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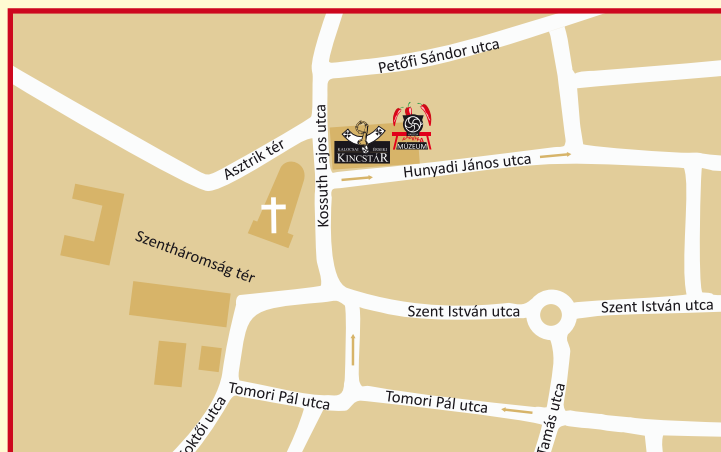
Paprika

Booklet



Table of Contents

I. Introduction to Botany: The Genealogy of Paprika.	1
I.1 The Family of Capsicum Annuum.	2
I.2 The Family of Capsicum Pubescens	3
I.3 The Family of Capsicum Frutescens	4
I.4 The Family of Capsicum Chinense	5
I.5 The Family of Capsicum Baccatum	6
II. Pepper seeds in the baggage – the newcomer’s European story of success	7
III. How the New ‘Citizen’ Settled Down to Hungary.	10
IV. The Paprika’s Route Towards World Fame	13
V. The Traditional Method of Paprika Production and Procession	18
VI. The Paprika as the Indispensable Spice of the Hungarian Kitchen.	22
VII. The Paprika as an Herb	24
VIII. The Paprika in the Hungarian Folk Art: Embroidery, Needle- Craft, and Wall-painting	27



Introduction

The permanent exhibition of the Hungarian Museum of Spice-paprika called ‘The History of Paprika in Hungary’ illustrates the history of paprika production and processing, the traditional labor, and the most important tools, through the collection of artifacts of the Hungarian Museum of Agriculture that was found in Kalocsa and its surrounding villages. This educational publication complements the information given by the exhibition in connection with it, but overreaching its geographical boundaries. This work is going to acquaint its readers with the genealogy, main types, and curative effects of paprika, while it guides you into the world of gastronomy and folk art as well.

I. Introduction to Botany: The Genealogy of Paprika

The paprika (*Capsicum*) is a water and heat intensive kitchen-garden spice and herb that is from the family of solanum species (*Solanaceae*) otherwise known as potatoes. The Latin name of paprika, *Capsicum*, originates from the Greek word *kapto* that means *to burn* or *to bite*. It is not a coincidence, considering that - except the various sweet paprika breeds - most of its types are spicy, although on a different level. Everyone can find their favorite paprika shape, color, or size among the numerous breeds: we know



Chili market in New Mexico

of tiny but immensely hot peppers, as well as large and fleshy sweet paprika. We can find all the shades of the rainbow in the world of paprika.

Today, we can identify approximately 200 different types of chilies. In fact, chili is the generic term for different spicy peppers that are produced in tropical or subtropical territories. The ripe chili can be bought in dried, crumbled, cut, milled, and ground forms as well; most of the chili sauces and pastes are based on these spices as well. Along with the black pepper, ginger and yellow ginger, paprika is one of the most produced spices of the world. The different paprika types can be divided into five groups.



Paprika drying in Argentina

I.1 The Family of *Capsicum Annuum*

In Europe, they spread as the domesticated types of the Mexican chiltepin (bird peppers). The two main cultivars are sweet paprika and the spice paprika, and in a separate group, due to its shape, the cherry pepper.



The flower and crop of the Capsicum annuum

I.2 The Family of Capsicum Pubescens

This is the earliest domestication of paprika species, since it has been produced for more than 8000 years; and therefore it has no wild relatives today. The breeds that are traditionally produced in higher mountains can be found in Central and South America. The paprika plant uses its 'hair' as a protection against the cold. This feature helps the plant to survive the chill, but it is still not effective against the hard frost. This is the only paprika family with purple flowers.



