

Good food for affordable prices

Milk bars

Drinking milk, in milk bars: it is an institution in Poland. On the menu: authentic kitchen and nice prices.

If you go to Poland, you inevitably end up in one of these restaurants. They appeared in the 1960s in the form of soup restaurants. At the time, you had two options: eating at home or in a canteen.

Since all the firms in Poland cannot have their own canteen, unpretentious small establishments have sprung up. Near the large factories, these small shops were even sponsored by the Communist Party. They were very cheap. These institutions are called Milk Bars for most of the dishes contain milk. Indeed, milk is the key ingre-

redient of Polish cuisine. In 1989, the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the communist bloc marks the return of liberalism and thus restaurants.

While many milk bars had to close their doors due to ruthless competition, some resisted. Today, the bulk of their clientele are pensioners, homeless people, penniless students and or backpackers. But much more than a restaurant where you can eat for

only \$2.30, these milk bars are now part of the heritage of Poland. If the bill is very light, the cuisine remains excellent. Faced with the extinction of these little jewels, the Polish government has even decided to put their hands in the pocket by paying the cost of raw ingredients used by bars such as oil, vegetables and milk of course .

By Mylène, Quentin, Gaëtan, Damien and Baptiste.

History of milk bars

In the communist era, the government subsidized the food for milk bars. The idea was to allow low-wage workers to afford a meal outside their homes.

The tradition continues, and today Poland still foots the bill for most of your milk-bar

meal. Prices remain astoundingly low — my bill usually comes to about \$3 — and, while the communist-era fare was less than that, the upside is that today's milk-bar cuisine is even tastier.

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milk
bar



At a Polish milk bar, you can buy soup or « borsht » for a buck.



My trip to Poland

The weather is beautiful and we have just arrived in Warsaw, the capital. I'm excited to finally enjoy the cuisine of a Bar Mleczny, one of the cafeterias from the communist era that are slowly disappearing from the Polish landscape. Bar Mleczny, I was told, means "milk bar:" now we did not see any milk, but we did see and smell great food!

We found this one in the old city centre of Warsaw. Just a single menu on the wall (only in Polish), you take what you want and then pay before finding a seat at the small tables. No fancy napkins or tablecloths, just a plain empty table. BUT, yes there is a but here, the food was very tasty and filling and very inexpensive.

It's a quite small but very nice place (it's possible that you have to wait outside), close to the market square. It's perfect for a quick and traditional lunch (and cheap). You can choose between a



few typical dishes and very few drinks (water and juices only!!). It still is quite a cheap place to eat in Warsaw. Of course, the main dishes are milk and breads that should be eaten with milk. Other food is quite different and international - salads, meat with potatoes and more. I think it is not hard to find something to your taste. I think it is possible to leave on a full stomach for 3 euros here.

Design in this place is not very nice, but anyway, it is for people who just want to eat well without having to drill a hole in their pockets.

By Baptiste Lefèbvre, correspondant in Warsaw, Poland for *Amazing News*.