

Honey, Pepper, and Flour

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Synopsis

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Through the medieval ages, spices such as ginger, cloves, peppercorns, and cinnamon bark have been traded along the Vistula River which runs alongside Poland. These spices were known as "pepper", and they were used to make gingerbread or pierniki rectangles for trade. Also, they were used as ingredients for the irresistible cookies known as Katarzynka or "Little Kates".

Wooden molds of pear or apple wood were meticulously carved by skilled tradesmen, and bakers combined flour, pepper, and honey before carefully pressing the dough into the plates bearing nobility or ornate horse-drawn carriages.

Well-practiced women painted the Katarzynka with imported cane sugar from the Americas and piped intricate patterns on them. The beloved cookies were often adorned with gold and silver. All of this labor resulted in glorious works of art often presented to dignitaries and those of great wealth as presents expressly from the region because they were of the best quality Poland had to offer, and the pierniki was in high demand as a trade commodity.

This is not just a story of baked goods though, this is the story of Piotr, the mold carver's son, who lived along the Vistula River in a bustling city during the early 18th century where he witnessed the "Tumult of Toruń" in 1724. Although, it is not just simply the story of a man but of many as well. But, above all, it is the story of the sweet and bitter in life.

Reader's comments

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