

INFLUENCE OF THE TV SHOW KUCHENNE REWOLUCJE ON CHANGES IN LOCAL GASTRONOMY

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Abstract: “Kuchenne Rewolucje” is a TV show, in which forgotten and poorly managed restaurants undergo transformation. The host of the program analyses problems reported by the eating places and suggests new solutions for the meals themselves, as well as managing and marketing. Not only do they educate the employees and the owners of the revived eating places, but also help the consumers – guests learn to choose among restaurant offers more consciously in search of fresh, wholesome and local dishes.

Key words: Culinary TV show, Kuchenne Rewolucje, Gastronomy, Regional cuisine

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Introduction

Culinary TV shows have been appearing on a regular basis in Polish TV channels since 1998 when the first episodes of series: Podróże Kulinarne Roberta Makłowicza and Gotuj z Kuroniem were aired on TVP2 and TVN respectively. Their great success and growing interest in cooking caused broadcasting consecutive cooking series (09.2004, Pascal po prostu gotuj), in which cooks who at that time were barely known taught the viewers new cooking techniques, new foodstuff and new, foreign flavours. Since 2006 in Polish cable television network a new thematic channel “KuchniaTV” is available, transformed later into “Kuchnia+” where you can find guide programmes, reality series, documentary and feature movies related to cooking and gastronomy 24/7.

Nowadays, cooking, going out to a restaurant and having knowledge about specialties from all over the world has become fashionable and watching cooks at work is becoming popular. An explosion of culinary programs takes place in Polish TV channels. Each channel schedules at least one cooking program and live cooking has become a permanent element of morning shows. In current prime time of many TV channels, popular foreign cooking reality shows are broadcasted. Apart from specialised knowledge, skills and talent of experienced or inexperienced cooks, their stress resistance and tactical skills are also tested during a show. According to the late 2012 GfK's research in the framework of omnibus CAPI at nationwide (with participants from all over Poland) representative sample of 1000 Poles over 15 in November 2012, 67% of viewers choose culinary programs. Thus culinary TV shows have become, along from quasi-documentary series, the main driving wheel of viewership in Polish television programming. The most commonly watched are those providing a pinch of culinary adrenaline to the audience, where emotions, personality differences, anger and an echo of swear words are present. And that is precisely what "Kuchenne Rewolucje" is.

"Kuchenne Rewolucje" is a TV show broadcasted on TVN channel since March 2010. The program was created under license of the British "Kitchen Nightmares", which has celebrated triumphs of popularity since 2004, with Gordon Ramsay as the host. Its aim is to help restaurant owners with their failing business. Apart from that tangible marketing and culinary benefits, the program educates the public in the use of food service. Its formula is based on a four-day visit of an expert in the gastronomy field who during this time becomes the chef of a restaurant. On the first day the new chef tastes the food served in the restaurant and on the second day he/she observes and analyses the issues. He/she checks knowledge and abilities of the cooks, waiters and occupational health requirements. The restaurant is then closed for two days and during this time the chef proposes solutions to the problems, e.g. introduces new meals to the menu, suggests hiring new employees, changes decor, launches advertising campaign and sometimes renames the place. Reopening of the restaurant and formal dinner takes place on the fourth

evening. After two weeks the expert comes back to check whether any progress has been made and his/hers “kitchen revolution” brought the expected result.

During the first three seasons “Kuchenne rewolucje” was broadcasted on Saturdays at 6 p.m. Since the last, fourth season premiere emission was changed to Thursdays, 9.30 p.m. with rerun at 6 p.m. on Saturdays. In the Polish version, the expert carrying out the revolutions is Magda Gessler.

According to the show webpage, Magda Gessler is the owner of a restaurant empire including more than 20 restaurants and cafes all over Poland. She is the author of many cookery books and feature articles in weekly magazines Wprost and Newsweek.

History of catering services

Gastronomy is one of the oldest human service activities. The word “gastronomy” is derived from Ancient Greek *gaster* (stomach) and *nomos* (law, knowledge, rule). According to a French dictionary, gastronomy is “an art of food preparation (cuisine, wines, ordering or serving food etc.)¹. Different authors underline various aspects and features of gastronomy. According to J. Sala, “gastronomy is an organised business depending on meeting consumers provisional needs through selling prepared dishes and drinks, offering conditions to consume them at a place and providing various services to meet entertainment, relaxation and mental recovery needs”.² Gastronomy is a wide and multi-leveled term, with two main aspects: cooking art and catering service³. Precise division is shown in pic.1.

