of minced meat, onions, pine nuts, oil and spices and those stuffed with a mixture of rice (without meat), olive oil, pine seeds, raisins, greens (dill, parsley and mint) and spices (usually allspice, cinnamon and black pepper) [4].

2. Diversity and classification

Găluștele occupy a special place in our national cuisine. They serve as a starting point or open the way for hot food at holiday tables.

As a culinary preparation, găluștele are eaten throughout the year. Their name differs from the contents of the stuffing (meat galuste and fasting galuste) and the sheets in the care are wrapped.

Today, in our country, the most common are cabbage leaves in cabbage leaves (sweet or pickled) or in young grapevine leaves, but in the past (or even today in other countries), sarmaua could be wrapped in beet leaves, kohlrabi, coltsfoot, garden patience, horseradish, orache, mallow, linden, walnut, raspberry, sorrel, amaranth, arctium, beans, maple or even mulberry - practically any leaf wide enough all scalded (blanched) with borș (bran) or lemon salt water to be soft [6].

The young grapevine leaves as well as other leaves, are dried or preserved and harvested for the winter.

The filling of the sarmale de post is made of lean beef, pork, bacon, veal, sheep, goose or turkey breast, etc., of urda and cow's cheese; of fasting is made from different grains.

Rice is not a local product, so in the past, sarmales were filled with corn on the cob (shelled and ground seeds), poultry (large ground grains), wheat bulgur (crack), etc., to which vegetables are added steamed (*undate, călite*) vegetables (onions, leeks, carrots, tomatoes) in oil and various spices (salt, black pepper, bay leave, various greens, etc.). The classification of sarmale is shown in figure 1.

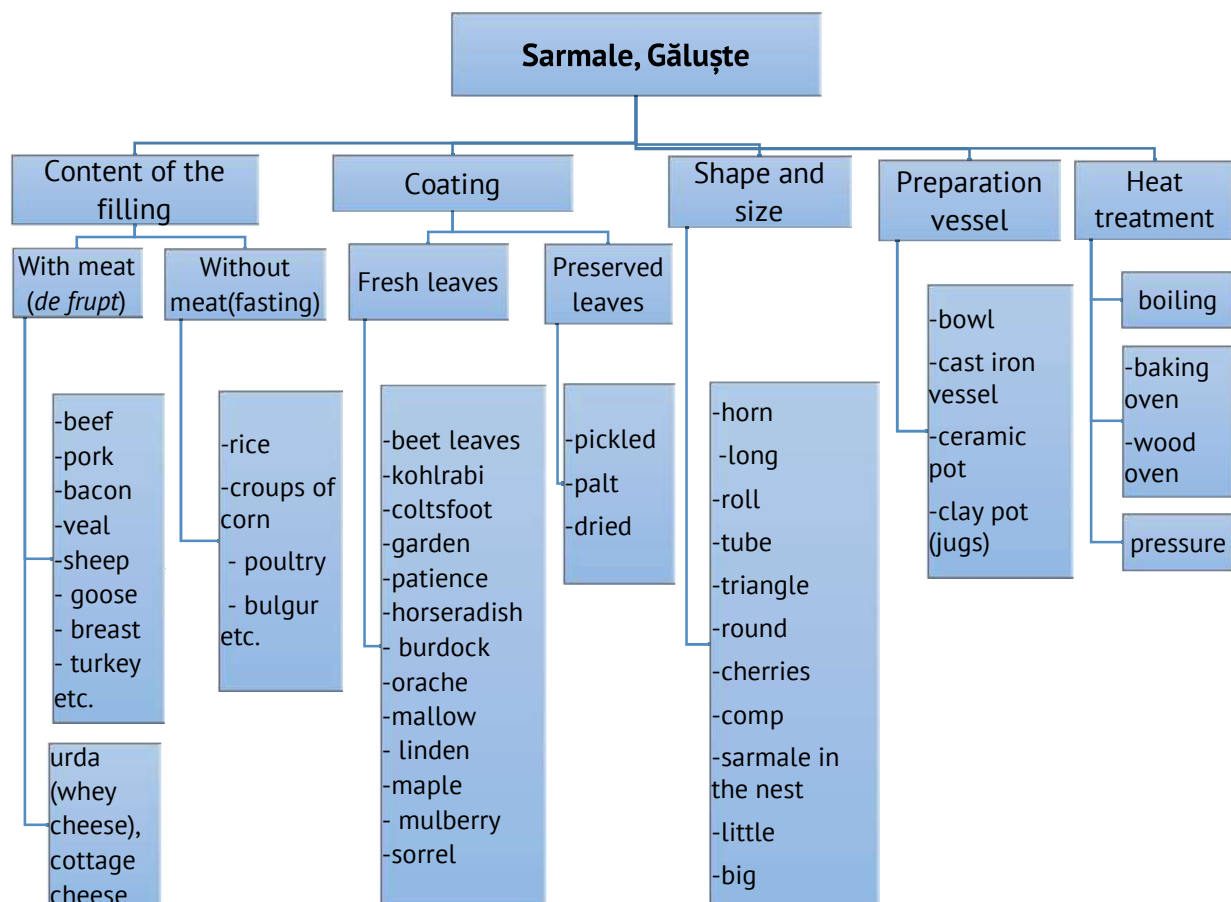


Figure 1. Classification of sarmale.

