

Adrianna Słabińska

Culinary lexis in Croatian proverbs, adages, idioms, songs, and jargon and dialectal forms

Dishes and foodstuffs, the manner of their preparation, complexity, taste and appearance are a part of culture and tradition which are created by people feasting at the table. While discussing various everyday issues, they also talk about food – they praise it, complain about it and criticise it. Eating meals with friends and family both in everyday situations and on special occasions creates a special mood. It is an opportunity for confessions, giving advice, telling jokes, memories and reflections about life. Various sayings and proverbs, which enrich the culture of a given country or region, are brought to life. Croatia is not an exception in this regard. In the Croatian language there are many proverbs and adages connected with local culinary traditions. Some of them are known widely throughout the country, others only in certain territories. Numerous proverbs are known throughout Croatia, albeit with a slightly changed imagery.

Proverbs are a form of expression that enriches a language on its various planes. [Frequently in a rhyming form, expressing some dictum, genral thought derived from literary sources.]¹ "Często w formie wierszowanej, wyrażające jakąś sentencję, myśl ogólną pochodzącą ze źródeł literackich." (Sobol, 1997, p. 678). The definition included

¹ If not stated otherwise, all the translations in square brackets are done by the translator (Joanna Modzelewska-Jankowiak). The English versions of proverbs, sayings, etc. are translated from the Polish versions written by the author.

in *Praktyczny słownik terminów literackich* states further that proverbs express universal truths, often characterised by a rhythm and rhyme (Sułek, 2004). [In turn an adage is a type of a proverb, a dictum] "Z kolei porzekadło to rodzaj przysłowia, sentencja" (Sobol, 1997, p. 678). It is worth mentioning that also idiomatic expressions form certain [fixed, lexicalised expressions] "stałe, zleksykalizowane zwroty" (Petrozolin-Skowrońska, 1993), which exist and are used in both a dialect and a literary language. According to the definition, minor differences appear between a saying and an adage. A saying may be known only to certain circles, is not common and so well-known as a proverb or an adage. On the other hand, it is important to explain what connects the above mentioned structures with idioms: it is, to some extent, the metaphorical nature of meanings as well as the scope of using them and their genesis. Nevertheless, proverbs, adages and sayings fall into broadly defined phraseology.

Proverbs and adages presented in this article are taken from the dictionary by Josip Kekez, a renowned Croatian paremiologist (Kekez, 1996). It should be stressed that this material is selected, and in online dictionaries there are more other structures which will not be discussed here. Each Croatian phrase is accompanied by its English translation, which clarifies the meaning of the whole structure. Further in the paper regional proverbs and songs are described, which illustrate the diversity of Croatian dialects. In addition, other language variants are quoted, such as jargon terms and foreign lexis in cuisine vocabulary so as to present rich vocabulary and its extraordinary variety.

In the encountered proverbs a few categories can be identified: first – the largest one, related to bread and types of cakes, the second one – connected with fish, the third category concerns soups, the fourth one – tells about wine, the fifth one – about roast meat. The criterion of selecting individual groups was an attempt to systematise the types of food and beverages.

Bread and cakes

The exceptional value of bread, which is an essential element of food, is reflected in numerous Croatian proverbs, saying that a person in the event of hunger would pull bread out of fire, i.e. would do everything to get it: *Gladna ruka kruh iz ognja vodi* – a hungry hand will even pull bread out of fire. As Regina Wyżkiewicz-Maksimow writes, [in many proverbs bread is a metonymy of indispensable food, of any food, and,

finally, any goods and values] "w wielu przysłowjach chleb jest metonimią pokarmu niezbędnego, wszelkiego pokarmu, a w końcu wszelakich dóbr i wszelakich wartości" (Wyżkiewicz-Maksimow, 2012, p. 158), e.g. *Bog sveti! Da bi još kruha imel* (Holy God, if only I had bread at least).

The maxim *Tko kruh kupuje, tri kuće hrani* (who buys bread, feeds three houses) in a logical way means that a person buying bread feeds three houses at the same time: baker's, seller's, and his or her own.

