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CULINARY ART, TASTE AND UTILITY. READING POLISH CULINARY TEXTS FROM THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Abstract

The article concerns Polish culinary texts from the eighteenth century. The state of their preservation, methods of analyzing culinary recipes and their evolution are discussed. At that time, there were only two printed cookbooks on the reading market, but they had many editions, and their content and reception changed. Throughout the eighteenth century, the *Compendium ferculorum, or the collection of dishes* from 1682, was revived many times. This text was published at the beginning of the 19th century, which testifies to the conservatism of culinary models. At the same time, we can notice a gradual change in the addressee of the text, which, since the mid-eighteenth century, ceased to be a fashionable and up-to-date model. The Baroque cuisine described in it began to give way to French classicist models, manifested, among others, by the publication of *The Perfect Cook* in 1783.

However, the literal copying of French models was met with reluctance from readers. In subsequent editions, the author tried to introduce more Polish recipes related to local conditions. A synthesis of local patterns and elements of French cuisine can be seen in the manuscript recipes of Paul Tremo, the cook of King Stanisław August. In his recipes and a recently found book on food preservation, we can see a range of ideas of the Enlightenment. They were related to the classicist aesthetics of taste, the search for new products and science-based methods of food preservation. The royal chef sought to end famines. This was to happen due to the development of science, the use of knowledge and skills of the cook-artist and nutritional education.

Keywords: food, cookbooks, culinary recipes, taste, identity.

A few decades ago, historians pointed out that food and cuisine are an essential part of culture, one of the ways to read and understand it. Researchers assigned a notable role to culinary texts, printed cookbooks and handwritten collections of recipes. They began to be treated not only as a curiosity, a source of picturesque anecdotes and colourful quotations, but as cultural texts set in various contexts.¹ Old culinary

¹ *Histoire de l'alimentation*, dir. J.-L. Flandrin, M. Montanari, Fayard, Paris 1996; J.-L. Flandrin, *Preface* in *Tables d'hier, tables d'ailleurs. Histoire et ethnologie du*

texts were first an illustration of stories about the so-called everyday life, i.e. various threads contrasted with the formerly dominant political history. In the 1960s, food history was recognized as an essential topic in modernist economic history. The focus was on studying the food rations, i.e., the food's quantitative, dietary and monetary value.² Leaving aside all the conventionality and arbitrariness of such juxtapositions, we will only point out that from this perspective, culinary texts seemed to be insignificant, fanciful and elitist statements.

Culinary texts have already become essential and credible for adepts of cultural history. They noted that they describe norms and patterns of behaviour, present knowledge and values related to food. They also reflect social aspirations. They are concerned with food, i.e., a sphere in the former societies of scarcity and hunger subject to comprehensive cultural, religious, and social regulations. Food is the basis of social bonding, a tool of power and distinction, and a way of demonstrating identity. The construction of such messages and the related knowledge are the essential content of the culinary text. A recipe for a historical dish ceases to be just a curiosity when we try to read it, referring to old knowledge and practices, and interpret it with regard to the cultural context of its functioning. Associations with contemporary, colloquial or even professional nutritional understanding can be, in our world, a "gastro-anomie", i.e., a historical anomaly resulting from a complete change in practices, meaning and social value of food in a world of abundance, obesity and food waste, particularly misleading. Claude Fischler's gastro-anomies are, above all, a decline, the disappearance of norms; it is an image referring to the concepts of Durkheim's sociology.³ We will deal with constructions based on long-lasting and conservative norms that attempted to be changed in the atmosphere of Enlightenment optimism and faith in the causative power of science, knowledge and education.

I will present examples of such reading using Polish culinary texts from the eighteenth century. While in the eighteenth century, few cookbooks were printed in Polish, culinary recipes appeared in dietary and medical texts, economic guides, calendars, and, with time, in the press. Many culinary texts remained in the manuscripts. This is important because manuscript texts testify to the reception, reaction, or at least

repas, ed. J.-L. Flandrin, J. Cobbi, Paris, Odile Jacob, 1999, pp. 17–36; Alberto Capatti, Massimo Montanari, *Italian Cuisine: A Cultural History*, trans. Aine O'Healy, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003; Massimo Montanari, *Food Is Culture*, trans. Albert Sonnenfeld, New York, Columbia University Press, 2006.

² J.-J. Hémardinquer (ed.), *Pour une histoire de l'alimentation*, *Cahiers des Annales*, 28, Paris, 1970.

³ C. Fischler, 'Gastro-nomie et gastro-anomie', *Communications*, 31 (1979), pp. 189–210.

knowledge of printed texts and nutritional practices. This is a fundamental difference compared to Western Europe regarding the development of the printed cookbook market.

On the other hand, compared to Central Europe, or especially Eastern Europe, this situation is entirely different. To the recent discovery of a manuscript copy of the Kraków *Kuchmistrzostwo* [*The Art of Cookery*], the first Polish cookbook was published as early as the 16th century, i.e. much earlier than in other countries of Central Europe (except for the Bohemia) and especially in Eastern Europe.⁴ Polish culinary texts from the 17th and 18th centuries were reprinted many times, as were economic, dietetic and medical guides, often containing entire parts devoted to strictly culinary issues.

Long duration of *Compendium ferculorum*

While the lost *Kuchmistrzostwo* [*The Art of Cookery*], published in Kraków around 1540, was quickly forgotten, the one also published in Kraków in 1682 *Compendium ferculorum albo zebranie potraw*, was reprinted numerous times. The popularity of this text applies primarily to the eighteenth century. As early as 1682, two different versions of this text were published, which testifies to the great interest in this subject, which most likely surprised both the author and the publisher. Stanisław Czerniecki's cookbook was primarily a kind of panegyric or a way of commemorating the figure of a magnate, a great lord and employer of a cook. Still, it was perceived as an important, utilitarian and aspirational text concerning a key area of life. In both versions from 1682, we see a range of differences in fonts, ornaments, and corrections, which result from careful reading and probably comments from readers.

