Taste it! Love it!
For longer than Lithuanians can remember, eating has been an exceptional, ritualistic activity. The older generation even today sits down to eat only when the entire family gathers. Lithuanians stand apart from other peoples not only for their devotion to the tradition of celebrating feast days together and sampling ritual dishes together, but also for their authentic culinary wisdom. The knowledge of what, with what, how, how much, and when to eat was passed down from generation to generation and depended on the skills of the housewife as well as the peculiarities of a given region. The five ethnographic regions of Lithuania are each proud of their respective dishes: the aukštaitai with their pancakes, curd products and pastries, the dzūkai with their dishes made from mushrooms, buckwheat and potatoes, the suvalkaičiai with their skilandis (a type of sausage), vėdarai (kishka) and sweet soups, the žemaičiai with their kastinys (a type of thick cream), European crayfish and porridge, and, last but certainly not least, the seaside dwellers with their fish.

The postwar shortages of meat, grain and vegetables compelled housewives to find alternatives to customary food. The years of scarcity came to be dominated by fatty, high-calorie, easy-to-make dishes from potatoes and flour, and sauces that in the past had been quite uncharacteristic. And this is why many think that Lithuanian cuisine is fatty and unhealthy.

Traditional Lithuanian food in fact was quite simple, but certainly not unhealthy. Everyday dishes were made from perhaps only two or three ingredients, but those ingredients complemented each other. The diet was seasonal and minimalist: food was eaten in moderation, but it was filling, it was tasty, and it was made as naturally as possible. These nutritional principles were shaped by religious convictions, Church precepts, and, most important of all, traditions. Lithuanians paid particular attention to traditions.
The traditional Lithuanian diet is first and foremost connected with seasonal food. Lithuanians have maintained their habit of eating dishes made from local, in-season ingredients. In spring and summer a lot of dishes made from milk, leafy vegetables, berries, mushrooms, fruit, fish and flour were eaten. During these months, a lot of lighter foods were eaten, and meat was eaten only from time to time, when strength was needed for physically-demanding tasks. In autumn and winter, the opposite was true: more meat, grain, legumes and root vegetables were eaten. As the seasons passed, ingredients naturally replaced their predecessors in the cycle, and the nutrition sufficed throughout the entire year. During the winter months, when cow’s milk was largely unavailable, people got their protein from nuts, hemp-seeds and poppy-seed milk. In the spring, Lithuanians tapped trees and drew buckets of sap, and for three weeks drank it in large quantities, in this way naturally cleansing the body. After the long winter, the nearly-empty tables were supplemented with fresh greens as well as scrambled eggs with nettles, and soups were made, as were stews and curry with winter-cress and dandelions. Wild plants, including stems, leaves, seeds, and roots were eaten or used as dietary supplements. For children, a real treat were the stalks of wood sorrel and wild garlic that sprouted in springtime; these would be sprinkled on buttered bread, and for many kids, they couldn’t eat these fast enough.

In summertime, the ripe apples, wild strawberries, pears, currants and blueberries were dried in quantities large enough to last through the winter. As the summer ended and the weather cooled, warm beverages such as caraway tea or acorn coffee strengthened the organism. Such beverages were healthy, caffeine-free, and were suitable even for children. When preparing food, very important aspects for Lithuanians were quantity and compatibility. According to the Lithuanian culinary tradition, the use of more than three main ingredients was not appropriate, and fats deriving from different sources were not mixed together. Also, Lithuanians ate much less than they eat today. The old dishes on display in Lithuania’s museums are an excellent illustration of this: the bowls for eating were much smaller than today’s bowls and dishes.

