

Are You Polish?

If you come from Chicago, Buffalo, Cleveland, or the suburb of Cleveland, Toledo, Hamtramck, or Milwaukee there is a large church called “Saint Stanislaus,” or “Saint Hedwig,” within one block of your childhood home (that is, unless you’re one of those suburban exiles, in which case the church is within one block of your busia’s house!)

The neighborhood you grew up in is called “Little Warsaw,” “Slavic Village,” “Polish Hill,” or something of that sort.

You like to celebrate St. Patrick’s Day but only because “the Irish are oppressed too”!

Your knowledge of the Polish language is limited to ‘naughty’ words (e.g., dupa, gówno, cholera, etc), names for food (e.g., pierogi, kapusta, etc), and drinking toasts (e.g., na zdrowie, sto lat, etc).

You occasionally add the suffix “-ski” to English words for no apparent reason (e.g., “I’m gonna go put the car-ski in the garage-ski”). [If you also happen to know a few basic conversational phrases in Polish, you are considered “old school” by friends and relatives.]

You call your grandma “babcia” or “busia” and your grandpa “dziadzia.”

You know how to dance the polka, but you only do it at weddings after kicking back a few generous shots of vodka.

You like to drink. Especially beercheap beer.

When frustrated, you slap your forehead, shake your head, and say “O Jezus Marija!”

You have one grandma that wears a babushka and galoshes every single day of the year and another grandma that wears a lot of jewelry and too much make-up.

You have a grandma who uses every single part of animal carcasses to make sausages, soups, dumplings, etc.

You have at least one uncle named “Stan,” or “Stosh.”

You have at least one relative who works, or used to work, for the Big Three.

Your relatives make devotions to saints, the Blessed Virgin, the Pope, the Democratic Party, the U.S. Steelworkers, etc.

Your grandma has a shrine complete with votive candles and a picture of the “Our Lady of Czestochowa” or “Infant of Prague.”

Your parents have at least one crucifix or religious picture mounted on a wall in their house with palms tucked behind it.

You refer to your two dozen or so cousins by childhood nicknames (e.g., Stannie, Wally, Louis, Joey, Chickie, Honey, etc.) irrespective of their ages.

You refer to grandparents and aunts by pet names (e.g., Aunt Honey, Aunt Chickie, Grandpa Jo-Jo, etc).

You regularly attend Friday fish fries, harvest festivals, parish festivals, Vegas nights, and/or bingo.

You bowl regularly and/or on a team sponsored by a local bar.

You get your food blessed at Easter and your house blessed at Christmas time and your throat blessed on St. Blaze.

Your family has a wigilia meal on Christmas Eve at which you share oplatki.

You like to put sour cream, horseradish, and/or beer on everything you eat.

Your family likes to play card games like hearts and pinochle, and this often culminates in full-scale brawls.

You always prefer rye bread to white or wheat.

Your dad has forced you to eat horseradish, claiming that it will “put hair on your chest” (even if you’re a female!).

You like to go “mushroom hunting.”

People in your family have their wedding receptions at places called “Polish Legion Hall,” “Sacred Heart Center,” etc.

You know the words to “Sto Lat” and sing it at all birthday parties.

You can out drink all of your friends.

You have waited in line at a church or bakery to buy pierogi or paczki.

You frequently add “dere” (there) and/or “ya know” to the end of sentences.

Words like kiszka, kielbasa, and kolaczki actually mean something to you.

You know the difference between Czechs, Slovaks, and Slovenes, and you think they’re all inferior to Poles despite the numerous glaring similarities.

You used to get a day off from school on Saint Joseph’s Day (March 19).

You actually know who Kosciuszko and Pulaski are, and why they’re important.

You have at least one relative who plays the accordion.

You have an easier time getting along with Irishmen and Italians than with non-Polish Slavs.

You're either completely overdressed or completely underdressed for every occasion.

If you're a woman, you wear make-up at all times – even if it's 90 degrees outside and you're 88 years old.

Your idea of “healthy” is boiled pierogi, light beer, and filtered cigarettes.

You walk into a crowd of people you don't know and talk to them like they're your best friends in the whole world.

You hoard vast amounts of money in your house.

You have at least one bar in your house – usually in the basement.

Your family always holds a “po prawinny” – a party the day after a wedding.

You've never been to Poland, but you have mysterious relatives there to whom you send gifts and money every Christmas.

Your front yard is filled with lawn ornaments – e.g., pink flamingos, jockey, Mary in the half shell, etc.

You have relatives who are priests and nuns.

You collect “prayer cards” from funerals.

You or someone in your family owns highly outdated Dodges or Plymouths.

You regularly attend Mass but spend most of the ceremony sleeping and/or looking at the parish bulletin.

You often visit cemeteries, light votive candles for dead relatives, and generally spend an unhealthy amount of time obsessing about death.

You like to gossip and generally talk too much.

People often have trouble pronouncing your last name.

Your family is so loyal that even a second cousin would take a bullet for you.

You drink your coffee black and take your liquor straight up.

Polish people are GREAT!