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Recipe Book: Traditional Cuisine

Tambov and Central Russia



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The recipe book is the result of a project undertaken at the Faculty of History, Political Science, and Philology at Tambov State University named after G. R. Derzhavin .

The project was supervised by Ekaterina Dubovitskaya, an Associate Professor of the Department of Foreign Philology and Applied Linguistics

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Appetizers

Tambov Cucumber and Mushroom Ragout



Prep. time

30 min



Cook time

20 min



Serves

3

INGREDIENTS

- ◊ 7 - 10 oz fresh porcini or birch bolete mushrooms, OR 1 - 1.5 oz dried wild mushrooms, rehydrated
- ◊ 2 large yellow onions
- ◊ 2-3 large barrel-fermented pickles
- ◊ 3-4 tablespoons vegetable oil
- ◊ Salt, to taste
- ◊ Freshly ground black pepper, to taste (optional, but recommended)
- ◊ Fresh dill or parsley, for serving (optional)



DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Prepare the Mushrooms

Boil fresh or rehydrated dried mushrooms in salted water until tender (fresh for about 20 minutes, dried for 15-20 minutes after boiling). Once cool, slice the mushrooms into thin strips.

Step 2: Prepare the Vegetables

Peel the onion and slice it into half-rings. Peel the pickled cucumbers if the skin is tough, then cut them into thin, short strips. If the cucumbers are very watery, gently squeeze the strips to remove excess brine.

Step 3: Sauté the Aromatics

Heat vegetable oil in a heavy-bottomed skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and sauté until soft and golden. Add the sliced mushrooms to the skillet. Increase the heat to medium-high and fry, stirring, until the mushrooms are browned and fragrant.

Step 4: Combine and Season

Add the chopped pickled cucumbers to the skillet with the mushrooms and onions. Stir to combine.

Taste and season with salt if needed (remembering the cucumbers are salty) and add ground black pepper to taste.

Step 5: Serve

Serve the dish warm, either as a standalone appetizer or as a side dish for meat or potatoes. Optionally, garnish with fresh chopped herbs before serving.

Olivier Salad (Russian Salad)



Prep. time

10 min



Cook time

30 min



Serves

6

INGREDIENTS

- ◊ 2 large eggs
- ◊ ¾ medium fresh cucumber
- ◊ ¾ medium carrot
- ◊ ¾ medium yellow onion
- ◊ ¾ medium chicken breast
- ◊ 3 medium potatoes
- ◊ 4 small pickled cucumbers
- ◊ 1 cup canned green peas
- ◊ 3 tablespoon mayonnaise
- ◊ Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste



DIRECTIONS

Step 1. Prepare the ingredients

Cook the potatoes and carrots separately in lightly salted water until tender. In another pot, cook the chicken breast until fully done. Hard-boil the eggs for about 10 minutes, then transfer them to ice water to cool. Let all the cooked ingredients cool completely before cutting.

Step 2. Dice the cooked vegetables and eggs

Peel the potatoes and carrots, and remove the shells from the eggs. Cut all the cooked ingredients into small, even cubes and place them in a mixing bowl.

Step 3. Dice the onion, cucumbers, and chicken

Peel the onion and fresh cucumber, then dice them into small cubes. Dice the pickles (dill pickles work best) and the cooked chicken breast the same size. Add everything to the bowl with the vegetables and eggs.

Step 4. Add the peas and dress the salad

Drain the liquid from the canned green peas and add the peas to the salad.

In a separate small bowl, mix the mayonnaise with a pinch of salt and black pepper. Stir the seasoned mayonnaise into the salad and mix thoroughly until everything is well combined. Serve immediately or chill before serving.

Dressed herring



Prep. time

8 min



Cook time

22 min



Serves

6

INGREDIENTS

- ◊ 10.5 oz Herring (fillets)
- ◊ 1 large beet
- ◊ 4 potatoes
- ◊ 2 carrots
- ◊ 1 white salad onion
- ◊ ½ cup Mayonnaise
- ◊ Salt (optional), to taste



DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Prepare the Ingredients

Wash all vegetables thoroughly. Remove skin and bones from the herring fillets, if needed.

Step 2: Boil the Vegetables

Place potatoes and carrots in a large pot, cover with water, and boil until tender (about 20 minutes; check doneness with a knife or fork).

Step 3: Cook the Beet

Place the beet in a smaller pot, cover with water, and boil until tender (about 50 minutes, depending on size; add water as needed).

