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TRADITIONAL WILD SPICE PLANTS OF POLAND AND SLOVAKIA TRADIČNÉ DIVÉ KORENINOVÉ RASTLINY V POĽSKU A NA SLOVENSKU

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Ethnographic sources in both countries were compared in order to find traditionally used wild growing spices. In Poland 14 species were found, in Slovakia around 11. In both countries few and similar species were used (e.g. *Armoracia rusticana*, *Carum carvi*, *Mentha*). Some species had already ceased to be added to dishes at the beginning of the twentieth century, e.g. *Glechoma hederacea*. The scarce use of spices in Poland and Slovakia may be attributed to the general avoidance of wild green leaves (apart from in famine times) and aromatic plants in the cuisine of both countries, a phenomenon, which can be classified as herbophobia.

Key words: ethnobotany, spices, *Glechoma hederacea*, herbophobia

Spices are an important part of human food history. However the use of spices depends heavily on cultural factors. The list of spices used can reflect the richness of the groups (if expensive, important ones are used), ethnomedicinal traditions (spices are often used medicinally as well), and local plant resources (in case of peasants who did not have access to imported species). The aim of the article is to compare the use of wild spices in Poland and Slovakia.

Material and methods

Ethnographic data concerning the use of wild plants in the 19th and 20th century were searched in Poland and Slovakia. The data on Poland were extracted from summaries of wild food plants of Poland published by the author of the article (Łuczaj and Szymański, 2007; Łuczaj, 2008a; 2008b; 2010a; 2010b). Spices were defined as plants added to foods in small quantities in order to give them flavour. Herbal teas were not included. Only information on the actual use of species were included.

Results and discussion

Polish sources list a similar number of wild growing spice species (14) to the Slovakian ones (between 10 and 12, depending on the interpretation). In Poland *Armoracia rusticana* was used as a spice for meat or beetroots, also used as a side dish mixed with boiled eggs. The roots are still commonly dug out from the wild state. Another once important spice was *Carum carvi*. Its seeds have been used to give flavour to soups and bread. The next important spice are pseudo-fruits of *Juniperus communis*, used as spice for meat and vodka. *Glechoma hederacea* leaves were added to flavour the soups. The use of this spice stopped at the beginning of the twentieth century. *Mentha longifolia* and *M. arvensis* leaves were used as flavourings for potato and cheese dumplings in many villages of SE and E Poland, and sometimes also added to soups. *Thymus pulegioides* and *T. serpyllum* flowering tops were added to various dishes in scattered localities around the country, though this custom was very rare. In the Podhale

region (Tatra Mts), *Achillea millefolium* leaves were sometimes used as a spice.

It is more difficult to estimate the frequency of use in Slovakia, due to the smaller number of ethnographic publications. Some species were the same as in Poland: *Armoracia rusticana*, *Glechoma hederacea*, *Mentha* spp. Some species from the publications of Markuš may not be identified correctly. The uncertainty concerns a spice called *madra*, once reported as *Anthriscus cerefolium* – wild and cultivated (although the species is only cultivated in Slovakia) and another time reported as *Nepeta* sp. Another uncertain identification is *lebitka*, reported by him as *Melissa*, in fact this name was often used in the Carpathians for *Origanum vulgare*.

The use of *Glechoma hederacea* must be brought to attention in both countries. This was once an important spice for soups in both countries and its use has disappeared, mainly due to the popularization of parsley (Łuczaj, 2010a). A special article was devoted to the use of this species in Poland (Łuczaj, 2008a). Efforts could be made to restore the use of this indigenous and healthy spice.

The comparison of the spices used in both countries shows many similarities, which result from the similarity of the folk cultures of the two countries. The larger number of spices listed for Poland is the result of its larger area and a larger number of ethnobotanical publications. Additionally in Poland the detailed ethnobotanical surveys of Rostafiński and the Polish Ethnographic Atlas, brought incredibly detailed material which has no comparison in any other country in the world in terms of its historic and geographical scope.

In both countries a limited number of spices was used, as both cultures can be classified as *herbophobic* as defined by Łuczaj, 2008b, in contrast to *herbophilous cultures* such as those of Italy and Eastern Asia. This avoidance of greens was well reflected by the Slovak botanist Holuby (1872): “Nemcom zelina, Maďarom slanina, a Slovákovi kaša s mliekom”.

Appendix 1. Wild spice plants used in Poland in the XIX and XX century according to ethnographic sources summarized by Łuczaj & Szymański (2007); Łuczaj (2008a, 2008b, 2010a, 2010b).

1. *Carum carvi* L. – kminek, kmin, anyżek, soups, bread, widely used, collected from the wild, now mainly cultivated.

