



CULTURE AND NATURE: THE EUROPEAN HERITAGE OF  
SHEEP FARMING AND PASTORAL LIFE

## RESEARCH THEME 6: CUISINE BASED ON SHEEP PRODUCTS

**Report of Hungary**

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## **Historic background of the consumption of mutton dishes**

While hunger is a biologic drive, food and eating serve not only the purpose to meet physiological needs but they are more: a characteristic pillar of our culture. Sheep is one of the oldest domestic animals of humanity; Hungarians have been breeding sheep for millennia. Consumption of mutton is known therefore in the total Hungarian language area but its intensity and proportion depend closely on the extent of sheep breeding in the concerning region. The role of mutton in the dietary habits of Hungarians has been changing considerably in the course of the last two centuries. Beef and sheep supplied the most important animal source foods in Middle Ages and even till the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The proportion has changed in favour of pork meat only in the course of the last two centuries.

The history of sheep-breeding in Europe is closely related to changes in agricultural technologies. In Middle Ages and Early Modern Age animal husbandry required more land than cultivation, since animals needed pastures. Animal husbandry prevailed in those areas where circumstances were unfavourable for cultivation (a too dry climate) or the density of population was very low, and land was available. The relationship between the two main branches of agriculture changed under the impact of the Industrial Revolution.

Wherever the climate was appropriate, animal husbandry became the main activity (in ocean climate) but its importance increased everywhere.

Sheep was bred in earlier times mainly for its fleece. After the pastures were turned into ploughed land, sheep-breeders didn't take another direction in sheep-breeding, like stabling the animals; we rather observe a decrease in sheep-breeding, or the restriction of sheep-breeding to areas with huge pastures available (in the mountains and in regions with less population density).

In Europe sheep-breeding and consumption of mutton was wide-spread in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century. One reason was that the transformation of the environment and the deforestation resulted in the creation of large natural pastures where sheep could graze. The other reason was the high demand of wool, since textile industry started to develop fast and intensely in this time. Therefore, sheep was needed more than pigs. As a consequence, sheep became one of the most popular meat suppliers in European towns during Renaissance; eating mutton instead of pork was a question of prestige among middle class citizens. Fresh mutton was a

festive food even among peasants: “a plate of beef or mutton replaced the usual roast pork to mark a festive occasion”.<sup>1</sup>

After a period of relative abundance during the Middle Ages, average meat consumption starts decreasing in Europe from the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This is due to the population growth, to the intensity of cultivation followed by the shrinking of pastures, as well as to the drastically decreasing export of live animals from Eastern-Europe as a consequence of the Turkish occupation. This is the period when dietary habits divide Europe increasingly into continental and Mediterranean regions. Continental Europe consumes more meat than the Mediterranean Europe. The process is intensified by the protestant Reformation: the Protestants broke with the dietary rules of meatless days practiced by Catholics. But the Catholic Church had to consider the geographic and climatic differences, since northern regions had no olives to replace animal fats during fast days. So the use of butter was allowed on meatless days from the 14<sup>th</sup> century already.

We have little written evidence about the way of life and eating habits in Middle Ages, only archaeological finds provide some ideas. The number of animals can be judged on the basis of the proportion of animal bones uncovered during excavations. In the time when Hungarians settled in the Carpathian-basin as well as during the early period of the Árpád dynasty, beef was on the top of the list of consumed meats, followed by pork, and mutton and goat were in the last place. According to our present knowledge, the heads of Hungarians during the time of conquest followed a “nomadic” way of life of Turkic characteristics. Whatever we may know about animal husbandry of that period, it fits into the way of economy characterized by sheep and horse breeding during the migration period and the time of Avars.<sup>2</sup>

The cheapest and most popular meat in the late Middle Ages was beef. Written sources about purchasing of food for forts and about consumption in Episcopal domains support this statement. István Szabó analysed following data taken from sources referring to year 1518 and to the fort of Ónod: for feeding the employees, labourers and foot-soldiers of the domain, beef was purchased on 216 days in the year, while sheep was bought only on 25 days, goose and chicken were bought each on 4 occasions, and one time each, capon, pig and rabbit.

A statistical analysis of meat consumption cannot be complete due to lacking data, since appropriate data are not available before the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1880s meat was

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<sup>1</sup> Massimo Montanari: Éhség és bőség. (Famine and abundance) 1996. 94.

