Long for Its Dishes
Ljubljana’s Been Known
Taste Ljubljana

Just like many other cities in the world, Ljubljana boasts a number of special dishes typical of different periods in its history. Today, these dishes serve as the point of departure for the so called ‘Dishes of Ljubljana Special Selection’, a list of traditional dishes adapted to suit modern eating habits.

The city gives you an opportunity to taste an array of delicious dishes, number one being **Kranjska sausage**, which is made to a recipe written in 1896 and has been awarded the Protected Geographical Indication status. Ljubljana’s traditional ‘gostilna’ restaurant Pri Žabarju still justifies its name, derived from the Slovenian word for ‘frog’, by offering excellent **frog legs**, which have for centuries been considered a great delicacy in Ljubljana. At the souvenir shop Paviljon Zvonček on the Triple Bridge you can get **Dragon potica**. An amazing cake that has been known under different names such as Tivoli slice and Bellevue slice since the end of the First World War and is now
called **Maxi slice** is available at the cake shop of the Maxi department store, where it has been made since 1971. Tasting the **Ljubljana cake**, you can explore the story of a young cook who won the hand of a lord’s daughter by cheering her up with this delightful cake. Another exquisite sweet delight related to a story, this time about the greatest Slovenian poet, France Prešeren (1800–1849), whose monument stands next to the Triple Bridge, right in the centre of historical Ljubljana, is **Fige Prešernove**, an artisan confectionery product made with chocolate and figs. A typical Ljubljana dessert that has been part of Sunday and festive family meals since the early 19th century is **apple strudel**, a local version of the Viennese classic. Ljubljana has for centuries been exposed to a mix of influences from the Mediterranean, Central Europe and, since the end of the Second World War, the Balkans. In the 1960s, people in Ljubljana began to discover the Italian **pizza**, and in the 1980s the Balkan **burek**. A synthesis of the two is **pizza burek**, which is believed to have been invented by Ljubljana’s burek-makers. All the three dishes are typical street foods in Ljubljana.
The city’s surrounding villages, meadows, and woods are a diverse source of foods and drinks including, among others, **strawberries, bilberries, apples,** and **chestnuts** from the village of **Janče,** from where a so called **Fruit Route** leads to the village of Javor through an area rich in fruit trees and well-known for excellent natural **apple juice** made by the local farmers. On top of the Šmarna gora hill (669m), a popular day-trip destination near Ljubljana, you can enjoy a cup of **Šmarna gora tea,** brewed from countless herbs. Ljubljana has two **excellent breweries:** Pivovarna Union, founded in 1864, and Pivovarna Kratochwill, founded in 1992 as a family-run business. The diversity of typical Ljubljana foods and drinks and their flavours can be explored at the city’s numerous modern restaurants, traditional gostilnas, cafés, and street food outlets, as well as at the **Ljubljana Central Market,** which has a unique charm and is imprinted with the signature style of the architect **Jože Plečnik** (1872–1957).
Ljubljana lunch

Some of the dishes most frequently prepared in Ljubljana on weekends used to include beef soup with noodles or ‘bleki’ (noodle dough squares), ‘pražen krompir’ (sauteed potatoes), boiled oxtail or another cut of beef used in the preparation of beef soup, horseradish with apples or sour cream or, in spring and summer, egg sauce with chives (‘šnitlahov zos’), green salad, replaced by various sauerkraut or sour turnip dishes in winter, and a dessert, often apple strudel (‘štrudl’) or pancakes filled with cottage cheese and tarragon.

- Beef soup with noodles or ‘bleki’........................................ 8
- Vodnik’s lamb’s lettuce salad............................................ 22
- Pražen krompir (sauteed potatoes).................................... 28

**Horseradish with apples or sour cream**
A side dish of finely grated horseradish with an addition of either shredded apples, apple vinegar, and olive oil or sour cream.

- Egg sauce with chives
A sauce of mashed egg yolks and finely chopped egg whites and chives, seasoned with vinegar.