Step 4: Dice the Herring

While the vegetables cook, cut the herring fillets into small cubes.

Step 5: Chop the Onion

Finely chop the salad onion.

Step 6: Grate Potatoes and Carrots

Once cooked, peel the potatoes and carrots. Grate them on a coarse grater. (The beet should still be cooking.)

Step 7: Assemble the Layers

In a suitable dish, spread the grated potatoes as the first layer (reserve a small amount for later). Sprinkle generously with chopped onion and spread a layer of mayonnaise over it. Place the diced herring evenly over the mayonnaise. Add another thin layer of grated potatoes over the herring and spread with mayonnaise. (For a non-classic version, you may substitute this potato layer with boiled egg whites or grated hard cheese.) Add a layer of grated carrots over the potatoes and lightly spread with mayonnaise.

Step 8: Prepare and Add the Beet

By now, the beet should be cooked. Cool it in cold water, peel, and grate coarsely. Spread the grated beet as the final layer and cover with mayonnaise.

Step 9: Let It Rest and Serve

Cover the salad with plastic wrap and let it rest in the refrigerator for several hours to allow the flavors to meld. Serve chilled as a festive appetizer or side dish.

Vinaigrette (Russian Beet & Vegetable Salad)



Prep. time

5 min



Cook time

30 min



Serves

5

INGREDIENTS

- ◊ 3 medium beets
- ◊ 2 medium carrots
- ◊ 3 medium potatoes
- ◊ 1 yellow onion
- ◊ 3 pickled cucumbers
- ◊ 6 tablespoon canned green peas
- ◊ 6 tablespoons sunflower or vegetable oil
- ◊ 1 tablespoon 9% white vinegar (or apple cider vinegar)
- ◊ 1 teaspoon prepared mustard
- ◊ 1 teaspoon sugar
- ◊ Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste



DIRECTIONS

Step 1. Cook the vegetables

Boil the potatoes and carrots whole and unpeeled until tender, about 30–35 minutes.

Boil the beets separately for 40–50 minutes until fully cooked. (Keeping beets separate prevents them from staining the other vegetables too early.)

Step 2. Dice the vegetables

Peel the potatoes, carrots, and beets. Cut all the vegetables into small, even cubes. Dice the pickles and the onion the same size.

Place the diced beets in a separate bowl and mix them with 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil — this keeps them from coloring the rest of the salad too much after mixing.

Step 3. Make the dressing

Combine vegetable oil with a couple of pinches of salt, black pepper, and a small pinch of sugar. Add a little mustard and a splash of vinegar. (You may use lemon juice instead of vinegar for a milder taste.)

Whisk until the dressing is smooth and well blended.

4. Assemble the salad

Place all the prepared vegetables in a large bowl. Add the canned green peas and pour the dressing over the salad. Gently mix everything together.

Serve immediately or refrigerate for a deeper flavor.

Sauerkraut (Pickled cabbage)



Prep. time

5 min



Cook time

27 min



Serves

5

INGREDIENTS

- ◊ 2.2 lb white cabbage, cored and thinly shredded
- ◊ 3.5 oz carrot, grated
- ◊ 1 tablespoon salt (non-iodized)



DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Prepare the Cabbage

Remove the outer leaves from the cabbage head. Cut out the core. Set aside one large, clean outer leaf for later use. Thinly slice the cabbage into strips approximately $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch wide. You can use a sharp knife or a food processor with a slicing blade.

Step 2: Prepare the Carrot

Scrub the carrot clean. Grate it on the large holes of a box grater or use a julienne peeler for long, thin strips.

Step 3: Salt and Massage the Cabbage

Place the shredded cabbage in a very large, clean bowl. Add the salt. With clean hands, massage and squeeze the cabbage vigorously for 5–10 minutes until it becomes limp and releases a significant amount of liquid (brine).

Step 4: Add the Carrot

Add the grated carrot to the bowl and mix it thoroughly with the salted cabbage.

Step 5: Pack the Jar

Transfer the cabbage and carrot mixture, along with all the released brine, to a clean 1-quart glass jar. Pack it down very firmly with your fist or a kraut pounder to eliminate air pockets. The brine must rise above the level of the vegetables.

Take the reserved outer cabbage leaf, fold it, and place it on top of the shredded mixture to act as a barrier. Place a weight (a clean, small glass jar filled with water, or fermentation weights) on top to keep everything submerged.

