



# A Traditional Polish Easter Basket and Its Contents

**Ś**więconka (shvyen-son-kah) is the traditional blessing of the food to be eaten on Easter Sunday. While the tradition varies from region to region and village to village, it is a tradition dear to the heart of every Pole. Today, this blessing takes place in church on Holy Saturday. All the items are placed in a wicker basket that is sometimes lined with an ornamental cloth or traditional folk fabric. The filled basket is then covered with a linen cloth which should be white, but can have a colorful crocheted or embroidered design. The basket is decorated with sprigs of boxwood (bukszpan), the typical Polish Easter evergreen. "Polish Palms" which are created from dried flowers, can also be used for decoration.

Listed at the right are Polish Easter Foods that are most commonly placed in the Easter Basket for the traditional blessing, along with the symbolism of each item.

We can all enjoy this beautiful tradition. It is a great way to teach new generations of Polish-Americans about our common heritage.



**Bacon - Boczek / Słonina** (boh-chek /swo-nee-nah)  
Symbol of the overabundance of God's mercy on us.

**Bread - Chleb** (h'lehb) Home baked bread, the staff of life.

**Easter Bread - Babka** (bab-kah)  
A special round loaf, made of rich dough and raisins, and decorated with a cross, reminds us of Jesus, the Risen Lord, who, in the Eucharist, is the food of our earthly journey and the true bread of everlasting life.

**Butter - Masło** (mas-wo)  
The butter should be shaped into the figure of a lamb or cross. Dairy products are included to celebrate the end of Lent and the richness of Salvation which flows from the Death and Resurrection of Jesus.

**Candle - Świeca** (sh-veh-tsa)  
The only non-edible item in the basket, the candle symbolizes Jesus, the Life and Light of the World. The candle can be lit during the blessing.

**Cheese - Ser** (sair)  
A symbol to remind Christians of moderation.

**Colored Eggs - Pisanki** (pee-san-key)  
Both colored and uncolored eggs, indicate hope, new life and Resurrection. Because of their special meaning, it is fitting that the eggs to be blessed are decorated with symbols of Easter.

**Ham - Szyńka** (shin-kah)  
This popular main dish is symbolic of great joy and abundance.

**Horseradish - Chrzan** (h'shan)  
This represents the bitter herbs prescribed in the original Passover meal as a reminder of the bitterness and harshness of the life of slavery in Egypt. It also reminds us of the bitterness of the Passion of Jesus, by which he entered glory. Horseradish is often prepared with red beets in the dish "cwikła."

**Salt - Sól** (sool)  
Symbolizes wisdom and preservation from corruption, it is included to remind us that Jesus did not undergo corruption in the grave.

**Sausage - Kielbasa** (kel-bah-sah)  
This is an old Slavic tradition. Its links remind us of the chains of death that were broken when Jesus rose from the dead as well as God's favor and generosity.

**Happy Easter! - Wesołego Alleluja!** (ves-so-weh-go ah-lay-lu-jah)