The flower and crop of the Capsicum pubescens

Many of its names, such as the South American *rocoto*, the Mexican *chile manzano* or *chile perón*, mean apple paprika or pear paprika, referring to its shape. However, this paprika family is not related with Hungarian apple paprika, not to mention that the members of the

Capsicum Pubescens are an order of magnitude spicier than their Hungarian namesake. A special version of capsaicin, the compound that is responsible for the hotness of the paprika, can be found in the cultivars of hairy paprika; no wonder why in America, they refer to it as “hotter than hot”.

I.3 The Family of Capsicum Frutescens

Although this family originates from South and Central America as well, its members are the most produced paprika breeds in the tropical countries. In India, Japan, China, Mexico, and Turkey it is grown in large quantities.



Malagueta pepper

One of its wild versions, the malagueta pepper, still lives in the Amazon basin, the supposed original region of the plant. Many of its still known cultivars were bred by Native Americans. The best known version is the tabasco paprika which, although was reared in the early 1840s in Mexico, became famous after it was brought to Louisiana from where the tabasco sauce originates. Since then it became one of the



Tabasco



Bloody Mary Cocktail

indispensable ingredients of the Bloody Mary. Other members of the family are the Thai chili (otherwise known as bird's eye chili), and the Naga Jolokia (or ghost chili) that is the hybrid of *capsicum frutescens* and *capsicum chinense* breeds. In 2007 Naga Jolokia was certified by the Guinness World Records as the world's hottest chili pepper.



Naga Jolokia

I.4 The Family of Capsicum Chinense

This paprika family is named Chinense paprika erroneously, since the plant originates from the Caribbean and, just like most of the paprika breeds, Central and South America. One of its notable characteristics is its unique tropical fruit or apricot-like taste.

This paprika family has numerous members, with different sizes, colors, tastes, and hotness. One of the world's hottest paprika, the



Red Savina

habanero, is also a *Capsicum chinense* breed. It was domesticated by Native Americans during the 20th century BC in the Amazon basin, from where it spread to the Caribbean and the Yucatan peninsula. Before the appearance of Naga Jolokia in 2007, a habanero, called *Red Savina*, was the world's hottest chili pepper.

1.5 The Family of *Capsicum Baccatum*

The *Capsicum baccatum* is called *aji* by the Native Americans, which simply means chili pepper. The paprika breeds with various tastes, shapes, and sizes are not well known outside South America.



The flower and crop of Aji Margarita

All the cultivars of the *Capsicum baccatum* share the traits of hotness and a special fruity flavor. It has white flowers with yellow spots.



Cayenne pepper

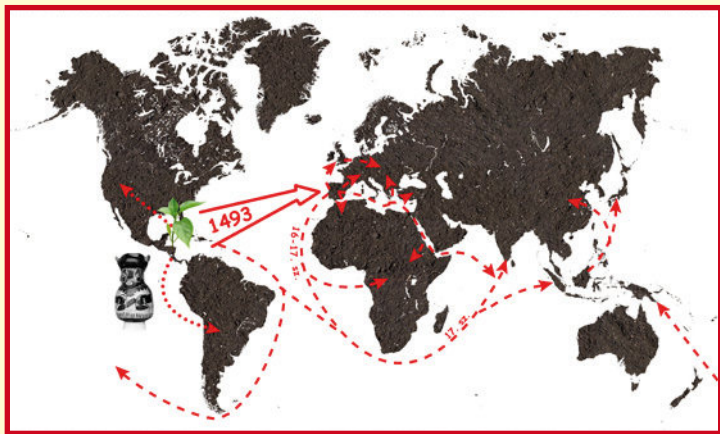


Aji Amarillo

Capsicum baccatum is one of the ingredients of the Cayenne pepper. Members of this family are also the most popular spice of the Peruvian kitchen. The most used *Capsicum baccatum* that is only produced in Peru is the *aji Amarillo*.

II. Pepper seeds in the baggage – the newcomer’s European story of success

Most people agree that paprika originates from Central America, Mexico, and Guatemala where for thousands of years, way before the time of the Spanish conquest, the Native Americans produced chili pepper, which they called *ají*. Other scholars say that the roots of paprika came from the South American Peru and the Western Indian islands.



