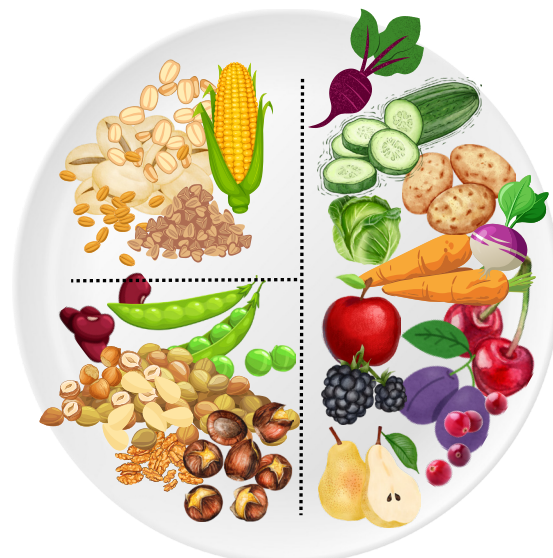


# VN DPG Culture Plates: Central European Cuisine



Central Europe is a diverse region with deep historical, cultural, and culinary connections. It includes countries such as Germany, Austria, Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, and Switzerland, among others. These nations share influences shaped by trade, migration, and historical empires like the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Holy Roman Empire.

One common misconception is that Central European cuisine is entirely meat-heavy and uniform, when in reality, the region has a rich tradition of vegetarian dishes, seasonal eating, and plant-based staples including potatoes, cabbage, legumes and grains. Another assumption is that each country's food culture is completely distinct, yet many dishes transcend borders—for example, dumplings (such as German *knödel*, Czech *knedlíky*, and Polish *pyzy*) and

hearty stews appear in multiple cuisines with unique variations.

Food serves as a bridge between these countries, highlighting shared ingredients, techniques, and traditions. Signature dishes like goulash exist in different forms across Hungary, Austria, and Slovakia, while fermented foods like *sauerkraut* and *pickles* are staples across the region. Additionally, Central Europe's historical trade routes brought spices, coffee, and pastry traditions that continue to influence regional cuisines today.

Through food, Central European countries remain interconnected, blending heritage and modern influences while showcasing the region's rich culinary diversity.

## Central European Plant-Based Foods by Region

Sub-Regions	North Central Europe	West Central Europe	Central Europe	East Central Europe	South Central Europe
Countries	Poland, Northern Germany	Western Germany Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg	Czech Republic, Austria	Slovakia, Hungary, Poland	Slovenia, Croatia
Legumes	<p><b>Peas</b> (split and green peas) –soups like German <i>Erbsensuppe</i></p> <p><b>Broad beans (fava beans)</b> – popular in rural Polish and German dishes</p> <p><b>Lentils</b> – increasingly in modern Polish cuisine</p> <p><b>White beans</b> –hearty stews and baked dishes</p>	<p><b>Lentils</b> – especially <i>green lentils</i> (e.g., <i>Linsen mit Spätzle</i> in Swabia)</p> <p><b>Kidney beans</b> –stews and modern mixed dishes</p> <p><b>Chickpeas</b> – more common recently, in salads / vegetarian dishes</p> <p><b>White beans</b> –Alpine stews and soup</p> <p><b>Peas</b> – traditional in soups and purées</p>	<p><b>Lentils</b> – traditional in Austrian <i>Linseneintopf</i> and Czech <i>čočková polévka</i> (lentil soup)</p> <p><b>Peas</b> –fresh and dried, in purées and soups</p> <p><b>White beans</b> –various regional bean stews</p> <p><b>Yellow split peas</b> – some rustic Czech recipes</p>	<p><b>Lentils</b> – especially in Hungarian New Year's dishes</p> <p><b>White beans</b> – <i>Jókai bablevés</i> (Hungarian bean soup) a national classic</p> <p><b>Yellow split peas and green peas</b> – common in Slovak home cooking</p> <p><b>Broad beans</b> – more common in traditional rural dishes</p> <p><b>Chickpeas</b> – gaining popularity in vegetarian and fusion cuisines</p>	<p><b>Beans</b> (white, pinto, borlotti types) –stews like <i>grah</i> (Croatian bean soup)</p> <p><b>Chickpeas</b> –Mediterranean-influenced dishes along Adriatic coast</p> <p><b>Lentils</b> –red and brown, common in vegetarian meals and soups</p> <p><b>Green peas</b> –side dishes and mixed vegetable stews</p> <p><b>Fava beans</b> – used more along coastal and southern regions of Croatia / Slovenia</p>