A real phenomenon was the incredible popularity of this book in the eighteenth century. Between 1682 and 1821, about 20 editions of the book and their various variants were published. The fact that the edition is reprinted or that subsequent versions are quickly published proves the work's great popularity. In 1744, the first edition of this text was published in Vilnius under a new, changed title as *Stół obojętny, to jest pański, a oraz i chudopacholski abo sposób gotowania rozmaitych potraw według rozmaitości smaku i upodobania, tak względem bogatych, jako też ubogich traktamentów* [*An Indifferent Table, that is, Lord's Table, and*

⁴ *Zbiór dla kuchmistrza tak potraw jako ciast robienia wypisany roku 1757 dnia 24 lipca*, J. Dumanowski (ed.), Bułatowa S., *Monumenta Poloniae Culinaria*, vol. VIII, J. Dumanowski (ed.), Warszawa, Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie, 2021, pp. 66-68,

also a Modest Way of Cooking Various Dishes According to a variety of tastes and preferences, both for rich and poor treatises].⁵ The edition did not include a dedication to Princess Lubomirska, thus omitting personal references to the author's employers and patrons, which were unclear after many years. The message, hence, exposes a more practical, strictly utilitarian character, in line with the tendencies that finally triumphed in this field in the second half of the century.

The title *The Indifferent Table That Is Lord's, and also a Modest Way of Cooking*, suggests that the cookbook written by the Polish magnate chef of the seventeenth century became a work intended for a much broader audience in the next century. However, apart from one version from 1784,⁶ its recipes did not change. While earlier they were perceived as sophisticated and extraordinary, in the second half of the eighteenth century, they became popular and ordinary recipes. The title change was probably not accidental; since 1775, publishers no longer used the original Latin version, and since 1800, Czerniecki's recipes appear as *Kucharka miejska i wiejska* [Urban and Country Cook]. Editions of *Kucharka miejska i wiejska* from 1800–1821 were published in Warsaw and the provincial town of Berdychiv.⁷

The originator of the new title was already addressing a much wider group of readers. The addressee was a woman, a housewife or cook in a noble manor or bourgeois house, and not a professional magnate cook.

In 1783, Wojciech Wincenty Wielądko changed the title of his cookbook, transforming French *Cuisinière bourgeoise* [The Bourgeois Cook] into *Kucharz doskonały* [The Perfect Cook].⁸ It was not only a matter of sound or attractiveness of the title. The author of the Polish text also

⁵ *Stół obojetny, to jest pański, a oraz i chudopacholski abo sposób gotowania rozmaitych potraw według rozmaitości smaku i upodobania, tak względem bogatych, jako też ubogich traktamentów*, Wilno, Drukarnia Akademicka, 1744.

⁶ *Stół obojetny, to jest pański, a oraz i chudopacholski abo sposobów gotowania rozmaitych potraw według rozmaitości smaku i upodobania, tak względem bogatych, jako też ubogich traktamentów*, Sandomierz, Drukarnia JKMci y Rzeczypospolitej, 1784; J. Dumanowski, 'Nowy addytament do starej książki. Stół obojetny z 1784 roku' in A. Kucharski, A. Laddach, W. Piasek (eds.), *Scientia magnam laetitiam parat. Studia z historii kultury, społeczeństwa i polityki ofiarowane Profesorowi Kazimierzowi Maliszewskiemu*, Toruń, Wydawnictwo UMK, 2020, pp. 279–299.

⁷ *Kucharka miejska i wiejska albo sposób gotowania rozmaitych mięsnych, postnych i rybnych potraw, tudzież robienia ciast, tortów etc. na trzy rozdziały podzielona, w których się znajduje sto mięsnych, sto postnych i sto rybnych potraw*, Warszawa 1800, 1804, 1811, 1816, 1821 oraz Berdyczów 1806.

⁸ W. Wielądko, *Kucharz doskonały pożyteczny dla zatrudniających się gospodarstwem*, ed. and prepared by J. Dumanowski with the collaboration of A. Kleśta-Nawrocka, *Monumenta Poloniae Culinaris*, ed. J. Dumanowski, vol. III, Warszawa, Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie, 2012, pp. 63–64.

made a number of changes in the recipes themselves, deleting from them, especially in the initial part of the work, references to bourgeois female cooks, which abounded in the original version.

The Perfect Cook remained the title of all subsequent editions of Wielądko's work until 1823. Starting from the third edition in 1800, the author changed the rest of the title and added many new recipes, no longer directly referring to the French original. A breakthrough in presenting the addressee and reader of cookbooks took place in Poland only in the mid-nineteenth century, when Jan Szyttler, the author of widely read cookbooks published in Vilnius, began to publish texts addressed to the "Frugal Cook" and the "Conscientious Housewife".⁹

Until 1783, the Polish reader had access to only one cookbook. Such a long duration of one title suggests a stagnation in the book market and the conservatism of readers. Despite the new content introduced in more detail only in one edition of *Compendium ferculorum*, despite removing the author's comments, Czerniecki's text still presented Baroque cuisine based on the use of hot, oriental spices. The essence of the culinary and aesthetic effect was to change and process the taste and, simultaneously, the food's colour, appearance, and texture. The complete processing of the product was associated with art and sophistication. Hot spices were part of a composition that often also consisted of sweets (sugar, dried fruit, preserves, juices, etc.) and sour additives such as vinegar, lemons, especially pickled lemons, sour wine, gooseberries and the so-called verjus (juice from unripe grapes).