- Ljubljana cottage cheese pancakes with tarragon................. 38
- Apple strudel
A filo pastry roll filled with grated and braised apples.
1kg beef (preferably chopped oxtail, which makes the soup particularly tasty, or a chunk of chuck, brisket or rump) and one or more beef bones (spongy bone, marrow bone, rib)

2.5l cold water
salt
1 red and 1 yellow carrot
a chunk of celeriac or a stick of celery
1 parsley root with greens
a chunk of rutabaga
1/2 onion
1 clove garlic
1 tomato
8 peppercorns or less
1 bay laurel leaf
Beef soup with noodles or ‘bleki’

A clear beef soup has been commonly prepared in Ljubljana since the 19th century, when it became a staple on the Sunday lunch menu. Its origins date back to meat and vegetable one-pot stews of a much earlier date.

1. Put the meat and bones in a cooking pot, add the cold water, and season with salt. Bring to the boil.
2. Brown the half of the onion in a pan or on a burner plate. Add the onion and all the vegetables to the boiling water. Let simmer for two to three hours, depending on the age of the animal. Do not skim the scum that forms on the surface as it adds to the flavour.
3. About 15 minutes before the soup is cooked, add the peppercorns and the bay laurel leaf.
4. When the soup is cooked, let it settle for a few minutes before straining. Serve either clear soup or add a garnish such as noodles or ‘bleki’ (noodle dough squares).
1kg white wheat flour
250ml milk
a pinch of salt
6 eggs
120g butter
a few drops of dark rum
1 sachet of vanilla sugar
50g yeast
sugar to taste
Janška vezivka
(Janče festive sweetbread)

This beautifully decorated festive sweetbread originates from the village of Janče on the Eastern edge of Ljubljana.

1. Prepare sweet milk dough using the above ingredients and put some of it aside. Place the dough into a greased baking dish and let rise.
2. Using the dough that has been put aside, make various dough ornaments (decorative strips, braids, birds, flowers, bows, etc.).
3. Brush the dough while still rising in the baking dish with beaten egg, decorate with dough ornaments and then repeat the brushing.
4. Bake for one hour at 200 °C.
5. When baked, brush with melted butter to make the crust even more appealing.
500g millet groats
1kg sauerkraut
salt
water
cracklings, lard
Všenat zele (sauerkraut with millet groats)

Sauerkraut with millet groats is delicious either as a stand-alone dish or a side dish served with meat dishes such as roast knuckle of pork or veal and winter pork foods. The rich tradition of making sauerkraut and sour turnip (grated and fermented cabbages and turnips) in Ljubljana’s suburbs of Trnovo and Krakovo goes back to the 19th century, while particularly the lower classes were familiar with the fermentation of whole cabbage heads and turnips from at least the 17th century. Trnovo sauerkraut used to have a widespread reputation and was appreciated even in Vienna.
1 tablespoon lard
1 tablespoon chopped onions
250ml husked barley (pearl barley), washed in hot water
500ml warm water
1l beef stock
250ml navy or roman beans
300g smoked pork, sausage meat or meaty bacon, cut in small pieces
1 tablespoon finely chopped parsley
1 clove garlic, crushed
1 carrot, cut into slices
3 cabbage leaves, shredded
salt
a pinch of pepper
Šmarnogorski ričet
(Šmarna gora barley stew)

Pearl barley stew with vegetables and meat is a famous dish served by the traditional ‘gostilna’ restaurant at the top of the Šmarna gora hill (669m), a popular hiking destination on the outskirts of Ljubljana.

1. Boil the beans in the beef stock. Drain well when cooked, reserving the cooking liquid.
2. In a saucepan, sauté the onion in lard and add the pearl barley. Sauté for a while, stirring all the time.
3. Add the warm water. When the water has reduced, add the reserved cooking liquid. Boil the pearl barley for about one hour then add the cured meat, parsley, garlic, carrot, cabbage, and salt. Cover the pan and simmer for another hour.
4. When the barley is cooked, stir in the boiled beans, sprinkle with pepper, and serve.
1 smoked or fresh beef tongue
1/2 celeriac
2 parsley roots
2 sprigs of parsley
4 carrots
1 small onion
2 cloves of garlic
8 juniper berries
2 leaves sage
salt
pepper
1 teaspoon sugar
Boiled beef tongue

Fresh and particularly smoked beef tongue served with various side dishes or sauces used to be, and still is, a much sought after meat delicacy in Ljubljana.

