

Bartłomiej Garda  
Radny Miasta Krakowa

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### I N T E R P E L A C J A

Szanowny Pan Prezydent  
Miasta Krakowa  
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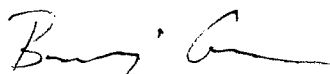
W ostatnim numerze Ryanair Magazine rozdawanym za darmo wszystkim podróżnym korzystającym z linii lotniczych Rynair jest ciekawy artykuł dotyczący popularyzacji spożywania wódki pt. *„Polish Spirit – Surviving the finest vodka in Krakow”*.

Uważam, że przedstawiony artykuł jest krzywdzący dla naszego miasta. Uważam, że sprawa spożywania alkoholu jest najmniej istotną atrakcją turystyczną osób przybywających do Krakowa. Jeśli w ogóle można to uznać za atrakcję.

Chciałbym prosić Pana Prezydenta o ewentualną reakcję. I wykpić we wspomnianym periodyku ogłoszenie o najważniejszych atrakcjach turystycznych naszego miasta. Natomiast do wszystkich linii lotniczych dostarczać regularnie informacje o wydarzeniach kulturalnych w naszym mieście w postaci gotowych artykułów. Chyba mamy się czym pochwalić? Ewentualnie również odpowiedzieć artykuł przedstawiający Kraków w innym świetle. Dokładnie w tym samym magazynie mamy informacje o włoskich kurortach narciarskich, o premierze baletu *„Dziadek do orzechów”* w Londynie, o świątecznych targach w Niemczech, o atrakcjach w Porto, o magicznej Wenecji, o najlepszych miejscach w Europie do grania w golfa i wiele wiele innych.

W załączeniu do niniejszej interpelacji dołączam wspomniany Magazyn.

Z poważaniem,



# SHARP SHOOTERS

*The Poles claim to have invented vodka, and in recent years their brands have proved even more popular exports than cut-price plumbers. **Duncan Rhodes** gets into the spirit in Krakow.*  
*Illustrated by **Henry Obasi***

**"N**a zdrowie," I say, clinking my shot glass before downing the Żubrówka vodka. That means "good health" in Polish, and I'll be saying it a lot tonight. Alongside Simon Taylor, a vodka-quaffing Englishman living in Krakow, I'm on a *Ryanair Magazine* mission to drink a shot of each of Poland's most famous vodkas.

Somerset Maugham described this particular brand in his novel *The Razor's Edge* as smelling "of freshly mown hay and spring flowers, of thyme and lavender, and it's soft on the palate and so comfortable, it's like listening to music in the moonlight..."

Simon's assessment is somewhat more phlegmatic. "It's like eating grass," he declares, wrinkling up his nose and pushing the glass away in disgust. Żubrówka's fresh-from-the-meadow flavour derives from the blade of so-called "bison grass", which is hand-picked and placed in each bottle. The grass, also known as "wisent grass" or "vanilla grass", earned its nickname thanks to the bison of the primeval Białowieża Forest who love to graze on it. Not only does this herb lend the vodka its distinctive sweetness, but the chemical inherent in it, coumarin, is purported to have hallucinogenic and aphrodisiac properties. Small wonder the brand has developed such a cult status in Poland and abroad.

Simon was perhaps a bit harsh about this one, but there's no chance for second opinions – drinking a shot of each of Poland's top vodkas is risky enough, without having to revisit them. We've certainly found the right

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**POLISH VODKA** 



venue to fulfill our brief though, as the rather suave Baroque bar serves over 100 flavours; including the country's most popular clear number, Wyborowa. Simon licks his lips in anticipation. After living in Krakow for the past two years, the 28-year-old from Brighton knows what he wants from his liquor.

"The thing with vodka," he explains sagely, "is that it's a drink you need to take neat. I don't understand those people who mix vodka with Coke. The whole point of drinking a shot is that it needs to go away in one." As for me, I wouldn't mind a spoonful of sugar with my medicine. Drinking shots of pure vodka like this brings back bad memories of my 21st birthday – most of which was spent unconscious on a pavement in Birmingham. Na zdrowie, indeed!

We chuck it back. Simon recovers first. "Now, that's what you expect from vodka," he declares with satisfaction. "It's light and liquidy, it goes down easily and the aftertaste vanishes quickly."

I concede it proved surprisingly painless, and only a small breather is required before we move onto the brand's upmarket brother, Wyborowa Exquisite. As it is a rather pricey drop, we decide to savour this one, causing pensive ripples to play on Simon's face with each considered sip. "It's really thick. I feel like I'm drinking drool, it's

got that consistency. OK, I'm confused by the aftertaste. I've heard people says it's creamy, but I'm getting burnt plastic."

Safe to say that Simon won't be getting a call from Wyborowa's marketing team any time soon, and in the end we both agree that the standard bottle is by far the better of the two.

It's around this point that my belly starts to

## "I FEEL LIKE I'M DRINKING DROOL, IT'S GOT THAT CONSISTENCY"

complain quite vociferously about the treatment it's getting. But when I ask the barman if he has something to counter the pain, his suggested remedy isn't quite what I had in mind.