<sup>2</sup> Bartosiewicz László: Régészeti állattan. (Archaeological zoology) In: [regeszet.freeblog.hu/Files/ZOO2005.DOC](http://regeszet.freeblog.hu/Files/ZOO2005.DOC)

consumed in following proportions: 36 % beef, 31 % pork, 7,5 % stuffing (for sausage and pudding), **16 % mutton**, 9 % poultry and 0,3 % game. Stuffing and filling were largely made of pluck and meat.<sup>3</sup>

Regional differences in mutton consumption exist from the late Middle Ages until now. Sheep-breeding and consumption was characteristic for the Great Hungarian Plain, Transylvania and Upper Hungary; in Transdanubia very small amount of mutton was eaten. The reason is in the purpose of sheep-breeding in Transdanubia, which was milk production and not meat production. When the new Merino breed was introduced, wool production gained importance from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Transdanubia, as well as on the Great Plain. 100 years later the drop in prices of wool put an end to this development. Mutton consumption was the highest in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Great Plain and in Transylvania, which proportions did not change much up to now. Medieval meat consuming habits – with beef prevailing – have changed basically in the 20<sup>th</sup> century; the loss of importance of mutton by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century accelerating the process.

Between 1934 and 1938 as much meat was consumed as in the 1880s, however in different proportions: 45 % pork and only 22 % beef. The change is due to new consumption habits and not to the shrinkage of Hungary's territory. After enormous fluctuations in offer and price, social transformations and with the doubling of absolute meat consumption, Hungary has become a country in Europe with the highest preference of pork. However, mutton consumption remains below 0,5 %.<sup>4</sup>

### **Typical regions of mutton-dishes**

Mutton dishes were known in the whole territory where Hungarian is spoken, however in some regions with considerable sheep-breeding they have been playing a major role during the past centuries and often even up to now. Generally, the main period to serve mutton dishes was autumn, during the typical period of slaughter after the end of autumn harvest till the beginning of Advent. Mutton was generally prepared from fresh meat.

### **The Great Hungarian Plain**

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<sup>3</sup> Kisbán Eszter: Táplálkozáskultúra.(Dietary Culture) In: Magyar Néprajz IV. Életmód (Hungarian Ethnography, IV., Way of Life

<sup>4</sup> Kisbán Eszter – Magyar Néprajz Életmód (Hungarian Ethnography)

Within Hungary's today's territory, this region can be regarded as the most important region of sheep-breeding and mutton consumption. A typical flatland shepherding of big animals takes place on the Great Plain. Sheep-breeding flourished even more when the new Merino breed spread at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which ended due to the drop in price of wool at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Parallel to the boom, the mutton consumption increased in the region. Mutton played an important role in the villages and market towns of the Great Plain; sheep was slaughtered for every social event. Dishes as "pörkölt" (stew) and "paprikás" as well as millet-mush with mutton were dominating in the alimentary culture of the Great Plain. When pörkölt and paprikás were to be prepared, the animal was skinned in such a way that no water touched it. The different parts of the sheep were placed into the cauldron in a specified order: the head cut into two was placed at the bottom, followed by the neck, by pieces of meat with bones, and finally the meat and the bones were put in the pot. In the meantime, salt and paprika was continuously added to the ingredients but nothing else, not even water. The dish had to boil in its own juice. The food was not stirred but shaken and turned around. An old speciality was the "shepherd's pudding": bread seasoned with salt and paprika was stuffed into the cleaned colon of the sheep, and put into the "paprikás" to be cooked.

A typical dish of the gastronomy of the Great Plain was the millet-mush with mutton: the chopped mutton pieces were cooked in fat and onion, seasoned with paprika, with a little water until dry. The millet was cooked in salty water in another pot; both dishes were mixed and cooked together and some hot paprika (chilli) was added too. Several varieties are known: with vegetables, with corn-meal mush or spiced with tarragon. The millet-mush with mutton was considered as a festive dish in the region Hajdúság.

A specialty called lamb "pilis" is known on the Great Plain: The meat of lamb was cooked together with lungs, liver, head, neck-glands and the fat of the omentum, further boiled eggs, lard, parsley, onion, salt and pepper were added and all this was chopped and stuffed into the layers of the omentum. It was baked in the oven in a baking tin where fat was spread on.

Different foodstuffs were produced of sheep-milk on the Great Plain. Sheep-milk was used only after treatment with rennet and curdling. The most important product is the cheese called gomolya. A side-product is the whey, a thin liquid dripping from the cheese. When the whey is boiled, the result is a thick, green-white liquid to be eaten hot or cold, eventually sweetened with sugar for breakfast. This sweet whey is called *zsendice* in Hungarian.