A classic example, which is still known in Poland, especially in the north of the country, was *czernina* (black blood soup), described by Stanisław Czerniecki:

Black Dish with Juszyca

Take a young goose or cony or another young beast you might have handy to slaughter, and let out their blood in the following manner: take fine vinegar, heat it up, let the blood of the beast into the vinegar and give it a good stir. Having chopped up the flesh, boil it and drain, then pour in the blood mixed with vinegar, which we call juszyca, and boil it all together. Fry some onions in butter and rub some rye bread through a sieve. Add vinegar, sweetening, pepper, ginger, cinna-

⁹ J. Dumanowski, 'Szyttler Jan' in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, ed. A. Romanowski, vol. 50, fasc. 206, Instytut Historii PAN, Kraków, 2015, pp. 430–431; J. Szyttler, *Kucharz dobrze usposobiony*, Wilno, Drukarnia Dyecezalna u XX. Missyonarzów, 1830 (1833, 1840, 1850); idem, *Kucharka oszczędna, czyli przepisy dla gospodyń wiejskich łatwego i niekosztownego sporządzania potraw, opatrzenia spiżarni w potrzebne zapasy oraz dystyllowania wódek*, Wilno 1835; idem, *Poradnik dla gospodyń, czyli nauka o ptactwie domowem i oswojonem*, Wilno, Jan Psurski, 1844; idem, *Skrzętna gospodyni, czyli tom drugi kucharki oszczędnej*, Wilno, Ruben Rafałowicz, 1846.

mon, cloves and cherry juice. Set it a boiling, not forgetting about some salt, and serve forth hot or cold.¹⁰

This dish was made of blood, to which, in order not to clot, the chef added vinegar and combined it with meat broth and the meat itself. The whole was thickened with grated rye bread, probably with a sour after-taste, and fried onions with a sweet taste. Moreover, vinegar was added to this acidic liquid and cooked, balanced with an unspecified “sweetness” (something sweet) and cherry juice. Pepper, ginger, and cinnamon, undoubtedly the most expensive ingredients in this dish, added a sharp, spicy taste that determined associations with exoticism, richness, and sophistication. Together, this created a complex fusion of flavours that completely changed and masked the natural features of the products, changing their colour, smell and taste. The value of food lies in its processing and a peculiar, perverse game with the senses.

In the following recipe, the author describes a dish that resembles black soup, but the author advises to prepare it without blood:

Black Dish of Meat Cooked with Povidl¹¹

If you want to cook deer or fallow deer, wild boar, roe deer, wild goat, and whatever of the livestock black, this is how to go about it. Take deer or elk, chop it into joints of your liking. Sear, and being run with broth and vinegar, put it on the fire and boil. When it is almost ready, have the povidl sieved and thinned down with vinegar handy, add some cherry juice, sweetening, pepper, ginger, cloves, cinnamon. Bring to the boil and serve forth. If you want, you can dredge it with blanched almonds cut lengthwise and with white sugar.¹²

In this case, we are dealing with an illusory dish, which is supposed to resemble something completely different in taste and appearance. Such a procedure was often used for fasting dishes, which were laboriously and at great expense processed to resemble meat or dairy products. Here, the illusion is an intrinsic value, although some readers and consumers may not have been delighted with the prospect of consuming blood.

The addition of vinegar does not result from technical necessity here. This different, baroque, and eternal elite taste is based on distinct sensations and contrasts. In addition to the aesthetic construction, it is a fixed, traditional way of demonstrating superiority. Costly additions,

¹⁰ S. Czerniecki, *Compendium ferculorum or collection of dishes*, J. Dumanowski (ed.) in collaboration with M. Spychaj, Warszawa, Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie, 2014.

¹¹ Povidl – plum stew.

¹² S. Czerniecki, op. cit., p. 81.

exoticism, and “artificiality” result from valued art as opposed to nature, which make up the strategy of an expensive and complicated but easily visible effect of distinction.

Capon, or castrated and fattened rooster, one of the most valued products of Old Polish cuisine, was tasty when the cook completely changed the taste and appearance of the dish itself.

Tasty Capon

Take a capon or goose, or whatever you fancy, sear it, cut into joints, dice in onions and parsley roots, put it all in a pot or a stewing-pan, pour in some broth and butter, set it a boiling. Pour in some fine vinegar, add lime, olives, pepper, and ginger. Give it a warm, and serve forth.

Otherways

Pour in vinegar, add sugar, raisins of both types, pepper, ginger and cinnamon, set it a boiling and serve forth.¹³

The cook cut or chopped capon meat into small pieces, then smashed and pureed it. Hot spices, sour additives, and sugar completely changed the natural, and therefore, the banal taste, and the consumer was often unable to guess what he was eating.

Czerniecki’s text does not lack examples of a completely different, new, classicist taste aesthetics. This model, known primarily from French cuisine, was developed in France in the 17th century, propagated in Europe from the second half of the century and triumphed in the 18th century.

In *Compendium ferculorum*, there is, therefore, a subchapter on “French potages”, which the author advised to prepare with salt and the addition of green parsley, possibly also pepper, cloves and nutmeg. The chapter describing meat dishes includes recipes for *estouffades* and *fricassée* (I, 17–20) and the following series of recipes for “dishes” (stewed meats).¹⁴ A mild, uniform taste distinguishes these recipes; the author advises using only a few spices here, which are rather to bring out and emphasize the natural flavour of the dish rather than hiding or changing it.

The fully developed idea of good and “natural” taste appears in Poland only in Wojciech Wincenty Wielądko’s *Kucharz doskonały* [*The Perfect Cook*] from 1783.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 98.

¹⁴ Ibidem, pp. 101–105,

The Perfect Cook from 1783, or the Translator's Troubles

Written by Wojciech Wincenty Wieladko, author of theatre plays, historian and genealogist, *The Perfect Cook* was published in Warsaw in 1783.¹⁵ The author must have realized a significant gap in the Polish reading market: the lack of a cookbook describing contemporary, fashionable cuisine. The constantly reprinted text by Stanisław Czerniecki from 1682 was not only not very useful in the second half of the eighteenth century but often incomprehensible.

