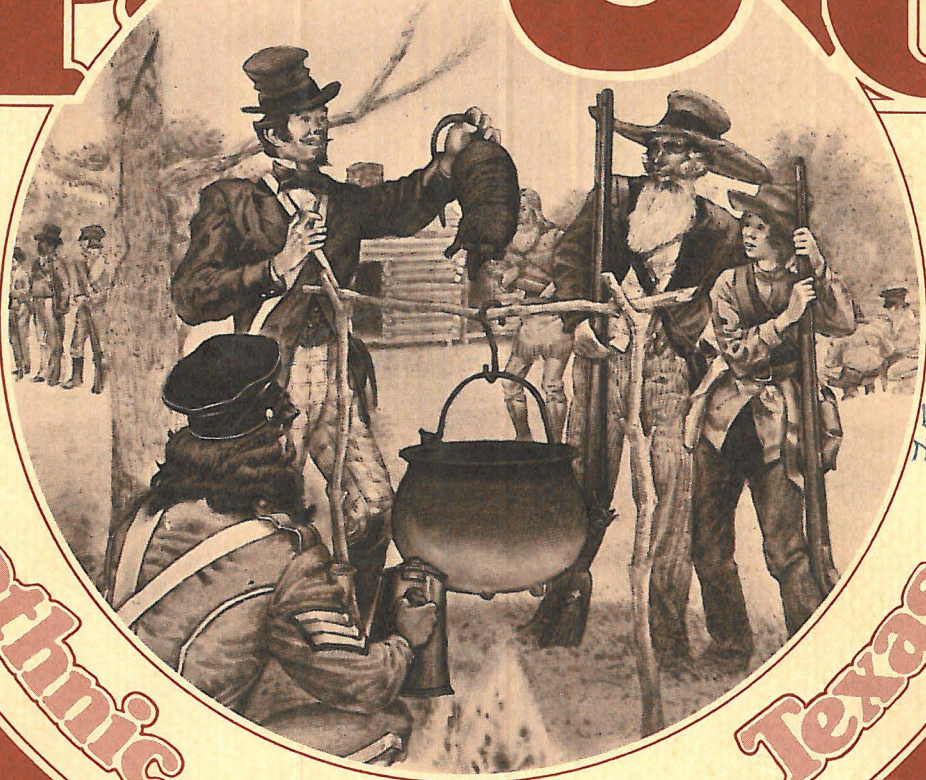


THE  
**Melting Pot**



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ethnic  
cuisine in  
Texas

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THE

# Melting Pot

ethnic cuisine in Texas



The Institute of Texan Cultures  
of The University of Texas at San Antonio  
San Antonio, Texas

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good informants: the people of Texas that the Institute has worked with for over eight years. They have loaned many of the objects shown in Institute displays and have given information used in other Institute products: publications, audio-visual materials and traveling exhibits. It was with these people, in contacts ranging over several years, that conversations were held about cooking, recipes, festival foods and Friday-night casseroles. They were asked for recipes they used or that were common in their ethnic societies.

All the recipes collected could not be included. Expert help was received from Frances L. Reasonover, foods and nutrition specialist, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Texas A&M

University System, College Station. She helped check recipe content, gave advice on the final selection and commented, "Three things that cannot be written into a recipe are judgement, experience and imagination." Enough recipes for a meal are included here from each group, with many incidental dishes to add to any family's regular fare.

Cooking is occasionally preserved or fostered by a group; yet it almost always remains an individual skill. Each section is preceeded by a short, historical introduction to the people represented. A few remarks about festivals are included along with some interesting stories about certain dishes that we felt just could not be left out.