The history of Polish catering service begins with the rising of permanent settlement. Then, on the basis of permission for alcohol produce first taverns/inns raised. The word tavern (in Polish “karczma”) derives from the word *krczag*, meaning pitcher. Their owners were local village administrators, gentry together with monasteries and

¹ Dictionnaire de la langue francaise, Paris, 1990 (as cited in: Sala, Józef. *Marketing w Gastronomii*. Warszawa: PWE, 2011:29)

² Sala, Józef. *Marketing w Gastronomii*. Warszawa: PWE, 2011: 12.

³ Milewska, Mariola, Prączko, Anna, and Stasiak, Andrzej. *Podstawy gastronomii*. Warszawa : PWE, 2010: 48

parsons⁴. Apart from eating-house, shop, night refuge inns served as places of social meetings, weddings, knowledge and information centres as well as political ones, since local courts and councils were taking place there. Inns' decor was modest. Furnished with wooden tables and benches, they were offering clay floor lined with straw for overnight guests. The urban equivalent of inn was *szynk* (pub). The place was cramped and dark and served mostly vodka and beer, meals were consumed rarely. In 1754 in Warsaw, the biggest town in the Republic of Poland at the time, there were 90 taverns⁵, but the census at the end of XVIII century announces that there were 1799 various eating places, including 1390 taverns, 22 hostelries and even 201 cafes⁶. Another type of a place with more exquisite décor, better service and rich tableware were *traktiernie*, which arose around 1790. Their name derives from a German word *traktieren* meaning *to treat*. Expensive as they were, they were visited by potent residents and artists.

Apart from *szynki* and *traktiernie*, numerous beer-houses, wine bars and mead bars were run in towns and for the poorer section of the society soup kitchens were run by clergy. First restaurants appeared in the Polish lands at the end of XVIII century. Located mainly in hotels, they served their guests. Similar to *traktiernie* at first, they later transformed into independent places of business meetings and formal dinners. Gourmet meals made of imported foreign products were served in restaurants. Apart from restaurants, there were also so-called *handelki*, where one could have breakfast as well as soup kitchens and inns called in Poland *gospody*. In XVIII and XIX centuries new eating places sprang - cafes and confectioneries founded by Swiss, French and Italians. Owing to the great variety of eating places, everyone could eat out during XVII and XIX centuries. Thus social life flourished and eateries became important part of life for the

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Kulesza, M. "Gastronomia i hotelarstwo w miastach polskich drugiej połowy XVIII wieku". *Turyzm* Vol. 11. No. 2. Łódź : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2001:56

⁶ Sobieszcański M., 1974. Rys historyczno-statystyczny wzrostu i stanu miasta Warszawy od najdawniejszych czasów aż do 1847 roku. Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa:40

Poles⁷. After the World War II, Polish eating service lost its gourmet, splendour and elegance. Food served was meant to be affordable and it was dished out carelessly. Eating places were brought under state control, sprang dining rooms, buffets at work and milk bars. There were also expensive restaurants in hotels, which due to high prices were not affordable to statistical citizen⁸.

Political changes in the early nineties entailed development of catering service in Poland, which underwent significant changes in just a few years. Initially, there were small dining places with plain food but they were gradually improved and the offer was systematically developed.

COOKING ART	CATERING SERVICE	
Culinary tradition, as an element of culture	IMMATERIAL	MATERIAL
Food products (quality, nutritive value, cooking utility etc.)	Places location	Preparing food and beverages
Recipies and cooking techniques	Qualitative and quantitative structure	Consumer service
Meals and beverages garnish	Buildings and their interiors	Entertainment services (e.g. live entertainment)
Cooking gift and sense of taste	Technical and facilities equipment	Catering facility management

Tab. 1. Gastronomy division: cooking art and catering service
 Source: Milewska, Mariola, Prączko, Anna, and Stasiak, Andrzej. *Podstawy gastronomii*. Warszawa : PWE, 2010: 50.

⁷ Milewska, Mariola, Prączko, Anna, and Stasiak, Andrzej. *Podstawy gastronomii*. Warszawa: PWE, 2010:24

⁸ Ibidem:25

In 1995 there was almost 61 thousands of eating places in Poland, 84 thousands in 2000 and 92 thousands in 2005.⁹ Tab. 2 shows the tendencies and number of eating places.