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Grains and Cereals	<p><b>Rye</b> – dark rye breads like <i>Pumpernickel</i> Polish <i>żytnia chleb</i></p> <p><b>Wheat</b> – breads, noodles, pastries</p> <p><b>Barley</b> – soups (like Polish <i>krupnik</i>) and porridges</p> <p><b>Oats</b> – porridge / baked goods</p> <p><b>Buckwheat</b> – traditional in Polish dishes like <i>kasza gryczana</i></p>	<p><b>Wheat</b> – breads, pastries, noodles</p> <p><b>Rye</b> – many hearty breads (<i>Mischbrot</i>, rye-wheat blends)</p> <p><b>Barley</b> – traditionally in soups and stews, beer</p> <p><b>Spelt (Dinkel)</b> – Germany and Switzerland, often used in health-focused and traditional recipes</p> <p><b>Oats</b> – porridge, muesli (originated in Switzerland)</p>	<p><b>Wheat</b> –dumplings (<i>knödel</i>, <i>knedliky</i>), bread, cakes</p> <p><b>Barley</b> –soups and beer production</p> <p><b>Rye</b> –breads and rustic baked goods</p> <p><b>Spelt</b> – increasingly in health food markets</p> <p><b>Buckwheat</b> – less common - rural / mountainous areas</p>	<p><b>Wheat</b> – breads, noodles (<i>nokedli</i>, <i>csipetke</i>), pastries</p> <p><b>Corn (Maize)</b> – especially in Hungary, in porridge (<i>puliszka</i>)</p> <p><b>Barley</b> – traditional in soups and stews</p> <p><b>Rye</b> - rural breadmaking</p> <p><b>Millet</b> – traditional in older Hungarian cuisine, making modest comeback</p> <p><b>Buckwheat</b> – mountainous or eastern rural regions</p>	<p><b>Corn (Maize)</b> – <i>žganci</i> (Slovenia) and <i>palenta</i> (Croatia, like polenta)</p> <p><b>Wheat</b> –bread, pasta, and pastry production</p> <p><b>Barley</b> –traditional dishes and beer</p> <p><b>Spelt</b> – health-focused products</p> <p><b>Millet</b> – traditional but less common today</p> <p><b>Oats</b> - modern breakfast dishes</p>
Fruit	<p><b>Apples</b> – widely grown fresh consumption to pies and compotes</p> <p><b>Plums</b> – jams (<i>powidła</i>), dumplings (<i>knedle</i>), cakes</p> <p><b>Cherries</b> – sweet and sour, desserts, syrups, and liqueurs</p> <p><b>Blackberries, currants, gooseberries</b> – preserves and desserts</p> <p><b>Pears</b> – often poached or baked</p> <p><b>Cranberries /lingon-berries</b> – forested regions and used in sauces</p>	<p><b>Apples</b> - traditional and modern dishes</p> <p><b>Pears</b> – especially in Switzerland (e.g., pear bread)</p> <p><b>Plums</b> – tarts (<i>Zwetschgenkuchen</i>) and dried (<i>prunes</i>)</p> <p><b>Cherries</b> – Black Forest cake (<i>Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte</i>)</p> <p><b>Grapes</b> – fresh or wine production (especially in Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland)</p> <p><b>Red/black currants, gooseberries</b> – jams /cakes</p>	<p><b>Apples and pears</b> – strudels, compotes, schnapps</p> <p><b>Plums</b> – cakes and spirits (<i>slivovitz</i>)</p> <p><b>Apricots</b> – Austrian desserts (e.g., <i>Marillenknödel</i>)</p> <p><b>Cherries</b> – pastries / liqueurs</p> <p><b>Red currants and blueberries</b> – forested regions / mountain areas</p>	<p><b>Plums</b> – extremely important; used in jam, dumplings, brandy (<i>palinka</i>, <i>slivovitz</i>)</p> <p><b>Apples</b> – fresh, baked, or preserved</p> <p><b>Cherries</b> – fresh, preserved, or in desserts</p> <p><b>Apricots and peaches</b> – Hungary in late summer</p> <p><b>Blackberries, elderberries, currants</b> – syrups / traditional medicine</p> <p><b>Quince</b> – sometimes made into jams or pastes</p>	<p><b>Figs</b> – Adriatic coast, eaten fresh or dried</p> <p><b>Grapes</b> – central to wine culture</p> <p><b>Plums</b> – fresh, dried, and distilled</p> <p><b>Apricots and peaches</b> – more common in warmer areas</p> <p><b>Cherries</b> – desserts / preserves</p> <p><b>Citrus (lemons, oranges)</b> – not grown widely, Mediterranean influence</p> <p><b>Mulberries / medlar (níspero)</b> – traditional but now rare</p>