**PRINCIPLES of traditional Lithuanian cuisine:**

seasonality, quantity and compatibility

The traditional Lithuanian diet is first and foremost connected with seasonal food. Lithuanians have maintained their habit of eating dishes made from local, in-season ingredients. In spring and summer a lot of dishes made from milk, leafy vegetables, berries, mushrooms, fruit, fish and flour were eaten. During these months, a lot of lighter foods were eaten, and meat was eaten only from time to time, when strength was needed for physically-demanding tasks. In autumn and winter, the opposite was true: more meat, grain, legumes and root vegetables were eaten. As the seasons passed, ingredients naturally replaced their predecessors in the cycle, and the nutrition sufficed throughout the entire year. During the winter months, when cow’s milk was largely unavailable, people got their protein from nuts, hemp-seeds and poppy-seed milk. In the spring, Lithuanians tapped trees and drew buckets of sap, and for three weeks drank it in large quantities, in this way naturally cleansing the body. After the long winter, the nearly-empty tables were supplemented with fresh greens as well as scrambled eggs with nettles, and soups were made, as were stews and curry with winter-cress and dandelions. Wild plants, including stems, leaves, seeds, and roots were eaten or used as dietary supplements. For children, a real treat were the stalks of wood sorrel and wild garlic that sprouted in springtime; these would be sprinkled on buttered bread, and for many kids, they couldn’t eat these fast enough.

In summertime, the ripe apples, wild strawberries, pears, currants and blueberries were dried in quantities large enough to last through the winter. As the summer ended and the weather cooled, warm beverages such as caraway tea or acorn coffee strengthened the organism. Such beverages were healthy, caffeine-free, and were suitable even for children. When preparing food, very important aspects for Lithuanians were quantity and compatibility. According to the Lithuanian culinary tradition, the use of more than three main ingredients was not appropriate, and fats deriving from different sources were not mixed together. Also, Lithuanians ate much less than they eat today. The old dishes on display in Lithuania’s museums are an excellent illustration of this: the bowls for eating were much smaller than today’s bowls and dishes.

**THE CUISINE OF THE NOBILITY: FOR GOURMET DISCOVERIES**

The cuisine of Lithuania’s nobility was distinctive for the abundance of its herbs, and made do without sugar and dishes made from potatoes. Several centuries ago, the Lithuanian nobility’s favourite dishes were made from game and flavoured with honey and mushrooms. From the 15th to the 18th centuries, nobles had soup three times a day. That is why many kinds of soup are made in Lithuania to the present day. A feature that sets Lithuanian soups apart from many soups elsewhere is that most Lithuanian soups are not made by grating ingredients, but by boiling them after mixing together various component parts. The soups are flavoured with cream, salt and pepper, and black bread is eaten at the same time as the soup. After the disappearance of the noble class, the peasant cuisine that came into dominance in the 19th and 20th centuries inherited from the old cuisine only the salting and smoking of meat. **Skilandis**, sausage, **lašiniai** (salo, made from fatback) and smoked fish spread throughout the country.
Great wisdom in the intelligent use of herbs

Taking advantage of the useful properties of herbs, Lithuanians in the spring helped their exhausted bodies to recover from the long winter, in the summer relaxed their bodies prior to going to sleep, in the autumn improved their digestion after eating heavy meat dishes, and in winter strengthened their immunity and raised their spirits. The žemaičiai (Samogitians) have long added the leaves of southern wormwood (European sage), tarragon or sage to cream, curd, cheeses or whole milk, because dairy products flavoured with such herbs are more easily digested. Calamus, maple leaves and caraway are often used when baking bread. Sage, juniper berries and thyme are often used when making meat dishes.

Knowing the medicinal properties of edible plants, Lithuanians chewed the fruit of the European rowan tree in order to improve digestion, and ate cranberries to reduce blood pressure. The chewing of dried fruit also has a relaxing effect.

The cleansing and detoxifying diets that dietitians recommend today are nothing new to Lithuanians. While dietary science has only recently discovered and recognised the health benefits of temporarily refusing certain kinds of foods, Lithuanians have cultivated such a tradition for centuries. Almost a month before Christmas, and seven weeks before Easter, Lithuanians traditionally fasted, that is, they refused to eat meat, eggs and dairy products, as well as dishes made with them. During the fast, Lithuanians did not starve, but ingeniously partook of special, health-promoting food. For example, during the winter fast prior to Christmas Eve, dishes were flavoured with the seeds or oil of hemp, flax and poppy.

In order to find out if the Lithuanian-style diet is right for you, we recommend you try three especially healthy traditional Lithuanian dishes: cold beetroot soup, pickled cabbage and cranberry kisielius (kisiel, a fruit soup or drink).

