WARSAW'S MILK BARS: A STEP BACK IN TIME

When in Warsaw, don't miss out on a taste of Polish history at the local milk bars. These eateries, once subsidised by Poland's socialist government were known as bar mleczny, or "milk bars" because of the dairy-based bill of fare such as cheese dumplings and yoghurt, although many other items including meat and vegetables are available at milk bars.

The milk bars were a way for workers busy building a new, industrialised Poland to get a cheap and healthy meal. **Although the Communist regime collapsed and the milk bars are now private businesses, they are an important part of Polish culture. A source of nostalgia for some older citizens and a necessary service for lower income Poles, everyone loves these cheap cafeterias.**

Milk Bars are famous for their pierogi, Poland's national dish. These dumplings are made with fillings of cheese, meat (usually pork) or potatoes. The menus usually include wholesome Polish soups, salads and meat dishes.

Pierogi. I could live on it.

Familijny Bar Mleczny

A popular milk bar with spartan interior with wood panelled walls, plastic flowers atop laminated tables. Nothing fancy, almost no service but rather wholesome, local food such as sour rye soup; meatballs and potatoes with dill; red cabbage salad and, of course, pierogi dumplings. Dessert is a fruity stew/jam containing berries served with white rice (tastes better than it sounds)

Rush hour

There are rumours of an English menu at Familijny but it was nowhere to be seen, so I took a guess and ended up with a tomato rice soup, schnitzel, potatoes, salad and dumplings. Probably a meal for two.The bill for an enormous meal for two people served with homemade fruit punch comes to about $5.70. This place is particularly busy on weekends and you'll be expected to eat and run to make way for the crowds. Stack your plates near the cashier as you leave. 39 Nowy Swiat. Open till 8pm on weekdays, 5pm on weekends.

Familijny: still serving old-fashioned Polish meals. They're quite good.