The gomolya cheese can be further processed to obtain cottage cheese. The ripe gomolya is washed, grated and kneaded by hand with salt added. After 2-3 days it could be eaten. Cottage

cheese was pressed sometimes in a small wooden barrel to keep it for several months. It was eaten as topping of noodles and it served as ingredient of small round cakes (pogácsa).

### **Upper Hungary**

Huge flocks of sheep were kept in the high mountains of the Carpathian basin. An important trading activity of sheep developed between the Great Plain and the Northern mountain range. Numerous flocks of sheep were driven in the 19<sup>th</sup> century from Transylvania and Temes County to the fairs of the towns of Losonc and of Nógrád County. Slovaks purchased sheep in Transylvania, in the regions of Bánát, Bácska and in the territory of present Hungary and drove them to the villages of Lower Tatra and of the Low and Big-Fátra.<sup>5</sup>

The sheep of the Palots remained on the pastures from early spring till late autumn, where they spent the nights in pens in the forest. Wool and live animals made up their yield.

The Palots living in joint families, used to slaughter a sheep every second week from the beginning of October till December, the month when they began to slaughter pigs. In Upper Hungary mutton and lamb were served on festive occasions – such as engagement, wedding, parish feast, Easter; when important agricultural work was carried out (harvest, threshing, vintage) mutton was cooked. Mutton could be fried, or prepared as stew, called paprikás, pörkölt, goulash. Rich peasants prepared stuffed lamb for important feasts. They used to slaughter lambs before Easter and to cook lamb paprikás, they roasted lamb meat and even fried lamb meat in breadcrumbs. Easter food was ham, eggs, sausage, lamb and sweet loaf.

Minced mutton was mixed with pork to be stuffed in sausage, mutton leg was smoked as ham but even mutton back and spare ribs were smoked for preservation.

A typical dish in Upper Hungary is cabbage cooked with mutton.

A characteristic element of the gastronomy in Upper Hungary is the sheep cottage cheese, being still a typical foodstuff in today's Slovakia. The cottage cheese – like all dairy products, carries different aromas in each time of the year and the flavour depends on the pasture too. The cottage cheese made in May is considered as being the best because the fresh young grass on the spring pastures is the most nutritive. In the days of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy the cottage cheese from Liptó represented Upper Hungary: it was supplied even to the emperor's table and it was sold on the markets of Vienna and Pest.

Its Slovakian name is brindza. The cheese kept its importance in Slovakia up to now, in spite of the modernisation which took place in every field. Every restaurant serves the dish of dumplings with cottage cheese topping called “bryndzové halusky”.

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<sup>5</sup> Paládi Kovács Attila: Juhtenyésztés (Sheep-breeding). In: Magyar Néprajz II. (Hungarian Ethnography)

A Hungarian speciality called “körözött” is a spread on bread: sheep cottage cheese is mixed with butter, sour cream, garlic and paprika powder.

## **Transylvania**

Sheep-breeding is typical for the farmsteads in Transylvania. Mutton and dairy products of sheep are determining elements in their nourishment. Fresh milk is turned into cheese with the help of rennet. After a short time of maturing, the cheese is kneaded with salt and it turns to cottage cheese, which is kept airtight. People in Transylvania had sheep cottage cheese during the whole year. They ate it mainly as a condiment to give a special taste to corn-meal mush. The corn-meal mush cooked with the whey of sheep cheese is called “bámos”, being a favourite dish even today. When the whey is boiled, a kind of cheese is condensed in the pot, which is called “orda” in Transylvania. Pancakes stuffed with orda and dill are very tasty. A typical soup, especially for fasting days consists of large noodles boiled in curd. Even butter is made from sheep milk.

Corn-meal mush is staple food in Transylvania, even as a substitute of bread. The mush is served as it is, or with milk or with toppings of sheep cottage cheese and fried lard or as a garnishing of ‘paprikás’ and ‘tokány’ meat as well.

Mutton ‘tokány’ is a typical dish of Transylvanian cuisine. Meat is cut into strips of 4-6 cm. Unlike pörkölt, tokány meat is steamed and prepared without onion and the dish is seasoned with pepper instead of paprika.

