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Deliverable N° DT 2.2.1 (H)

Title: storyline on theme 13:
Immaterial Heritage

Storyline: “Vlaai/Flan”

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Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Innovation,
Digitalisierung und Energie
des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen



provincie limburg



Proof of deliverable:

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Theme: Immaterial Heritage

Storyline: Vlaai/ Flan

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Storyline:	Vlaai/Flan
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Version + date:	Definitief 22-11-2021

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Sweet euregional 'pies'

1. Introduction

Immaterial heritage has also a culinary aspect. Various food has a World heritage status. In the Euregio Meuse-Rhine there is one very famous food that is particular for special festivities: flan!

2. Historical information

According to a legend, the origin of flan comes from the Germanic tribes. They baked bread by heating a stone and smearing it with a fat pulp of flour. The stone was first smeared with fat so the pulp would not coat. Honey or fruit juice was poured on it. They called this pastry “vladel”. A direct historical or archaeological source for this legend is lacking.

It is more likely that flan originated at the medieval cloisters. So called “sacrifice bread” were made in an oven called “vladehus”. Those flans were, after they were consecrated by priests, distributed on Easter Sunday. There are in several places in Europe flan processions around Eastern. The flan was covered with fruit juice, honey or figs from the cloister orchard. Flans were only eaten at certain holidays. Apart from Eastern, the name day of the local Saint was the day they served different flans. Those days coincided with the village fair, where there was already abundant food and drinks.

3. Different perspectives

The word flan derives from “ulade” or “vlade”: a flat cake. In old high German one knows the word “flado” or “flathe” as origin form of the recent word Fladen. The region Aachen/ Jülich still uses the word Fladen. People also call Fladen “Taart” (Prummetaart is for example plum flan) or “Gitterkuchen”. Gitterkuchen or Riemkestaat has this name because of the dough strips on top of the flan. In the Netherlands and in the Dutch speaking part of Belgium we use the name “vlaai”. In Wallonia flan is usually called “Tarte”. Famous are Tarte aux riz, tarte aux sucre or tarte aux cereies. Sometimes the name “Flamitche” is used, which is an old-fashioned name.

Abroad we also find flan or variations of it in for example Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France and Belgium. Flans are called “Flecke” in Austria and in other places “Flarren”, “Flärre” or “Platz”. In Switzerland, flan is since memory times known as the Eastern pastry and Eastern Sunday is also known in various cantons as “FladenSuntig” (Flan Sunday).



Vlaaien/Flans

4. Common Euregional experience

What makes a flan a flan? And how are they baked?

Baking a flan was a very labour-intensive and accurate activity. The dough from the flan was worked by hand in wooden troughs. The dough contains of flower with warm milk, eggs, salt, sugar and yeast. Then the filling of the flan is prepared: cherries were stoned, fruit was thickend, rice boiled (with cinnamon) and pudding made. When the dough had risen, the flan was rolled out with a rolling pin. The flan forms, heavy metal forms with a diameter of 27 to 32 centimetres, were fattened with oil and then the dough was placed inside. The rolling out was a very accurate activity because the dough can't be too thin or too thick. A thin flan will not come out of the form and too thick will not be in the right ratio with the filling. Flan dough is a kind of bread dough and is much more airy then cake dough. With a fork, the dough is pitched and after all the flans have been risen, the filling is put on. Flans are usually the last to be put in the oven, after the bread. The rest heat of the oven is

sufficient to bake the flans fast. After they have been taken out of the oven, they have to cool down and after that stored in a cool cellar. When the flans are put on the table to eat, they will be sprinkled with sugar powder. Whipped cream is traditionally not supposed to be on the flan, but is nowadays often done. The fruit flans are put on the table first, later on the rice and butter flan, and finally the flan with the dough strips put over them diagonally. Flan is cut in 6 to 8 pieces. Every baker bakes his flan in his own way and there are a lot of varieties. There is for example a significant difference between a rice flan from Limburg or from Liège. The ones from Liège have a gold-like shine, they are smaller, have eggs in the rice filling and they have a bit sweeter taste. Limburg rice flan is bigger and a kind of pale shine. In addition, the Fladen in Germany are also smaller. They have a diameter of approximately 20 cm. The bottom of a fruit flan is a bit thicker than the bottom of a rice flan.

Special flans:

During lent it was not a habit to eat flan with one exception: lent flan. This is black prune flan, which has a strong tendency to go mouldy. After lent, that is to say on Easter Sunday, white Easter flan was eaten, that's a rice flan. This is a typical Limburg tradition. Rice flan is well known in the region around Verviers (Belgium) and is called tarte aux riz or "blank dorêye" (white flan). The "Seigneurie de la Vervi-riz", a fellowship of connoisseurs, guards the recipe of this flan. In Belgian Limburg and Germany, the rice flan can be garnished with cherries and other red fruit.