	2005	2010	2011	2012
Number of eating places	92 072	70 483	67 356	68 753
Public sector	2 398	1 527	1 299	1 430
Private sector	89 674	68 956	66 057	67 323
Restaurants	9 716	14 937	15 287	15 883
Bars and pubs	40 834	27 145	25 866	26 383
Canteens	6 950	4 509	4 271	4 292
Other catering services	34 572	23 892	21 932	22 195

Tab. 2. Polish eating places in 2005, 2010-2012 (as of 31.12.)

Source: Mały rocznik statystyczny. GUS, 2013.

Two trends in creating new eating places are observed in recent years. The first one, traditional, is based on local places and cuisine and the other one, modern, on places such as fast foods, quick-casual restaurants or catering trade, the so-called food court.¹⁰ In recent years new fashion appeared among youngsters on foodtrucks serving a kind of “wholesome” fast food. The number of restaurants serving international cuisines increases significantly. While travelling, the Poles have learnt new tastes and now they are looking for them in the restaurants back home. The new lifestyle, character of work and fashion makes the Poles eat out more often. This increases competition on culinary market and only those which are the best and able to follow these Poles’ new expectation can resist.

The essence of each catering activity is preparing catering product and its profitable sale. The analysis of the essential elements of the product made it possible to distinguish some of the most important components that determine its attractiveness in the eyes of consumers and include as follows:¹¹

- Basic offer consisting of:
 - assortment of food, beverages, commercial goods;

⁹ Ibidem:26

¹⁰ Ibidem:28

¹¹ Ibidem:35

- consumer service and handling complaints;
- Additional offer, e.g. seasonal and cultural events (concerts, cabarets, recitals, exhibitions);
- External appearance of the workplace:
- Building (form, technical condition, colour);
- Surrounding(car park, garden, terrace, neighbourhood);
- Inferior features (size, colour scheme and consumer room decoration, equipment, furnishing, heating, acoustics, lightning);
- Other features, e.g. opening hours, location, payments, cloak room, lavatories.

Gastronomic product, as any other product, has its cycle of life – time in which it operates since its invention up to its decline. There are 5 stages of the life cycle of a product and knowing about them enables adopting proper business strategy.

The program “Kuchenne Rewolucje” reported failing restaurants in the last stage of life cycle product or even due to the lack of clients and idea for reviving the business at the stage of “business death”. It is assumed that the average life cycle of the gastronomic product is 5 to 8 years. The analyses show that restaurants serving traditional and ethnic cuisine might last the longest on the market, while fast food restaurants (outside global restaurant chains) the shortest. For the owners of the reported restaurants taking part in the program, it was the last straw. Although not always enthusiastic, they agreed on the host’s suggestions.

To check the changes in local gastronomy the author analysed 4 seasons of the show *Kuchenne Rewolucje*. In total, 48 episodes with 48 revived restaurants were analysed. Tab. 3 shows details such as names, locations and the date of airing.

SEASON		ORIGINAL AIR DATE	NAME	LOCATION
1	1	6 March 2010	DZIKI MŁYN	Warszawa
	2	13 March 2010	PANORAMA	Gdańsk
	3	20 March 2010	FRANC JOSEF	Katowice

	4	27 March 2010	IMPULS	Łódź
	5	3 April 2010	ARTEMIS	Poznań
	6	24 April 2010	POD ARSENAŁEM	Toruń
	7	1 May 2010	U ZOSI	Szczawnica
	8	8 May 2010	GRANDE AZZURRO	Warszawa
2	1	4 Septem ber 2010	POD ŻAGLAMI	Olsztyn
	2	11 Septem ber 2010	JESZ BURGER	Lublin
	3	18 Septem ber 2010	CINAMON CAFE	Racibórz
	4	25 Septem ber 2010	INCOGNITO CLUB	Mrozy
	5	2 October 2010	WOOK and ROLL	Warszawa
	6	16 October 2010	ZAMKOWA	Toruń
	7	23 October 2010	SŁOWIAŃSKA	Słońsk
	8	30 October 2010	BRONISZÓWKA	Warszawa
	9	6 Novem ber 2010	ZAMKOWA	Świdwin
	10	13 Novem ber 2010	PAROLES	Kraków
	11	20 Novem ber 2010	HOROLNA	Żywiec
	12	27 Novem ber 2010	CZARCIA ŁAPA	Lublin
	13	4 Decem ber 2010	TABUN	Gdańsk Otomin
	14	11 Decem ber 2010	TAWERNA DOMINIKAŃSKA	Gdańsk
3	1	12 Febru ary 2011	OBROCHTÓWKA	Zakopane
	2	19 Febru ary 2011	COLLOSEUM	Tychy
	3	26 Febru ary 2011	PEPER`S	Białystok