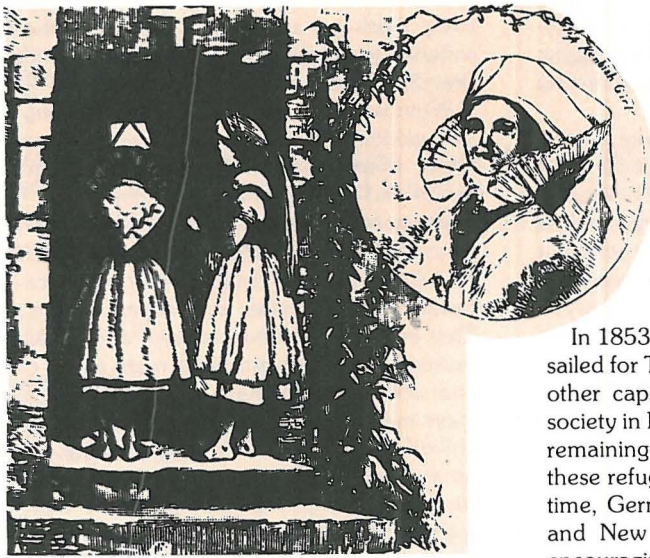


THE

# Wendish



# THE Wendish



At the Church Door; *Harper's New Monthly*

The Wendish settlers of Texas provide a uniquely interesting sidelight in ethnic history. Both in Europe and in Texas they have been associated with the Germans by geography and little else.

The Wends are an ancient Slavic people claiming descent from Japhet, son of Noah. The ancestral homeland of these people is in East Germany along its southern border with Poland. Although surrounded by Germanic influence, their culture withstood assimilation. Their language is akin to Czech, Polish and Russian. Their dress, food and folklore is certainly more Slavic than German. But starting in 1815 the Congress of Vienna divided the Wendish homeland between Saxony and Prussia. In 1817 the Prussians decreed that the Wends in their jurisdiction would have to abandon Lutheranism and enter the Reformed Church. Persecution mounted until immigration seemed the only recourse.

In 1853 two groups of Wends, in two small ships, sailed for Texas. One vessel was lost at sea and the other capsized off the Cuban coast. A German society in New Orleans raised funds to bring the 35 remaining families from Cuba to Texas. Once again these refugees were settled among Germans—this time, Germans who lived at Industry, Cat Spring and New Ulm. But their letters home were so encouraging that within a year 580 more Wends decided to make the perilous voyage. This second group chose the Reverend John Kilian as their leader and brought with them the bell from Kilian's old church in Saxony. They came aboard an English sailship, the *Ben Nevis*, which docked at Galveston on December 16, 1854. Seventy-three died of cholera enroute, but since immigration officials found none aboard then ill, the settlers were permitted to disembark. On shore, however, a yellow fever epidemic raged and the Wends traveled quickly to Houston where they spent Christmas. They sent out representatives to find land at a price they could afford. A settlement was made on Rabb's Creek in what is now Lee County. The rolling, wooded land cost them 50 cents an acre. One of their first acts was the construction of a one-room, log church for Pastor Kilian. In its place today stands a red sandstone house of worship that dates from 1871.

Clannish, without funds and accustomed to hard work, the Wends united in a tight community around their church. They called their new community Serbin. Cooperation was vital to their survival; they banded together to perform the heavier farm tasks and worked their fields using simple wooden tools.

Try as they might, the Wends did not escape German influence. In 1860 an unusually large migration of Germans arrived in nearby Bastrop County. Ironically it was the church, a stronghold of Wendish tradition, that became the instrument of assimilation. The two groups began to associate there and soon there was intermarriage between them. Since both pastor and congregation were bilingual, services were now conducted in Wendish and German. The practice continued until the 1920s when Germans and their language came to dominate through the sheer weight of numbers.

Today the main centers of Wendish culture in Texas are at Serbin, Giddings, Fedor, Warda, Manheim, McDade, Loebau, Lincoln, Winchester, LaGrange and Walburg. Wherever found they are gregarious and convivial people, still very much in the habit of turning work into social occasions. Some of the women may gather for afternoon sewing and quilting parties with refreshments of coffee and assorted cakes, jellies, jams and cheeses. And sometimes the fun is a bit more organized, though certainly never formalized. Texas Wends convene at McDade the second Saturday of July for an annual Watermelon Festival and the attendant barbecue, music and crowning of the queen. Historic St. Paul's Lutheran Church at Serbin is the scene of a community-wide reunion, also in July. Outdoor religious services are conducted, followed by dinner on the grounds, visiting and entertainment provided by children of the parochial school.