Many proverbs clearly highlight the value of bread which is associated with a friend and the most valuable gift – it is obtained with great effort, earned by the sweat of one's brow. Here we should mention: *Kruh je najbolji pajdaš* (bread is the best friend); *Bez orača i zdrava kopača ne bi bilo kruha ni kolača* (without a ploughman and a healthy digger there will be neither bread nor cake); *u kovača crne ruke a bijela pogača* (a blacksmith has got black hands and white bread). Even tears do not spoil its taste: *I suze su s kruhom dobre* (even tears are good with bread). The uniqueness of bread is reflected in the proverb: *Sve je mana, a hljeb je hrana* (everything tantalises but bread feeds).

The maxim known in many languages, originating from the text of the Gospel, is: *Ne žive čovik samo od kruha* (Man shall not live on bread alone). In the Croatian variant of the biblical proverb, the dialectal impact is visible, the noun *čovik* is written in the Ikavian dialect, in which "ě" – jat' comes from the Proto-Slavic language. While in the standard Croatian language (the Shtokavian dialect) it is transformed into "i". The entire quotation refers to the situations when Jesus is tempted by the devil. Satan is trying to persuade the Messiah, who has fasted for forty days and forty nights, to turn stones into bread, and Jesus replies: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God"².

Another adage relating to baking says that persistent endeavours allow you to achieve the long-awaited goal: *Zrno do zrna pogača, kamen po kamen palača* (several grains produce a cake, several stones produce a palace). The message of the proverb: *Sladi gladnu ječmenik negli situ pšeničnik* (for a hungry person rye bread is sweeter than wheat bread for a satiated person) is the conviction that a hungry person will settle for each type of bread. The mentioned situation indicates that the most important value

² See <http://biblehub.com/matthew/4-4.htm> (J.M.J.)

is the survival, and what we eat depends on our financial situation. In times of poverty, crop failure or war people were satisfied even with a small "slice of bread".

In the standard Croatian language (the Shtokavian dialect) there are also comparative idioms, the component of which is bread. They all juxtapose certain elements of reality with bread. Emphasising its importance, weight and indispensability in human life, e.g. *potreban kao kruh* (as necessary as bread) and *dobar kao kruh* (as good as bread), they add point to the situation when having only bread on the table was the symbol of satisfying basic human needs. There are also negative associations with modest life as *živjeti o suhu kruhu i o vodi* (live on dry bread and water). A flat thin pancake (*crêpe*) became the base of the idiomatic expression *spljošan kao palačinka* (as flat as a pancake) and *spljoštiti kao palačinku* (to flatten as a pancake).

Fish

The proverb *Fratar van ćelije, riba je van mora* (a monk out of the cell, a fish out of the sea) draws our attention to the fact that both a monk and a fish feel the best in their environments: in water and in the cell.

In the Croatian language there is also the simile *suh kao bakalar*, i.e. *as dry as a cod*, which means being as dry as a bone.

Soups

The proverb *Od stare kokoši dobra je juha* (soup made from an old hen is good) says that the broth made from an old hen is thicker and tastier. Like wine – the older, the better. In the metaphorical contemporary language we can talk about a woman in a similar manner – the maturer, the more beautiful. The proverb can also indicate the curative power of broth in which housewives believed. A table laden with food, plenty of food is suggested in the saying: *badanj juhe, tovar mesa* (a barrel of soup, a pile of meat). Idioms precisely express situations in life, e.g. *mariti za koga, za što kao za fratarsku čorbu* (I quote after Wyzkiewicz-Maksimow in Polish: *dbać o kogoś jak o klasztorną, postną zupę*; which means: to take care of someone like for a monastic fasting soup, i.e. not care). This is a quotation from the work by August Šenoa, and the structure allows you

to transform its content. The correspondent Polish idiom is: "coś kogoś obchodzi jak zeszłoroczny śnieg" (English equivalent: I don't care a jot about it – or: it is as exciting as watching paint dry).

Wine

The value of friendship, honour, respect, reliability and loyalty is emphasised in numerous Croatian proverbs, e.g. *drži se starog vina i starog prijatelja* (keep together with old wine and an old friend). The sense and aim of human life is summed up by the adage: *Četere su stvare bolje nego more: ulje, vino, mornar i prijatelj* (four things are better than the sea: oil, wine, a sailor and a friend). In turn, the saying *Vino leži, a rakija viče* (wine is lying and rakija is screaming) indicates the recommended preparation and consumption time of these two most popular alcoholic beverages in Croatia. Wine has to stay for appropriate time in a cellar, and rakija is ready for drinking just after distillation.