FLAX AND HEMP: FOR THOSE SUFFERING FROM SUNLIGHT DEFICIENCY

Modern science has confirmed that the seeds and oil of hemp and flax contain significantly more protein and amino acids than are found in grains or animal fats. Hemp oil is abundant in Omega-3 and Omega-6 fatty acids that are especially vital to the human organism (in fact, hemp oil contains about twice as many such fatty acids as are found in fish liver oils). In addition, these products help protect against sunlight deficiency, dispel seasonal doldrums, strengthen the organism and protect against depression.
Cold beetroot soup

You can get a taste of authentic Lithuanian cuisine by trying cold beetroot soup!

The somewhat-shocking bright red colour of the cold beetroot soup comes from NATURAL beet juice, and the indescribably refreshing taste comes from the most important component of this cold soup, KEFIR, which nutrition specialists call one of the healthiest products in the world! Every Lithuanian family makes this low-calorie soup according to their own recipe.

KEFIR: A HEALTHY DRINK
- Kefir is one of the oldest fermented milk drinks known to humanity. It has a positive effect on many bodily functions, it regulates and maintains the balance of micro-organisms in the intestines, and strengthens the immune system.
- Kefir is low-calorie (with just 59 kcal in 100 g!), with relatively few carbohydrates, but rich in protein, fats, organic salts, microelements and B-group vitamins (with considerably more vitamins B2 and B12 than are found in milk).

Ingredients
- 500 g kefir*
- 100 g boiled or marinated beets
- 2 fresh cucumbers
- Several onion leaves
- A pinch of fresh dill
- 1 egg
- Salt according to taste (if instead of kefir you choose to use yoghurt, use more salt)
- 400 g boiled potatoes

* Sometimes Lithuanians replace kefir with soured milk, buttermilk or cream thinned with mineral water. If kefir is not available in your country, you can look for similar sour-milk products: in Western Europe or the USA, you will find natural yoghurt, in Germany, you will find Buttermilch, and in Russia, Central or South Asia, and in southeastern Europe, you will find ryazhenka, prostokvasha, kumis (kumiss, koumiss, kumys), ayran, laban, dahi, lassi, doogh and so on.

Make it yourself – no factory needed!

Finely chop the vegetables: cucumbers, beets (you may grate these), onion leaves and dill. Mix them all in a large bowl.

Pour the kefir over the vegetables, flavour with salt according to taste, mix and let stand for several minutes (the longer the mixed vegetables stand, the tastier the soup will be).

Pour the soup into bowls, cut the boiled egg in pieces into the bowls. The cold soup is served with hot boiled potatoes flavoured with dill. Enjoy!
Correctly* pickled cabbage

For Lithuanians, cabbage is a ROYAL VEGETABLE. It is used to make salads, soups, stews, rolls and other dishes, which can be sampled in many Lithuanian restaurants. You can find tasty pickled cabbage in open-air markets as well as shops and supermarkets.

If you want to try cabbage with an especially good taste, pickle it yourself according to this old Lithuanian recipe.

Ingredients
• 10 kg fresh cabbage
• 100 g sugar
• 200 g salt
• 5–8 grated carrots
• 100 g cranberries
• 2–3 tart apples (these can be replaced with a splash of lemon juice)
• 50 g caraway seeds (these are optional)

* Maybe other recipes for pickled cabbage look simpler to you, but believe us, once you try making pickled cabbage according to this recipe, you will never again make it any other way...

When pickling cabbage, it is very important to select the right phase of the moon and follow instructions carefully!

The best time for pickling cabbage is during the waning moon. Do not pickle the cabbage during other phases of the moon, because the process may not work as well or at all.

Place the finely chopped cabbage together with the grated carrots, sugar, salt, cranberries, apples and caraway seeds into a large bowl or container. Mix everything together and let stand at room temperature (not less than +18 degrees C) for two days (it is not necessary to cover or press the mixture in any way).

After two full days, repeatedly poke the mixture with a long implement (in folk terms, to let the air in) and let stand another day without disturbing it.

Next, it is ESSENTIAL to take the cabbage out of the bowl or container to “ventilate” it (to mix it up), put it back into the bowl or container, and let it ferment for another two full days.