Step 6: Ferment

Cover the jar with a clean cloth and a rubber band (or use a special fermentation lid with an airlock) to allow gases to escape while keeping out dust and insects.

Place the jar in a cool, dark spot (ideal temperature: 65–72°F). Do not seal it with an airtight lid. Place the jar on a plate to catch any overflow. Ferment for 1 to 4 weeks depending on temperature and your taste preference. Check every few days: press the vegetables back under the brine if needed, and remove any surface scum. The cabbage should always remain below the brine.

Step 7: Test and Store

Start tasting the sauerkraut after 1 week. It should be tangy and crisp. Once it reaches your desired sourness, remove the weight and the outer cabbage leaf.

Important: Transfer the jar to the refrigerator. The cold temperature drastically slows down fermentation, preserving the texture and flavor. If you leave it at room temperature, it will continue to sour and eventually become soft and mushy. Store refrigerated for up to 6 months. Always use a clean utensil when serving.



Soups

Borscht



Prep. time

35 min



Cook time

2 h



Serves

5-6

INGREDIENTS

- ◊ 1.1–1.5 lb bone-in meat
- ◊ 3–4 medium potatoes (9–10 oz)
- ◊ 10.5 oz cabbage
- ◊ 1 medium carrot (3.5 oz)
- ◊ 2 medium beets (about 7 oz)
- ◊ 1 medium onion (3.5 oz)
- ◊ 2 cloves garlic
- ◊ 2–3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- ◊ 2–3 bay leaves
- ◊ A few peppercorns (black and allspice)
- ◊ 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- ◊ Salt, sugar, and vinegar — to taste (vinegar may be replaced with lemon juice)



DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Prepare the Meat Broth

Place the bone-in meat into a large pot and cover with cold water. Beef is traditional for classic beet borscht, but pork or chicken can also be used. What matters most is that the meat is on the bone — this gives the broth richness and depth. Bring the pot to a boil, then skim off any foam that rises to the surface. Add salt, the bay leaves, and peppercorns. Reduce the heat to low and simmer the broth until the meat becomes tender and starts separating from the bone.

Step 2: Prepare the Vegetables

While the meat is cooking, prep the vegetables: dice the potatoes into small even cubes, grate the carrots and beets on a coarse grater. Finely chop the onion, and press or finely grate the garlic. Shred the cabbage into long, thin strands.

Step 3: Make the Vegetable Sauté (Zazharka)

Heat the vegetable oil in a skillet. Sauté the onion and carrot over medium heat until softened. In a separate pan, sauté the grated beets for 5–10 minutes. Combine all sautéed vegetables in one skillet. Add a splash of broth and simmer for another 10 minutes on low heat, stirring occasionally. Stir in the tomato paste (diluted in a little broth) and add the garlic.

Step 4: Remove and Cut the Meat

Once the meat is fully cooked, carefully remove it from the broth. Let it cool slightly so you don't burn your hands. Remove the bones and cut the meat into bite-sized pieces.

Step 5: Assemble the Borscht

Return the broth to a gentle boil and add the diced potatoes. Cook for about 10 minutes, until the potatoes are tender. Add the sautéed vegetable mixture (zazharka). At this stage the broth will turn a bright red color. Simmer for 3–5 minutes, then add the shredded cabbage. Cabbage is added last so it stays crisp and doesn't become mushy. Cook for another 5 minutes, then turn off the heat. Return the chopped meat to the pot and let the borscht rest for 15 minutes uncovered.

Step 6: Serving

Serve the borscht hot, topped with: a spoonful of sour cream, finely chopped fresh herbs (dill, parsley, or scallions) Black bread, garlic rolls (pampushki), or crisp croutons make excellent accompaniments.

Solyanka (traditional Russian sour & savory soup)



Prep. time

7 min



Cook time

40 min



Serves

5

INGREDIENTS

For the Broth:

- ◊ 14 oz beef, for broth
- ◊ 1 medium onion
- ◊ 1 medium carrot
- ◊ 8 cups cold water
- ◊ Salt, to taste

For the Soup:

- ◊ 6 oz cooked beef from the broth
- ◊ 3 oz pickled cucumbers
- ◊ 1.5 oz yellow onion
- ◊ 1.5 oz carrot
- ◊ 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- ◊ 1 tablespoon tomato

paste

- ◊ 2.5 oz pickled cucumber
- ◊ 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 cup hot water or broth