In Croatia in particular cool drinks are popular: *bevanda* and *špricer*, which perfectly quench thirst and therefore they are mentioned in the similes: *hladan kao špricer* (as cool as *špricer*). It is worth stressing that this is a slang expression. The Polish equivalent would be "zimny jak głaz" (as cold as stone; English equivalent: as cool as a cucumber) in relation to the nature of a person.

Meat

The proverb *Nema tice do prasice* (no bird is better as a piglet) in a humorous and bantering announces that people like meat. Roast suckling pig is one of the most popular dishes of the Balkan cuisine. Large piglets are prepared on a spit or fire at various ceremonies, during weddings and feasts. The popularity of the above saying is so great that new adages are formed on the basis of it, such as:

Daj Ti meni odojka, a ne batak (give me a cutlet and not a chicken's thigh) or *nema tice do slavonske kobasice* (no bird is better than a Slavonic sausage).

Apart from proverbs, the Croatian language knows adages and sayings used on small areas, in dialects and subdialects, and therefore dialect forms are often present in them.

Regional proverbs

In Dalmatia folk adages and sayings are popular, often embroidered on tapestries adorning walls of a kitchen. They play the role of humorous or sometimes seriously formulated pieces of advice, cautions and words of wisdom which are to help women, wives to create pleasant atmosphere through good cuisine, i.e. with tasty dishes served at the right time. They were and still are also the praise for excellent housewives who have perfectly mastered the culinary art. Here they are:

Kuvarice zlato moje, Tebe hvali jelo tvoje (Little cook, my dear, your victuals praise you), (Puharić, 2008, pp. 397–410); *objed skuhan u čas pravi to muž voli to muž slavi* (dinner given on time, so the husband loves, so the husband praises); *kuharice manje zbori da ti ručak ne zagori* (little cook, talk less and don't burn the dinner); *za udaju nije spremna koja ne zna spremat jela* (this one is not ready to get married who can't prepare food).

The catchphrases presented above originate from the regions where the Chakavian dialect is used. They emphasise the specific characteristics of this variant of the language, used, among others, in western Croatia: in Istria, in Kvarner, in Gorski Kotar, in the Kupa valley to the north of Karlovac, in northern Lika, the Kordun, and on the coast and on the islands of Dalmatia. One of the fundamental differences between dialects – Shtokavian and Chakavian – is the loss of "h" in the pronunciation, which in Dalmatia is equal to "v", e.g. *kuvarice* instead of *kuharice*, *suv* instead of *suh*, etc. (Słabińska, 2013, p. 41).

The feature of maxims and catchphrases on the subject of cooking is their local nature, application of rhymes and presenting old prejudices and customs associated with the duties of a woman, including running a household.

Also on the island of Korčula there is a large amount of catchphrases and interesting dialectal names which show their interculturalism, e.g. *cukora de orza* (*mali bomboni* – small sweets). According to tradition, these are sweets kept in a wooden case. This term comes from the local dialect used by local *none*, i.e. "ours" (Hajdić, 2008, p. 312).

The culinary lexis also contains the features of local speech. An example of this dialect are lexemes listed in the work by Marija Hajdić *U kuhinji i za stolom korčulanske građanske obitelji*. The author lists such examples as *pasabrod* (dish with a deep bottom, most often used to prepare a recipe for *mramona jaja*), *bronzin* (bronze cauldron), *lavadura* (small bread), *škovacjera* (basket), *kurkuma* (*curry*), *slatko od pira* (sweet cake from

potatoes), *dešpik* (lavender), *lajanjar* (a rolling pin), *semita* (dish for cooking), *škancija* (small wooden shelf for dishes). In the region of Korčula the vocabulary has been a social characteristic for a long time, and understanding or ignorance of it have been treated as a visible factor of the category "a fellow" or "a stranger" (Hajdić, 2008, p. 312).