How the paprika spread from its original location

During the archaeological excavations in Peru (in Ancón, Huaca Prieta and Chavín de Huantar), not only remains of paprika crops were found, but also textiles and ceramics with paprika motifs, and



Paprika shaped and decorated Native American ceramics

containers that were used to store chili, from the years between 2500-2000 BC. These relics prove that the ancient Natives knew the ways of paprika cultivation, not to mention the fact that the remains of the found crops were already domesticated. There are several signs that by that time the Native Americans had already blended and grew these breeds regularly. Childhood friend of Christopher Columbus, Michele de Cuneo wrote the following about paprika



*Christopher Columbus
(1451-1506)*



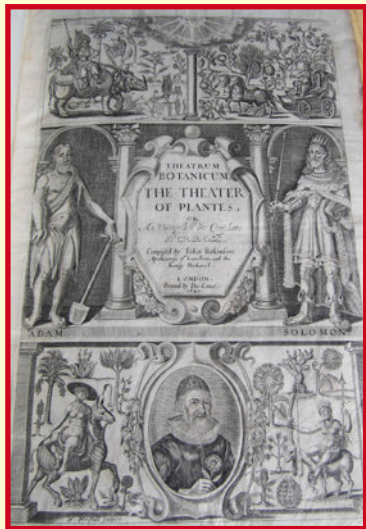
Michele de Cuneo (1448-1503)

after their second voyage in 1495: “On these islands there are shrubs reminiscent of rose-bush, on which the cinnamon-length pods are full of seeds that are as hot as black pepper. The Indians and the Caribbean inhabitants eat this crop like we eat apple.” And why was Michele de Cuneo surprised? Because these chili pepper breeds were fiery hot without exception. It took a long time for the first sweet, or at least piquant, paprika types to appear.

After the discovery of America, the fellow-traveler and surgeon of Columbus, Alvarez Diego Chanca took the first paprika seeds, along with other exotic plants, to Spain, where it soon became an important ingredient of the Spanish gastronomy. At that time it was as popular as the well-known and favored black pepper, and since they still believed that the conquerors were in India, they called it Indian pepper (*piper indicum*). During the 17th century, the famous



John Parkinson (1567-1650)



John Parkinson's Theatrum Botanicum, London, 1640

botanist John Parkinson mentions in his book, that as a part of a tradition in Spain and Italy, chili garlands hung in the windows.

To the western part of Europe the chili pepper arrived through Spanish trades, as its German name (spanische Pfeffer – Spanish pepper) suggests. Greek merchants introduced the new spice to the Balkan and the Turkish Empire.

III. How the New ‘Citizen’ Settled Down to Hungary

It took several steps for paprika to conquer Hungarian gastronomy. First it was only used as ornamentals in pontifical and baronial gardens; hence it was called *garden pepper*. In 1570, Margit Széchy had it in her garden under the name *red Turkish pepper*, and a few years later, in 1579, it appeared in the garden of Boldizsár Batthyány with the help of his French botanist Charles de l’Ecluse



Boldizsár Batthyány
(1535-1590)



Charles de l’Ecluse
(1526-1609)

During the invasion, the Turkish soldiers knew the plant as *morbis hungaricus*, and used it regularly to avoid the epidemic diseases such as malaria, typhus, and dysentery. It was because of that reason that the Hungarians who lived on the Hungarian Plain started to use it as a medicine at that time. The names of the plant from that era (*pogánybors* [pagan pepper], *törökbors* [Turkish pepper], and *tatárkabors* [Tatar pepper]) can prove that theory.



Mátyás Bél (1684-1749)

However, it only appeared in the peasant kitchen during the 18th century to supplant the more and more expensive black pepper. In his Latin, multivolume work about Hungary, the famous historiographer Mátyás Bél writes the following about the territories of the Great Hungarian Plain:



József Csapo: *New Hungarian Garden with Herbs and Flowers*

Hungarian pepper. In some region they grow this kind of pepper, but only on flatlands. The seeds of this are in pods, similarly to those of haricot. It is only slightly different from the long pepper that was noted by Plinius, though its seeds are rufous and the pod is red when it is ripe. The piquancy of the Hungarian pepper is so strong, that sprinkled into the eye it can take one's sight. Hence many of the people do not use it; however it is quite a popular spice. No one eats more food with pepper than the Hungarians.