After that, take the cabbage to a cool location (the temperature should be no higher than +10 degrees C) and put it under some pressure (that is, cover it and press it so the juice can seep out of the cabbage) with a heavy object, for example, a large stone. Let the cabbage stand for another five full days. And then dig in to your heart’s content!

Pickled Cabbage: Loaded with Vitamins!
• 100 g of pickled cabbage may contain up to 40 mg of vitamin C. That is more than half of the recommended dietary intake norm. It also contains an abundance of B-group vitamins, potassium, magnesium, zinc and other important elements.
• Nutrition specialists say that pickled cabbage is almost the only human-made food product which surpasses nature’s equivalent (in this case, raw cabbage) in terms of nutritional value!
Cranberry kisielius

Lithuanians have long called cranberries LIFE BERRIES, and for Lithuanians the berries were and still are not only food, but also a first line of defence against chills, anaemia and avitaminosis. Due to the especially large amount of vitamin C they contain, cranberries are called NORTHERN LEMONS, and scientists have put them on the list of the most useful foods in the world.

Ingredients

- 2 glasses (400 g) of cranberries (fresh or frozen)
- 1.5 litres of water
- sugar (for those who prefer a more sour taste, 5 tablespoons (100 g) will suffice, but for those who prefer a sweeter taste, it would be best to sweeten according to taste)
- 2 tablespoons (40 g) of potato starch (if you do not use the potato starch, you will make kompotas, a kind of fruit drink)

THE MIRACLE-WORKING POWER OF CRANBERRIES

- Today researchers confirm that cranberries have an abundance of antioxidants, which remove free radicals from the body, and reduce the risk of developing many chronic diseases such as cancer and diabetes. Cranberries are also a source of vitamins in the PP, B and C groups. Cranberries contain 25 different minerals, especially potassium, calcium, phosphorus, iron, manganese and iodine.
- Cranberries also have antibacterial properties, which help protect against infections of the urinary tract. They are also an excellent defence against tooth decay and inflammation of the gums.

Make it yourself – no factory needed!

Having washed the cranberries, mash them and press out the juice into a separate container. It is best to mash in a strainer or sieve with a pestle, a large spoon or other blunt tool (if you use a juicer, the juice will not be fit for use). Set the juice aside.

Pour the pulp (pomace) into boiling water, let it boil (about 10 minutes) and filter it again. Sweeten the resulting liquid with sugar, and bring it to a boil again.

Put the starch into a cup or bowl, pour 100 ml of cold water into it and mix together. When the starch dissolves, pour this liquid into the sweet liquid, mix slowly and bring it to a boil again, then remove it from the heat.

When the liquid has cooled off a bit, pour into it the cranberry juice that you had earlier set aside. In this way, all of the vitamins that were in the berries at the beginning will be preserved. Let the drink cool off.

Enjoy!
What dishes should I try in Lithuania?

No matter when you decide to get acquainted with traditional Lithuanian cuisine, you can’t go wrong, because it is always in season. If you are travelling during the summer, start with cold beetroot soup – its colour will impress you no less than its taste. You can find this cold soup throughout Lithuania. If you visit the seaside, ask for fresh fish in the homesteads along the shores of the Curonian Lagoon, or even better, ask for homemade fish stew, the Lithuanian equivalent of bouillabaisse. The residents of the seaside region have kept the old traditions of making smoked fish, so when you catch a whiff of smoked fish, you simply must stop and try cold-smoked bream (1).

As the weather cools, fattier and warmer dishes look better and better, so in autumn in Lithuania various dishes from lamb, mutton, goose and duck are eaten. Autumn is also harvest-time for vegetables, so this is the best time for trying dishes especially popular in Lithuania: cepelinas (a type of dumpling made from fresh grated potatoes) (2) or kugelis (a type of baked potato pudding). Despite the fact that potatoes became widely used in Lithuania only at the end of the 17th century, they nevertheless are a Lithuanian staple, a kind of second bread.

If you travel around southeastern Lithuania during the autumn, don’t be surprised by the sellers you see on the side of the road. They are mushroom- and berry-gatherers, offering for sale the goodies they have found in the forest. Forest berries are a real cocktail of the vitamins and microelements necessary to maintain good health, so don’t pass up the opportunity to strengthen your system before winter begins. And as for mushrooms, we suggest trying them only after they have been boiled, as in the mushroom-bread vat (3)!

