

## taste buds

chef Larry Jones

Busy cooks:  
Don't stew  
over dinner

Invited some good friends over last weekend, and while on the phone extending the invite, was asked the usual "What are you preparing?" When I responded "stew," the phone went silent for what seemed to be forever. Let's face it, most folks don't go to a chef's house to sashay.

Recently, however, the stewing rage is resurfacing. Personally, I can't say I remember it sinking. The Jones Gang was raised on stew. Later on, in cooking school, stew was called ragout, paprikash and goulash. Now again, "stew" seems to be the proper colloquial term to identify a savory blend of potatoes, vegetables and the most tender meat you can sink your mouth into.

THINK ABOUT IT... what else can be made ahead, reheated, misused and still come out tasting lovely? Most folks think that just because stew is so reliable that it doesn't belong on the tables of the food connoisseur. To them I say "Let them eat liver!"

Mama Jones used to get out the old pressure cooker and precook an English blade cut roast. She'd add a few vegetables and potatoes, and some of the best bread-soggin' gravy ever — a hearty meal was offered to all. Some nights we dined "fancy style" and served the stew over rice or noodles.

THE FRENCH are noted for their excellence in stew making. Their process utilizes two main French ingredients that have fallen by the wayside in this day of microwaves and boxed cake mixes, namely, wine and time. While interesting herbs and spices, fresh vegetables, and the discreet use of wine can make a fabulous stew, the true success lies solely in the method of cooking. A stew that has boiled on high power with as much agitation as a washing machine will cook no faster than one gently nudged on the simmer setting.

Everyone knows that boiled meat will prove to be tough and stringy, and the gravy will be muddy with the flavors "boiled out."

Always simmer with wine for several hours so that the true taste of the vino can "marry" the remaining flavors into a rich, happy family. Of course, other liquids can be used for braising, such as beer, cider, broth and fresh vegetable juices.

Now I'm not talking crock-pot cookery here folks, however, such an electrical contraption is acceptable when you just can't get your hands on a big, old, heavy cast iron dutch oven. Le Crouzet makes an affordable enameled cast iron dutch oven that not only makes the best stews, but can double for just about anything from a casserole to a soup pot.

It is recommended that the skin that forms on the top of pot while cooking be removed. Allowing a large pot to simmer for hours will not only produce this so-called "skin" but also will surface an oil or grease slick. A glass, wide of bent oversized kitchen spoon works best to remove this without the disturbing that could easily turn a tender pot of stew into a nutcase's nightmare. When it comes to the stirring, I personally don't feel the need to make everything as thick as 20W 50 motor oil. Some people like a substantial sauce and use a roux to accomplish this.

Mama sufficed with dissolving flour in milk and whisking through a sieve so as not to get any lumps. I guess if it was truly necessary, I would thicken with some cooked pureed vegetables or incorporate the silky rich taste of cream and egg yolks.

Whatever your preference, fork-tender meat and vegetables in a luscious sauce can be an easy accomplishment to a busy cook. In the stewpot, if not in mathematics, the whole is often more than the sum of its parts.

Simply  
good...  
Simply  
RussianBy Keely Wygonik  
staff writer

WHEN OLGA Stevens of Troy talks about Russian cooking, she makes a distinction between food that was served by royalty, and food of the people.

"The food served by royalty was often French," said Stevens, the daughter of Russian immigrants. "Catherine the Great corresponded with a lot of French philosophers, as did Peter the Great. You could say Peter the Great was the first Mikhail Gorbachev. He went out of the country and realized Russia needed ideas from the outside world."

"The food of the people was simpler, lots of vegetables and soup, kasha, buckwheat, and pickles which carried some of the freshness of summer into winter."

JANE BARNA, who has traveled to Russia with her husband, the Rt. Rev. Michael Barna of St. Michael's Orthodox Church in Redford, said the Russian and Slavic people are great for soup. (See her recipe for Shchi (sauerkraut soup) inside.)

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Olga Stevens, wearing a copy of an 18th century Russian court costume that would be worn by the nobility, serves tea from a samovar.

JIM RIDER  
staff photographer

## COMING EVENTS

## ● MOISEYEV DANCE COMPANY

The 155-member Moiseyev Russian Folk Dance Company with orchestra has performances scheduled 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Oct. 18-19, 2 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 19, and 8 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 20 at Masonic Temple Theatre, 500 Temple Avenue, Detroit. For ticket information, call 832-2232.

## ● BALALAIKA ORCHESTRA

America's oldest balalaika orchestra, founded in Detroit by Russian immigrants, will perform, 8 p.m. Saturday Oct. 26 and 3 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 27 at the Jones-Johnson Theatre, Oakland Community College, Royal Oak Campus, 739 S. Washington at Lincoln. For ticket information call Ticketmaster, 645-6666, or 543-7830.

## ● RUSSIAN-AMERICAN STUDIO-THATRE

Russian-American Studio-Theatre presents a comedy based on a Russian folk story, 7 p.m. Oct. 20, Nov. 3 and Nov. 10, at Days Hotel-Southfield International Complex, 17017 W. Nine Mile Road. For ticket information, call 557-4800 Ext. 2243.

## ● FALL BAZAAR

St. Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Church, 3810 Gilbert, Detroit is hosting a fall bazaar Nov. 2-3. For information, call 697-3308.

fluenced by other cultures and cuisines.

In "Please to the Table," a Russian cookbook, authors Anya von Bremzen and John Welchman explain the role geography has played.

