

A Comparison of Sour Food in Romania and Japan

Romania Project

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1. Introduction

Are you interested in Romanian food? I think there are discoveries which we can make by looking at how other countries make food. I think dietary culture is influenced by features such as land, relationships with other countries, and geological characteristics, which is very interesting. I researched Romanian dietary culture and traditional Romanian food. In this essay, I am going to write general information about Romanian food, traditional Romanian food, and information from Romanian students.



2. Everyday Romanian food

In the Balkans countries such as former Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, there are many dishes affected by Turkish cuisine. However, even though Romania is near the Balkans, it has not been influenced by Turkish cuisine very much. Romania does have some ethnic dishes. Mămăligă is the staple food, it is made from corn powder. Soup is interesting too because it is a feature to make soup sourly. In addition to mămăligă and soup, sunflower seeds are popular snacks. In Romania, there has been a large scale cultivation of sunflowers in order to produce cooking oil. This production is the biggest out of all the European countries, and it occupies the 23 percent of the total exportation of sunflower oil in the Europe.



3. Romania

3-1 Examples of Sour Romanian Food and How to Cook Traditional Romanian Food: Ciorba and Sarmale

Popular sour Romanian foods are “Ciorba” and “Sarmale” and both of them are popular traditional Romanian foods.

Ciorba is a thick soup which is made from a lot of vegetables and meat. Picture1 is Ciorba. First you mince carrots, onions, potatoes, turnips, zucchinis, tomatoes, bell peppers, celery, and parsley. Then you simmer the minced vegetables and add the minced meat and simmer for hours. Next you add bors, which is one of the vinegars into the soup. Bors is shown in Picture2. It is made from fermented wheat and it tastes sour. You can use sour cream and lemon instead of using it.



Picture1-Ciorba- Picture2-Bors-

Sarmale is a meat dish, in which meat and rice are wrapped with pickled cabbage leaves. Picture3 is Sarmale. First you boil cabbage leaves in the water and vinegar. Next you stir fry minced onion and pork, then put rice, minced tomato, basil, parsley and dill. Third you wrap all the ingredients with pickled cabbage leaves and simmer them in hot water which contains consomme, tomato puree, bacon and olive oil. Finally you bake them. When you boil cabbage leaves, you need 250ml of vinegar for 1000ml of water, that's a lot!



Picture 3- Sarmale

3-2 A Consideration of Sour Romanian Food

I have considered why they make food sour. The main reasons are to preserve food for a long time because if you make food sour, food doesn't go rotten so easily, to make meat tender, and to take the smell of meat away. In addition to this, I have also found out the reason is related to socialism. When Romania was a socialist country, Romanian woman needed to work outside and they couldn't spend too much time cooking. Therefore, they made large batches of ciorba a lot at a time and made it sour, it to save time. In Romania vinegar and the similar types of vinegar are used especially when they cook meat.

4. Japan

4-1 A Recipe for Sour Japanese Food

In Japan sushi and umeboshi (pickled plum) are our sour foods. Both are traditional Japanese foods.

When we cook sushi, we use sushi vinegar. After you cook the rice, you add the vinegar to the rice. Sushi is shown in picture4 and sushi vinegar is shown in picture5. Sushi vinegar is not only sour but also a little bit sweet. It is only used for sushi.



Picture4 -Sushi-



Picture5-Sushi Vinegar-

In a rice ball, we usually add an umeboshi (pickled plum). It goes well with rice. Picture 6 shows a rice ball with an umeboshi and picture7 is just umeboshi. To make umeboshi, you marinate plums in salt, then the plum pulp extract is removed. It makes the plums sour and keeps rice fresh.



Picture6 -Rice ball with umaboshi- Picture7 -Umeboshi-

4-2 A Consideration of Sour Japanese Food

I consider sour Japanese food same as Romanian sour food. The main reason is to preserve foods for a long time. Sushi was eaten in the Edo era and it was sold at stalls. Sushi uses raw fish, so they needed to keep sushi fresh. Umeboshi is also used to keep rice fresh. In Japan, rice has been important for a long time, thus vinegar and other forms of it are used with rice.

5. Conclusion

By researching both sour Romanian food and sour Japanese food, I have found that people make food sour because these foods are important for them, and these sour foods are important ingredients for popular dishes. I think there is wisdom in our sour foods, and thus our important foods have been protected for a long time. Now, I want to research my theme a lot more and try to cook sour Romanian dishes myself. I will continue to study about sour Romanian food and Romania itself.

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