

# February Spice Club:

## *Hungarian Paprika*



### Suggested Reading

*available to order on the Minerva catalog*

Susan Derecskey, *The Hungarian Cookbook: The Pleasures of Hungarian Food and Wine*

Yolanda Fintor, *Hungarian Cookbook: Old World Recipes for New World Cooks*

Anikó Gergely, *Culinaria: Hungary*

Magdolna Hargittai, *Cooking the Hungarian Way*

George Lang, *The Cuisine of Hungary*

Edward Weiss, *The Paprikás Weiss Hungarian Cookbook*

## *Hungarian Paprika*

“Paprika is to the Hungarian cuisine as wit is to its conversation — not just a superficial garnish, but an integral element, a very special and unique flavor instantly recognizable.”

George Lang, *The Cuisine of Hungary*

Mildly spicy; a robust, sweet aroma; and a full-bodied warmth like a hug from mum: Hungarian paprika is worlds away from inoffensive grocery store varieties. Paprikas are made from dried and pulverized peppers in the *capsicum annuum* species, with a flavor profile dependent upon which specific peppers — or which parts of the pepper — are used. Frontier Co-Op describe this Spice Club product as “a bit hotter and slightly less sweet” than Spanish paprika. Hungarian paprika is a gift to the world from a people of whom 98% identify as ethnic Hungarian, 3% Romani, and 2% German.

Carolyn Bánfalvi of TasteHungary.com describes how almost all Hungarian meals utilize paprika and details the most essential of Hungarian cooking techniques: slowly sautéing diced onions in lard or other fat until translucent, and then throwing in a few heaping spoonfuls of paprika and very briefly heating it. You can go in several directions from here — paprika pairs well with egg, bean, and potato dishes, as well as roasted and grilled meats — but all great dishes must necessarily begin with fat, onion, and good paprika.

Hungarian recipes are a joy to peruse in cold months. Some favorites that stood out to me are thick, rich stews tempered with *túró*, a soft farmer’s cheese; the tomato and pepper *lescó*, similar to the French *ratatouille* but ideally cooked over an open fire in a traditional Hungarian cast iron cauldron, with ingredients that must come fresh and perfect from your late summer garden; and the uniquely spicy fisherman’s soup, *halászlé*, with broth so bright red it imparts a ring on a white bowl. Hop online for some serious culinary inspiration or give the library a call to order some of the cookbooks in the Suggested Reading section. Happy cooking!

The paprika in this kit was purchased at the Frontier Co-Op and was grown and processed in Hungary. Non-irradiated; kosher; use by May 2024. Please submit any feedback to Meghan at [mfogg@freeportmaine.com](mailto:mfogg@freeportmaine.com).

# Gombapaprikás

Agnes Barath, BudapestCookingClass.com

“Hungarian mushroom paprika is a vegetarian dish cooked the same way as the famous chicken paprika.”

## INGREDIENTS

35 ounces of your preferred mushrooms (white, oyster, portobello, cremini), sliced  
3 medium or 2 large onions, finely diced  
6 tablespoons vegetable oil (sunflower oil is used in Hungary)  
2 good tablespoons of sweet paprika powder  
1 medium fresh tomato, chopped  
1 sweet yellow pepper (or bell pepper, wax pepper, banana pepper), cut into small pieces  
2 heaping tablespoons sour cream  
Ground black pepper  
Salt to taste  
Chopped parsley for decoration

In a large soup pot, sauté onions in vegetable oil over low heat, stirring frequently, until translucent. Do not let them burn. Salt slightly to help tenderize them. The onions should be cut into very small pieces, which is essential for achieving “stew consistency.” Add a small amount of water, if necessary, to keep them from sticking to the pan.

Remove the pot from heat, add the paprika, and stir. Do not burn the paprika or it will become bitter. Add the tomatoes, chopped pepper and mushrooms. Salt to taste, sprinkle with a good amount of black pepper and some water, no more than ½ cup.

Cover the pot and simmer the mushrooms on low heat for about 30 minutes. Stir occasionally. It should have a thick, creamy consistency. If too soupy, take the lid off and keep simmering until it gets thicker.

Remove the pot from heat, mix in 2 tablespoons of sour cream. Put back on the heat and bring to a boil, then turn off the heat – it’s done!

Sprinkle with parsley and serve over rice or fresh *nokedli* noodles. Please refer to the next recipe if you would like to attempt *nokedli* to serve with your *gombapaprikás*!

# Dumplings / *Nokedli* / *Spätzle*

Family recipe provided by Elaina Lowell of Freeport!

Note: *Nokedli* is a simple dumpling or noodle, depending on how you look at it, and pairs wonderfully with *gombapaprikás* or the more traditional *paprikás csirke* (paprika chicken). This is a sparse recipe, as all family recipes must be, so look online if you're not getting the results you expected.

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 eggs, beaten
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup water

Mix all ingredients together with a large spoon or wooden spoon (the batter should be of a loose or stretchy consistency). Drop batter by teaspoonful into boiling, salted water. Cook about 10 minutes, until dumplings rise to top. Cook in two batches to avoid crowding. Drain dumplings, rinse briefly to keep dumplings separate while in colander, and serve as a side to a hot, rich dish (like *gombapaprikás*!).