In a church-oriented culture like that of the Texas Wends, it is hardly surprising that weddings would assume particular social significance. Symbolic of the gradual abandonment of age-old tradi-

tions is the evolution of the Wendish wedding gown. Originally, the immigrant bride and her attendants dressed for the wedding in long, snug-fitting black gowns. In the late 1890s the color softened to gray and after the turn of the century Wendish brides, like others, wore white.

What is best remembered is the wedding feast. The wedding in the morning was followed by a heavy noon meal. The tables were laden with turkey and dressing, ham, beef and gravy, homemade noodles, boiled potatoes, fresh or home canned vegetables, pickled beets and watermelon rind, fresh or stewed fruits, homemade bread with freshly churned butter, and coffee or lemonade. That evening the leftovers were augmented with sausage, cheese, potato salad, more cakes, cookies and coffee. Traditionally at some point during these meals, a guest would reach under the table, pull off one of the bride's shoes and use it to take up a collection. The money was usually sent to a struggling young ministerial student, an orphanage or some other worthy cause. Beer and cigars helped tide the celebrants from lunch to dinner and finally to a midnight meal with its customary main course of pickled herring and sweet potato salad.

Throughout the day the bride and groom remained at the place of honor at the head table. Gifts were brought to them as well wishers gathered around to watch the packages being opened. At the conclusion of the midnight meal the maid of honor removed the bride's veil, and the couple was free to mingle with the guests.

Outside, a crowd gathered for a shivaree with ringing cowbells and the drumming of washtubs. The bride and groom would greet the revelers and invite them in for refreshment. Those guests who chose to spend the remaining hours of the night were bedded down on the floor. When morning came the bride cooked a breakfast of pork sausage, eggs, homemade bread, cake and coffee. Such festivities usually lasted several days—until the last survivor could no longer bear the sight of food.



# Recipes

## LENTIL SOUP

1 pound lentils  
1 ham bone or 1 cup diced ham  
1 large onion  
1/2 cup diced celery

1-1/2 cups diced potatoes  
1 cup diced carrots  
salt to taste

Wash lentils and soak overnight. Drain. Place lentils, ham bone, onions and celery in a kettle. Cover with water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer 1 hour. Add potatoes and carrots. Continue cooking 30 to 45 minutes until done. When serving, add vinegar to taste, if desired.

Mrs. Emma Wuensche, McDade

## BEER SOUP

1 quart milk  
2 eggs, slightly beaten  
2 tablespoons butter  
1/3 teaspoon salt  
1/2 cup sugar

1/4 cup raisins  
1/3 cup flour  
12 ounces beer  
1/3 teaspoon nutmeg

Heat milk, eggs, butter, salt and sugar together. Cook raisins in a small amount of water 10 minutes. Add to other mixture. Thicken with flour. Add beer and nutmeg. Boil slowly about 30 minutes. Serve while warm.

Mary Schimank and Alice Schluecher, Houston

## GREEN TOMATO RELISH

2 gallons sliced green tomatoes  
1 gallon sliced onions  
3 cups sugar  
1-1/2 cups vinegar

1-1/4 cups water  
1 teaspoon cloves  
1-1/4 teaspoons pepper

Mix tomatoes and onions thoroughly. Let stand 2 hours. Squeeze out and pour juice away. Then add remaining ingredients. Bring to boiling point and simmer for 15 minutes. Put in hot jars and adjust lids. Process in boiling water bath for 5 minutes.