Unique dishes in the Dzūkija region are made from buckwheat, so it’s worth trying the local buckwheat pancakes, buckwheat bread and old-fashioned buckwheat cake (loaf), called “babka”. Carrot cake (4) is a real treat for sweet tooths, and subtle Lithuanian herbal tea goes very well with it. For those who prefer a stronger taste and aroma, a good seasonal choice is Lithuanian aged liqueur (trauktinė) and mead (3), matured according to ancient recipes that are held in secret. A small amount of these alcoholic drinks are beneficial to your health. Cheers!

A unique dish served in the Žemaitija region (Samogitia), especially appropriate in summer, is kastinys (a type of thick cream) with hot potatoes (2). This dish is particularly well-liked by vegetarians. For meat-eaters, we recommend trying cold-smoked lašinukai (salo, made with fatback) with onion leaves or treating yourself to dishes made from game. For those with a bit of gourmet taste, we suggest treating yourself to black-bread dessert (4). The thirsty can refresh themselves with live beer or kvass (gira, a beverage made from bread) (3). Famous for its beer-brewing traditions, Lithuania will amaze even the most discerning beer taster. And fermented gira, made from the black rye bread that Lithuania rightfully takes pride in, might vaguely remind one of the taste of the most famous carbonated beverage in the world. Gira is liked by children and parents alike, because it is not only refreshing, but also nourishing as well.

Autumn

On the last Saturday of September each year in Varėna, the so-called mushroom capital of Europe, not only mushroom-gatherers come together at the Mushroom Festival to have a good time. Festival-goers sample Lithuanian culinary treats, learn traditional crafts... and maybe even photograph themselves posing with the champion mushroom-gatherers!

If you visit northern Lithuania in the second half of July, drop in at the annual fiesta for sweet tooths, which lasts several days: the Žagarė cherry festival. The main attraction of the festival is the cherry jam that is made on-site. Maybe you’d like a taste. Or two, or three...?
What dishes should I try in Lithuania?

Many traditional celebrations are held in winter according to the calendar, and so various dishes are associated with those holiday periods. If you have the opportunity to visit a Lithuanian home as a guest in the period before Christmas, you simply must try kūčiukai (small balls of leavened dough and poppy seeds) with poppy-seed milk (2). It is a sweet dish especially enjoyed by children, somewhat similar to soup. You can also eat the kūčiukai by themselves, or easily transport them home as a gift, to show what a traditional Lithuanian pastry or snack is like.

During the Lithuanian winter, we recommend eating herring with hot potatoes (1), cream and onions. This dish will especially satisfy those who enjoy raw fish, because only one ingredient, the potatoes, are thermally processed. We also recommend trying fresh vėdarai (kāška). It consists of a pig’s intestine stuffed with grated potatoes, and is usually eaten with a sauce including fried bacon bits.

Southeastern Lithuania is proud of its flour pancakes and skilodzi (a kind of pancake) (3). In Aukštaitija, pancakes, crepes and the dips, seasonings and fillings that go with them are so many and varied that it is difficult to select a few from among so many, even for one who thinks he or she knows everything there is to know about pancakes... An especially good fit with pancakes is cranberry kūšelis (kisėl, a kind of drink), which supplies much-needed vitamin C during the winter for young and old alike.

Acorn coffee (4) is caffeine-free coffee, which Lithuanians “invented” after seeing how wild pigs, having eaten their fill of acorns in the autumn, grew strong during the winter. An authentic Lithuanian treat is sweet soup (4). It is especially tasty in Suvalkija. The aukštaičiai are quite proud of dumplings with berry fillings, called virtiniai (literally, “cold-noses”) (3). They simply melt in your mouth. You won’t believe us until you try them yourself!

An heavenly layered-dough pastry with poppy-seed filling, the so-called simtukos (hundred-leaf) (2), is similar in some ways to baklava and other phyllo-dough pastries. It is a dessert well-liked by Lithuanians, and a part of the Karaite culinary heritage which came together with the Crimean Tatars and Karaites who were expelled from their homes by the Golden Horde in the 14th century. Vytautas, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, offered them a home, and thus they settled in Lithuania. Lithuanians also enjoy other Karaite dishes, including šimtalapis (hundred-leaf) (2), is similar in some ways to baklava and other phyllo-dough pastries. Šaltanosiai (literally, “cold-noses”) (3). They simply melt in your mouth.