"Try a Żołądkowa, it's good for the stomach," he assures me. "Are you an expert in vodka?" I ask. "Everyone in Poland is an expert in vodka," he replies, although I can't tell whether he's joking or not. As our stoic tender pours

out the Żołądkowa, Simon confirms that this so-called "bitter stomach vodka" is part of any self-respecting Pole's medicine cabinet. But by a delightful surprise this aromatic spirit proves to be the most palatable of the bunch by far.

"It's pepperminty, right?"

"They have a minty one but this is the herby one," Simon corrects me, before tilting his head towards the ceiling thoughtfully and drifting into a wistful nostalgia. "There used to be a sweet shop near where I grew up, and – I remember them distinctly – they had these funny things, herbal lozenges, which old people used to suck. It tastes like that. It's like kissing my grandma!" Simon shudders involuntarily, and I wonder if maybe he too has had too much to drink. "No, no, it's just I had a vision of my gran's hairy top lip."

Stopping at this point could be dangerous, so we move swiftly onto another perennial Polish fave, wisniówka. A type of vodka, rather than a brand, this sickly cherry liqueur can be found in every larder across the land, and appeals to the nation's ardently sweet tooth. The Englishman's verdict? "It's just a bit sweet, that's the problem – and sticky," says Simon, with the air of someone who's been forced to drink more than one in the past. I ask him if he's ever had the courage to refuse an offer of



ERECTUS SOBERUS



STARTUS DECLINUS



HOMO NON-ERECTUS

vodka in Poland but, as he explains, it is simply not socially acceptable.

"One Easter I went to stay at my girlfriend's. Her father woke us up at 9am for breakfast and straightaway he cracked the vodka out. It was a shot to one leg, a shot to the other – you always drink even numbers in Poland, then as soon as we had downed those he bought the wine out. We had an hour-long breakfast and afterwards I had to go to sleep again."

But back to Baroque and, as the evening lengthens, the place is quickly filling up with attractive girls. However, despite the improving décor, we are in need of a change of scene, not to mention a breath of fresh air. We wind our way (literally) along Krakow's picturesque cobbles in search of some other suitable place to complete our mission, before settling on a cosy nook that seems to have appeared in our honour – it's called Wódka Bar after all.

As the barman points out a range of exotic infusions from ginger to mango, Simon's eyes settle on a bigger prize – wormwood-flavoured vodka. "Wormwood is what they put in absinth," he says enthusiastically, putting the shot glass to his lips. The cogs tick as I wait for what turns out to be a bath-pearl of wisdom. "You know when you were a kid and you went with your

mum to The Body Shop? There are all those funny balls of soap and, even though you know they're not sweets, you still try one – you eat a soap – well it tastes just like that."

If Simon's increasingly bizarre analyses aren't evidence enough that the vodka has addled our brains, then his sincere attempts to convince me that all bears are left-handed and that Liza Minnelli is allergic to her own saliva are surely the final proof we are utterly sozzled. Simon is busy demonstrating how Gentle Ben would catch a tennis ball in a forest, when thankfully we're interrupted by a phone call from his girlfriend demanding to know where he is.

But before we are allowed to bid farewell to Wódka Bar, the gregarious barman invites us to drink one last round with him – a traditional Polish shot going by the name of "wściekły pies", or "mad dog". Half vodka, half raspberry juice, with a varying amount of Tabasco sauce, the mad dog is a Krakow fave that owes its popularity in part to the clear and crimson layers that mimic the Polish flag. Simon and I exchange a doomed glance – we both know we can't refuse. Down the hatch it goes, followed by much coughing, spluttering and facial spasms. What does Simon think of that one? "It's better than eating grass, I suppose." ♥

## 5 KRAKOW VODKA BARS

**BAROQUE:** A swanky pre-club bar, with more vodkas than seats. Pop in to sample over 100, and try the bartenders' own inventions.

16 UL JANA, TEL: +48 (0)12 422 0106,  
[WWW.BAROQUE.COM.PL](http://WWW.BAROQUE.COM.PL)

**WÓDKA:** Teeny Wódka is a low-key space to get slowly sozzled on "little water". Helpful staff will initiate you in the spirits' folklore.

5 UL MIKOŁAJSKA, TEL: +48 (0)12 422 3214

**PIEKNY PIES:** Although not a specialist vodka bar, "The Beautiful Dog" is full of experts who will no doubt happily share their wisdom with you, especially if you stand them a round.

6A UL SŁAWKOWSKA,  
[WWW.PIEKNY-PIES.PL](http://WWW.PIEKNY-PIES.PL)

**MINISTERSTWO:** Attracting a young crowd, this bar is best on Tuesdays for its Today parties and drinks specials.

1 UL SZPITALNA, TEL: +48 (0)12 429 6790,  
[WWW.KLUBMINISTERSTWO.PL](http://WWW.KLUBMINISTERSTWO.PL)

**LOCH CAMELOT:** A romantic café famous for cabaret and music in its cellar.

17 UL TOMASZA, TEL: +48 (0)12 423 0638,  
[WWW.LOCHCAMELOT.ART.PL](http://WWW.LOCHCAMELOT.ART.PL)

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