## **Ways of preparation**

### **Gulyás/pörkölt/paprikás**

Goulash dishes are cooked in the juice of the meat, which is cut into small pieces and different spices are added to the dish. Different varieties and names are distinguished. The most known and most frequent type of dish is the one made on the Great Hungarian Plain. A similar dish in Transylvania is called ‘tokány’, spiced with pepper. Two basic ways of preparation are known, which have developed into uncountable varieties. The most archaic variety is the steaming of the meat in its own juice, without fat, onion and water. It has following names in Hungarian: gulyás, gulyásos, gulyáshús, gulyásos hús, parázshús, pörkölt. The other way of preparation: onion is fried in fat, meat and water are added. The dish

prepared is called paprikás. Both varieties were spiced with salt and pepper, and from the 19<sup>th</sup> century on, with paprika. These varieties have developed up to now into several kinds of dishes with different names.

The goulash type of dish became very popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: it went beyond the peasant society and reached a higher status in the hierarchy of dishes.

This peasant dish has become a national symbol due to the romantic aspect of national culture; but the origin and characteristics of the dish (prepared of small pieces of meat and it is not roast meat) set limits to its “career”: it could not enter among the festive food of higher social layers, however it was present among their everyday meals. Peasant culinary habits however required goulash dishes to be served on the festive tables on the Great Plain, even more, it was a pertaining part of the menus served on weddings and on Sundays.

### **Mush**

Mush, in Hungarian ‘kása’ refers to the whole grain and to the thick dishes cooked from them, as well as to the dishes prepared of meal. The mush with mutton is generally known and used to be prepared for festive occasions, like vintage or wheat threshing. Pieces of mutton are put in the pot where onion is fried on fat; paprika is added, and cooked in the meat’s own juice with little water, until dry. The millet was cooked in salty water in another pot; both dishes were mixed and cooked together and some hot paprika (chilli) was added too.

### **Meat with cabbage**

A book by János Lippai was published in 1664 “Garden of Poson”, where he writes about the cabbage: *„This plant is so common among Hungarians that a poor man hardly survives without it.”* Cabbage was always present in Hungarian kitchen because it was preserved either with salt or pickled and could be used during the whole year even in fasting periods – without meat - and on other occasions with meat, often with mutton. Cabbage dishes were made from fresh cabbage and sauerkraut. In the region Hajdúság following dish was prepared: mutton pörkölt cooked on fat with fried onion and paprika, some water and finally the sauerkraut was added.

### **Roast mutton**

Roasting of mutton or rather of lamb was reserved for festive days. The meat was roasted on open fire, turned on spit. When roasted in the oven, a whole young animal was placed on the tray. Slices of meat could be roasted on iron grills above the fire. Lean meat was larded.



## **Methods of preservation**

Mutton was normally consumed as fresh meat but some preservation methods were known. We have few data about preservation of mutton. On the Great Plain salting and smoking was a popular way to preserve mutton. This method flourished in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Historic sources mention preservation by air-drying. While in Northern Europe beef was preserved with salt, Hungarians chopped the meat small and air-dried it. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century herdsmen used to air-dry meat. According to herdsmen's lore in Törökszentmiklós, mutton paprikás was poured on the leather side of their furry coat and after having eaten, they smeared the remaining grease on the surface of the coat to impregnate it. The left-over meat was placed into linen sacks and kept in a dry place. Later they ate it cold or heated up. We read in sources from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, among others in the chronicle by Villani that Hungarian troops of King Louis the Great kept dried and pulverized meat; a nutritive dish was cooked when boiling the meat-powder in hot water. (Miskulin A. 1905: 72–73). Different sources mention that peoples on the Eurasian steppe used to take along dried meat for long journeys or military expeditions. It is possible that meat-drying is a surviving method of preservation practiced before the conquest of the country.

We know two kinds of preservation of mutton: for a short period of a few days, or for a longer time. Fresh meat was generally kept for a few days lowered into the shaft of a well. Even a layer of nettles (or hay) covering fresh meat kept it preserved for some days. Dehydration was also a well-known method: a sheep was skinned and cut into two and hung in the loft. The meat could be eaten for eight days. But this method was only suitable in the favourable climate of lofts under thatched roofs.

Meat was frozen in ice-cellars, as it happens today in freezers.

Freezing is a way of long-time preservation; however the most popular techniques were salting, smoking and keeping in fat.

Before smoking the meat was kept in brine, and after in a pickling solution for 8-10 days. Different spices were added to the solution: beside salt and pepper, pine-kernels, coriander and chopped vegetable. A slow fire of oak-wood or acacia smoked the meat. Even the smoke was often seasoned, when juniper berries were thrown into the fire. Smaller pieces of raw and fried meat were preserved in fat: meat was placed in a bowl and fat was poured over. The dish was closed air-tight.