The name paprika was suggested by the chief physician of Debrecen, József Csapó, in his book *the New Hungarian Garden with Herbs and Flowers*, published in 1775. He used the diminutive suffix of the Slavic name of pepper, papar. The word *paprika* became universal and international through the Hungarian usage.

These were the early years of paprika in our country. The plant that arrived from far and wide became our national spice, a true Hungaricum, in less than 200 years.

IV. The Paprika's Route Towards World Fame

The cultivation of paprika began around the 18th century in Kalocsa and Szeged simultaneously. In the beginning, it was only grown and processed for self-use by the peasant households.

The Kalocsa paprika is not just from the town itself. It has always meant the paprika of the surrounding, more than 60 villages and the neighboring Transdanubian towns. According to the documents that were found in the Archdiocesan Archives of Kalocsa, the first paprika of the region appeared on the lands of the archbishop. We can find the Paprika as a family name in tax assessment reports from 1703, which means that paprika became a popular spice and medicine by that time. A serf called István Paprika is listed on the first roster of Csanád, a village on the territory of the Archdiocese of Kalocsa. According to the Canonica Visitatio (Church Attendance Records) from 1748 János Molnár notary and cantor was given a



Franciscan Church and Monastery in Szeged Downtown

paprika field as barter. After the 1766 archdiocese tithe register paprika garlands could work as tithes, so from Szeremle, 15 garlands were collected accordingly.

In Szeged we find the first record about paprika in the account books from 1748 of the Franciscan Order of Szeged .

The two cities were not only helped by the favorable environmental conditions, but the economic factors also played an important role in the birth of the world-famous paprika from Kalocsa and Szeged. The continental blockade during the times of Napoleon indicated that the paprika supplanted the more and more expensive black pepper in the beginning of the 19th century. For that reason, it gained ground in the kitchens of the noblemen, and by the middle of the century, it became a sought-after commodity in the country. Due to the state monopoly of the Austrian government in 1851 to control tobacco sales, the flourishing tobacco production around Szeged disappeared by the middle of the century, and they started to grow the more and more popular paprika instead. For the

people in the Kalocsa-centered Sárköz territory, paprika production became a new branch of gardening along with garlic and onion.

With the growth of the demand, the paprika fields around Kalocsa and Szeged grew as well. In 1880 the Szeged paprika appeared in the international market as well, starting with the capital of the Habsburg Empire – Wien. Later János Kotányi established a paprika mill in Wien where he ground the paprika that arrived from Szeged. For



*János Kotányi's cookbook
that popularizes the
paprika of Szeged*

the Szeged paprika, the greatest market was the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, but at the end of the 19th century even the United States of Amerika was interested in the red gold. To transact the growing international trade, in 1933 the Hungarian Paprika Export Ltd. was founded in Szeged.

The growing of the demand affected the technology of the process as well. Since the first sweet paprika breeds appeared in Hungary only after the 1930's, most of the new methods served the goal to weaken the hotness of the paprika. The first such method was the so called 'picking' as they were picking out the stem together with part of the core from the pods. Earlier they milled the paprika together with their core and stem. The other hotness weakening method was the slashing, invented by János and Balázs Pálffy. This was done by slashing women, who cut out the core and the veins of the paprika by hand, and then they dried the paprika skin as garlands. The seeds were handled separately (soaked, trod, dried, and stored), and mixed with the paprika only during the milling. That way they could produce paprika powder with different levels of spiciness. At the beginning of the 1930's, János Elekes invented



Paprika pinching



Paprika slashing

the paprika-seed-washer, which helped to reduce the capsaicin-concentration in the paprika, hence creating a less piquant powder. The invention worked similarly to a spin-dryer.

The milling of the paprika into powder was a Hungarian invention as well that was first noted down by József Csapó in his book mentioned above, in 1775. First this part of the process was made by mortars, dry-mills, or water-mills. The first Hungarian steam powered mill was built by János and Balázs Pálffy in 1859 at



Küli, Paprika Museum, Kalocsa



The scale-model of the water mill that used to work next to Fajsz, Paprika Museum, Kalocsa

Szeged; however, their special delicate milling methods supplanted the traditional ways only during the first years of the 20th century.

