

SZEKELY GULYAS

(Sour Goulash)

The Magyars of Hungary are totally unlike the Slavic peoples of the countries that surround them. In folklore, language and temperament they are closer to the Finn than the Russian or Czech because both the Finns and the Magyars are descendants of a fiercely independent warrior tribe that swept through Europe around the time of the Crusades. Magyar cooking displays this same individuality, nowhere better demonstrated than in its vast number of "gulyas" (goulash) dishes, each one different, each one superb. This one I got many years ago from Tibor Szakas, the fine tamburitza player. It probably hasn't changed too much since the Magyars first rode into Hungary. Enjoy it with plenty of robust red wine.

3 1/2 pounds sauerkraut
2 large onions, chopped
1/4 cup melted bacon fat, divided
1 teaspoon caraway seeds
1/2 teaspoon dried tarragon
black pepper, freshly ground
3 cups dry white wine, divided
water
3 pounds boned loin of pork,
cut into 1/2-inch slices
salt
1 tablespoon paprika
2 cups sour cream

Rinse the sauerkraut and drain well. Fry half of the onion in half of the bacon fat in a heavy saucepan until golden. Add the sauerkraut and fry, stirring until it begins to turn golden brown. Stir in the caraway, tarragon, 1/2 teaspoon pepper, 2 cups of the wine and enough water to cover completely. Bring to a boil and simmer for 3 hours, adding more wine if it gets too dry. Meanwhile heat the remaining bacon fat and fry pork slices; add the remaining onion and finish browning. Pour off the excess fat, season with salt, pepper and paprika and cook it slowly for 4-5 minutes. Add the remaining wine and 1/3 cup water, cover and cook very slowly for 1 1/2 hours, adding water or wine if necessary. Combine pork, sauerkraut and sour cream and serve at once.

Serves 6-8