### **Utensils needed for the preparation of mutton and their changes in the course of time**

The cooking technique and the utensils needed for the preparation of mutton depend whether the preparation takes place on open fire or in a closed system of a cooking range. The most important utensil for the preparation on open fire is the skewer. The wooden skewer had a sharpened end to spit on it the food or the whole animal, or the lamb. A spit was used also in the kitchen where open fire was burnt on the top of the hearth. The most common pot used for cooking on open fire was the stew-pot, the cauldron made of iron or copper, having a round bottom and handles. They were produced for use on open fire in different shapes and materials. Archaeological finds refer to the use of earthen pots in the 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries.

To hang the pots, shepherds as well as peasants used pot-hangers: a right-angled branch's one end was sharpened and driven in the soil. The pot was hung on its other, horizontal part reaching above the fire. Pot-hangers were made of iron in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and today tripods are the most popular.

### **Customs related to the preparation of mutton dishes**

No typical customs have been developed related to the preparation of mutton and lamb dishes. Among Jews in Hungary it is a general custom to eat lamb during Passover. Passover or the feast of unleavened bread as it is called otherwise is the first pilgrimage festival according to the traditions of the Ancient Testament, when Jews remember the Exodus from Egypt.

The Israelites were instructed to mark the doorposts of their homes with the blood of a spring lamb and, upon seeing this, the spirit of the Lord *passed over* these homes. In commemoration, a lamb is slaughtered for Passover and unleavened bread is eaten.

Jewish traditions require following strict rules in food preparation. After the complete exsanguination of the slaughtered animal the meat is soaked in water for about half an hour, and covered with salt for one hour, after which it has to be washed three times to clean it completely from blood. It is important that slaughter is performed by a trained individual (shochet) and it is required that the animal be killed by a single cut to prevent the animal's suffering. In the kitchen of Jews meat and dairy products are to be kept and cooked separately as well as the pots used for their cooking. These pots and utensils are kept in separate places in the kitchen; moreover, they are to be washed in different basins.

The blessing of Easter food - and among the specialties, the Easter lamb - is one of the Catholic Easter ceremonies. On Easter Sunday people take along a basket of food to the church to be blessed by the priest. The family shares the blessed food at home afterwards.

Cooking on open fire was in Hungarian traditions a custom of men; even today, men prepare mutton paprikás and pörkölt.

### **Opportunities for eating mutton and related customs**

Mutton was eaten typically during autumn in households breeding sheep, since meat could be kept fresh in colder weather and could be eaten during several days. In warmer seasons sheep was slaughtered on occasions when many people had to be fed with fresh meat. Such occasions were family events, like asking a girl in marriage or baptising a child. The most typical opportunity for cooking mutton however was the wedding. The custom of frying lamb as Easter speciality is less practiced in the peasant kitchen, and was/is more typical for the town dweller middle class.

Mutton pörkölt or paprikás was often cooked on the occasion of community feasts, like parish feast. During the socialist system (before 1990), it was customary on the Great Plain to cook mutton pörkölt for the annual closing feast of the cooperatives.

The third group of occasions is linked to work: whenever work or help was carried out in common efforts, or on the day of vintage, mutton pörkölt or paprikás was served to the participants.

### **The role of mutton dishes in the life of communities (identity, signals, stereotypes, festivals)**

At the time of change of political regime, at the binning of the 1990s, a change can be observed in the concept of identity of local communities. During the decades of the dictatorial social and political regime public festivals of communities were run and organised centrally, like any other areas of life; feasts and celebrations had all a similar structure composed of similar elements of programs. These common feasts were created due to an effort of centrally established activities with the purpose to “create traditions”, however earlier traditions and festive customs of the community were seldom considered. The political change wiped out earlier customs of feasts and celebrations in the shortest time. Local communities found themselves in a kind of vacuum – they needed opportunities for common feasts and gatherings to strengthen their cohesion, even, if the new political system recreated or revived older festive events. In the 1990s a new type of festivities was created in the life of

communities: the village day. These events soon have become one of the most important ways to express local identity, or “collective spirit”. Thus the change of regime brought along an important novelty in the field of culture: the local festivals. Almost every town and village organises its own music, folklore, sport and gastronomic festivals.

