

# Culture and traditions of Poland

# Polish





On January 6, Poles celebrate the Epiphany or the Feast of the Three Kings. This refers to the Magi, Kaspar, Melchior and Balthazar, who came to the infant Christ. They were led, as you know, by the Star of Bethlehem, in memory of which we decorate our Christmas trees with stars to this day. Gifts of the Magi, a symbol of worship, recognition of the newborn King and Savior: frankincense, gold and myrrh (ancient incense).



This biblical story is reflected in the ritual of consecration of gold and frankincense on this day in Polish churches. The letters "K+M+B" are written on the doors of houses. The first letters of the names of the magi can also be put together in the Latin saying - *Christus Mansionem Benedicat* - God bless this house. Poles believe that the inscribed letters will protect the house and its inhabitants from all kinds of adversity.

On this day, almond pies are baked, carols are sung and festive processions are arranged.



The Day of the celebration of the Body and Blood of Christ in Poland or "God's Body": the first summer holiday 22.05.2021. On this day in Poland is a day off, shops and government offices do not work. Festive processions are arranged in all cities of the country, houses are decorated with flowers, candles are lit in the windows. In front is a priest with a canopied tabernacle. Girls in white clothes throw flower petals in front of the procession.

This day occupies the highest place in the qualification of Catholic church holidays. Catholics on this day should attend Mass and refrain from any work. Small wreaths woven from flowers and herbs will hang in churches for 8 days (octaves) after the Body of God. It is believed that wreaths have miraculous power. After the end of the octave, believers can take



The last Thursday before Ash Wednesday is traditionally called "fat Thursday" and on this day everyone in Poland happily eats donuts. In general, it is customary to overeat on fat Thursday. The tradition of such a holiday, like the Orthodox Maslenitsa, has its roots in pagan times, when winter was seen off at this time. Eating doughnuts is a relatively young custom. Previously, meat, corned beef and wine reigned on the tables these days.

Later, prototypes of donuts appeared, but they were not sweet, they were prepared from bread dough and stuffed with corned beef. Now the symbols of "fat Thursday" are considered sweet with sprinkles, fudge, jam and other excesses donuts and brushwood (faworki). At least stay on a diet all year and eat healthy food, and on this day eat a donut and have a snack with brushwood, the



Andreiki is one of the most interesting Polish holidays, which is celebrated on the eve of St. Andrew's Day and falls on the night of November 29-30 every year. Traditionally, Andreyki marks the beginning of Advent – the Catholic pre-Christmas tradition, the waiting time for Christmas.

What do they do on Andreiki? Of course, they are guessing! This is the best time for divination of the year. For example, they pour hot wax through a hole in the key and examine the resulting patterns. Or they guess on shoes, as in the Russian tradition, in order to find out which of the girls will get married first. True, Polish young ladies do not throw boots over the threshold, but line them up from the wall towards the door and then rearrange them one by one to the threshold. Whose boot touches the threshold first, she will get married first. There is also a nice fortune-telling on a paper heart. Panenki write different men's names on a heart cut out of paper, and then they pierce it with a pin on the back side. On whose name the pin falls, he will be the betrothed. However, young people can also guess this way, this is a gender-neutral version of divination. Cards with wishes that are thrown into a bowl with cold water are also popular. The wishes on those cards that will come to the surface will come true in the coming year. The cards that have fallen to the bottom contain something that will have





December 31 is a holiday known in Poland as Sylvester, marking the transition from the Old Year to the New. This is a special day for Poles. Sylvester's traditions are very different from Polish Christmas traditions. There are many signs and customs associated with it. So, on New Year's Eve, you can not clean the house, so as not to "sweep away happiness." The concerns of Poles on this day are mainly related to filling the refrigerator so that there is plenty of food all year round.



In Poland, it is customary on New Year's Eve (unlike Christmas Eve) not to sit at home, but to book a table in some beautiful place, with dinner, champagne and a program. The program most often includes music and dancing, less often there may be a presenter and almost always, if the place allows - fireworks! They usually go to such events without children, have fun until they drop and, if this happens in country restaurants, stay overnight. In the morning, the hosts serve a festive brunch, in good weather you can walk around the neighborhood, in



Vigil or Christmas Eve is the most solemn holiday of the year in Poland. Its name comes from the Latin word *vigilare* - to look after, to supervise. This was the name of the evening before Christmas because of the observance of the Christmas fast, which, as you know, ends with the first star.

The most important element of the gala evening is a family dinner consisting of lean dishes. Poles are true to traditions: they cover the table with a white tablecloth and serve borscht with ears, carp, festive herring and stewed cabbage for Christmas dinner. For more than a century, there has been a tradition of 12 dishes on the table on Christmas Eve - according to the number of apostles. Of the interesting customs, we also note the breaking of the wrappers, leaving a free place at the table for a random guest, and even in rural houses putting four sheaves of different cereals in the yard: wheat, wheat, oats and barley.

The custom of sharing wafers is generally very symbolic, its history is interesting and worthy of a separate mention. "Being together" is what this tradition is about. The breaking





According to the old tradition, on the first day after Easter in Poland comes a «wet» Monday, or «oblivanka». On this day, it is customary to pour water on each other, which is equivalent to wishing health and well-being.

Once mugs, cans or buckets were used for this, but now water pistols are most often used. At the same time, the main condition is that the one who pours himself must remain dry.

In the old days, in many Polish villages at dawn, a guy climbed into the house where a girl lives and poured water on her right in bed. This meant that he liked the girl. It was always possible to buy off the «cold shower» with vodka, pastries and Easter eggs. Since the compulsion to pay off bears the ancient name «dyngusovanie», the holiday with pouring was also called Smigus-dyngus.

# Polish cuisine





Zurek - soup with sourdough bread, with potatoes, sausage and egg, sometimes the soup is served in bread





Zupa pomidorowa –  
tomato soup: based on  
tomatoes, usually with rice  
or noodles.





Smalec — made from lard with the addition of onions, marjoram, sometimes also with apple or dried cream. It is usually served with pickled cucumbers as an appetizer before the main course.



Kotlet schabowy –  
pork chop: breaded  
pork chop.



Bigos – a delicious dish based on cabbage with the addition of vegetables, mushrooms, pieces of sausage and smoked meat; a traditional Polish dish.





Makovets, one of the favorite desserts in Poland, is a strudel—like roll of yeast dough with poppy seed filling. In addition to poppy seeds, honey, butter, raisins and walnuts are added to the filling. It turns out very tasty: any fan of this dessert will agree that the more filling, the better.

Makovets is a traditional Polish dish and a mandatory menu item for Easter and



Polish traditions and cuisine are very similar to Belarusian, so only distinctive features were presented in the presentation.

I hope it was interesting to learn something new about the traditions and culture of another country.