In Kalocsa, the paprika growing remained as a family business for a long time. Although the first steam powered paprika mill was built in 1891, Kalocsa only entered the domestic market after the First World War. In 1917, in Kalocsa the world's first paprika research facility was built, called 'Paprika and Chemical Experiment Facility', where the chief researcher Ferenc Horváth created the first sweet paprika breeds in the 1930's.

In the beginning of the 20th century, the cheaper Spanish paprika appeared in the international market, becoming a serious competitor of the Hungarian merchants. During the First World War, the blockades helped the paprika sales; however, the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy made the international trade impossible. The export started to prosper after the 1930's, especially



Ferenc Vitéz Horváth (1854-1972)

**Kérje követelje mindenütt a
Kalocsavidéki csipősségmentes
paprikát**

amely a M. Kir. Mezőgazdasági Vegyiskerteti és Paprikaké-
rleti Állomás kalocsai telephelyének vezetője vitéz Horváth Ferenc
kir. fővezérszáz által lett nemesítve és kitermelve.

Ezen **csipősségmentes paprika** vitamintartalma igen
magas, 1 gr. friss őrölt paprika A-vitamintartalma 20 vitamin-
egység. A **csipősségmentes paprika** 1 gr. súlyú termés-
falában a vizsgálatok szerint 3 mgr. C-vitamin foglaltatik.
Enneifogva az egészségre nézve igen hasznos és a betegek
által is fogyasztható fűszert sikerült előállítani.

Csipősségmentes paprika megrendelhető:

Árva Ferenc paprikatermelőnél	-----	Bátya
Báti János	-----	Foktő
Gombócás B. Mihály	-----	Fajsz
Guzsván Ferenc	-----	Bátya
Hegedűs P. József	-----	Bátya
Illés F. József	-----	Bátya
Jánosfi L. Mihály	-----	Fajsz
Ifj. Jónás Ferenc	-----	Fajsz
Kölemen Pál	-----	Bátya
Nagy Károly	-----	Fajsz
Nánási János	----- és malom L. -----	Fajsz
Perity István	-----	Bátya
Raklós Ferenc	-----	Bátya
Raklós Péter jegyző és	-----	Bátya
Rockenstein Andor kereskedő és paprikatermelőnél	-----	Bátya
Sőrösfi Andor paprikatermelőnél	-----	Bátya
Szavvas G. János	-----	Bátya
Varga B. József	-----	Fajsz

**Ha a kalocsavidéki csipősségmentes paprikát megismeri,
Mindig ezt a minőséget fogja venni.**

Hogy a **csipősségmentes fűszerpaprikát** mind többet meg-
ismerhesse, ezért a szállítást igen olcsó árban eszközöljük.

Fotó: Kádár - Hagyóczy F. János. - Képek: Bencsik P. István.

*The advertisement of the sweet
paprika*

towards the USA, and some Western European, Asian, and African countries. To maintain the excellent quality of the paprika and to avoid the overproduction, in 1934, Kalocsa and Szeged established their so called close-range paprika production.

The paprika industry was socialized in 1949, and by incorporating the mills and the small-scale industries, the Paprika Producing Company of Kalocsa and Szeged were established in the beginning of the 1950's. Both factories were upgraded with packing-trade profile during the sixties. After the privatization, the production has been continued by the Szegedi Paprika Ltd. since 1998, and by the Kalocsa Spice Paprika Ltd. since 1999.

V. The Traditional Method of Paprika Production and Procession

The growing of the paprika has two main steps: seed-sowing or growing seedlings around the house, and later on their cultivation on the fields. A significant part of the process is still manual, the same way it used to be done a hundred years ago.

The seeds are sown between the end of March and the 20th of April, which is followed by irrigation and fertilization. The other technique of paprika cultivation is to grow seedlings under more protected conditions. After they are strong enough they are planted



Paprika seed and seedling

into the fields. That way, after being soaked in water for 24 hours, the seeds are sown between the 15th and 30th of March. If the soil is too dry, it is watered before the sowing. The seedlings are developed within 7-8 weeks.

Since the paprika requires warm weather, the seedlings are planted into the fields between the 12th and 15th of May, after the celebration of the ice saints. Following that date, the seedlings need proper care. They are hoed first in the next two weeks that is repeated at least two times until the pods are ripe.