For those who enjoy flour pancakes, we hereby invite you to the especially lively Lithuanian festival for driving out the winter, Užgavėnės, which takes place each year 7 weeks prior to Easter. On this day, throughout Lithuania, you can encounter strangely-dressed, masked personages and eat your fill (and more) of pancakes. It is believed that having eaten well on this day, you will be full and strong throughout the entire year.

During the Lithuanian winter, we recommend eating herring with hot potatoes (1), cream and onions. This dish will especially satisfy those who enjoy raw fish, because only one ingredient, the potatoes, are thermally processed. We also recommend trying fresh vėdarai (kāška). It consists of a pig’s intestine stuffed with grated potatoes, and is usually eaten with a sauce including fried bacon bits.

Southeastern Lithuania is proud of its flour pancakes and skilodzi (a kind of pancake) (3). In Aukštaitija, pancakes, crepes and the dips, seasonings and fillings that go with them are so many and varied that it is difficult to select a few from among so many, even for one who thinks he or she knows everything there is to know about pancakes... An especially good fit with pancakes is cranberry kūšelis (kisėl, a kind of drink), which supplies much-needed vitamin C during the winter for young and old alike.

Acorn coffee (4) is caffeine-free coffee, which Lithuanians “invented” after seeing how wild pigs, having eaten their fill of acorns in the autumn, grew strong during the winter. An authentic Lithuanian treat is sweet soup (4). It is especially tasty in Suvalkija. The aukštaičiai are quite proud of dumplings with berry fillings, called virtiniai (literally, “cold-noses”) (3). They simply melt in your mouth. You won’t believe us until you try them yourself!

An heavenly layered-dough pastry with poppy-seed filling, the so-called simtukos (hundred-leaf) (2), is similar in some ways to baklava and other phyllo-dough pastries. It is a dessert well-liked by Lithuanians, and a part of the Karaite culinary heritage which came together with the Crimean Tatars and Karaites who were expelled from their homes by the Golden Horde in the 14th century. Vytautas, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, offered them a home, and thus they settled in Lithuania. Lithuanians also enjoy other Karaite dishes, including šimtalapis (hundred-leaf) (2), is similar in some ways to baklava and other phyllo-dough pastries. Šaltanosiai (literally, “cold-noses”) (3). They simply melt in your mouth.

For those who enjoy flour pancakes, we hereby invite you to the especially lively Lithuanian festival for driving out the winter, Užgavėnės, which takes place each year 7 weeks prior to Easter. On this day, throughout Lithuania, you can encounter strangely-dressed, masked personages and eat your fill (and more) of pancakes. It is believed that having eaten well on this day, you will be full and strong throughout the entire year.

Each year, spring in Lithuania begins with Kazikiau mugė (St Casimir’s fair), which is usually held on the Sunday closest to St Casimir’s Day, 4 March. The fair continues for several days and spreads across almost all of the Old Town of Vilnius. Artisans and crafts people sell their handmade folk items. During the fair, one can sample and buy dishes, treats and beverages from across the spectrum of Lithuania’s regional culinary heritage, find out and even practice the secrets of making them, and purchase the fair’s symbols as gifts for those at home: meduoliai (a type of biscuit or cookie made from flour, honey and spices) and riestainiai (similar to a bagel).

An authentic Lithuanian treat is sweet soup (4). It is especially tasty in Suvalkija. The aukštaičiai are quite proud of dumplings with berry fillings, called šaltanosiai (literally, “cold-noses”) (3). They simply melt in your mouth. You won’t believe us until you try them yourself!