	4	5 March 2011	KUCHNIA I WINO	Pszczyna
	5	12 March 2011	ALCHEMIK	Tomaszów Mazowiecki
	6	19 March 2011	INDIAN OCEAN	Poznań
	7	26 March 2011	MAXIM	Wieliczka
	8	2 April 2011	VALENCIA/U SAMUELA	Warszawa
	9	9 April 2011	KARCZMA U JĘDZY/EDELWEISS	Kraków
	10	16 April 2011	BARCELONKA	Przemyśl
	11	23 April 2011	BARBAROSSA	Siedlce
	12	30 April 2011	DARJAN BRYDŹ	Bystrzyca Kłodzka
4	1	8 September 2011	OPEN AIR/ALE BAJKA	Magdalenka
	2	15 September 2011	STEAK HOUSE RODEO	Kwidzyń
	3	22 September 2011	PANORAMA	Nowogród
	4	29 September 2011	PENELOPA	Inowrocław
	5	6 October 2011	ANIA Z ZIELONEGO WZGÓRZA	Tarnowskie Góry
	6	13 October 2011	KARCZMA PRZY DWORZE	Jasionka
	7	20 October 2011	BRATERSKA	Tarnów
	8	27 October 2011	LI DU	Warszawa
	9	3 November 2011	STARA KUŹNIA	Magnuszew
	10	10 November 2011	GALERIA SMAKU	Kozienice
	11	17 November 2011	STELLA CAFE	Lębork
	12	24 November 2011	KARCZMA NAŁĘCZOWSKA	Nałęczów

	13	1 December 2011	KARCZMA POLANY	Kościelisko
	14	8 December 2011	ZAPIECEK	Poznań

Tab. 3. Overview of restaurants participating in „Kuchenne rewolucje” in years 2010-2011

Source: own study on the basis of TVN website: www.tvnplayer.pl (access on 1.05.2014 r.)

In the fourth season of the TV show, restaurants located in the vicinity of bigger urban centres from all over Poland took part. Most recurrent were restaurants from Warsaw and surroundings (8 restaurants), followed by 3 restaurants in Gdańsk and 2 in Toruń. In most restaurants dominated mixed: Polish and European cuisine – especially Italian. There were three foreign (Greek, Hindi and Chinese) owners of 48 restaurants (Artemis and Indian Ocean, Wei Heping), serving their traditional cuisine.

Most common problems before Magda Gessler’s revolution

Meals served in restaurants were, according to the host, unpalatable and often referred to as inedible, possibly poisonous for consumers. In most cases, either product or entire meals were frozen and heated only after ordering. Using flavour enhancers was a common practice, as well as serving instant soups and using the cheapest possible semi-products. Traditional exam for a restaurant was steak tartare. Not a single cook passed it with flying colours. Instead of steak tartare the host was served minced, defrost and bland beef with yolk, chopped cucumber and onion. The most often menu was long and culinary inconsistent that gave the customers no chance for eating fresh-made meals.

In most cases, kitchen did not meet sanitary requirements necessary to do business. Burnt oil on kitchen utensils, dirty, unwashed pots, old, mouldy products, semi-products and frozen food were main shortcomings of revived restaurants.

Waiters’ service, according to the expert, left a lot to be desired. Waiters were not familiar with the meals they served and what products they were made of. They could not choose, recommend and serve wine properly or determine whether it is

ready to drink after opening or not (if it is corked). Also staff appearance raised objections: not always neat clothes, too striking makeup and manicure.

The interior appearance and lack of consistency between the name and dished out food are the chef's main allegations against the surrounding of the served food. A number of mismatching elements of decor and lack of coziness in a restaurant also rose the host's objections. Allegations regarded mostly rooms – stale, bland, random or on the contrary, they were too flamboyant.