Mutton dishes, especially mutton stew are popular in several gastronomic festivals. A special event takes place in Karcag, in the region of Nagykunság, where the annual mutton stew cooking competition has earned a reputation. The mutton cooking traditions of the region furnished the basis of the competition, which evolved so far that local people suggested including the mutton pörkölt of Karcag in the list of cultural heritage.

How to prepare the mutton stew of Karcag:

Put some pork fat in a cast iron pot and place the chopped meat in the pot (the bony parts to the bottom, followed by the singed head and the meat. Pluck, with the exception of liver, comes on the top). Nails and tripe are mixed into the ingredients in the pot. The mixture is cooked at high temperature for about 15 minutes without water added. Due to the heat, the meat gives off juice, in which the dish can be stewed. At the same time, onion is fried in fat, mixed with paprika powder and the mixture has to be added to the half-cooked dish while stirring permanently. Salt can be added before. 20-25 minutes before the dish is cooked, the liver is added as well as some more paprika powder for a good colour. At this point water is added too. Hot chilli and salt as required complete the stew.

### **Mutton dishes in restaurants, their role in rural, eco, village and agro-tourism**

Mutton dishes are being served again in Hungarian restaurants. Beside the traditional stew, roast lamb as well has become popular in many restaurants. The first famous representative of Hungarian gastronomy was János Gundel, the first member of the Gundel-dynasty. He invented several well-known dishes. He created the ‘Palots-soup’ to honour the famous Hungarian writer, Kálmán Mikszáth. The soup is today part of the menu in most restaurants, and it has become a typical food of Hungarian kitchen. The soup’s ingredients are mutton, which is prepared as paprikás with potatoes and French beans and the dish is seasoned with sour cream and dill.

### **Local products, local brands, food quality and trademarks**

The trademark’s purpose is to enable the consumer to identify the products of a certain producer and to distinguish them from other or similar products made by competitors. There are different possibilities to convey the message referring to the excellent, above average

quality of unique products. The use of different quality marks, and mainly of trademarks is spreading fast. The main characteristic of the trademarks is the possibility of visual identification so that consumers can easily recognize, understand and remember them. Their content and message are clear, and carry information for the conscious consumer. An outstanding trademark in Hungary among collective trademarks is called „Kiváló Magyar Élelmiszer” (Outstanding Hungarian Foodstuff), which had been founded in 1998. For obtaining the right for using and maintaining the trademark, companies have to meet requirements controlled by the State, in order to safeguard the high quality. Purpose of the qualification is to distinguish Hungarian and guaranteed outstanding foodstuffs offered in the market. Another big group of trademarks are the quality certifications to distinguish eco products.

The European Union has established a tripartite system of quality agricultural products and foodstuff:

**Protected Designation of Origin (PDO)** ensures that only products genuinely originating in that region are allowed in commerce identified as such. More than 500 products are protected by this legal framework, which are produced due to the know-how of local producers. Furthermore, their qualities and characteristics must be essentially due to their region of production: they must also be produced, processed and prepared exclusively within that region, with specified methods.

**Protected Geographical Status (PGS)**: the purpose is to protect the so far more than 450 products, having their reputation and characteristics genuinely originating in that region. At least one of the production, processing and preparatory phases has to take place within that region.

**Traditional Specialty Guaranteed (TSG)**: this regime refers to such products (about 30), which have a certain traditional feature or a set of features in their composition or production process. TSG status does not require that a product is manufactured in a specific geographically delimited area, but the product description has to be respected in the manufacturing process.

The “Slovakian brindza” has been registered in 2008 by the European Union as a product under Protected Designation of Origin (PDO).

## **Slow Food**

**Slow Food** is an international movement founded by the Italian journalist Carlo Petrini in 1986 in Rome. It strives to preserve culinary pleasures and local products against the effects of globalization and standardization, therefore its logo has become the snail. Eating well means to enjoy eating: not only to gulp down the food but to eat something fresh and nice and to discover whatever is growing in our environment – in harmony with nature.

Small local communities have been formed who believe that every community, every region and every nation has a fundamental right to enjoy its own tastes, dishes and products: its own kitchen. Therefore they have the right to grow their regional products, to prepare traditional food and to consume it. One of their most popular activity is searching for, preserving, enlisting in a catalogue and protecting local and traditional food products almost fallen into oblivion, along with their lore and preparation; for this purpose they launched the project "Ark of Taste" following the example of the Ark of Noah to save local culinary traditions and foods of high quality within an exact culturally, historically and geographically definable and delimited area.

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