An heavenly layered-dough pastry with poppy-seed filling, the so-called simtukos (hundred-leaf) (2), is similar in some ways to baklava and other phyllo-dough pastries. It is a dessert well-liked by Lithuanians, and a part of the Karaite culinary heritage which came together with the Crimean Tatars and Karaites who were expelled from their homes by the Golden Horde in the 14th century. Vytautas, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, offered them a home, and thus they settled in Lithuania. Lithuanians also enjoy other Karaite dishes, including šimtalapis (hundred-leaf) (2), is similar in some ways to baklava and other phyllo-dough pastries. Šaltanosiai (literally, “cold-noses”) (3). They simply melt in your mouth.

For those who enjoy flour pancakes, we hereby invite you to the especially lively Lithuanian festival for driving out the winter, Užgavėnės, which takes place each year 7 weeks prior to Easter. On this day, throughout Lithuania, you can encounter strangely-dressed, masked personages and eat your fill (and more) of pancakes. It is believed that having eaten well on this day, you will be full and strong throughout the entire year.

An authentic Lithuanian treat is sweet soup (4). It is especially tasty in Suvalkija. The aukštaičiai are quite proud of dumplings with berry fillings, called šaltanosiai (literally, “cold-noses”) (3). They simply melt in your mouth. You won’t believe us until you try them yourself!

An heavenly layered-dough pastry with poppy-seed filling, the so-called simtukos (hundred-leaf) (2), is similar in some ways to baklava and other phyllo-dough pastries. It is a dessert well-liked by Lithuanians, and a part of the Karaite culinary heritage which came together with the Crimean Tatars and Karaites who were expelled from their homes by the Golden Horde in the 14th century. Vytautas, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, offered them a home, and thus they settled in Lithuania. Lithuanians also enjoy other Karaite dishes, including šimtalapis (hundred-leaf) (2), is similar in some ways to baklava and other phyllo-dough pastries. Šaltanosiai (literally, “cold-noses”) (3). They simply melt in your mouth.

For those who enjoy flour pancakes, we hereby invite you to the especially lively Lithuanian festival for driving out the winter, Užgavėnės, which takes place each year 7 weeks prior to Easter. On this day, throughout Lithuania, you can encounter strangely-dressed, masked personages and eat your fill (and more) of pancakes. It is believed that having eaten well on this day, you will be full and strong throughout the entire year.

An authentic Lithuanian treat is sweet soup (4). It is especially tasty in Suvalkija. The aukštaičiai are quite proud of dumplings with berry fillings, called šaltanosiai (literally, “cold-noses”) (3). They simply melt in your mouth. You won’t believe us until you try them yourself!

An heavenly layered-dough pastry with poppy-seed filling, the so-called simtukos (hundred-leaf) (2), is similar in some ways to baklava and other phyllo-dough pastries. It is a dessert well-liked by Lithuanians, and a part of the Karaite culinary heritage which came together with the Crimean Tatars and Karaites who were expelled from their homes by the Golden Horde in the 14th century. Vytautas, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, offered them a home, and thus they settled in Lithuania. Lithuanians also enjoy other Karaite dishes, including šimtalapis (hundred-leaf) (2), is similar in some ways to baklava and other phyllo-dough pastries. Šaltanosiai (literally, “cold-noses”) (3). They simply melt in your mouth.

For those who enjoy flour pancakes, we hereby invite you to the especially lively Lithuanian festival for driving out the winter, Užgavėnės, which takes place each year 7 weeks prior to Easter. On this day, throughout Lithuania, you can encounter strangely-dressed, masked personages and eat your fill (and more) of pancakes. It is believed that having eaten well on this day, you will be full and strong throughout the entire year.
**Gifts from Lithuania!**

1. **The most authentic delicacy of the Lithuanian culinary heritage: skilandis**
   This product, made of minced or ground meat that has been smoked and stuffed into a pig’s stomach, developed from a food that was offered to distinguished guests in ancient times. If you purchase a skilandis with an EU-certified tag, you can be sure that it was made in Lithuania, was made only of Lithuanian ingredients and was made only in the approved traditional way (taking not less than 2 months)!

2. **Honey and herbal tea: a good combination for a good mood**
   Lithuanians maintain their pagan beliefs longer than any other people in Europe, and have long believed in the power of nature and have long had a deep understanding of its curative properties. Knowledge that was passed down from generation to generation has survived to the present day, and so today Lithuania is known for its abundance of herb farms. Old-timers still make the joke that “no matter where you throw a rock, it will fall near a medicinal herb.” We recommend you take home some Lithuanian ecological (organic) herbal tea, to improve your mood as well as your health. It would be a sin not to bring home some Lithuanian honey, too. Such a mistake is not made by those who have tasted the honey harvested from tree-hollow hives at the unique Bee-keeping Museum in the Dzūkija National Park.