Sayings related to the preparation of dishes, cooking and serving on table have become the basis of not only the formulation of words of wisdom, the instructions for perfect housewives, but also the universal reflections. On the island of Korčula we can hear, e.g.: *Ni ljubav juha od hobotnice* (love is not a soup from octopus) (Hajdić, 2008, p. 312). In the author's opinion, love is metaphorically compared to a soup from octopus, which in itself has not got many positive qualities. In contrast to it, love is precious and should be cherished. According to the interpretation of the very proverb, a soup may resemble the feeling of changing love, but with the comment that it is not as colourful and banal as an octopus. In the saying: *dvi salse, malo mesa* (two sauces, little meat) the criticism of poor life on the island is visible, due to a disproportionate combination of major components of a dish: two sauces, little meat. The proverb *One noge od prašćića što su ostale od Božića, boje da ih nami date, nego da ih maška ukrade* (these pig's trotters that are left after Christmas, should rather be given to somebody than stolen by the cat), the conviction shared by all good housewives that it is better to eat something or give it to someone (hungry, needful) than to wait until a cat eats it. In addition, the change of consonant "č" to "š" in the word *maška*, characteristic for the Chakavian dialect, is worth mentioning.

During carnival time in the vicinity of Virotvica songs are popular that can be heard during frying doughnuts or a kind of angel wings (Pl: chrust, faworki), called here *kovrtanji* (*uštipici*), e.g.: *Za konopje i za lan, I za masni kovrtanj* (For hemp and flax, and a fatty doughnut) (Hajdić, 2008, p. 312). They are a line taken from folk songs. This connects them with other idiomatic expressions. Moreover, on St Martin's day people sing carols, humming: *Za ne povrć zakon stari blagovat će i lojenice...* (old law not for vegetables, they will also eat lojenice). The lexeme *lojenica* is a regional name of a cake prepared on *Martinje* (Hajdić, 2008, p. 312).

Another region where housewives know catchphrases associated with cooking is Istria – the region of festivals, food and drinks, original and exquisite soups. An important device used in the kitchen is a spoon, which is a symbol of an "ideal tool" allowing you to mix and taste dishes, thus helping achieve a good final result, hence: *Žlica je gospodarica*

dobre kužine (a spoon is the housewife of a good kitchen). The word *kužina* comes from the Latin language – *coquina*, and it became a part of the Croatian vocabulary thanks to Italian influences, and more specifically Venetian influences (Skok, 1971, p. 201). It is observed in particular in the lexis, in culinary and cultural habits of this region.

Another saying is: *Žlica je za stepliti dušu, pirun je za tilo* (a bucket warms up the heart, a fork strengthens the body), which means that soups, i.e. meals eaten with a spoon, warm up the heart as they are delicate and exquisite dishes, and meat, being a proper and heavy meal, sometimes stewed, energises the body. In the above adage the phonetic features that appear e.g. in the lexeme *tilo* (the Ikavian dialect) should be highlighted. It replaced the form of ijekavica – *tijelo*, in another way realising the reflection of the Proto-Slavic "ě". As it can be seen, the vocabulary of folk adages in Istria contains elements of the Italian language, and thus the Latin language, which applies to both lexis and grammar structures.

The last two regional adages express old folk wisdom. The first one: *Povrtna juha, lijek koji traje* (a vegetable soup, a medicine that cures) shows the healing power of a vegetable soup as a remedy for any complaints, and the next one: *Obnovljeno je prijateljstvo poput pogrijane juhe* (the renewed friendship is like a heated soup), transposes the meaning of a saying well-known in Poland: no man ever steps in the same river twice. The cooking vocabulary also expanded the jargon layer of the language, becoming its component which is picturesque and full of vividness.

According to the dictionary by Kopaliński, a jargon is a special variant of a nationwide language, used by individual socio-professional groups, which differs from this language as regards the characteristic vocabulary; this language is spoiled, incorrect, inconsistent with standards (Kopaliński, 1999). Therefore it is a language known to one social group and often becomes a reflection of changes visible in its structure and usage. It can develop without limitation, basing on lexical, conventional and standard forms of a language. Ranko Bugarski claims in the foreword to his book that "pojam žargona živo oscilira od jezika struka do jezika ulice", which means that the concept of jargon vividly oscillates between the language of science and the language of the street (Bugarski, 2006, pp. 7–9).

The presented below words concerning culinary arts are taken from the dictionary of the Croatian jargon by Tomislav Sabljak (Sabljak, 2001). I have divided them into two categories: jargon forms of dishes and their names that have got metaphorical meanings, functioning as jargon terms.

