



ULST Timisoara  
**Multidisciplinary Conference on  
Sustainable Development**  
15-16 May 2025



## DELIGHTS FROM GRANDMA'S NOTEBOOK: AN INTROSPECTIVE LOOK AT DESSERTS FROM THE '80s AND '90s

ANCA MIHAELA DICU<sup>1</sup>, MARIANA RAMONA CIOLAC<sup>2</sup>, RAMONA BACTER<sup>3</sup>,  
LUMINITA PIRVULESCU<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>"Aurel Vlaicu" University from Arad, Faculty of Food Engineering, Turism and Environmental Protection, Arad,

<sup>2</sup>University of Life Sciences "King Mihai I" from Timisoara, Faculty of Management and Rural Tourism, Timisoara,

<sup>3</sup>University of Oradea, Faculty of Environmental Protection, Oradea

**Abstract:** The gastronomic tradition is a profound expression of cultural identity, reflecting the values, history, and lifestyle of a community. Through the preservation and transmission of recipes and culinary techniques across generations, food becomes not only nourishment but also a living archive of shared memory. Culinary art, as a manifestation of creativity and mastery, transforms cooking into a multisensory and aesthetic experience, where ingredients, textures, and flavors interact to tell stories of place and time.

Cultural and historical influences have significantly shaped the evolution of cuisine, leading to the emergence of distinctive flavor profiles, regional variations, and innovative methods. Trade, migration, and cross-cultural exchange have enriched local culinary landscapes, blending tradition with novelty.

In this context, the grandmother's dessert notebook stands as a tangible testimony of familial and regional heritage. Hand-written and lovingly preserved, it encapsulates the essence of homemade desserts—simple, heartfelt, and rooted in time-honored practices. These recipes continue to inspire modern reinterpretations, merging authenticity with contemporary tastes. The act of revisiting such traditions not only honors the past but also bridges generations, ensuring that the cultural and emotional value of food remains vibrant in today's dynamic culinary world.

### • Introduction

The Transylvanian region of Arad-Crişana is notable for its complex ethnic and cultural mix, which has generated, over the centuries, a remarkable cuisine. The ethnic diversity – including Romanian, Hungarian, German (Swabian), Serbian and Jewish communities – has led to the construction of a gastronomic matrix in which the influences are significant. In this sense, traditional local desserts – such as “dobos”, bejgli, “gomboti”, “linzer”, but also puff pastry cakes, sponge cake, horn-shaped cookie or Lenten cakes – reflect a cross-border and multiethnic food culture. Many writings and testimonies about the dishes that recommend, tell and characterize the specificities and local customs of each region. With largely Austro-Hungarian influences, with the participation of a mix of flavorful ingredients, the gastronomy of Transylvania is considered one of the greatest achievements of culinary art.

### • Material and method

In this study, the authors consulted a bibliography consisting of various publications, monographs, and an old recipe book. The methodology of the article combines standard research techniques and methods: documentation, analysis and synthesis, and formulation of conclusions.

In the context of cultural globalization and accelerated digitization of everyday practices, handwritten recipe notebooks remain an underexplored but extremely valuable documentary corpus for understanding regional and family gastronomic heritage. This work aims to analyze, from a cultural-gastronomic perspective, the specific desserts of the 1980-1990 decades, as they were retained and transmitted through family recipes, especially in the Arad-Crisana area. The aim is thus to reconstitute a gustatory universe situated between tradition, adaptation and affective memory

### • Results and discussions

Grandma Pia Pia's cake notebook .... a dedicated teacher of her time, is a testament to the devotion to tradition. Each page is a tribute to a culinary heritage that has passed from hand to hand, from heart to heart, from one generation to the next. It is a treasure that preserves not only the recipes, but also the values that guided her grandmother: respect for family customs, for the way in which each cake can become a tangible link between past and present.

**Pia's biscuits.** It's a homemade cake with soft dough made with flour, eggs beaten with sugar, vanilla and lemon zest, then kneaded with butter or lard, plus cream for smoothness. Cut out little figurines from the dough, bake and stick them two by two with margarine. Decorate with beaten egg white, sugar, nuts or chocolate icing. Fragrant, fragrant and slightly crunchy, they are ideal for festive platters or everyday sweets.



Figure 1 Pia's biscuits



**Lemon cake.** It is a traditional cake with tender sheets, baked individually, then glued with apricot jam and filled with a fine meringue and butter cream, flavored with lemon. The dough is made from flour, fat, sugar, egg yolks and milk, and the cream combines steamed egg whites with sugar and foamy rubbed butter. It is dusted with sugar or glazed with cocoa and left to cool to soften. (figure 2)



Figure 2 Lemon cake



Figure 3 White "cremes".



**White "cremes".** It is a traditional cake with tender sheets, made from a dough kneaded from flour, lard, eggs, sugar and milk or cream, for extra tenderness. The custard is prepared from boiled milk with flour, to which, after cooling, foamy butter rubbed with sugar and vanilla sugar is added. The sheets are filled one at a time, and the cake is left in the cold until the next day, when it becomes tender and can be cut into equal portions. (figure 3)

**Wonderful cake.** The cake is prepared from a dough made from flour rubbed with lard, whole eggs, to which honey melted with sugar is added, for a sweet and aromatic taste. The kneaded dough is divided into 5 equal parts, each part being stretched into thin sheets and baked on the back of the pan. The cream is a fine combination of sour cream, ground nuts, vanilla sugar and lemon zest, which is enriched with sour cherry jam. (figure 4)



Figure 4 Wonderful cake



Figure 5 Maria cake



**Maria cake.** For this cake, egg yolks are mixed with fat, powdered sugar and milk, and then flour and baking powder are added. The resulting dough is divided into two parts, and cocoa is added to one of them. Both sheets are baked together, on the back of the tray, until golden. After the sheets have cooled, they are covered with a mixture of ground nuts, jam and sugar. On top of this layer, a steamed egg white is added with sugar, and finally, a milk chocolate glaze is added, which is boiled over low heat. After the glaze cools, it is spread evenly on the beaten egg white, creating a glossy layer. (figure 5)

### • Conclusions

The studied notebook is not just a simple notebook, it is considered a true altar of tastes, a place where traditions are not only noted, but also live, to be passed on. Each recipe carries with it not only the ingredients, but also the stories, laughter and memories of a family that are found in each dessert. Thus, "that notebook" of grandma's is more than just a culinary guide - it is a true link in a priceless tradition, in which each cake is a symbol of the bond between generations, an act of love and respect for the past.