Vegetables	<p><b>Cabbage (white, red, savoy)</b> – fresh, stewed, or fermented (<i>sauerkraut</i>, <i>kapusta</i>)</p> <p><b>Carrots</b> – stews, salads, soups</p> <p><b>Beets</b> – borscht and pickled forms</p> <p><b>Potatoes</b> – major staple</p> <p><b>Leeks, onions, parsnips</b> – soup and stew bases</p> <p><b>Cucumbers</b> – pickled and fresh in salads</p> <p><b>Kohlrabi and turnips</b> – traditional root veg in rural cuisine</p>	<p><b>Cabbage and kale</b> – <i>Grünkohl</i> dishes and soups</p> <p><b>Leeks, onions, garlic</b> – flavor bases</p> <p><b>Carrots / celery root</b> – soup starters (Mirepoix-style mixes)</p> <p><b>Asparagus</b> – especially white asparagus (<i>Spargelzeit</i> season in Germany)</p> <p><b>Swiss chard and spinach</b> – tarts / side dishes</p> <p><b>Potatoes</b> – roasted, boiled, gratins</p> <p><b>Zucchini and pumpkin</b> – Alpine / autumn cuisine</p>	<p><b>Cabbage (fresh / fermented)</b> – base for many national dishes</p> <p><b>Potatoes</b> - dumplings, sides, soups</p> <p><b>Root vegetables (carrot, parsley root, celery root)</b> – classic soup bases</p> <p><b>Onions, garlic</b> – flavor essentials</p> <p><b>Mushrooms (wild)</b> – prized in stews and sauces</p> <p><b>Lettuce, endive</b> – fresh salads</p>	<p><b>Paprika peppers</b> – iconic in Hungarian cuisine</p> <p><b>Tomatoes</b> – fresh and stewed, in sauces (<i>lecsó</i>)</p> <p><b>Cabbage / sauerkraut</b> – present at most meals</p> <p><b>Eggplant and zucchini</b> – stews and dips</p> <p><b>Potatoes</b> – mashed, fried, dumplings</p> <p><b>Onions / garlic</b> – foundational flavor</p> <p><b>Carrots and beets</b> – soups, salads, sides</p>	<p><b>Swiss chard, spinach, kale</b> – stews / pies (<i>soparnik</i>, <i>zeljanica</i>)</p> <p><b>Peppers and eggplant</b> – grilled, stuffed, roasted</p> <p><b>Cabbage</b> – raw, cooked, or fermented</p> <p><b>Tomatoes and zucchini</b> – summer staples</p> <p><b>Onions and garlic</b> – heavily coastal / inland cooking</p> <p><b>Wild greens and mushrooms</b> – foraged traditional dishes</p> <p><b>Pumpkin</b> – soups and roasted (especially in Styria)</p>
Nuts/Seeds	<p><b>Hazelnuts</b> – baking, chocolates, spreads</p> <p><b>Walnuts</b> – cakes, cookies, and sometimes savory sauces</p> <p><b>Chestnuts</b> – roasted or in purées during winter</p> <p><b>Poppy seeds</b> - used like a nut in pastries</p>	<p><b>Hazelnuts / almonds</b> – pastries and chocolates</p> <p><b>Walnuts</b> – traditional cakes and nut rolls</p> <p><b>Chestnuts</b> – roasted, in stuffing, or creamy soups</p> <p><b>Pine nuts</b> – more recent, often in fusion or Italian-inspired dishes</p>	<p><b>Walnuts</b> – classic in strudels / nut rolls</p> <p><b>Poppy seeds</b> – key in Czech and Austrian baking (<i>makový závin</i>, <i>Mohnstrudel</i>)</p> <p><b>Hazelnuts and almonds</b> – in desserts / baking</p> <p><b>Pumpkin seeds</b> - especially in Southern Austria (Styrian pumpkin seed oil)</p>	<p><b>Walnuts</b> – festive pastries (e.g., <i>bejgli</i>, <i>orehova potica</i>)</p> <p><b>Poppy seeds</b> - important in traditional baking</p> <p><b>Chestnuts</b> – sweet spreads or winter dishes</p> <p><b>Sunflower seeds</b> – common snack or bread topping</p> <p><b>Pumpkin seeds</b> – baking and oils</p>	<p><b>Walnuts</b> – staple in pastries - <i>baklava</i>-style desserts and <i>potica</i></p> <p><b>Almonds</b> – coastal Croatian cuisine</p> <p><b>Pine nuts</b> – Dalmatian coastal recipes</p> <p><b>Chestnuts</b> – fresh / roasted in fall</p> <p><b>Pumpkin seeds</b> – Slovenia / Southern Austria (especially oil)</p>