The paprika-picking starts either at the end of August or at the beginning of September – the date depends on the amount of red-ripe paprika. The hand picking is the most laboursome part of the paprika procession. Depending on the number of the pods, the picking is repeated two or three times a season on the same field. First workers only pick the most beautiful, evenly red pods; the reddish-brown (the so called ‘smoky’) crops that are not ripe yet, are only picked during the second and third harvest.



*Tools for planting, Paprika Museum,
Kalocsa*



*Hoes, Paprika Museum,
Kalocsa*



*A skep of paprika,
Paprika Museum, Kalocsa*

During the picking, the paprika pods are collected into large bags. Earlier, the crops were hanged under the roof, or spread in the garden in order to dry them before the 'garland sewing.' Now they put them into large, air-permeable nets for the same reason. This so-called *szüttyőzés* saves a good amount of time for the paprika growers.

These nets of paprika are hung under the roof of houses, where they get proper ventilation, and for the 25-40 days (depending on the weather) they are after-ripen. This part is indispensable, since even though Kalocsa and its area has the highest amount of sunny hours a year, the spice paprika cannot ripe as much as in southern countries, so at the end, a small



Paprika nets (szüttyők)

amount of sugar still remain in the pods. This sugar and the protein of the crops get into a chemical reaction during the after-ripe. This chemical reaction, the caramelization of the sugar during the drying and the milling, and the seed oil indicates the deep red color and the unique, sweet and rich taste that one can only find in the Kalocsa spice paprika powder.



Utility stove that was used as a drier

The after-ripen paprika is then put into a dryer, where it spends an average 22-28 hours in constant 47-48 °C (116 – 118 °F) heat.

The drying is followed by hand selection, or *csipedés* (pinching), when from the dry broken parts, they select the substandard pieces and the stem, that would only lower the

quality of the powder. Only the perfectly sound parts are transferred into the grinder.

During the milling, the selected paprika is grinded into powder. To get a finer powder, the grinding is repeated several times. According to their chemical and physical features, the Hungarian spice paprika powders are categorized into four groups:

- special quality
- delicate
- noble-sweet
- rose paprika

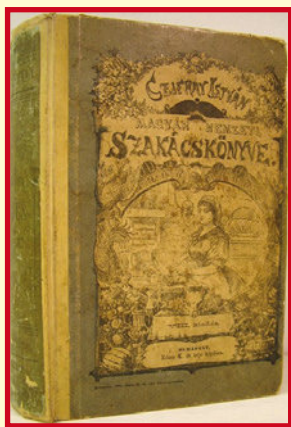


Paprika powder

VI. The Paprika as the Indispensable Spice of the Hungarian Kitchen

The paprika that was first used as a medicine, gradually became the most popular spice of the peasant kitchen since the middle of the 18th century, bringing a significant change in the Hungarian taste. It is no wonder that people said: “If you have salt and paprika, you have all the spice you need.” Since until the 1930’s, only the hot breeds were known, paprika was used as an alternative of the more and more expensive pepper that came from far lands. Even the archaic appellations of the crop came from the Hungarian name of pepper. József Csapó, in his already mentioned book, published in 1775, notes down the spiciness of the plant: “As for its use, I cannot write anything but it is a rather piquant tool, and heats up the men’s blood.”

The paprika as an alternative to pepper started to be more popular at the end of the 18th century, during the Napoleonic wars. Among the ‘high society’, the habit of ‘paprika spicing’ spread in the beginning the 19th century, during the reform era. Széchenyi’s words in the beginning of his work from 1830, the Credit refers to this phenomenon: “As many believe that the true master chefs are those who use the paprika spice excessively, just like that the true Hungarian men likes his food that way.” The foods that were made with paprika appeared in the army as well during the Napoleonic wars, as we can read it in the reports of the Hungarian unit that fought at Rhine: “at the 21st of August, as we were to cook some goulash meat,



István Czigfay: Hungarian National Cookbook

the enemy ambushed us” - the French, so to say. Soon the officers were introduced to these meals as well, just like the noblemen, who, during their routes or hunts, could taste the delicious foods made with paprika in an inn. Many of the most famous dishes of the Hungarian kitchen were invented around that time, for example the goulash, the fisherman’s soup or the chicken paprikash. The recipe for *Paprikás Tsirke* (*tshiken paprikash*) was first written down in the fourth edition of the *Hungarian National Cookbook* by István Czifray in 1830. It is important to mention that the recipes of the goulash and the stew were also first published in that book, so by that time, the three cooking methods were already differentiated. The following quotation from the cookbook is the original recipe for the Chicken paprikash:



Characteristic Hungarian dishes made with paprika: goulash, the fisherman’s soup, the chicken paprikash, and the specialty of Kalocsa: the paprika scone.