Wieladko decided to translate into Polish the greatest of the culinary bestsellers of Europe at the time: *La cuisinière bourgeoise* by Joseph Menon.¹⁶ The original was first published as a small booklet in 1746, after which it was reprinted many times, growing into two extensive volumes.

Translating a ready-made and popular text was a logical decision, not only because of Wieladko's translation activity. It also resulted from the popularity of the French culinary model, i.e., a new style of taste, but also the very perception of cuisine and its elevation to the rank of art.

However, Wieladko chose a specific and innovative work. While in Protestant countries, cookbooks written for women and even by women had already appeared earlier, in France, recipes intended for the eponymous *cuisinière bourgeoise* were something completely new. In a sense, they were foreshadowed by the work of the famous cookbook author François Massialot, who partially broke the practical monopoly of the printed cookbook addressed to palace cooks with his *Le cuisinier royal et bourgeois* from 1691, reprinted and supplemented many times in the eighteenth century.

While the basic message of Menon's new text, which described a prosperous, professional and complicated cuisine utterly devoid of aristocratic panache and conspicuous consumption, was clear and understand-

¹⁵ W. W. Wieladko, *Kucharz doskonały pożyteczny dla zatrudniających się gospodarstwem. Okazując sposób poznawania, rozbierania i sporządzania różnego rodzaju mięsniwa, ryb etc. przy tym naukę dając przezorną o mocy, czyli wyśmienitości warzywa i ziół, oraz wyborze onychże używania. Tudzież robienia wódek, likworów, syropów, ciast i cukrów z francuskiego przetłomaczony i wielą przydatkami*, Warszawa, Michał Gröll, 1783; W. W. Wieladko, *Kucharz doskonały pożyteczny dla zatrudniających się gospodarstwem*, ed. and prepared by J. Dumanowski with the collaboration of A. Kleśta-Nawrocka, *Monumenta Poloniae Culinaria*, ed. J. Dumanowski, vol. III, Warsaw 2012, pp. 63–64.

¹⁶ J. Menon, *La cuisinière bourgeoise suivie de L'office a l'usage de tous ceux qui se mêlent de dépenses de maisons*, Paris, Guillyn, 1746; A. Girard, 'Le triomphe de "La cuisinière bourgeoise". Livres culinaires, cuisine et société en France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 1977, vol. 24, no. 4, pp. 497–523; B.K. Wheaton, *Savoring the Past. The French Kitchen and Table from 1300 to 1789*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983, p. 208.

able in France, in the case of the Polish reader it could have caused a feeling of disappointment and confusion. Wielądko, who knew French, as well as German and Italian, first of all changed the Polish title to *The Perfect Cook*, recognizing that addressing his work to a woman, of bourgeois origin, made no sense in Poland. He considered his audience to be the wealthy nobility and perhaps the townspeople aspiring to the lifestyle of the nobility and the professional chefs working for them. However, this resulted in further difficulties and inconsistencies.

Wielądko not only changed the book's title but also removed Menon's remarks about female cooks as the addressees of his work. However, the author of the Polish version did not change or remove the numerous references to bourgeois cuisine. The Polish version includes recipes for "bourgeois-style tripe", "Beef cinders in the bourgeois style", "Tails with cabbage in the bourgeois style", "Veal head stuffed in the bourgeois style", "Offal or veal lungs in the bourgeois style", "Veal liver in the bourgeois style", "Veal shoulder in the bourgeois style",¹⁷ etc.

The translator also left in the Polish version Meno's characteristic remarks on the taste of the townspeople. At the beginning of the chapter devoted to beef dishes, Wielądko contrasted the better batches of beef chosen by the townspeople, "i.e. people who like to eat well", with the worse types of meat consumed by the "common people", who must be satisfied with "vile meat".¹⁸

On the other hand, in the recipe entitled "Stags, hinds, roe-bucks and fawns, how to prepare", the translator states: "I will not write much about this game, because the townspeople do not very use it".¹⁹ Such a remark must have at least surprised the reader from the noble circles to whom Wielądko addressed his work. Venison, one of the attributes of the life of the nobility and aristocracy, widely described by Czerniecki, deserves special attention here. Therefore, we will reach for the recipes that were supposed to show the tremendous culinary change proposed by French cooks and gourmets as early as the mid-17th century, which was finally accepted in Poland in the second half of the 18th century. Wielądko summed up the recipes for big game in one sentence, but he included several recipes for hares.

Hare with turnips

Cut the liver, gut the hare, and put it in a saucepan with butter. Add parsley, onion, garlic, three cloves, two shallots, bay leaf, thyme, and basil. Put it on the

¹⁷ Recipes I, 3, 10; I, 3, 14; I, 4, 52; I, 5, 2; I, 5, 10; I, 5, 13.

¹⁸ I, 3.

¹⁹ I, 10, No. 20 in the unnumbered subchapter 'About the game, or hares, roe deer and others'.

fire, put a tablespoon of flour, pour in half a quart of white wine, two tablespoons of vinegar, two or three glasses of water or broth. Boil for an hour, then put in the chopped turnips, having boiled them for a quarter of an hour, and cook with the hare, salt and pepper. Reduce the sauce, remove the bundle, and serve hot.²⁰

The hot, exotic spices that determined the elite taste of food for centuries are absent here, which is no coincidence. Imported oriental “roots” have been replaced by homely, local herbs. The dish was supposed to have a slightly sour taste but no longer associated with sweetness. Adding sugar to meat or fish showed terrible taste and a lack of orientation in culinary fashions. The cook recommended the use of cloves, which, in the eighteenth century, was considered a universal spice combined with pepper. Still, there is no longer a composition of a whole set of hot spices, typical of Baroque cuisine.