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Herbs/Spices	<p><b>Dill</b> – iconic in Polish and Northern German cuisine, fish, potatoes, pickles</p> <p><b>Caraway</b> – essential in rye bread, cabbage dishes, and sausages</p> <p><b>Bay leaf</b> – soups, stews, and marinades</p> <p><b>Parsley</b> – flat and curly, widely used fresh and cooked</p> <p><b>Marjoram</b> – Polish sausage and bean dishes</p> <p><b>Mustard seeds</b> – in pickling and condiments</p> <p><b>Horseradish</b> – fresh grated root, especially with meats</p>	<p><b>Parsley</b> – universal garnish and soup ingredient</p> <p><b>Chives</b> – fresh in spreads, eggs, and sauces</p> <p><b>Tarragon</b> – Alsatian and Swiss French-style dishes</p> <p><b>Nutmeg</b> – key in creamy dishes like spaetzle or béchamel sauce</p> <p><b>Caraway and marjoram</b> – sausages and stews</p> <p><b>Thyme and rosemary</b> – southern Germany / fusion cuisine</p>	<p><b>Marjoram</b> – classic - lentil and potato soups</p> <p><b>Caraway</b> – heavily used in Czech cabbage, pork, and bread dishes</p> <p><b>Parsley</b> – fresh and cooked</p> <p><b>Chives</b> – especially in Austrian dairy-based dips and egg dishes</p> <p><b>Bay leaf</b> – for stews and stocks</p> <p><b>Paprika (sweet and smoked)</b> – increasingly common</p> <p><b>Poppy seeds and cinnamon</b> – sweet baking</p>	<p><b>Sweet and hot paprika</b> – foundation of Hungarian cuisine</p> <p><b>Caraway</b> – soups, cabbage, and bread</p> <p><b>Marjoram and savory</b> – meats and bean dishes</p> <p><b>Garlic and onion powder</b> – alongside fresh forms</p> <p><b>Bay leaf</b> – stews and pickles</p> <p><b>Parsley, dill</b> – fresh herbs used generously</p> <p><b>Poppy seeds and cinnamon</b> – essential in baked sweets</p> <p><b>Chili flakes</b> – spicier Hungarian cooking</p>	<p><b>Rosemary and thyme</b> – coastal / southern areas</p> <p><b>Bay leaf</b> – stews / sauces</p> <p><b>Oregano and marjoram</b> – Mediterranean-influenced regions</p> <p><b>Garlic (fresh and dried)</b> – central</p> <p><b>Chili flakes and black pepper</b> – Dalmatian / Istrian cooking</p> <p><b>Parsley and basil</b> – near the coast</p> <p><b>Sage and mint</b> – traditional dishes / tea</p> <p><b>Paprika</b> – sweet and smoked, inland</p>