3. **Acorn coffee: the strength of the oak tree**
   This is a one-of-a-kind gift. Although the beverage is caffeine-free, it is just as good-tasting as genuine coffee, and those who look for something a little different will especially like it. Try it while you’re here in Lithuania or take it home as a gift, but the most important thing is, find out how to make the drink, so that you can enjoy all the nuances of its flavour.

4. **Vėsūs sūris (curd cheese): your travel companion**
   Have you heard about the cheese that is taken on long trips? The cheese which tolerates hot weather very well? The cheese which is home-made and tastes really good? This cheese is varškės sūris that is taken on long trips. You can select varieties with tasty with honey) or it can be fried, smoked or dried. The dried curd cheese is best for journeys, you can select varieties with flavour, too: caraway, garlic or mint.

5. **Live beer**
   If you have already travelled on an excursion to the Beer Road of Biržai or Pasvalys, you know well just what live beer tastes like. Lithuanian live beer is simply good, so there is certainly no need to talk you into taking some home. But when your friends ask you, after trying the live beer you have brought back with you, why Lithuanian beer is so good, just tell them that Lithuanians have been famous for their beer-brewing for more than 500 years!

6. **Obuolių sūris ("apple cheese"): definitely tasty, definitely traditional Lithuanian dessert**
   The only thing connecting cheese with this dish made from apples, sugar and cinnamon that is boiled and then dried is its form. However, that form is characteristic only of Lithuanian curd cheese. Confusing? Maybe. But we can guarantee that after you try the "apple cheese", you won’t care about its form or the way it is made. Only one thought will be in your mind: you’ll want more.

7. **Šakotis (a type of cake): the horned candidate to become a part of Lithuanian culinary heritage**
   An appearance which is no less impressive than its taste. The origin of the šakotis is undisputed: it is German (although at present it is no longer made in Germany!). Also undisputed is the taste of the šakotis: the Lithuanian šakotis is simply delicious. Although it came to Lithuania only at the beginning of the 20th century, in barely a hundred years it has become a key element of Lithuanian wedding table settings and an almost obligatory gift for an honoured guest. If you find the time to participate in making a šakotis, you are not likely to forget its freshly-baked taste for the rest of your life!

8. **The pride of many a Lithuanian: black rye bread**
   The black rye bread that is undergoing a renaissance today was the primary food for Lithuanians through the centuries, and was a kind of medicine as well. It is still baked in many a village oven, and young people often go out of their way to buy an electric bread-oven so that they can bake their own bread according to old-fashioned and even ancient recipes in their own kitchen. If you don’t find the time to bake this bread for yourself, then at least buy some in a shop’s farm-fresh department or in an open-air market.

9. **Kvass (gira, made from bread): an alcoholic beverage to some, a soft drink to others**
   Lithuanians like gira and have enjoyed drinking it since time immemorial. It is suitable for young and old alike. The pleasant-smelling, thirst-quenching and satiating gira, a good source of energy, was made in every home. Gira made from bread is considered a non-alcoholic beverage, however, depending on the production process, up to 1.2 per cent alcohol content can be found in Lithuanian gira, so choose wisely as to whether or not to let children enjoy it.

10. **Lithuanian mead**
    Probably the most popular gift brought back from Lithuania. Mead is the oldest alcoholic beverage in the world, but Lithuanian mead is exceptional not for its history, but for its unique taste. Genuine Lithuanian mead is only about 12 per cent strong, and has an inimitable smoothness to its flavour. Well, if you really want to impress somebody, bring back some balsam made from mead, the alcohol concentration of which reaches as high as 75 per cent.
In Lithuania, national heritage products are certified and marked with the symbol of the Culinary Heritage Fund. The food products marked in this way are produced from traditional ingredients, are hand-made and use other old or equivalent new technologies, and preserve the unique qualitative properties and composition of the traditional products.