Mrs. Arnold Kasper, Warda



## SLAVIC OVEN STEW

10 medium onions, minced  
8 to 10 large tomatoes, sliced  
1/2 cup rice  
6 to 8 potatoes, pared and sliced  
5 lamb chops  
5 pork chops

1 eggplant  
6 green peppers  
1 cup diced okra  
salt and pepper to taste  
2 tablespoons butter

Cover the bottom of a roaster with onions. Arrange half of the tomatoes on onions. Spread rice over tomatoes. Add potatoes, then chops. Alternate lamb and pork. Pare and dice eggplant. Remove seeds from peppers and cut into thin rings. Cover chops with eggplant and pepper slices. Add another layer of tomatoes. Cover with a layer of okra. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and dot with butter. Cover roaster and bake at 450 degrees for 1 hour. Remove cover and continue cooking at 350 degrees 30 minutes or until done.

Mrs. Mary Schimank, Houston

## WENDISH SAUERBRATEN

6 pounds choice roast beef  
1 quart buttermilk  
2 large onions  
2 bay leaves  
6 whole cloves  
1-1/2 teaspoons salt  
1/2 teaspoon pepper

4 tablespoons butter  
2 tablespoons mustard  
1 tablespoon brown sugar  
4 tablespoons flour  
1 cup water  
1 smoked ham hock  
1 cup water

Wipe meat with a damp cloth. Put in a deep pan or dish and cover with buttermilk, sliced onions, bay leaves, cloves, salt and pepper. Let stand in a cool place for 24 hours, turning meat often. Remove from spiced buttermilk and wipe dry. Reserve 1 cup buttermilk. Rub the meat with butter and mustard, spread brown sugar over the top and sprinkle with flour. Place in a roasting pan and add 1 cup water and 1 cup of the spiced buttermilk. Cover and cook at 400 degrees for 1 hour. Add ham hock and another cup of water. Turn heat down to 350 degrees and bake until meat is tender enough to slice. Remove and pour gravy in a serving dish. Makes 14 to 16 servings.

## WIENERSCHNITZEL

1 cup flour  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon parsley flakes  
1/4 teaspoon paprika  
1/2 teaspoon pepper  
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves

1 egg, beaten  
1 cup milk  
6 medium veal cutlets  
4 tablespoons butter  
juice of 1 lemon

Combine dry ingredients in a wide bowl. In another bowl mix egg and milk. Dip cutlets in flour mixture, then in milk, then again in flour mixture to make a crust. Fry in butter over medium heat. Place on a warm platter. Melt 4 tablespoons butter in a skillet and add lemon juice. Heat 1 minute. Pour over each cutlet and serve at once.

Mrs. Leona Haniff, submitted by Mrs. August Zoch, Giddings

## WENDISH BUTTERMILK DUMPLINGS

3 eggs, separated  
1/2 cup sour cream  
1/2 cup buttermilk  
1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon baking soda  
1 tablespoon boiling water  
flour  
seasoned chicken, duck or goose broth

Beat egg yolks until thick. Add sour cream, buttermilk, salt and soda which has been dissolved in boiling water. Fold in the stiffly beaten egg whites. Fold in enough flour to make a stiff batter. Drop by spoonfuls into seasoned chicken, duck or goose broth and boil, covered, at low heat 20 minutes or until no raw dough shows. Serve hot.

## HOMEMADE NOODLES

6 eggs  
6 tablespoons light cream  
1 teaspoon salt

4-1/2 cups flour  
2 quarts water  
2 tablespoons salt

Combine eggs, cream and salt. Beat thoroughly. Stir in flour gradually to form a dough that can be made into a ball. Knead on a lightly floured surface for 10 minutes. Divide dough into four portions. On a lightly floured surface roll each portion, stretching dough, until paper thin and transparent. Let dry 30 minutes. Cut into strips of desired widths. Drop into boiling salted water and cook for about 6 minutes. Drain. Makes 2 pounds of noodles.