The lexeme '*bira*' (beer) became a part of the jargon as a result of Italian influences. It is interesting that in the Croatian dictionary of 1998 this headword is included, but it is not in the edition of 2006 (Anić, 1998, 2006). Currently the lexeme occurs only in the jargon dictionary. Beer can also be called *hmelj* (its main ingredient). In the jargon caricatured and bantering names of popular alcohols are present, such as *deit – gemišt*, an alcoholic beverage, white wine with sparkling water and *dizel* – an alcoholic drink that is prepared by mixing beer and coca-cola. The lexeme *hrana* – food, according to the dictionary by Sabljak has got many jargon synonyms such as: *hapa, hama – jelo, hrana, has – jelo, hrana, klopa – jelo, hrana, mandža – jelo, hranama, njupa, njupaluk, papica, žder or ždera*. Other dishes are: *hambi, kob(a)ja* – sausage, *krenviršla, hrenovka* – frankfurter, and *koksa, čvrga, zvrčka* – coca-cola. Some names of dishes are distinguished by their vividness, humorous associations, e.g. *čoravi sataraš* – a meatless dish, a stew without meat, so a "blind dish".

Some group of names of the culinary vocabulary is used in the terms created as a result of specific associations, e.g.: *coca* – nice girl; *krem pita, kremšnita, šaumšnita/šampita* – fiat 125 or someone whose father holds a high managerial position; *pogača* – narcotic; *štrudla, savijača* – stout girl, little dumpling; *šufnudli* – small penis.

Interesting examples of regional jargon names are mentioned by Sanja Brbora who analyses the culinary vocabulary. She claims that these names reflect the identity of the specific culture and in their standard form they are affected by foreign patterns as a result of the move to another place of residence and the adoption of new vocabulary, but in their regional forms they remain unchanged (Brbora, 2007, pp. 91–102).

By analysing the culinary vocabulary of Dubrovnik, Split and Zagreb (origin, use/lack of use of the lexis and attributing it to individual social groups), Brbora shows their lexical diversity, abundance of names and the regional identity.

She takes into account the vocabulary of three cities which she compares with the standard form. In the broadcast on radio HR1 the researcher explained why she had chosen these language centres (Brbora, 2007, pp. 91–102). She admits that her own experiences helped her. She was born in Dubrovnik, studied in Zagreb, and currently works in Split, which inspired her to compare the culinary vocabulary in these three cities. Another motive was her willingness to help tourists who visit these cities in large numbers.

The table shows the vocabulary taken from private surveys by Sanja Brbora, published in the book and presented in the broadcast on radio HR1.

Dubrovnik	Split	Zagreb	Standard language
pastiċerija Italian: <i>pasticceria</i>	pašticerija Venetian: <i>pastiziera</i>	cukenpekaraj German: <i>Zuckerbäckerei</i>	slastičarnica
priganica Dalmatian-Romance: <i>ostatak</i>	fritada; fritaja Venetian: <i>fritada; fritaja</i>	ajeršpajz German: <i>Eierspeise</i>	kajgana
sklenica (caklenica)	karafina Venetian: <i>carafina</i>	karafindl (substitute) German: <i>Karaffindel</i> < Italian	staklenka za ulje ili ocat; uljenica
ogrnačić traversa Venetian: <i>traversa</i>	traverša Venetian: <i>traversa</i>	šircl German: <i>Schürze</i>	pregača
pasta Italian: <i>pasta</i>	manistra Venetian: <i>manestra</i> pašta Venetian: <i>pasta</i>	tijesto	tjestenina
salsa Italian: <i>salsa</i> toč šug (and ,sok') Italian: <i>sugo</i>	šalša , Italian; Venetian: <i>salsa</i> toč šug Venetian: <i>sugo</i>	sos German: <i>Sauce</i> (<i>Soße</i>) < French: <i>sauce</i>	umak
polpeta Italian: <i>polpetta</i> or Italian: <i>polpeta</i>	polpeta Venetian: <i>polpeta</i> or Italian: <i>polpetta</i>	faširanac, faširani/-a šnicl/-a prema German: <i>faschieren</i>	kosani odrezak
trlica	lajanjur Venetian/Italian: <i>lazagnol</i>	valjak za tijesto	valjak za tijesto

An interesting point is the inscription on the wall in the restaurant named Dalmacija (photo below) '*Tko pije umrijet će tko ne pije još će prije*' ('who drinks will die, who does not drink – even sooner').