The author of the Polish version of the text was a culinary amateur. Translating professional culinary terms, names of animal and plant species unknown in Poland, or developed nomenclature regarding the names of products and dishes often caused him difficulties. Most of them can be seen in the dictionary at the end of the work. In many explanations, the author referred to *Compendium ferculorum*, describing dishes that did not appear at all in his *Perfect Cook*.²¹

This procedure of the translator has significant consequences for today’s reading of both these texts. Wielądko, studying the recipes of the *Compendium* a hundred years after its publication, did not understand many old Polish terms. Therefore, he limited himself to summarizing the recipe or highlighting the features of the dish that seemed to be the most important, which he sometimes pointed out entirely randomly. Explanations constructed in this way became the starting point for the development of culinary entries in the monumental *Dictionary of the Polish Language* by Samuel Bogumił Linde.

Many culinary terms were untranslatable, as they have no equivalent in Polish. This applies, for example, to the distinction between the lark (*alouette*, a wild bird) and the fattening lark (*mauviette*). In this case, Wielądko writes about thrushes and calls the thrushes themselves starlings. The French *crème bachique*, a sauce based on wine and egg yolks, is in Wielądko’s work sour cream, and *pimprinelle* (great burnet, *Sanguisorba officinalis* L. – a plant whose leaves were used for salads) is associated by the author with locally grown anise (*Pimpinella anisum*).

²⁰ W. W. Wielądko, *Kucharz doskonały pożyteczny dla zatrudniających się gospodarstwem*, ed. and prepared by J. Dumanowski with the collaboration of A. Kleśta-Nawrocka, *Monumenta Poloniae Culinaria*, J. Dumanowski (ed.), vol. III, Warsaw 2012, p. 167.

²¹ For example, the term “Kontuza”.

These exemplary errors, which are much more numerous in the entire text of *The Perfect Cook*, testify not only to the lack of orientation in professional culinary nomenclature. Translating such terms would require several comments and explanations, for which the author lacked competence and probably also time and strength. Translating culinary recipes is not only a linguistic operation, as it also requires translating a specific “language” of cuisine: aesthetics, dietetics, the construction of taste, the rules of fasting, the mechanisms of distinction, the values associated with food and, i.e. a whole range of codes and information created by the food itself, as it were, beyond the language spoken and written down in the text of the book.

Wielądko’s mistakes must have caused problems for his readers, especially for the cooks who put his recommendations into practice. Minor but numerous errors did not obscure the fact that Wielądko tried to translate the text accurately. Changes and alterations in his text are minimal; they are mainly concerned with the omission of certain recipes, as well as their shortening and supplementing the dictionary at the end of the work with terms taken from *Compendium ferculorum*.

Wielądko writes about brie cheese as a cheap and popular product, praises the meat of fig-eater birds from the Mediterranean, writes about alosa (herring fish from the Garonne and Seine), mentions the mysterious “sea bittern” (probably referring to the bittern bird), describes the salicornia (herb) popular in France. Finally, he mentions almonds, apricots, currants and cherries available in spring.

In this way, practical advice, referring to the seasonality and rhythm of nature, locality and simplicity, has become an exclusive model in which exoticism and sophistication, expensive, imported products and a retreat from locality are exposed. The literal translation of the text, with all its shortcomings and flaws, resulted in a complete change in the idea and style of the cuisine. Moreover, this kind of advice was impractical, it became more of an aspirational text, a book for entertainment and cognition, rather than a practical manual of popular cuisine.

Despite the fact, Wielądko’s work was reprinted seven times, together with the first edition from 1783. After the first edition and its reissue in 1786, the book was published in 1800, 1806 (as *Kucharz nowo-doskonaly - The New Perfect Cook*), 1808, 1812 and 1823. On the Polish cookbook market, *The Perfect Cook* competed only with the constantly reprinted and very outdated text of the Baroque *Compendium ferculorum*. However, the secret of the popularity of Wielądko’s work lies in the text of the reissued book. The publication known under the abbreviated title *The Perfect Cook* is, in fact, two different works with two different titles. While the first two editions of 1783 and 1786, as well as the 1806 edition

entitled *The New Perfect Cook* and the 1812 edition, are abridged translations of the *French Cuisinière bourgeoise*, the editions of 1800, 1808 and 1823 contain a different, primarily altered text. These books have different titles but are not always used consistently. The version based on Menon's work is known as *The Perfect Cook Useful to Farm Workers*, but only works from 1783 and 1786 were published under this title.²² The editions of 1800, 1808, 1812 and 1823 are already entitled *Perfect Cook in Excellent Taste with Economy Convenient*.²³

The text of the 1800 edition and its later reprints are Wielądko's much more independent works than the earlier editions, which contain an abridged translation of Menon's book. In the 1800 edition, recipes referred to in the titles as prepared "in Polish style", e.g. "Chickens in Polish style with saffron", "Partridges in Polish style", "Pike in Polish style", "Carp cooked in Polish style", "Trout in Polish style", "Artichokes in Polish style", "Asparagus in Polish style", "Baba baked in Polish style". Even more recipes are labelled "in German" and in "Prussian", "Stettin", "Hamburg", "Magdeburg", and "Bavarian" style.²⁴

In the new edition, Wielądko included more chapters, separating new parts of the text or incorporating new parts of the work. The text begins with three chapters of a more general nature, devoted to the characteristics of a perfect cook, the types of meat used in the kitchen and the ways of setting the table.²⁵ The female cook, whom the author tried to erase from the first two editions, is already an exposed figure in the text from 1800 and subsequent reprints.

²² W. Wielądko, *Kucharz doskonały pożyteczny dla zatrudniających się gospodarstwem. Okazując sposób poznawania, rozbierania i sporządzania różnego rodzaju mięsiwa, ryb etc. przy tym naukę dając przezorną o mocy, czyli wyśmienitości warzywa i ziół, oraz wyborze onychże używania. Tudzież robienia wódek, likworów, syropów, ciast i cukrów z francuskiego przetłomaczony i wielą przydatkami pomnożony przez Wojciecha Wielądkę*, Warszawa 1783, 1786.