Meat & Cured Garnishes (use at least 3 types, including one smoked):

- ◊ 0.6 oz ham
- ◊ 0.6 oz doctor's sausage
- ◊ 0.6 oz semi-smoked sausage
- ◊ 1 small Vienna sausage
- ◊ 0.6 oz smoked chicken (optional)



DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Make the Broth

Wash the onion and carrot. Peel the carrot. Place 1.3 lb of meat (beef, pork ribs or chicken/turkey), the whole onion, and carrot in a large pot. Cover with 8 cups of cold water. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, then reduce to a very low simmer. Skim off any foam, add a pinch of salt, partially cover, and cook for 1.5 hours.

Step 2: Prepare the Ingredients

Peel and wash one onion and one carrot. Thinly slice the onion into half-rings and julienne the carrot into thin strips (about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch). Peel the pickled cucumbers and dice them into small cubes (about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch). Drain the capers and olives. Slice the sausages and ham into small, bite-sized pieces or thin strips (about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch). Slice the sausage into rounds. **Tip:** Use at least three different types of meat, and ensure one is smoked.

Step 3: Make the Dressing

Heat a large skillet or pot over high heat. Add 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil. Sauté the sliced onion for 1 minute. Add the julienned carrot and cook for another minute. Add the diced pickled cucumbers and cook for 30 seconds. Stir in 1 tablespoon of tomato paste. Add $\frac{2}{3}$ cup of cucumber brine, 1 tablespoon of sugar, and 1 cup of hot water or broth. Bring to a boil.

Reduce the heat to the lowest setting, cover, and simmer for 30 minutes.

Step 4: Assemble the Solyanka

Strain the finished broth into a clean pot. Discard the boiled vegetables. Shred or dice the cooked meat into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch pieces. Add the prepared dressing to the broth and bring to a simmer. Add the olives, capers, diced cooked meat, and all the sliced sausages and ham to the pot. Return to a gentle boil, cover, and cook on low heat for 3 minutes. Remove from heat and let the soup rest, covered, for 10 minutes.

Step 5: Serve

Ladle the hot soup into bowls. Serve with traditional garnishes: a thin slice of peeled lemon, a dollop of sour cream, and fresh herbs.

Chicken Noodle Soup



Prep. time

20 min



Cook time

70 min



Serves

4

INGREDIENTS

For the Broth:

- ◊ 14 oz chicken (breast, thighs, or a mix)
- ◊ 1 medium carrot
- ◊ 1 medium yellow onion
- ◊ 4-6 black peppercorns
- ◊ 1 bay leaf
- ◊ Salt, to taste
- ◊ Fresh herbs (dill, parsley), for serving

For the Noodles:

- ◊ 1 large egg
- ◊ $\frac{3}{4}$ - 1 cup flour, plus extra for dusting
- ◊ 1 pinch of salt



DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Make the Broth

Rinse the chicken. Place it in a large pot and cover with 10 cups of cold water. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. As it heats, skim off any foam that rises to the surface with a spoon. Once boiling, add salt, reduce the heat to low, and maintain a gentle simmer. Peel and dice the onion. Peel and cut the carrot into thin matchsticks. Add the onion and carrot to the pot with the chicken. Simmer for about 30 minutes, or until the chicken is fully cooked.

Step 2: Make the Noodles (while the broth simmers)

In a medium bowl, beat the egg with a pinch of salt. Gradually add the flour, stirring with a fork until a shaggy dough forms. Turn it out onto a lightly floured surface. Knead the dough for 5-7 minutes, adding a little more flour if it's too sticky, until it becomes smooth and firm. Let it rest for 10 minutes, covered with a bowl. On a floured surface, roll the dough out into a very thin sheet. Lightly dust the sheet with flour, roll it up loosely into a log, and slice it crosswise into thin strips (for fine noodles) or wider ribbons. Unfurl the noodles and spread them on a clean kitchen towel to dry slightly while you finish the soup. (For later use, let them dry completely and store in an airtight bag.)

Step 3: Finish the Soup

Once the chicken is cooked, remove it from the broth and set aside to cool slightly. Bring the broth back to a gentle boil. Add the fresh noodles and cook for 3-5 minutes, until tender. While the noodles cook, shred or chop the chicken into bite-sized pieces, discarding the skin and bones. Chop the fresh herbs. When the noodles are done, return the chicken to the pot. Stir in the herbs, taste, and adjust seasoning with salt and pepper.

