

## **Polish *meibutsu* - famous things from Poland: sweets.**

What is Poland really famous for? What souvenirs should you bring if you visited Poland? What is Poland's *meibutsu*, or literally in Japanese *famous thing*? The word *meibutsu* can mean anything a country, region, or a town is famous for- from typical food to folk art. So what about Poland? A lot of people will say: Poland is famous for amber, vodka, or pierogi, but that's not all. Everyone with a sweet tooth will also find something delicious for sure, so let me introduce famous Polish sweets.

### **1. Pierniki toruńskie**

The iconic Polish gingerbread cookies, originated in the city of Toruń, the home to famous astronomer Nicolas Copernicus. Traditional Toruń gingerbread cookies have been produced since the Middle Ages. They are made of flour, milk, honey and spices including ginger, cinnamon and pepper. Pierniki come in few different variations, the most popular ones are heart-shaped and covered in dark chocolate, others are stuffed with plum marmalade, or sugar glazed. Perhaps it is their spicy distinctive taste and smell, very different from the traditional Japanese sweets, that made them popular in Japan. In 2017 a group of pierniki fans established Japanese Pierniki Association.

### **2. Krówki**

Krówki are a semi-soft polish fudge made of milk, caramel and butter. It is said they were first produced in 1929 by Feliks Pomorski, but nowadays they are many brands and Krówki are sold around the world. Krówki should be hard and crispy on the outside, but more soft and a little bit fluid inside. The name *Krówka* literally means "little cow" and the candy is usually wrapped in white-and-yellow paper with a cow picture. Krówki are all-time favorite Polish sweet, definitely "No.1" among members from the Sport Promotion Team in Kaminoyama I work with.

### **3. Ptasie mleczko**

Ptasie mleczko is a light and fluffy marshmallow covered with chocolate. It was first produced in 1936 by the Wedel chocolate company. The name, which in Polish means "*Bird's Milk*", is said to be first used by the company's owner – Jan Wedel after he tried similar delicacy during his trip to Paris and compared it to "birds milk", meaning something like *rare as hen's teeth* and delicious. Originally, Ptasie Mleczko was made only in vanilla flavor but today you can buy lemon, or caramel Ptasie Mleczko as well. It is one of the most frequently purchased souvenirs from Poland.

#### **4, Śliwki w czekoladzie**

It's a chocolate-covered sweet which entire filling is a dried plum. This delicacy has a unique sour-sweet taste, one of the most typically Polish. I often buy it as a gift for my foreign friends. Plums are widely used in Polish cuisine not only to make sweets and preserves, it's also used as a dumpling filling, or to make drinks, or even meat sauces.

#### **5, Prince Polo**

Prince Polo is a bar legendary in Poland. It's chocolate-covered with four layers of wafer joined by three layers of chocolate-flavored filling. You can buy it everywhere – at the newsagents at the station, small convenience stores, in supermarkets, and it's easily identifiable by its metallic gold-colored wrapper. Prince Polo was introduced in 1955, during the early years of the Polish People's Republic. Besides the so called *classic* chocolate version of Prince Polo, new flavors were introduced, including peanut, and coconut.

#### **6, Michałki**

Besides Krówki, Michałki have been an all-time favorite sweet for few generations of Poles. Michałki have a cuboid shape with moist chocolate-hazelnut filling with tiny crunchy peanut bits inside. They are produced since 1960-ties. The name – Michałki – is an affectionate variation of popular Polish name Michał (although Michałki is the Plural of Michałek). It is said that the candy was named after the son of the director of chocolate company where it was first made.

#### **7. Cukierki pudrowe**

These colorful candies have accompanied few generations of Poles and for many are the taste of their childhood. Covered with a thin layer of sugar powder they are super sweet, and quite hard at first. They come in different colors, shapes and tastes, such as lemon, orange, raspberry and many others.

#### **8. Delicje**

Delicje are yet another Polish trademark among sweets. They are rounded soft biscuit cookies with a fruit jelly covered with dark chocolate. They have been produced since 1970s. Initially the jelly was orange-flavored, but nowadays Delicje are available in few additional flavors like cherry, raspberry, blueberry and apricot.

#### **9. Jeżyki**

Jeżyki are one of the most recognized and popular cookies on the market. These crispy biscuits

covered in chocolate conceal a wealth of ingredients, such as caramel, dried fruit and nuts. The name *Jeżyki* means "*little hedgehogs*" in Polish which fits very well the shape of the cookies with all the rich ingredients jutting out like hedgehog needles from the chocolate.

#### **10. Ciepłe lody**

Don't be fooled by the name – this special delicacy, has not much to do with ice cream. It's a sweet fluffy egg white-based mousse topped with chocolate squeezed in a waffle cone used for soft ice-creams, thus the name: *warm ice cream*. They were very popular dessert in People's Republic of Poland but can still be found in shops around the country. Combination of a sweet mousse with a chocolate sauce is quite high in calories so be careful!

That's a wrap for today! Would you fancy some Polish sweets? They certainly are different than any typical Japanese sweets, such as for example *mochi*, but I can ensure you that they go very well with bitter Japanese green tea, checked it myself many times! Some of the sweets from the list are available online in Japan. Hope you will have a try!

Until next time!

Hanna