²³ W. Wielądko, *Kucharz doskonały w wyborzym guście z oszczędnością dogodny z kopersztynchami zastawiania stołów, czyli sposób gotowania różnych potraw z mięsa i ryb, robienia z nich gąszczów, sosów, galaretów, pieczenia pasztetów, tortów, ciasta, smażenia z wszelkich gatunków owoców konfitur, cukrów, tudzież dystylowania rozmaitych dobrych wódek, likworów, syropów, przy tym ciekawe sekreta doświadczone, do wiadomości w domowym gospodarstwie potrzebne, utrzymywania i konserwowania w spiżarni znajdujących się żywności, warzyw, ziół etc. etc., przez Wojciecha Wielądkę z nowych francuzkich i niemieckich autorów przetłomaczony. Dla wygody obywatelów i obywaterek gospodyń do druku podany*, Warszawa, Michał Gröll, 1800, 1808, 1812 and 1823.

²⁴ W. Wielądko, *Kucharz doskonały w wyborzym guście z oszczędnością dogodny...*, Warszawa 1800, vol. 1, pp. 176-178, vol. 2, pp. 15-16, 111, 173, 176, 179.

²⁵ Ibidem, vol. 1, pp. 1-25.

Let us look at two characteristic recipes from the new version of Wielądko's work:

Partridges in Polish style

Place the partridges roasted on a spit with a piece of butter in the middle, covered with thinly sliced bacon, and wrapped in paper on a platter. Sprinkle them with grated ginger, add parsley, salt and a piece of fresh butter, put it on each partridge, add a sliced orange, a little broth and breadcrumbs, press with another platter, place over the fire, and heat up. Pour half a glass of champagne wine, boil for a while, and serve hot.²⁶

The recipe describes a local product, relatively readily available and often found in noble manors and wealthy bourgeois houses. Partridges were first roasted and then stewed in broth according to the French culinary fashion. A large amount of butter, a symbol of the new French cuisine, is noteworthy here. It was treated as a delicate spice, a carrier of flavour and an element that gave the dish a delicate structure. The recipe includes ginger and a typical Old Polish and Baroque culinary accent. However, it is only one hot spice here; it does not create a whole series of taste sensations and aromas associated with the use of different spices at the same time, and finally, it does not combine with sweet or sour additives. As a result, we will get a dish that is, on the one hand, well known to the consumer when it comes to the basic ingredient and a slightly spicy flavour, but at the same time with a fairly uniform, simple taste. Although such a dish, due to its main product and delicate spicy taste, could resemble traditional Baroque Polish cuisine, it is a kind of synthesis of both models, with a clear predominance of elements of classicist French cuisine.

On the other hand, in the recipe for carp, popular in Poland, whose breeding in France was irretrievably destroyed during the revolution, we read:

Boiled carp in Polish style

Trim the carp, cut it into slices, salt it and let it rest for half an hour, then put it in beer, let it cook, collect the scum until it is clean. Put the parsley, celery, chopped onion, and whole allspice in another pot and let it boil well. Then grate the honey cake, rub it with wine vinegar, mix it with carp sauce, bring it to a boil well, add a piece of sugar, and when it is cooked, you will serve it hot on the table. Some people like to eat carp cold.²⁷

Carp, the essential product of elite Lenten cuisine, has been very popular for centuries in Polish and French cuisine and most Catholic

²⁶ Ibidem, vol. 2, p. 205.

²⁷ Ibidem, vol. 2, p. 60.

countries of Europe. It is prepared “in Polish style”, i.e. with honey cake (honey dough) and a small amount of sugar. Wine vinegar, much more delicate than local beer vinegar, gives an acidity taste here. Allspice, a new and fashionable condiment unknown in classic Old Polish cuisine, sharpens the whole thing. So, we have here an essential, contrasting combination of sweetness, spiciness and acidity. However, it is milder than in recipes from the seventeenth century. The spicy and sour taste results from using individual ingredients, not their entire fusion, and the sweetness is obtained from honey and sugar.

This kind of softening of taste reduces the role of contrasting sensations and product processing, which is not a coincidence. To explain this, we will use the example of a culinary professional and closely observed model – Paul Tremo, chef of King Stanisław August Poniatowski.

Polish cuisine of a French chef

The most famous Polish cook of the eighteenth century was Paul Tremo (1734–1810), the chef of King Stanisław August Poniatowski. A Frenchman and Huguenot by origin, he came to Poland from Berlin and cooked for several decades for the king and his guests. As a chef, he managed the entire large department of the court, controlling the work of his subordinate staff and organizing the monarch’s daily meals and ceremonial banquets. Over time, he became one of the king’s closest people. He played a special role after the abdication of Stanisław August when he accompanied him to St. Petersburg. He was one of the most important figures of the monarch’s already small entourage.²⁸

In addition to managing the royal kitchen, Tremo performed various unofficial functions. Receiving royal guests, organizing their food and staying at the court, he often accompanied them during visits to Polish dignitaries and participated in scholarly disputes. He was a diligent reader of the royal library, where he mainly consulted Georges Buffon’s work on natural history. He dated the famous traveller Georg Forster and was friends with the doctor and mineralogist Jan Piotr Ernest Scheffler. As the king’s envoy, in 1781, he organized the stay of Grand Duke Paul of Russia in Poland, acting as the king’s representative rather than cook.²⁹

Due to his position at the court, personal interests and contacts with scholars and writers from Stanisław August Poniatowski’s entourage,

²⁸ J. Dumanowski, *Tremo Paul (1734–1810)*, *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. 55/1, 224, Warszawa-Kraków 2023, pp. 21–23.

²⁹ J. Dumanowski, ‘O czym opowiada historia kuchni? Paul Tremo, kucharz wieku filozofów’, *Ethos. Kwartalnik Instytutu Jana Pawła II KUL*, 2022, 35 (137), pp. 53–80.

Tremo was a typical representative of the Enlightenment era. In his recipes, this is manifested both in the culinary style and in the belief in the importance of nutritional education and the social mission of the royal chef.