Chicken paprikash. Take two or more chicken, and dice it up. Make a piece of butter or fat sweat in a copper pot, sprinkle it with paprika, allspice, onion and tamp it until it's yellow. Throw in the diced chicken, tamp it until it is soft enough – spread it with a spoonful of flour, pour some gravy on it and sour-cream as you feel it – to make its sauce dense. Put some more paprika in it, and it is ready.

After the Compromise the paprika became the indispensable spice of the civic homes. We cannot imagine our traditional food without it – how could we eat fisherman's soup without paprika?

VII. The Paprika as an Herb

The paprika was first introduced to the Hungarians as a medicine during the times of the Turkish Invasion. It became an important tool in the fight against malaria, and it was used to strengthen the immune system during the times of cholera in 1831.

The paprika, as a medicine, could be bought from travel-apothecaries, who wandered all around the country, but later on, in the 19th century, one could find numerous medicines in the pharmacies that contained paprika. Other than powder, paprika could be used as tincture, unction, extract, bandage, and ointment as well. The powder of the paprika is appetite enhancer and diuretic in small portions. Ointments and creams, that were used against rheumatic and muscle pains, also contained



The flower, crop and foliage of the paprika

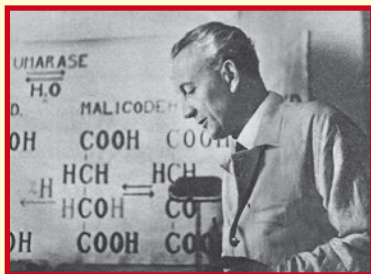


Different medicines that contain capsaicin

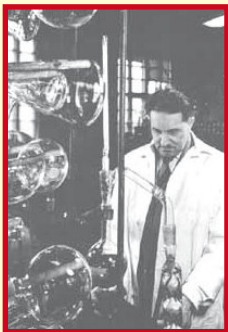
paprika. The peasants have often used it as cosmetics: they believed that it could work as a hair-restorer and that mixing it with honey can be effective against freckles.

The healing effect of the paprika is based on the hotness of the capsaicin. Thanks to this feature after rubbed into the skin it dilates the blood vessels, clears out the lactic acid to make the muscles more productive, and improves the circulation, while having detoxifying and febrifugal effects.

The vitamin C content of the paprika was discovered by Albert Szent-Györgyi, who received a Nobel Prize for his research. Like many of the greatest breakthroughs, this one was unintentional as well. During the 1920s, he was studying the function of the adrenal cortex to find out the reason behind the Addison disease and to find its cure. As he realized, this illness that comes with intense tanning is caused by the adrenal cortex's lack of his newly discovered hexuronic acid. He continued his research with plants, where among the browning and non-browning



Albert Szentgyörgyi (1893-1986)



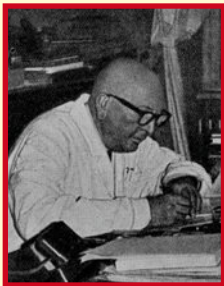
Zoltán Földi
(1895-1987)

fruits he could demonstrate the lack and presence of the hexuronic acid. With his American college he revealed that this acid is the same as the long-sought vitamin C.

The vitamin C, as the cure of scorbut, is one of the greatest achievements of medicine. Although it has a great role in improving our immune system, we do not know what the appropriate dose is. While in 1930, the recommended daily amount used to be 75 mg, today many are of the opinion that one should take 200-500 mg every day.

Its overdose can speed up the process of atherosclerosis. The synthetic production of vitamin C in Hungary was invented by Zoltán Földi in Chinoin. It was patented in 1942.

