

Warm up with a bowl of vegetable borscht

BY MELANIE POLK
SPECIAL WRITER

If your knowledge of Russian cooking is limited to Beef Stroganov and Chicken Kiev, then there's much to be learned about this hearty cuisine that is based on a variety of wholesome foods.

Cabbage is Russia's national vegetable, and the cuisine is rich in cabbage-based recipes. Cabbage soup (schchi) is a staple food. Russia's most famous soup, however, is borscht - a hot, red, steaming dish made from beets (see recipe below).

Traditional Russian bread is a black rye bread and the staple breakfast food is a cooked grain called kasha. Russians also love blinis, little pancakes used to enfold caviar or other delicacies.

Russia is known as the land of the potato, and root vegetables, including onions, carrots and

beets, help Russians survive long winters when access to fresh vegetables is limited. These vegetables are commonly served chopped in "winter salads," sometimes mixed with meat, fish or hard-boiled eggs.

Cucumber pickles are eaten for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and tomatoes, when not in season, are also usually preserved as pickles. Mushrooms are popular in Russian cuisine as well, and a side dish of mushrooms is frequently served with meals.

For dessert, Russians often serve a pureed fruit concoction called kisel, which they make with fruits such as apples, apricots, strawberries, cranberries or rhubarb.

As with any cuisine, there are some things to enjoy only in moderation when sampling Russian cooking.

Be wary of the dollops of sour

cream so frequently added to a variety of dishes - soups, salads, vegetables, fish, meat, eggs, stews, desserts. Other popular, high-fat Russian foods include sausage, savory pies (pirog) and egg dishes.

Freshly ground pepper
1 teaspoon lemon juice
Garnish:
3 tablespoons low-fat sour cream or plain yogurt

In large saucepan, combine onion, beets, carrot, potato and stock. Bring to

a boil, cover and simmer for 30 minutes, skimming foam if necessary. Add cabbage, tomato, parsley and dill; simmer for 30 minutes longer, or until vegetables are tender. Season with salt and pepper to taste and lemon juice. Top each serving with 1 teaspoon of sour cream.

Nutrition information: Each of the 8 servings contains 60 calories and 1 gram of fat.

Melanie Polk is a registered dietitian and Director of Nutrition Education for the American Institute for Cancer Research.



Hearty soup: Vegetable borscht is a savory soup that's especially good in the winter.

AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR CANCER RESEARCH

When you're under the weather, stew soothes

See related story about stew on Taste front.

low temperature 300°F for a long time, 3 hours.

FRENCH OVEN STEW
Serves 8-10
2 pounds stewing beef cut into 1 1/2-inch cubes
2 medium onions, cut into eights
6 medium potatoes cut into chunks
6 ribs celery cut in large pieces
6 carrots cut in large slices
1 1/2 cups tomato juice
1/3 cup quick tapioca
1 tablespoon sugar
1 tablespoon salt, or according to taste
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1/2 teaspoon basil
Preheat oven to 300°F.
Combine first 5 ingredients in a quart casserole. Combine remaining ingredients and pour over meat and vegetables. Cover and bake in 300°F oven, about 3 hours.

Recipe compliments of Pat Atkinson.
Editor's note: I called Pat to verify that the correct oven temperature is 300°F and not 350°F. Pat said she cooks the stew on a

OLD-FASHIONED CHICKEN STEW
Serves 8
3-5 pounds stewing chicken
2 cups diced potatoes (3 medium)
1 cup diced turnips
1 cup diced carrots
1 cup diced celery
1 green pepper, sliced
1/2 cup diced onion (about 8 small onions)
1 tablespoon salt, or to taste
4-6 cups chicken broth
Cover chicken with broth. Simmer 2 hours, adding broth or water if necessary.
Combine remaining ingredients and add to meat. Cook until vegetables are tender (about 30 minutes). If desired, thicken liquid for gravy.

Recipe from "Betty Crocker Cookbook," (General Mills, Inc. 1968)

VEGETABLE BORSCHT
1 onion, chopped
2 large fresh beets, peeled and chopped
1 medium carrot, sliced
1 large potato, peeled and cubed
12 ounces beef or chicken stock
1/4 small head cabbage, shredded
1 tomato, chopped
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
1/2 teaspoon dried dillweed
1 teaspoon salt

chopped
4 celery stalks with leaves, coarsely chopped
3 carrots, peeled and coarsely chopped
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
1 clove garlic, sliced

In a large stockpot over medium-high heat, combine chicken or beef and water. Bring to a gentle boil and boil for 30 minutes.

Add remaining ingredients. Boil gently uncovered for 30 minutes, or until vegetables are thoroughly cooked.

Remove from heat and strain through a fine-mesh sieve lined with cheesecloth into a clean container. Use immediately, or cover and refrigerate for up to 6 days or freeze for up to 1 year.

4 slices bacon, cut into 1-inch pieces
1 large onion, sliced
2 3/4 cups water
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
1 clove garlic, crushed
1 beef bouillon cube
1 cup sliced carrots, 1/2-inch thick
1/4 cup rice
1 large green pepper, cut into 1-inch pieces

In large bowl, combine flour, salt and pepper. Add beef, toss to coat. In Dutch oven, cook bacon until crispy; drain on absorbent paper and reserve.