1. Cut the celeriac in pieces and place in a pot together with the beef tongue. Cover with water, season with salt and pepper, add a teaspoon of sugar, and boil.

2. While the beef tongue is boiling, check for tenderness from time to time. When tender, remove from the pot and peel while still hot.

3. Slice the peeled beef tongue at an angle and serve immediately or let cool and slice thinly before serving.
100g dry-cured bacon
1 onion, chopped
1kg potatoes
200g pork tenderloin
(or young beef or Kranjska sausage)
100g ham (or dry-cured collar bacon)
4–5 eggs
4 tablespoons milk
salt, pepper

Chives, pickled gherkins, boiled carrots and, when in season, fresh mushrooms can be added to taste.
1. Boil the potatoes and slice thinly.
2. Dice the meat and ham and sauté with bacon (or in butter or oil). Add the potatoes and sauté for a while more.
3. Add the other ingredients to taste, season with salt and pepper, and add the eggs, beaten with milk. Cook until the eggs have set.
4. Serve with salad.

(Union) Hopel Popel

Union Hopel Popel is a variety of a Berlin one-pot dish prepared by Ljubljana’s Hotel Union from 1920 using potatoes, eggs, pork (or veal or young beef), and ham or Kranjska sausage.
500–550g beef (leg or forerib)
3 large onions, chopped
1 tablespoon lard
30–40g streaky bacon
sweet and hot red pepper powder
water
salt
caraway seeds
thyme
1 tablespoon flour
3 potatoes
1. Cut the beef into chunks.
2. Fry the streaky bacon in the lard, add the onions and cook until golden. Season with sweet and hot red pepper powder and add some water to prevent the onions from burning. Add the beef and season with salt, caraway seeds, and thyme. Cover with a lid and braise.
3. When the liquid has evaporated, add more water and braise for another good hour.
4. Let the water evaporate, then sprinkle with a tablespoon of flour and stir for as long as the flour has become golden. Again, add some water, just enough to get the right consistency.
5. Peel the potatoes, cut into chunks, and add to goulash.
6. The goulash is cooked when the potatoes are tender.

Ljubljana goulash

In the 1930s, several recipes for Ljubljana goulash were published in the United States, in the Zarja – The Dawn magazine, which continues to be the official publication of the Slovenian Women’s Union of America today. The recipes testify to the fact that Slovenian emigrants did not lose connection with the culinary habits of the places from which they had emigrated to the United States.
lamb’s lettuce
hard-boiled eggs
salt
oil
apple vinegar
beet
cauliflower
### Vodnik’s lamb’s lettuce salad

The recipe for this salad is from the first cookbook ever written in Slovenian, Valentin Vodnik’s ‘Kuharske bukve’ (The Cookbook), published in Ljubljana in 1799.

1. Wash the lamb’s lettuce, put in a bowl, season with salt, and dress with oil and vinegar.
2. Peel the hard-boiled eggs, separate the egg yolks from the whites, and chop both finely.
3. Boil the beet, let cool, and chop finely.
4. Boil the cauliflower, let cool, and place in the middle of the bowl, on the bed of lamb’s lettuce.
5. Place small heaps the chopped egg whites, egg yolks, and beet around the cauliflower to create a symmetrical pattern.
5 hard-boiled eggs
3 egg yolks
3 egg whites
1/2 bread roll, ground and soaked in milk
30g butter
1/2 teaspoon mixed herbs
a pinch of salt
a pinch of grated lemon peel
2 tablespoons sour cream
2 tablespoons breadcrumbs
1 cup dried morels or other mushrooms
1 tablespoon finely chopped parsley leaves
1 tablespoon white flour
extra butter, for greasing the baking tin
Ljubljana egg dish

The name of Ljubljana as the place of origin of this dish was first used as part of the dish’s name in 1868, in the Slovenian cookbook ‘Slovenska kuharica’ by Magdalena Knafelj-Pleiweis. The recipe was listed under no. 146.