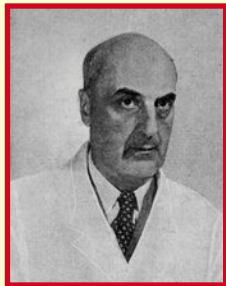
The Hungarian scientist had a big role in discovering the pharmaceutical agents of the paprika. Tibor Széki studied the composition and production of capsaicin, while László Zechmeister and László Cholnoky found the capsanthin pigment, that is a close relative of carotene. Today there is an ongoing research about the effect of capsaicin against cancer, while it is already used in urology and dermatology as well.



László Cholnoky
(1899-1967)



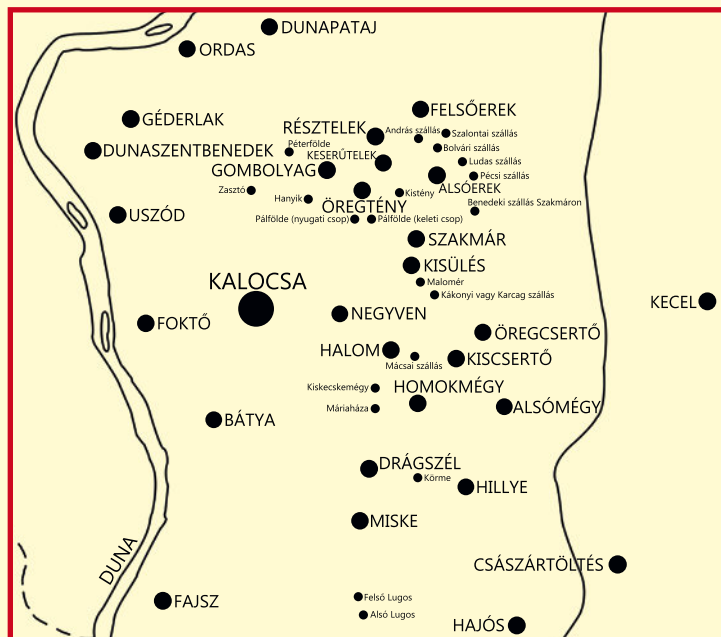
Tibor Széki
(1879-1950)



László Zechmeister
(1889-1972)

VIII. The Paprika in the Hungarian Folk Art: Embroidery, Needle-Craft, and Wall-painting

The paprika appears only in a rather small territory for only a short period of time in the Hungarian decorative arts. We cannot find any signs of it before the 1920s and 1930s, and other than to the neighboring villages of Kalocsa, it did not really spread. What we know as the traditional and colorful patterns of Kalocsa are not as old as one would think. This art is the part of the peasant culture of the surrounding villages and farms that were born during the 18th and 19th century. This ethnographic group of villages, that is famous for its unique folk art, is called *pota* by its habitants.



Villages around Kalocsa



Kalocsa embroidery

Embroidery was one of the most important art form of Kalocsa. Almost every single woman knew how to embroider, however the preliminary sketch for the motifs, the ‘writing’, could only be done by the writer-women. Later on, some writer-women became more popular than others, so the embroider

girls were looking for names like Ilus Király, Julis Pilisi, or Maris Kővágó. The patterns were first planed according to traditions, but by the beginning of the 20th century, they tried to make their own, personal system of motifs that became bigger and more naturalistic. The colors of the folk art of Kalocsa are extremely regulated. Most of the motifs can only appear in one specified color. The red of the paprika can only be put next to a pink patter, which describes why we cannot find more crimson pods on the folk costumes: the red rose was more decorative than the pink. Among the wall and furniture-painting, the biggest impact on the color of the earliest patterns was the appearance of the new synthetic hues.

One of the peculiar forms of Kalocsa’s folk art was the wall-painting. The women of Kalocsa painted colorful, flourishing friezes on the façade of their homes, under the roofs, between their windows, and on the walls of their rooms and kitchen. The patterns from the embroidery were painted on yellow, red, or blue surface.

The paprika, as an art theme can be found on many of the painters’, graphic artists’, and naïve painters’ work as well.



One of the peculiar forms of Kalocsa's folk art is the wall-painting

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Written by: Adél Lakatos

Translated by: Máté Mészáros

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Hungarian Museum of Spice-paprika

2 Hunyadi Street, 6300 Kalocsa

(Katona István House)

Tel.: 30/5750 702

infokincstar@gmail.com

<http://paprika.asztrik.hu>

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