Add onions to drippings in pan; cook and stir 3 to 4 minutes. Remove with slotted spoon to small bowl and reserve. Add beef to remaining drippings in pan; brown evenly, stirring occasionally. Pour off drippings.

Add water, vinegar, garlic and bouillon cube. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low; cover tightly and simmer 1-1/2 hours.

Add carrots and continue cooking, covered, 30 minutes. Stir in rice; cover and continue cooking 10 minutes. Add reserved onion and green pepper; cover and cook 10 minutes or until beef and vegetables are tender. Stir in reserved bacon. Serves 4.

Recipe from the National Beef Commission

Recipe adapted from "Stews," (Williams-Sonoma, Time Life Publishing, 1986).

EUROPEAN-INSPIRED HUNTER'S STEW
1 1/4 pounds beef for stew, cut into 1 to 1 1/4-inch pieces
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon pepper

BASIC SOUP OR STEW STOCK
Yield: about 8 cups
2 pounds chicken pieces, or stewing beef
10 cups water
2 large onions, coarsely

Must be 55 years or older

RECIPE CORRECTION

The amount of water was left out of Chef Kelli Lewton's Cheese Bread recipe in the Sunday, Jan. 10 edition of Taste. Here's the corrected recipe.

1/4 cup Parmesan cheese, set aside
Scald milk, add sugar, and salt. Melt butter (reserve 1 tablespoon) lightly saute onions and garlic. Cool until tepid.

CHEESE BREAD
2 cups whole wheat flour
2 1/2 cups white unbleached flour
2 (1/4 oz.) packages of Active Dry Yeast
1 cup milk, scalded
3 tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon salt
1/4 cup melted butter (reserve 1 tablespoon)
2 tablespoons minced sauteed garlic
1/2 cup diced minced onions
1/4 cup lukewarm water
1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
1/2 cup Mozzarella cheese, grated
2 tablespoon chopped basil

Put water in mixing bowl, add yeast and let stand for 5 minutes. Add scalded mixture and butter mixture, add flour and Mozzarella cheese and half cup Parmesan cheese. Beat with mixture with wooden spoon for 2 minutes and then stir mixture with a wooden spoon for an additional 300 strokes.

Allow dough to rise covered for 45-60 minutes. Stir dough down and beat for 1/2 minute. Divide dough into 2 greased 8 1/2-by-4 1/2-inch loaf pans. Cover and let rise again for approximately 60 minutes.

Baked in pre-heated 350°F oven for 30-40 minutes until golden. Top with remaining butter and sprinkle remaining Parmesan Cheese on top and return to oven for an additional 3-5 minutes.

Enter your favorite recipe in chicken soup contest

Is your chicken soup the best in town? We'll be the judge of that!

other local media personalities, area chefs, and Temple Kol Ami's Rabbi Norman T. Roman, will sample chicken soup and select the contest winners.

Enter your recipe in Temple Kol Ami's Ultimate Chicken Soup Contest. Entries must be postmarked by Sunday, Jan. 31. The top 10 finalists will be notified by Feb. 13. No shellfish or pork ingredients. Call (248) 661-0040 for an official entry form. Mail entry form to Temple Kol Ami, 6065 Walnut Lake Road, West Bloomfield, 48323.

First prize is a deluxe soup pot from Kitchen Glamour. Also WBK-TV 2 will film a segment of Keith Farnie's "Adventures in Cooking" featuring the winning chef and Ultimate Chicken Soup Recipe.

Contest finalists will compete in a cook-off at Temple Kol Ami on Wednesday, Feb. 24. Taste editor Koryl Wygonik along

Second prize is dinner for two at Restaurant Di Modesta in Southfield.

Third prize is a cookbook from Kitchen Glamour

Tradition from page B1

Place all ingredients in a medium sauté pan over low heat, covered and cook about 10-15 minutes or until vegetables are tender.

Strain off any remaining liquid and serve immediately.

graduate of the award-winning culinary arts program at Schoolcraft College in Livonia, Emert was captain of the 1996 Michigan Culinary Team, which won seven medals at the World Culinary Salon. He is an active member of the American Culinary Federation and the Michigan Chefs de Cuisine Association. Look for his next column in Taste on Sunday, March 21.

Chef Randy Emert of Clarkston is the Executive Chef at Paint Creek Cider Mill & Restaurant, 4480 Orion Road, Rochester, (248) 651-8361. A

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Share a dish to pass along

Everyone knows the best recipes are ones you share. If you have a recipe for a dessert, main dish, soup, salad or appetizer that would like to pass along to our readers, send it to Koryl Wygonik, Taste Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36261 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150.

To fax recipes, call (734) 591-7279 or e-mail kwygonik@oe.hometeam.net

If your recipe is chosen we'll feature it in Taste on the fourth Sunday of the month, and send you an apron and cookbook along with our thanks.

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