2. *Armoracia rusticana* P. Gaertn., B. Mey & Scherb. – chrzan, krzan, roots, widely used as meat, beetroot condiment, also grated with boiled eggs.
3. *Ribes nigrum* L. – czarna porzeczka, smrodynia, leaves, spice of lactofermented cucumber, mainly from cultivated plants though wild ones were used as well.
4. *Mentha arvensis* L. – mięta, mięta, shoots and leaves – for soups and dumpling filling, mainly in S and E Poland, not often.
5. *Mentha longifolia* (L.) Hudson – mięta końska, shoots and leaves for soups and dumpling filling, mainly in S and E Poland, not often.
6. *Thymus pulegioides* L. – macierzanka, shoots and leaves – for soups and dumpling filling, very rarely.
7. *Thymus serpyllum* L. – macierzanka, shoots and leaves – for soups and dumpling filling, very rarely.
8. *Allium ursinum* L. – dziki czosnek, czosnek niedźwiedzi, roots once used as spice for meat, in one village in the Carpathians; now leaves are, rarely, added to some dishes (e.g. salads) as a new fashion, mainly in the Carpathians.
9. *Glechoma hederacea* L. s.l. – bluszcz, kudrón, kondratek, kurdybanek, kocimunda, leaves used to be an important spice for soups, in S and central Poland, now no longer used.
10. *Juniperus communis* L. – jałowiec, pseudofruits, for meat, sauerkraut, sausages, beer.
11. *Nigella* sp. – czarnuszka, seeds – bread spice, wild seeds used extremely rarely, recorded in one locality in central Poland.
12. *Quercus* spp. leaves – commonly used as a spice for lacto-fermented cucumbers.
13. *Achillea millefolium* L. – krwawnik, once sometimes used as a spice in the Western Carpathians.
14. *Galium odoratum* (L.) Scop. – waldmeister, in the past as a spice of deserts in Pisz (NE Poland).

Appendix. 2 Wild plants spice plants used in Slovakia in the XIX and XX century according to ethnographic sources.

1. *Armoracia rusticana* L. – chren, roots used as meat condiment (Markuš 1961).
2. *Allium scorodoprasum* L. – divý česnek, used instead of garlic (Holuby, 1891).
4. *Carum carvi* L. – rasca, dried, probably as spice (Markuš, 1974; Slavkovský, 1995).
5. *Glechoma hederacea* L. and *G. hirsuta* Waldst. & Kit. – kocurovo vajca, kocurovo jajca, kocurovo jajička, nádešník, leaves added as spice for boiled cereals and soups, very commonly until the beginning of the 20th century (Holuby, 1891; Markuš, 1961, 1974, 1985; Šipka, 1985; Slavkovský, 1995).
6. *Madra* – *Nepeta* according to Markuš, 1985, and mača mádra – *Anthriscus cerefolium* L. according to Markuš (1974), who distinguished a wild and a cultivated form, madra shoots added to dishes; taxonomic position of madra/mača mádra requires clarification, it may concern wild species e.g. *Anthriscus nitida* or *A. sylvestris*.
7. *Melissa* [not wild] (more probably the wild *Origanum vulgare*?) – lebitka – green/flowering shoots added to dishes (Markuš, 1985).
8. *Mentha* – mjata, green/flowering shoots added to dishes (Markuš, 1985) [it is not certain if the wild species was used].
9. *Poterium sanguisorba* L. – no name given, leaves added to soups (Holuby, 1891).
10. *Tanacetum vulgare* L. – bofačkovo žilja, green/flowering shoots added to dishes (Markuš, 1985), e.g. as spice of egg dishes (Šipka, 1985).
11. *Thymus* sp. (probably the commonest species – *Thymus pulegioides* L.) – materina duška, green/flowering shoots added to dishes (Markuš, 1985).

Conclusions

Similar plants were used as spices in Poland and Slovakia. In both countries a very limited number of species was used. Some species ceased to be utilised, particularly *Glechoma hederacea*, which used to be an important ingredient of soups in both countries.

Súhrn

Cieľom porovnávania etnografických zdrojov z Poľska a Slovenska bolo nájsť tradične využívané divo rastúce koreniny. V Poľsku bol nájdených 14 a na Slovensku 11 druhov. V oboch krajinách sa používalo iba niekoľko veľmi podobných druhov (napr. *Armoracia rusticana*, *Carum carvi*, *Mentha*). Na začiatku 20. storočia sa niektoré druhy prestali pridávať do jedál napr. *Glechoma hederacea*. Obavy s používania divých korenín v Poľsku a na Slovensku môžu byť pripísané všeobecnému vyhýbaniu sa divých zelených listov (okrem obdobia krajného nedostatku) a aromatických rastlín v kuchyni oboch krajín. Ide o fenomén, ktorý môže byť klasifikovaný ako herbofóbia.

Kľúčové slová: etnobotanika, koreniny, *Glechoma hederacea*, herbofóbia

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