1. Clean, blanch, and drain the morels. Sauté in butter together with parsley.
2. Mash the egg yolks of the hard-boiled eggs with a fork. Rinse the egg whites and cut into strips.
3. In a bowl, mix together the raw and hard-boiled egg yolks, well-squeezed half of the bread roll, salt, herbs, lemon peel, and sour cream. Whip the egg whites until they form stiff peaks and fold into the mixture.
4. Cover the bottom of a greased baking tin with a layer of the egg mixture, add a layer of sautéed mushrooms and a layer of egg-white strips, and finish off with a layer of the egg mixture.
5. Bake in the oven and serve either as a hot starter or a main dish with a vegetable side dish and sauce of your choice.
1 large or 2 small cod (enough to get 1kg of boiled white fish flesh), soaked
800g potatoes
2 bunches parsley
4–6 cloves garlic
100ml olive oil, plus extra for greasing the baking dish
200ml sour cream
grated Parmesan cheese
1kg sauerkraut, sautéed or braised
Štokfiš (cod layered with potatoes)

This popular dish of cod layered with potatoes used to be commonly prepared for Lent and in winter. It was traditionally served with sautéed or braised sauerkraut.

1. Boil the soaked cod for 30 minutes, then separate the tender white flesh from the bones.
2. Peal the potatoes and cut into 2–3mm slices.
3. Finely chop the parsley and garlic (or wild garlic, aka ramsons, wood garlic, and bear’s garlic).
4. Cover the bottom of a glass or ceramic baking dish with a layer of potatoes, sprinkle with parsley and (wild) garlic, and add a layer of fish. Keep layering until you have at least four layers of each.
5. Pour the olive oil, diluted with an equal amount of water, over the top layer, brush with the sour cream, sprinkle with Parmesan cheese, and cover.
6. Bake for about one and a half hours at 180 °C.
7. Serve in the baking dish while still hot with braised or sautéed sauerkraut as a side dish.
1kg potatoes
salt
60g lard
4 tablespoons onion, sliced
1 ladle of beef soup (optional)
1. Boil the unpeeled potatoes in salted water for 30 minutes. Drain, peel while still hot, and slice thinly.
2. Fry the onion in lard until golden-brown. Add the potato slices and sauté on both sides.
3. Optionally, you can add a ladle of good beef soup and stir well again.

Pražen krompir tastes best if sautéed in such a way that the potato slices have a golden-brown crust.
chicken drumsticks
and wings
flour
eggs
bread crumbs
salt
oil for frying
Flying žganci (fried chicken drumsticks and wings)

The word ‘žganci’, standing alone, refers to an everyday dish of boiled flour commonly associated with poverty and struggle for survival. The phrase ‘flying žganci’, however, was humorously used by 17th century dockers working at the city’s port on the river Ljubljanica in reference to fried chicken drumsticks and wings.

1. Wash the chicken drumsticks and wings and season with salt.
2. Roll the drumsticks and wings in flour, dip into beaten eggs, and roll in breadcrumbs.
3. Fry the breaded drumsticks and wings in oil.
Filo pastry for štruklji
500ml white flour
250ml warm water
1 egg
salt
a slice of butter
lemon juice or vinegar
oil

Tarragon štruklji
filo pastry for štruklji
(see the recipe above)
300ml thick sour cream
2 eggs, separated
3 tablespoons breadcrumbs, fried in butter
salt
2 bunches tarragon, finely chopped
1. Mix together the sour cream, egg yolks, fried breadcrumbs, and tarragon.
2. Whip the egg whites until they form stiff peaks and add to the mixture.
3. Spread the mixture over the filo pastry and roll up.
4. Wrap the roll in a wet but not dripping linen tea towel or kitchen foil and tie the wrapping with string. Cook in a large saucepan filled with boiling salted water for 25 minutes.
5. Unwrap the cooked štruklji, cut into slices, and sprinkle with a tablespoon of breadcrumbs fried in butter until golden-brown.