Bad relations between employees, unskilled staff - all-knowing and resistant to change, all of these can spoil the atmosphere of work and hence both the quality of dishes and the service. According to the host's rule: what is in the heart, it is on the plate, there should not be any misunderstandings in the kitchen and in the restaurant. Many working cooks did not have basic knowledge to make served meals. Young and inexperienced as they were, cooks were often carrying out the owner's instructions who were often green in the business. Among revived restaurants, there could be found ones which existed on local market for years and their gastronomic culture remained at the stage of the former regime (e.g. Maxim in Wieliczka)

Magda Gessler's Kitchen Revolutions

In the second part of the show Magda Gessler found solutions to heal failing restaurants and was carrying out revolutions. She was analysing potential guests needs and the restaurant surrounding, which might inspire new menu. First of all, change in the philosophy of running the restaurant was undergone. The leading rule was introducing short menu based on fresh products and meals. In most cases new menu consisted of regional cuisine, characteristic of the area in which the restaurant was located. Situation was different with revolutions carried out in ethnic restaurants, where Magda Gessler was showing their cook-owners how to serve their traditional meals in order to hit the culinary tastes of the customers. But even here the main principle was cuisine based on fresh, fragrant products without enhancers. In each analysed case she created a short menu based on seasonal products, which was thought up in such way to efficiently use

possible overproductions. She often proposed venison and long forgotten flavours of traditional Polish cuisine. Redecorations, revamped menu and sometimes renaming the place were also based on people working there. Unnoticed by the owner, their specialization and management skills were sometimes setting the tone of change. Scenery inspired to serve traditional, local and fresh meals. Magda Gessler introduced new dishes into the menu to be the “house specialty”. She taught the staff how to prepare them and then they were served on the formal dinner at reopening of the restaurant after the revolution. She renamed 18 restaurants or transformed the name so it reflected undergone changes inside the place and in the menu. Each time décor become cosier. Bright colours, fresh flowers and good lightning helped to bring out the best effects from the interior. Lights in windows, smell of the cooked food and neat, well-kept entrance welcomed guests and invited them inside.

Healing relations between the staff, appointing and executing tasks at each work post improved cooperation and reliably facilitated performing duties. During the formal opening of the revived restaurants (in direct promotion of new food) the guests praised both the taste of the served dishes and the decor and they declared subsequent visits.

By the formula of the show, after 2 to 4 weeks Magda Gessler revisited those restaurants in order to check the results of her work and whether the owners seized their opportunities. She checked whether the dishes she introduced to the menu are served, how they taste and if cooking techniques are properly executed. She also checked whether the formula and decor of the place remained as she suggested it. Only 3 from total 48 restaurants did not obtain the certificate of “Kuchenne Rewolucje” as a result of abandoning the formula.

Summary

“Kuchenne Rewolucje” plays a significant role on many grounds in Polish catering from both the supply and demand point of view. The program educates restaurateurs pointing to basic problems of Polish catering service. It teaches love of eating, the culture of service and culinary honesty. It shows the way of thinking, local products use and tradition in creating exceptional places, such as restaurants; places where

not only basic nutritional needs are met, but which become the places of meeting good cuisine. Owing to the program, the viewers learned the rules of running a restaurant, they became more demanding and pay attention to details which previously went unnoticed. They consciously read the menu, ask how fresh the ingredients of meals are and pay attention to the interior decor and service. The program “Kuchenne Rewolucje” also became an effective marketing tool. Many thousands of viewers in front of TVs follow the restaurateurs struggles and receives information about a particular restaurant. Table 3 shows viewers’ ratings during first 4 seasons.

Episode	I season	II season	III season	IV season
1.	2 407 644	1 712 249	3 195 561	2 677 527
2.	2 673 402	1 613 978	3 211 330	2 399 843
3.	2 580 264	2 245 285	3 154 825	2 376 142
4.	2 594 951	2 139 167	3 047 857	2 436 333
5.	2 249 897	2 657 147	2 836 598	2 710 417
6.	1 749 993	2 653 345	3 074 326	2 965 595
7.	1 979 433	2 351 266	3 204 320	2 689 979
8.	2 221 727	2 418 278	2 538 453	2 963 161
9.	-	3 007 814	2 919 339	2 838 172
10.	-	2 748 789	2 619 900	2 784 594
11.	-	3 143 423	2 354 132	3 186 575
12.	-	2 974 986	2 327 283	2 801 136
13.	-	2 937 787	-	3 158 763
14.	-	2 996 708	-	3 054 213
Sum	2 307 164	2 542 873	2 873 660	2 788 746

Tab. 4. Viewers’ ratings during first 4 seasons of the program “Kuchenne rewolucje” (years 2010-2011)

Source: own study based on the official website of the “Kuchenne rewolucje” <http://kuchennerewolucje.tvn.pl> (access on 7.05.2014 r.)

After the show was aired, guests enjoy visiting the restaurant to see the effects of Magda Gessler’s and restaurateurs’ work. They compare the TV image with reality. Most restaurants take the advantage of a chance to develop but some of them lose twice if they do not comply with the new recommendations.

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