Serve the soup hot immediately!"

Ushnik (Giblet and Millet Pottage)



Prep. time

30 min



Cook time

2-2,5 h



Serves

4-6

INGREDIENTS

- ◊ 1.1 to 1.5 lb pork or beef intestines, cleaned
- ◊ ¾ cup millet
- ◊ 2-3 large yellow onions
- ◊ 2-3 tablespoon pork fatback or vegetable oil
- ◊ 1-2 bay leaves
- ◊ 5-7 black peppercorns
- ◊ Salt, to taste
- ◊ 8-12 cups water



DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Prepare the Tripe (The Most Important Step)

Rinse the intestines thoroughly under cold running water.

Turn them inside out, scrape off any residual fat or membrane, and rinse again.

For best results, rinse the tripe in salted water with a splash of vinegar (1 tbsp per liter), then rinse thoroughly with clean water.

Cut the cleaned tripe into 1-2 inch (3-5 cm) pieces.

Step 2: First Boil

Place the tripe in a large pot and cover with cold water. Bring to a boil and cook for 10-15 minutes. Drain this first broth completely. This step is crucial for removing any strong odors.

Return the tripe to the pot and add 10-12 cups (2.5-3 liters) of fresh cold water.

Step 3: Cook the Soup Base

Bring to a simmer, then reduce the heat to low. Cook the tripe, partially covered, for 1.5 to 2 hours, or until it becomes very tender. Skim off any foam that rises to the surface.

While the tripe is cooking, rinse the millet in several changes of water until the water runs clear. Dice the onions. Heat the fatback or oil in a skillet over medium heat. Sauté the diced onions until soft and translucent, about 5-7 minutes.

Step 4: Finish the Stew

Note

Once the tripe is tender, add the rinsed millet, sautéed onions, bay leaves, and peppercorns to the pot. Season with salt.

Simmer gently for another 25-30 minutes, uncovered, until the millet is fully cooked and has thickened the broth.

Step 5: Rest (The "Oven" Effect)

Turn off the heat, cover the pot tightly, and let the Ushnik rest for 20-30 minutes. This allows the flavors to meld, mimicking the traditional oven-steeping process.

Step 6: Serve

Ladle the hot soup into deep bowls. This is a substantial, standalone dish that does not require any side.

Adding salt towards the end of cooking, after the millet has softened, ensures the grains break down properly and results in a perfectly textured broth.

Creamy Chicken and Potato Potage



Prep. time

20 min



Cook time

40 min



Serves

4-6

INGREDIENTS

For the Broth:

- ◊ 1 lb chicken pieces (drumsticks, thighs, or breast)
- ◊ 3 cups water
- ◊ 1-2 bay leaves
- ◊ 3-4 black peppercorns

For the Soup:

- ◊ 2.5 lb potatoes (7-8 medium)
- ◊ 1 ½ cups whole milk
- ◊ 1 large yellow onion
- ◊ 2 tablespoons butter or neutral vegetable oil
- ◊ Salt, to taste
- ◊ Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ◊ Fresh dill or parsley, for garnish



DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Make the Broth & Prepare Chicken

Rinse the chicken. For a lighter soup, remove the skin. Place the chicken in a pot and cover with 3 cups of cold water. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Skim off any foam that rises to the surface.

Add the bay leaves and peppercorns. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 25-30 minutes, until the chicken is cooked through. Remove the chicken from the pot and set aside to cool. Strain the broth through a fine-mesh sieve back into the pot. Once the chicken is cool enough to handle, shred the meat, discarding the skin and bones.

Step 2: Prepare the Vegetables

While the chicken is cooking, peel and dice the potatoes into ½-inch (1-1.5 cm) cubes.

Finely chop the onion.

Step 3: Cook the Potatoes

Return the shredded chicken to the strained broth and bring to a simmer.

Add the diced potatoes and cook for 10 minutes over medium heat. They should be par-cooked (no longer raw but still offer some resistance when pierced with a knife).

Step 4: Add Milk & Onions

While the potatoes are cooking, gently heat the milk in a separate saucepan until hot but not boiling. This prevents curdling.

In a skillet, melt the butter (or heat the oil) over medium heat. Add the chopped onion and sauté until soft and translucent, about 5-7 minutes.

Step 5: Finish the Soup

Pour the hot milk into the soup and stir to combine.

Add the sautéed onions and season with salt and pepper to taste.