Tremo left behind a small manuscript collection of 86 recipes, preserved in three different copies written in Polish. His recipes are much longer and more accurate than those of Czerniecki or Wielądsko. They are clearly didactic in nature, as they are no longer addressed to professional chefs cooking for rulers and aristocrats, but to a much wider audience.³⁰

The Huguenot from Berlin made an interesting attempt to synthesize Polish and French cuisine. He softened the taste of the dishes he described, gave up most of the spicy, exotic spices and added sugar to meat and fish dishes. Above all, he avoided contrasts of opposing sensations. The initial product was no longer so deeply processed.

In his collection, Tremo described many Polish dishes prepared according to the new classicist canon of taste and with the use of modern culinary techniques. He offered two recipes for beetroot borscht, sorrel soup, and cold soup made of various vegetables. The French chef also described the classic dishes of the French cuisine of the time. His collection includes recipes for “Bœuf à la mode”, a “French-style duck dish”, a “French-style poulard”, and a “Soup à la bourgeoise”.³¹

In his view, Polish and French dishes were already very similar. They tasted similar, and the same culinary techniques were used to prepare them. It is difficult to point out any fundamental differences so visible in the second half of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Exciting are the recipes, which Tremo described as prepared “in Polish style”. The author included three such provisions. As Polish Tremo considered “Capon in Polish style” (no. 15), “Tripe in Polish style” (no. 18) and “Pike in Polish style”³². When we take a closer look at these recipes, their “Polishness” turns out to be a bit problematic. Although capon, beef or veal tripe and pike were among the most popular products in old Polish cuisine, it is not easy to find in these recipes either the earlier baroque style of taste or any fundamental differences compared to dishes described as prepared in French.

“Capon in Polish style” from Paul Tremo’s recipe is baked and served with anchovy sauce. The sauce is prepared from butter, wine and broth, thickened with bread or flour, and seasoned with lemon and pepper.

³⁰ *Przepisy Paula Tremo*, ed. J. Dumanowski, *Monumenta Poloniae Culinaris*, vol. IX, J. Dumanowski (ed.), Warszawa, Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie, 2022.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 92, 102, 108.

³² *Ibidem*, 95-97, 129.

A similar recipe from 1682 by Czerniecki describes a capon cooked with anchovies and seasoned with hot spices. On the other hand, the recipe for “Tripe in Polish style” resembles the popular recipe in France *gras-double à la polonoise*. Tremo, however, omits the saffron and rice, giving this dish a milder flavour.

The most famous Polish dish in France was pike in Polish style. It was popular in Europe since the Middle Ages.³³ In Germany and the Czech Republic, this dish, associated with Poland, had a distinct and spicy taste of various spices. The version with saffron, also known as “pike in yellow”, was particularly popular. The sauce was prepared from onions, sugar and vinegar. The Tremo version describes a pike cooked in wine. Butter and grated bread were added to the broth, seasoned with a mace and nutmeg. The sauce obtained in this way is much milder and more delicate in taste than the original, old Polish version of the recipe.

Tremo’s recipes refer to the French fashion for dishes *à la polonoise*, popular in the eighteenth century. In 1734, François Massialot described pike in Polish as a dish from the court of King Stanisław Leszczyński. His cookbooks also included dishes described as prepared *à la Stanislas* or *à la polonoise*. They were delicate in taste, with sparingly used spices.

The most “Polish” recipes by Paul Tremo were French recipes but referred to associations with Polish cuisine. It was primarily about the most popular products, some delicate spicy flavour accents and a preference for sour taste (vinegar, lemons). These dishes became fashionable in France after the marriage of Maria Leszczyńska with Louis XV in 1725. They peaked in popularity after the outbreak of the War of the Polish Succession in 1733 and the accession of Stanisław Leszczyński to the throne of Lorraine.

Tremo showed Polish cuisine as in line with French standards. His recipes influenced the modernization of Polish cuisine and gained recognition. While many Poles found it challenging to acknowledge French cuisine’s superiority directly, they willingly accepted French recipes *à la polonoise*.³⁴ In the Tremo kitchen, we can see an evident influence of classicist aesthetics, striving for harmony and simplicity and the cult of naturalness and nature. In addition to these solutions, he used popu-

³³ Jakobson R., ‘Szczupak po polsku’ in R. Mayenowa (ed.), *W poszukiwaniu istoty języka. Wybór pism*, vol. 1, Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1989, pp. 100–111.

³⁴ J. Dumanowski, ‘Deux langages? Mode vestimentaire et culture culinaire en Pologne au XVIII^e siècle comme objets du métissage’, in M. Figeac, Ch. Bouneau (eds.), *Circulation, métissage et culture matérielle (XVI^e–XX^e siècles)*, Paris 2017, pp. 329–346; idem, ‘À la française’ Réception de la culture culinaire française en Pologne aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles’ in B. Laurieux, K. Stengel (eds.), *Le modèle culinaire français (XVII^e–XXI^e siècle)*, Tours 2021, pp. 39–54.

lar culinary techniques in France, such as clarifying soups, broths and sauces, as well as reducing and condensing their flavour by evaporating liquids. In his collection of recipes, he often recommended using *demi-glace*, the preparation of which he devoted a separate recipe. Let us look at this inconspicuous, technical text because it is important to us for several different reasons.