Cabbage leaves and other wrapping leaves from the rolls have a high biological value are rich in protein, carbohydrates, fiber, mineral salts, vitamins, antioxidants (especially Vitamin C) to help ward off breast, colon and prostate cancers, reduce “bad cholesterol,” and amp up immunity. Rife with B vitamins and potassium, cabbage boosts energy and calms jittery nerves, while stabilizing heart rate and blood pressure [7]. As for the tomato sauce, those red beauties packed with Vitamins C, A, B6, niacin, folate and lycopene are believed to put the skids on various cancers, along with heart- and age-related diseases.

3. Preparation and serving

The technology of preparation of sarmale differs slightly from one variant to another. For example, the rice from the sarmale is fried, or pre-scalded, after which it is mixed with the onion and carrot steamed. Another differentiation consists in the fact that in some regions in the filling are put both fried onions and green onions, finely chopped. Ukrainians in northern Moldova prepare sarmale stuffed with corn or buckwheat, mixed with rice (*Marcauti, Pervomaiscoe village*) [8]. Some Ukrainians in the center of the country add red pepper paste to the filling.

The sarmale are cooked over low heat until the crops and components in the filling change their texture and the consistency becomes soft. An important role in changing the texture of plant foods belongs to the heat treatment, which has a profound effect on the middle lamellae and cell walls [9].

The change in the firmness of legumes and cereals is the result of the evolution of cell wall components, especially polysaccharides. At the same time, due to the complexity of the composition of cell walls, it is difficult to fully correlate texture changes with specific chemical changes of polysaccharides [10, 11].

The change in boiling consistency is also correlated with the gelatinization of the starch, the denaturation of the proteins, the permeability of the coating, the grain size of the cereals by the composition of the filling, the leaves with which the sarmales are wrapped and the boiling medium, etc.

Increasing the ratio of monovalent ions (Na^+ and K^+) and bivalent ions (Ca^{2+} and Mg^{2+}) in these environments significantly decreases the cooking time. Onwuka and Okala (2003) showed that the addition of calcium salts to the cooking medium significantly increases the cooking time [12].

Sarmalele, găluștele or sarmăluțele are boiled in borș (bran) in Gagauzia, in vegetable or meat broth, water with salt or tomato juice, red pepper paste. The preparation (boiling, baking) of sarmales takes place over a very slow fire in special clay, black ceramic or cast iron pots that are usually placed in a wood or electric oven. Water is put in the preventive clay pots, so that the clay absorbs the necessary water, after which it is greased with oil and then the sarmales are placed. Sarmalele prepared in clay pots are incomparably richer in taste, flavorful and ensure the preservation of a high level of mineral substances, vitamins in food.

They differ not only in the composition of the filling, or in what they are wrapped. They depend on their aesthetic shape and size. In the northern villages, small dumplings are made in the shape of a croissant or tubular, in the parts of Rezina they are made without meat, as small as cherries or dwarfs as the fingernail and so that corn flour is not spread. In the center are oblong and larger [13]. In Gagauzia they are wrapped in a special

way, like pancakes. Likewise, in the north of the Republic, *sarmale Boierești* or *sarmale Țigănești* are prepared, which are distinguished by the fact that for their preparation pork ribs, chicken with bone are used, which are placed inside the sarmale.

The shape of the galuște also depends on the imagination of the housewives. Today, on holidays, the nest of galuște is also common: make a few small sarmale, then wrap them in a whole cabbage leaf.

But as a diversity, sarmalele are also made placed in a pumpkin from which the core was removed, then given for preparation in the baking oven figure 2. The wrapping of the sarmales is like an art, they must not be tightened too much so that the boiling liquid can penetrate inside and the sarmales keep their shape.

They are served with mămăligă (polenta), sometimes with potatoes or bread, "cooled" with yogurt, cream and horseradish [14].



Figure 2. Assortment of sarmale.

Sarmalele - stuffed cabbage rolls are our favorite and they became our traditional dish for Christmas, Easter and also for very special occasions such as weddings, New Year's Eve parties or anniversaries [15]. Sarmalele are the first hot dishes to be brought to the holiday table. During the wedding ritual, the găluștele are brought by the cooks with shouts and cheerful music.

Conclusions

A part of the cultural heritage of a nation is the variety of traditional food, kept unchanged for generation to generation. The value of the kitchen consists not in the number of existing dishes, but in the variety of shades of taste and aroma, in the art of combining different products. According to these criteria, the Moldovan cuisine, in our opinion, occupies one of the leading places among the cuisines of the world.

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