Fig. 1. The table on the wall in the Dalmacija restaurant in Gdynia

The proverb comments ironically on human fate – everyone is going to die whether one drinks or not.

In summary, the comparison of regional names leads to the conclusion that the culinary terminology is diverse, reflects numerous Venetian, Italian and German cultural influences which can be noted in the phonological-morphological and lexical layers of the language. There are names that have different terms in various regions of the country. At the same time, terms concerning cooking change due to differences between social groups, which use a particular language.

The original and most important reason for the lexical dissimilarity are dialectal differences, and the factors of origin and identity are equally important (Lisac, 1998, p. 177). Many forms change, new words enter the language, other are borrowed, neologisms and neosemantisms are created, and other words are falling into disuse.

The aspect of culture stands out against this linguistic background. The analysis of catchphrases, proverbs and jargon forms, which has been carried out, shows a great role of oral tradition in the promotion of culture. Thanks to it the names of regional cuisine, habits and customs related to everyday life survive in our memory. The culinary lexis presents an image of the Croatian cuisine, is the essence of the current culture of food and shows changes in the language as time goes by.

Translated by Joanna Modzelewska-Jankowiak

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The proverbs presented in my article are found in a dictionary by Josip Kekez, a renowned Croatian paremiologist. It is worth noting that they comprise selected material, which does not cover information present in internet dictionaries. Further in the paper I describe regional proverbs and songs, which are an important element presenting the diversity of Croatian dialects. Each Croatian phrase is accompanied by

my Polish translation, which clarifies its meaning. Additionally, I quote other language variants like jargonisms and foreign lexis in culinary vocabulary with a view to present the extraordinary abundance and diversity of Croatian culinary lexis.

Keywords:

jargon form, proverb, saying, idiom, dialect vocabulary, Croatian cuisine

Słownictwo kulinarne w chorwackich przysłowiach, porzekadłach, frazeologizmach, przyśpiewkach, formach żargonalnych i ludowych

Potrawy i artykuły spożywcze, sposób ich sporządzania, złożoność, smak i wygląd są częścią kultury i tradycji, którą tworzą ludzie biesiadujący przy stole. Rozmawiając o różnych codziennych sprawach, mówią też o jedzeniu – chwalą, narzekają czy krytykują. Spożywanie posiłków w gronie rodziny, przyjaciół, zarówno w sytuacji codziennej, jak i uroczystej, tworzy specjalny nastrój. Nadarza się okazja do zwierzeń, porad, żartów, wspomnień i życiowych refleksji. Powstają różne powiedzenia, przysłowia, które wzbogacają kulturę danego kraju czy regionu. Nie inaczej jest w Chorwacji. W języku chorwackim istnieje wiele przysłów i porzekadeł związanych z lokalnymi tradycjami kulinarnymi. Część z nich jest powszechnie znana w całym kraju, niektóre tylko na wybranych obszarach. W całej Chorwacji znane są liczne przysłowia w formie nieco zmienionej w warstwie obrazowej.

Zaprezentowane w niniejszym artykule przysłowia i porzekadła zaczerpnęłam ze zbioru Josipa Kekeza, uznanego paremiologa chorwackiego. Należy wziąć pod uwagę, iż jest to materiał wybrany, a w słownikach internetowych notowane są jeszcze inne formacje, których nie będę tu omawiać. Obok form chorwackich podaję w nawiasach polski ekwiwalent w tłumaczeniu własnym, oddający sens całej konstrukcji. W dalszej części opisuję przysłowia regionalne oraz przyśpiewki, które ilustrują różnorodność dialektów chorwackich. Przytaczam także obecne w chorwackiej leksyce kulinarnej inne formy językowe, jak żargonizmy i elementy zaczerpnięte z innych języków, aby ukazać jej niezwykle różnorodność i bogactwo.

Słowa kluczowe:

forma żargonalna, porzekadło, przysłowie, frazeologizm, słownictwo dialektalne, chorwackie kulinaria