Beverages	<p><b>Beer</b> – especially lagers and pilsners (e.g., Tyskie, Beck's)</p> <p><b>Kvass</b> – traditional fermented bread-based drink in Eastern Poland</p> <p><b>Compote drinks</b> – sweetened, fruit-based beverages (cold or hot)</p> <p><b>Herbal teas</b> – chamomile, mint, linden blossom</p> <p><b>Buttermilk and kefir</b> – traditional fermented dairy beverages</p> <p><b>Vodka</b> – culturally significant, often flavored (e.g., bison grass)</p> <p><b>Coffee and tea</b> – consumed at home / in cafes</p>	<p><b>Beer</b> – regional varieties like Helles, Kölsch, and Altbier</p> <p><b>Wine</b> – especially white wines (Riesling, Silvaner), grown along the Rhine</p> <p><b>Apple cider (Apfelwein)</b> – particularly popular in Hessen</p> <p><b>Herbal teas and fruit infusions</b> – widely consumed</p> <p><b>Mineral water</b> – often naturally carbonated (e.g., Gerolsteiner)</p> <p><b>Coffee</b> – strong, black, often served with cake (Kaffee und Kuchen)</p> <p><b>Hot chocolate</b> – Swiss / Alpine regions</p>	<p><b>Beer</b> – Czech pilsner and Austrian lagers</p> <p><b>Wine</b> – Grüner Veltliner (Austria), Moravian whites (Czech)</p> <p><b>Schnapps and fruit brandies</b> – plum, pear, apricot (Obstler)</p> <p><b>Almdudler</b> – a traditional Austrian herbal soft drink</p> <p><b>Coffee</b> – especially Vienna, elegant café culture (Melange, Einspänner)</p> <p><b>Herbal and fruit teas</b> – common at home / in traditional inns</p> <p><b>Soda water with syrup (sodovka)</b> – Czech Republic</p>	<p><b>Beer</b> – local lagers and pilsners</p> <p><b>Wine</b> – Tokaji (Hungary), a famed sweet wine</p> <p><b>Palinka</b> – strong fruit brandy, a Hungarian national drink</p> <p><b>Kefir and buttermilk</b> – traditional dairy beverages</p> <p><b>Fruit syrups with soda water</b> – common homemade drinks</p> <p><b>Herbal teas</b> – everyday and medicinal use</p> <p><b>Coffee</b> – generally strong / served black</p> <p><b>Compotes</b> – fruit drinks made by simmering dried or fresh fruits</p>	<p><b>Wine</b> – coastal and hill-grown whites and reds (e.g., Malvazija, Teran)</p> <p><b>Rakija</b> – strong fruit brandy, especially plum and grape-based</p> <p><b>Beer</b> – traditional and modern settings</p> <p><b>Coffee</b> – often espresso-based; café culture</p> <p><b>Mineral water and sparkling water</b></p> <p><b>Herbal teas</b> – sage, mint, chamomile, and mountain herbs</p> <p><b>Fruit juices and syrups</b> – especially berries or elderflower (bezgov sok)</p>

## Vegetarian Nutrition

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