

Breakfast with Maria



Warszawa

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Maria Skłodowska-Curie was born in Warsaw, where she spent her childhood and early adult years. The Polish scientist and laureate of the Nobel Prize, both in Physics and in Chemistry, lived in very interesting times for the development of culinary culture on Polish lands. Cuisine was an important element of national identity, especially during the Partitions (1772–1918), when the country's territories were divided between Austria, Prussia and Russia. Culinary literature flourished throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. Written mostly by women, it was addressed not only to cooks and domestic helpers, but also ladies of the house, who needed to know the rules of pairing and serving dishes, even if they didn't cook themselves.

Maria Ochorowicz-Monatowa (1866–1925) was one of the most-read food writers of the early 20th century, an editor and great personality who lived around the same time as Maria Skłodowska-Curie. Her most significant work was *The Universal Cookbook (Uniwersalna książka kucharska)*. First published in 1910, the book saw many reprints. The thick volume contains over two thousand recipes for every occasion, as well as an abundance of illustrations. These are not just formulas — the book weaves in suggested eating plans, dietary advice and general information on how to run a kitchen.

In Poland, breakfast is often said to be the most important meal of the day. In the early 20th century, this subject was treated very seriously. The magnificence and abundance of delicacies served at the time will often take the modern foodie by surprise. For a modest breakfast, Maria Ochorowicz-Monatowa recommends a set composed of a ham omelette, beefsteak with potatoes, cheeses and fruit. Another suggestion includes eggs fried on spinach, veal kidneys with Madeira wine, cheeses and fruits. A refined breakfast, served for special occasions, would have no doubt been to the taste of many a modern gastronome. A proposed autumn menu includes red borscht with patties, Parisian-style pike perch, cured ox tongues served with green peas, venison haunch, lettuce, cheeses and fruit, as well as coffee and various liqueurs to drink.

Warsaw is a city teeming with life from the early morning hours. Good coffee and all sorts of breakfasts, whether savoury or sweet, are served in its many cafes and bakeries. On the weekend, people who like to take pleasure in their meals eat brunch at local restaurants.

Photos: Warsaw Tourism Office, Polona.pl



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