

Zahradníček's blog for English speaking students

Part twenty nine: Niva, or tvarůžky?

Cheese is not a typical Czech product. The most famous cheese country is probably France that gave birth to Roquefort and all blue cheeses (although Italians believe that the oldest blue cheese is Gorgonzola), camembert-like or brie-like cheese and many others. Dutch people have their famous Gouda and Eidam, Swiss people their Emmental, even English have their Cheddar.

Maybe we should start with saying that the Czech word *sýr* is not as large as the English word "cheese". Especially some soft and not salty cheeses, that can be used to make cheesecakes or tiramisu, should be rather translated into Czech as *tvaroh*. As mentioned last week, even Czech *Tradiční pomazánkové* is a kind of cheese, similar to Philadelphia.

Czechs have their own variants of all the world cheeses. Some of them have the usual names – brie, Eidam, Emmental (or *ementál*), sometimes you can also find a Cheddar (or *čedar*). Some of them might have different names: Camembert-like cheese is usually *hermelín* (but sometimes also *plesnivec* and sometimes *král sýrů* what means *king of cheeses*). The blue cheese is usually sold as *niva*, and this name is used for cheese that is made in different dairies. One of them comes from a small dairy in Otínoves, a village close to Moravian Karst. For long years, it got mature in one of Moravian karst caves, *Michálka*; now it is already not possible because of hygienic rules, but it is still one of quite traditional and very good blue cheeses. You can also buy it fresh directly in the dairy (an maybe to combine it with a trip to the Moravian Karst); but it is only open 7.30 a. m. to 5 p. m. on workdays and 7 a. m. to 1 p. m. on Saturdays.

Some Czechs like processed cheese; children often get bread with processed cheese as a snack. But now it is less common than in eighties, as many people stopped buying it because of addition of emulsifier to these cheeses. It is partially rational, as some of the emulsifiers are really not very good for health, on the other hand, it is also a part of a general hysteria against food additives (even the additives that are completely innocent). – Some Czechs also like steamed cheeses, smoked cheeses, and sometimes also steamed and smoked cheeses; you can also see many of them on advent markets and many other outdoor events. They are mostly imported from Slovakia (less frequently also from South-East Poland), as they are traditional products of the Carpathian mountains. Another typical cheese from Carpathian mountains is *bryndza*, a soft, quite acid cheese made of sheep milk. Fresh, non-pasteurized *bryndza* is a probiotic containing lots of enterococci. *Bryndza* is a traditional Slovak cheese; but be careful when travelling through Europe – in Romanian language "brânză" (read: brynzeh) means just "cheese". Slovaks make a sauce of *bryndza* and cream and they pour it on potato gnocchi called *halušky*; with some particles of bacon, it is a typical Slovak meal (available also in Brno, for example in Skanzen in Olympia, formerly also on Pekařská street). It is called *bryndzové halušky* and of course, for best *halušky* you have to visit Slovakia, or more precisely, Slovakian mountains. If you buy it on náměstí Svobody in Brno (or also the some *halušky* with cabbage, another variant sometimes called *strapačky*), it does never taste so good.

Czechs also like aromatic cheese, that is traditionally served with Czech beer. Sometimes, bread with such an aromatic cheese can be also obtained in pubs as "something to eat with beer". One of them is *romadur*, what is a Czech (and also German) name of the *remoudou* cheese from Belgium. – But even more aromatic, and the only really Czech (more precisely, Moravian) cheese are Olomoucké tvarůžky (Olmützer Quargel in German, no translation exists for English). Usually a packet contains four or more pieces, that is why we have it usually in plural (*tvarůžky* and not *tvarůžek*). The cheese is very aromatic (some people compare it with Malaysian/Singaporean *durian*, or Icelandic *kæstur hákarl*), but it contains nearly no fat, so it is very dietary food. Despite its name, it is not made in Olomouc, but in Loštice (30 km NW from Olomouc). In Loštice, you can find a small museum and a special restaurant, that serves even sweet meals with *tvarůžky*. It is just on you, if you would find it tasty or not.