"CENTURIES OF invasion and occupation by the Mongols, Tatars, and Ottomans brought a whole shopping list of delicious foods that are now considered to be Slavic staples — noodles and dumplings (which the Turkic people had in their turn picked up from the Chinese), stuffed vegetables, tea, (introduced as late as the 17th

century) and that great symbol of Russian heart and home, the samovar."

A luncheon menu for some visiting nobility before the Russian Revolution might have included crayfish soup, pirozhki (filled pockets), Finnish trout, lamb with mushrooms, cold chicken consommé, salad, artichokes with peas, and ice cream.

The foods Stevens says the country is so large, spanned by 6,500 miles from the wiles of steaming soup, pirozhki (chicken cutlets). For dessert, a tart sour cream cake. One thing is for sure, no one leaves the table hungry.

Tea, not coffee was the preferred drink

It was sweeten with jams, like raspberry in place of sugar.

When friends and relatives visited, Stevens said her mother would put out a dish of zakuski, small bites to take the edge off hunger. This might have included fruit, marinated mushrooms, or a bit of herring.

Russians are known for their hospitality, right from the toast-to-the-toast-to-the-toast, followed by a glass of vodka, followed by a glass of vodka, followed by a glass of vodka.

## OBSERVER &amp; ECCENTRIC

## WINNER DINNER

## Recipes

## BORSHCH

- 1 pound piece of veal or beef, with a bone
- 1-2 additional veal or beef soup bones, optional
- 1 large onion, diced and divided
- 2 medium-sized carrots, scraped and shredded
- 1/2 green or red pepper, seeded and chopped finely
- 2 cups cabbage, shredded
- 2 beets, cooked until fork tender, peeled and grated on medium side of grater (canned beets may be used)
- 4 potatoes, peeled and cut up
- 1 potato, peeled, cooked and mashed
- 3-4 garlic cloves, chopped finely
- 1 can tomato sauce, 15-ounce size
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 2 tablespoons margarine
- fresh parsley, chopped
- 4 quarts water

Sour Cream

Using a large soup pot, cook meat with one half of the large onion, diced, in salted water for 1 hour. In a separate sauce pan, cook 2-3 washed beets with the ends trimmed off in water for about 30 minutes or until the beets are fork tender. In another sauce pan, boil one peeled, quartered potato until fork tender and then mash it with a potato masher or a blender.

Next, saute the other diced half of the onion in 2 tablespoons margarine. When the onions are translucent, add the shredded carrots and chopped green pepper. Continue cooking until softened, about 5-8 minutes.

When the meat has cooked for an hour, add the sautéed vegetables, the shredded cabbage, the four cut-up potatoes and, when done, the peeled and grated beets to the soup pot and stir to combine. Mix in the can of tomato sauce and two tablespoons of

## ketchup. Allow to simmer, removing the meat, trimming off any fat and cutting it into bite-sized chunks, and return it to the soup pot. Chop the garlic cloves finely and combine well with the one mashed potato. Season to taste and add to the soup.

Ladle into bowls, add a dollop of sour cream.

## PIROSHKIS

- This recipe makes 20 piroshkis.
- 4 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 8 ounce box of mushrooms, washed and sliced
- 1 medium onion, chopped finely
- 3 medium-sized potatoes, peeled, quartered and cooked until fork-tender
- 2 tubes of ready-to-bake butter-milk biscuits

Saute in two tablespoons of olive oil the sliced mushrooms and chopped onions in a large frying pan. Cook until the onions are slightly crispy, about 10 minutes.

When the potatoes are fork-tender, drain them and mash with a potato masher or blender until they are of a smooth consistency. Add the sautéed mushrooms and onions and mix in well with the potatoes. Season to taste.

Open the tube and separate the biscuits. Take each biscuit and stretch it so that it almost doubles in size. Take a spoonful of the potato mixture and place it in the center of the biscuit dough. Then, folding the dough around the filling, pinch the edges closed and pat with your hands to mold into a circular or oval shape.

## Hearty fare from Latvia with love

With all the changes in the Soviet Union at the forefront of the news these days, it seemed timely and appropriate to feature a typically Russian meal, submitted by this week's Winner Dinner Winner, Bella Makarenko, of Farmington Hills.

Featuring recipes for Borshch, a delicious soup made with beets, Piroshkis, small filled turnovers, and fresh fruit compote, this meal comes to you, and your family from Russia with love.

Recent immigrants from Riga, Latvia, Makarenko, her husband, Slav and their daughter, Ellina, have lived in the Detroit area for almost two years. The story of how they finally arrived in America is a touching one, a journey that encompassed five months, and included short stays in small hotels and private homes in three countries before finally arriving in the United States.

The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society helped them find an apartment that was conveniently located right next to the school their daughter would be attending.

Upon their arrival in Detroit, Makarenko and her husband attended school for four months to learn English. She then spent two months taking classes at a local beauty college, and is now working as a manicurist at Dittoni Salon in Birmingham.

Her husband, who was a dermatologist in Latvia, is now working as a salesman at a pawn shop in Detroit. Both enjoy their jobs and feel that their English is improving daily. Daughter Ellina has fit right into the swing of high school, earning excellent grades and having fun with her many new American friends.



family-tested  
winner dinner  
Betsy  
Brethen

They are so thrilled and happy to be here as they love this country, enjoying especially the tremendous sense of freedom and independence to do with their lives as they wish. Thank you, Bella Makarenko, and

Bella Makarenko, this week's Winner Dinner winner, sautes mushrooms and onions to make piroshkis.

SEE PHOTOGRAPH

