

**Seasonal Eating**  
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**A Tribute to Texas Czech**  
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Where can you get handmade sausages and hotdogs, try three different types of Kolache and have a lunch of the best sauerkraut and cabbage rolls you've ever eaten? If you're thinking Eastern Europe, think a little closer – Texas actually!

Gay Ervin and I just returned from the International Association of Culinary Professionals Conference in Austin, Texas. Between watching cooking demonstrations from the likes of Chef Jacques Pepin (host of 11 Public Television Cooking Series), John Besh (author of "My New Orleans"), Ellie Krieger (host of "Healthy Appetite" on Food Network) and Shirley Corriher (the "Mad Scientist" on "Good Eats"), we took a tour of the Czech-influenced culture of Central Texas. Beginning in the 1860s, immigrants from Moravia and Bohemia settled on the Texas prairie land and were able to maintain their unique culture until today in places in Fayette and Lavaca counties.

We stopped at City Meat Market in Shulenburg where they make 10,000 pounds a week of their own sausages and hot dogs. If you think a hot dog is a low class bland mixture of who knows what, this wiener was elevated to a whole new level of deliciousness (one of the best I've ever tasted!). The dried beef and pork sausages in natural casings send off a hickory smoked aroma that will make your mouth water and your suitcase attract every dog in the neighborhood.

At Sengelmann Hall, a restored dance hall in Shulenburg, we enjoyed a lunch of a beautifully sweet sauerkraut with pork ribs and cabbage rolls stuffed with a mixture of pork and veal in a tangy tomato sauce. The rye bread slices were brushed with duck fat and fried for a luscious accompaniment. The tour ended at Spoetzl Brewery where they make Shiner beer.

But the best part of the tour was the Kolaches. These are a Czech pastry dough wrapped around a filling which is traditionally apricot, poppy seed, dewberry (kind of like blackberry), prune or cottage cheese. Some are enclosed while others are open with the filling in the center. We tasted kolaches from three different bakeries and they were all different. Some were denser and more like a sweet pizza dough while others were more coffee cake like in texture. Some were traditionally filled while others were filled with bacon, apples and brie cheese or mushrooms and



boar meat. They were all delicious! We were given a booklet of Czech recipes from the Texas Czech Genealogical Society which had three recipes for the kolaches. We came back and tried a couple and this was our favorite. We encourage you to try these delicious pastries for breakfast and if you're ever in central Texas try the Zubik House, Sengelmann Hall Bakery or Kountry Bakery kolaches – you won't be disappointed!

### Kolache

½ cup warm water  
2 packages dry yeast  
1 cup warm milk  
¾ cup sugar  
¾ cup butter flavored shortening  
2 unbeaten eggs  
1 teaspoon salt  
4 ½ cups flour

Stir together the water and yeast and let sit for 5 minutes. Add milk, sugar, shortening and eggs. Stir together, mashing with the spatula to break up the shortening. Add the salt and flour, stirring together and kneading a little with your hands until a soft dough is formed (may need a little less or more flour). Place in a greased bowl and let rise until doubled (about an hour). Pull off balls of dough and form into a flat round and place on a greased baking sheet. Cover and let rise a little (about 30 minutes). Press down the center and add a spoonful of filling. Bake at 350 degrees for 15-20 minutes until lightly browned.

For the filling: Cook 8 ounces of prunes in water until softened. Drain and place in food processor with ¾ cup sugar and 1 ½ tablespoons melted butter. Pulse until the texture of a preserves (some small chunks left). You can do the same thing with dried apricots.