Tarragon štruklji can be served either as a savoury or a sweet dish. Other popular štruklji varieties are made with cottage cheese, apple, and walnut fillings.
**Potica dough**
3 tablespoons lukewarm milk
1 teaspoon sugar
20g yeast
500ml warm milk
100g butter
2–3 tablespoons sugar
1 teaspoon salt
dark rum
lemon peel, grated
vanilla sugar
750g plain white flour
2 egg yolks

**Walnut potica filling**
1kg walnut kernels
250ml hot milk
150g butter
grated lemon peel
250g sour cream
2 sachets of vanilla sugar
2 tablespoons sugar
2 egg yolks
2 egg whites, whipped to stiff peaks
50ml dark rum
Potica

Potica, which can have various sweet or savoury fillings and is baked in a special baking dish called ‘potičnik’, is Slovenia’s most distinctive baked delight, first mentioned in 1575 by the Protestant writer Primož Trubar. The earliest descriptive recipe was published by J. V. Valvasor in 1689. The most distinctively Slovenian potica variety is made with tarragon, and the most popular one with walnuts.

1. Grind the walnuts finely and set aside 2–3 handfuls for sprinkling. Pour the hot milk over the ground walnuts and let cool.
2. Stir in the lemon peel, sugar, vanilla sugar, sour cream, butter, egg yolks, and dark rum. Fold in stiffly whipped egg whites.
3. Spread the filling over the dough and sprinkle with the reserved walnuts.
4. Roll the dough into a tight roll, put the roll in a ‘potičnik’, and pinch the ends of the roll together well.
5. Cover with a tea towel and leave in a warm place to rise. Before baking, brush with beaten egg.
6. Bake for about 45 minutes at 180 °C, then lower the temperature to 150 °C and bake for another 25 minutes.
7. Turn out from the potičnik and let cool. Dust with icing sugar.
Yeast-leavened flaky pastry

20g yeast
4 tablespoons lukewarm milk
1/2 tablespoon sugar
20g butter, melted
5 tablespoons cream
2 egg yolks
1 tablespoon sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon dark rum
280g white flour
180g butter

Ljubljana štrukelj

yeast-leavened flaky pastry (see the recipe above)
apricot marmalade
1/2 cup candied orange peel
beaten egg
almond flakes
Ljubljana štrukelj

The recipe for this dessert named after Ljubljana was first recorded in 1868, in the first Slovenian cookbook, written by Magdalena Knafelj-Pleiweis. The dessert’s name is one of the earliest European examples of the place of a dish’s origin being included in the dish’s name.

1. Roll out the pastry (not too thinly), spread the apricot marmalade (generously) over it, sprinkle with candied orange peel, and roll loosely.
2. Place the roll in a greased baking tin and put in a warm place to rise.
3. Brush with beaten egg, sprinkle with almond flakes, and bake in a moderate oven.
Pancake batter
500ml milk
2–3 eggs
1 tablespoon sugar
250g plain white flour
salt
oil or butter for frying

Cottage cheese filling with tarragon
250g cottage cheese
1–2 eggs
200ml cream
1 bunch of tarragon, leaves removed and chopped
2 tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon breadcrumbs
a pinch of salt

Egg sauce
100ml cream
1 egg
a pinch of salt
Ljubljana cottage cheese pancakes with tarragon

These gratinated pancakes owe their special flavour to tarragon (Artemisia dracunculus). In Slovenia, unlike in other parts of the world, this popular herb is typically used in sweet, rather than savoury dishes.

1. Whisk the ingredients for the pancake batter until smooth. Let rest for 30 minutes.
2. Heat up a heavy-based frying pan, add a few drops of oil or a bit of butter, pour in a ladle of pancake batter, and tilt the pan to coat the base evenly. Cook until the pancake comes away from the pan, then flip over and cook on the other side.
3. When the pancakes are ready, mix together the ingredients for the filling and spread over the pancakes.
4. Roll the pancakes and arrange side by side in a greased ovenproof dish. Make two or more layers if necessary.
5. Pour the egg sauce over the pancakes and grill in the oven for 30 minutes at 200 °C.
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