How to make *jus*

Please take a few pounds of beef from the leg, cut it into slices a good inch thick, put it in a saucepan, put all sorts of vegetables on top, add chopped veal knees, and water it with good broth or water. Cover and let it simmer over low heat until well browned but not burned. Pour water on it and let it boil slowly. Place the saucepan on the side until the meat is cooked through and tender. When the meat is sufficiently cooked, pour it all onto a napkin in a clean saucepan, squeeze out all the sauce, and drain. When everything drips, put it on the coals and cook it over low heat so that if there is a pot of this sauce, it is reduced to half a quart or less. Then, pour it into a clean dish and set it aside to cool. This *jus* can be used for all brown sauces or browned soups. *Jus* is a type of broth which, in addition to the power inherent in broths, gives sauces colour.³⁵

The author of the text had a linguistic problem with naming a new and poorly known product. So, he used a distorted French term *jus* (juice), but the description of the procedures is already systematic and accurate. The basis of *jus* production here is good quality beef leg meat, a set of vegetables used to cook broth and veal bones (containing a lot of knee collagen). The cook prepared the whole thing for a long time and slowly over very low heat until evaporated and browned. After separating the meat, vegetables and bones, the broth itself had to be continued to be cooked over low heat. The goal was to obtain a thick liquid with eight times less volume than the broth from cooking meat and vegetables for a long time. On the one hand, it is a classic technique of French cuisine, widespread throughout Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this procedure had mainly an aesthetic dimension, leading to the condensation of the natural, uniform taste of the essential product. It was a very laborious and expensive technique, leading to obtaining a small amount of essential broth prepared with a large amount of various ingredients. Due to the aesthetic justification of the value of uniformity and naturalness of taste, the rejection of exoticism and the emphasis on the work, craftsmanship and knowledge of the cook, such a broth was a classic example of the new culinary fashion.

³⁵ *Przepisy Paula Tremo...*, op. cit., p. 111.

Tremo's recipe goes a step further – it describes not just a broth but a thick sauce or a semi-liquid, gelatinous mass, like today's demi-glace. Such a product simplifies the cook's work, such as essential broths, basic sauces, and concentrates. Cuisine is no longer an art that uses surprise, referring to feeling lost and uncertain. According to cooks from the Enlightenment era, it was no longer just an art but a science.

Tremo's recipes also include practical, simple culinary advice, which in the case of a court chef seems surprising. In the last recipes of his collection (no. 79–86), Stanisław August's chef described the methods of preserving some food products. Such recipes are rare in collections describing sophisticated court cuisine. However, the royal chef believed that the advice on marinating sorrel, dill and gooseberries, preparing rennet for cheese making, salting saffron milk caps and beef (*pekeflejsz*), baking blocks of apple mass and making low-alcohol drinks from wild fruit on birch sap fully deserved a detailed description.

In these recipes, we can see a clear trait of practicality and belief in the usefulness of the chef's profession. They are concerned with the storage of various products in fat, brine, and vinegar and the process of alcoholic fermentation. Each recipe has a different type of maintenance and can serve as a benchmark for other products. When describing the production of drinks from wild fruits (no. 82), the author already in the title enumerated a whole series of products that one can preserve in this way. The recipe for gooseberries marinated in vinegar is a model for safeguarding green, unripe plums and nasturtium buds. This practical approach is evident throughout but takes on a unique character in these recipes. The chef feels the need to share the knowledge resulting from his experience, as well as a series of trials and experiments he has carried out. Food preservation is important here to fight hunger and diversify the winter menu. The basis of the cooks' knowledge and experience in this case is chemistry, and food processing is treated here as a chemical experiment.

Such a practical and scientific approach can be seen especially in the text *L'art de sécher et de conserver les légumes*, published in 1794 by Paul Tremo.³⁶ This publication was long considered lost, but we were able to find one copy of the book. Although the chef concealed his authorship, it is beyond doubt – as confirmed by the royal librarian John Baptist Albertrandi and the book's content. According to the work's title,

³⁶ *L'art de sécher et de conserver les légumes, pour procurer un aliment salubre aux voyageurs par mer, à une armée en campagne, aux communautés, aux hôpitaux et aux habitants des grandes villes. D'après les instructions du pasteur Eisens, traduit de l'allemand, avec additions intéressantes et relatives à ce sujet par le traducteur, Varsovie, P. Dufour, 1794.*

it was only a translation of Johann Georg Eisen's book describing the methods of drying vegetables and herbs. Its text contains information about events later than Eisen's death, as well as about the person and environment of Paul Tremo. The content of the book is not a translation but mostly a completely new, original text.³⁷

An interesting example is the recipe for stock cubes (*Bouillon en tablettes pour le commun*),³⁸ in which the author describes how to prepare beef stock cubes. Although such a recipe may seem trivial today, it was an original solution in the eighteenth century, laborious and requiring a lot of practice. It was related to the experience of court cooks, who, since the mid-seventeenth century, had been experimenting with reducing broths and condensing the taste. The stock cube is a solution that goes further than the demi-glace recipe (*jus*) quoted above. However, the scale of this project and its purpose are essential differences. *Jus* described by Tremo is a recipe for elite cuisine, facilitating and accelerating the work of a professional cook. The stock tablets from the 1794 book are a way to preserve food and make it easier to transport and prepare a meal quickly and easily. Due to the scale of its production and the fact that it was intended for the army, ship crews, and travellers, it was already a harbinger of industrial food production.

Other peoples' geographical knowledge and experience are referred to in the information about the cooking of Siberian acacia (*Caragana arborescens Lam.*) pods. On the other hand, the chemical knowledge and experience of cooks are the basis for the argument on butter preservation and yeast drying. The palace chef is already the author of a learned work of an efficient nature based on science and experiment. The most important thing here is his optimistic belief in the possibilities of science and education. Tremo is a true man of Enlightenment here, who uses his knowledge and experience in a utilitarian mission to ensure people's happiness. And happiness will come when famines and related misfortunes, diseases and epidemics are averted. Published in 1794, when an uprising against the partitioners broke out in Poland, the book on food preservation is mainly about feeding the army. Perhaps this association with the Kościuszko Uprising was the reason why somebody decided to withdraw all the copies from the market.

Therefore, recipes and nutritional advice are not only about the aesthetics of taste, pleasure, religion, social competition and identity. Even in the old, elite type of this literature, they also describe the practical problems of feeding wider population groups and talk about politics and power.

³⁷ *Przepisy Paula Tremo*, op. cit., pp. 23-32.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 155-156.

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