Mrs. Mary Schimank, Houston

## WILTED LETTUCE

1 head lettuce  
1 small onion, diced  
5 to 6 slices bacon  
1/4 cup bacon grease  
1/4 cup vinegar  
1/2 cup sugar  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1/4 teaspoon pepper  
1/4 cup water

Break lettuce into small pieces. Place in bowl with onion. Dice bacon and heat until crisp. Drain. Add to lettuce and onion. Combine bacon grease, vinegar, sugar, salt, pepper and water. Bring to a boil, stirring. Pour over salad while hot. Toss well. Serves 6.

Mrs. R. H. Wuensche, Elgin



Wendish Couple, Showing the Bride in  
Traditional Black Wedding Gown

## WHOLE WHEAT BREAD

1 package dry yeast or 1 yeast cake  
3 cups water or 1 cup milk and  
2 cups water  
1 tablespoon salt  
1/4 to 1/2 cup sugar, as desired

3 cups white flour  
1/2 cup shortening  
2 or 3 eggs, beaten  
about 6 to 7 cups whole wheat flour  
butter or margarine

Dissolve yeast in 1 cup lukewarm water. Add salt and sugar and other liquid. Stir in white flour and shortening. Add eggs. Gradually add whole wheat flour, stirring vigorously until a very stiff dough is formed. Turn on a board and knead well. Add enough flour to keep from sticking. Place in a large bowl and grease the top. Cover and allow to rise until double in bulk. Punch down then allow to rise again until double. After second rising, shape into loaves. Put into greased pans, grease tops of loaves and allow to rise until double. Bake at 350 degrees to 375 degrees for 25 to 30 minutes for medium sized loaves. Brush the top of each loaf with butter or margarine when taken from the oven. Makes 3 loaves.

Miss Jewell Hudler, McDade

## FRESH FIG PIE

3 tablespoons flour  
3/4 cup sugar  
1/4 teaspoon allspice  
3 cups peeled, sliced figs  
butter

1 unbaked 9 inch double pie shell  
3 tablespoons lemon juice  
1 tablespoon sugar  
2 tablespoons butter

Mix flour, 3/4 cup sugar and allspice. Place 1 cup figs in pie shell. Sprinkle with 1/3 sugar mixture. Repeat until all is used. Dot with butter. Add lemon juice. Cover with slashed upper pie crust. Sprinkle crust with 1 tablespoon sugar and dot with 2 teaspoons butter. Bake at 325 degrees for 35 minutes.

Mrs. Minnie Miertschen, La Grange

## NUT CAKES

4 cups grated pecans, almonds or  
other nut meats  
2 cups sugar

1/2 cup crushed zwieback or  
dried bread crumbs  
5 large eggs, separated

Mix nuts, sugar and bread crumbs thoroughly. Whip egg whites slightly and fold into nut mixture. Refrigerate 2 hours or overnight, but no longer. The mixture should be soft enough to drop by spoonfuls; space rather closely together in pans lined with unglazed paper. Ordinary wrapping paper may be used but it is advisable to grease the pans before inserting the paper, then dust with flour. Bake at 300 to 325 degrees for 10 or 15 minutes on lower shelf of oven, then about the same time close to top. Do not bake too long or in too hot an oven. Remove when barely firm to the touch and very light brown in color. Remove cakes with a spatula when cool. If they stick, place the paper on a damp towel while still hot.

Mrs. Ella Simmang, Corpus Christi.

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Anglo-Americans—Laying the Fences

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Chinese—Mrs. T. H. Wu and Mildred Wu; *San Antonio Light*

Czechs—First Czech Band in Texas; Sister M. Andrea, Fayetteville

Danes—Carl Jensen Family at Danevang

Dutch—Westerterp Family, c. 1920; Windmill Museum, Nederland

English—William Turner and Family, 1919; *San Angelo Standard Times*

Filipinos—Tinikilin Dancers

French—Founding of Champ d'Asile in 1818, San Jacinto Museum

Germans—Gymnastics Organization at Half Moon in 1888; Edwin Wolters Memorial Museum, Shiner

Greeks—Greek Orthodox Clergy, Houston, 1970; Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral, Houston

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Italians—Italian Club Picnic, Thurber; Texas Pacific Oil Co., Inc., Dallas

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