Another special flan is "Schwatze Flaam". This pear flan or black flan is a culinary specialty of the western Rhineland up to the river Meuse, The Hunsrück. In the region Eschweiler, Eupen and Limbourg it is also known as "Beerdigungskuchen" (funeral flan), because they are only served at funerals. The filling is a compote of dried Bergamot-pears. After the dried pears have been soaked for a whole night in water, they are cooked and made into a black compote. Bergamot pears become unfortunately very rare and that means that the original "Schwatze Flaam" is disappearing as a flan. That is also the reason sometimes apples and prunes or a combination of those are used as a filling.

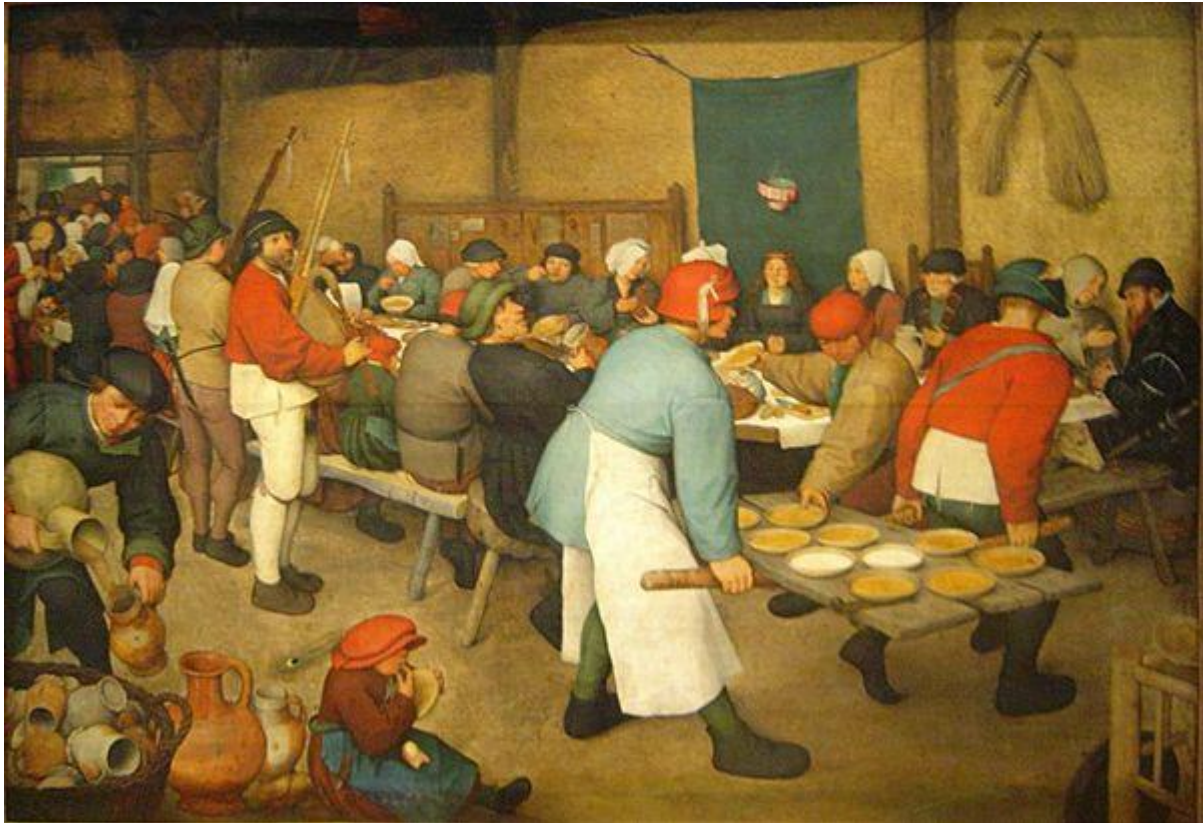


"Schwatze Flaam"

In the north of Belgium and Dutch Limburg an almost identical old-fashioned flan is made: “Bakkemoezevlaai”. This flan uses also preferably Bergamot pears as a filling, although here also Conference- pears are used instead. This flan is not typical for funerals but is eaten most of the time on Sundays. Some say that these “bakkemoezevlaai’ is already to be seen on the paintings of Pieter Brueghel de Oude. The name “bakkemoeze” comes from the fact that the dried pears are baked in an oven where they shrivel up, and they look like baked mice (bakke moeze)!



Dried pears are baked in an oven where they shrivel up, and they look like baked mice (bakke moeze)



5. Where to visit and storyline products:

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Flan is available in the very best bakery stores in the EMR. Especially the flan made in a traditional way are of high quality. The industrial made flans are not bad but just not as good as the traditional ones. If you want to make your own flan, then the bakery store in Maastricht called De Bischopsmolen is recommended!

6. Literature

Marleen Willebrands, De Verstandige Kok, de rijke keuken van de Gouden eeuw. Bussum 2006



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