Simmer gently for another 5-7 minutes, or until the potatoes are completely tender.

Step 6: Serve

Remove the pot from the heat, cover, and let it rest for 10 minutes for the flavors to meld.

Ladle into bowls and garnish generously with fresh herbs.

Okroshka (Cold Russian Soup with White Sourdough Kvass)



Prep. time

50 min



Cook time

30 min



Serves

4-6

INGREDIENTS

For the Soup Base:

- ◊ 6-8 cups White Sourdough Kvass

For the Salad Components:

- ◊ 10 oz boiled beef or ham
- ◊ 3-4 medium fresh cucumbers
- ◊ 5-7 radishes
- ◊ 1 large bunch green onions
- ◊ 1 large bunch fresh dill
- ◊ 1 small bunch fresh parsley
- ◊ 4 hard-boiled eggs

For the Dressing:

- ◊ $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sour cream, plus more for serving
- ◊ Salt, to taste



DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Prepare and Cook the Main Components

Eggs: Place eggs in a saucepan and cover with cold water. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 10-12 minutes. Once cool, peel and chop them into a medium dice.

Meat: If using raw beef, boil it in lightly salted water until tender (about 60-90 minutes, depending on the cut). Let the meat cool completely in its broth to keep it juicy, then cut it into small cubes. Using pre-cooked ham is a great time-saver.

Step 2: Chop the Vegetables and Herbs

Wash and dry all vegetables. Cutting everything to a similar size ensures you get a bit of every flavor in each spoonful. Cube the cucumbers and slice the radishes.

Finely chop the dill, parsley, and spring onions. For a more pronounced flavor, you can lightly crush the chopped spring onions with a pinch of salt to help release their juices.

Step 3: Assemble the Okroshka Base

In a large soup tureen or a mixing bowl that can hold at least 3 liters, combine the chopped meat, eggs, cucumbers, radishes, and all the fresh herbs.

Pro Tip: Add the sour cream directly to this mixture and stir well until everything is evenly coated. This step prevents the sour cream from clumping when the liquid is added and helps the flavor cling to each ingredient.

Step 4: Add the Kvass

Gently pour the cold kvass over the vegetable and meat mixture. Stir carefully to combine.

Now, taste the soup. Add salt gradually, stirring and tasting after each addition, until the balance is to your liking. The amount needed can vary depending on the saltiness of your kvass and meat.

Step 5: The Crucial Chill

Cover the tureen or bowl with a lid or plastic wrap and place it in the refrigerator for at least 1-2 hours. This resting time is not optional—it's what allows the flavors to meld together and become greater than the sum of their parts.

Step 6: Serve

Ladle the cold, refreshing soup into deep bowls. Serve immediately with extra sour cream and a dollop of spicy mustard on the side, allowing everyone to customize their bowl to their taste.

variations:
A defining feature of Tambov-style Okroshka is the accompanying hot, crispy fried potatoes. They are served separately and added to the cold soup at the table just before eating.

Main dishes



Chicken and Mushroom Pot Roast



Prep. time

5 min



Cook time

30 min



Serves

4

INGREDIENTS

- ◊ 14 oz pork (shoulder or loin)
- ◊ 1.3 lb potatoes
- ◊ 1 medium zucchini
- ◊ 9 oz white button mushrooms
- ◊ 1 medium yellow onion
- ◊ 4 tbsp vegetable oil
- ◊ ½ cup sour cream (20% fat)
- ◊ 4.2 oz hard cheese (such as Cheddar)
- ◊ ¾ cup + 1 tablespoon water or broth
- ◊ Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste



DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Sear the Meat

Rinse the pork and pat it dry with paper towels. Cut the meat into 1-inch cubes. Heat 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the pork and sear until browned on all sides, about 5-7 minutes. Season the meat with salt and pepper to taste. Transfer the browned pork to a plate and set aside.

Step 2: Sauté Mushrooms and Onion

Wipe the mushrooms clean and slice them. Finely dice the onion. In the same skillet, add the remaining 2 tablespoons of oil. Add the mushrooms and onion and cook over medium heat until the onion is translucent and the mushrooms have released their liquid and turned golden brown, about 8-10 minutes. Remove from heat.

Step 3: Prepare the Vegetables and Assemble

Preheat your oven to 400°F(200°C). Peel and cube the potatoes. Wash and cube the zucchini into pieces similar in size to the meat. Divide the cubed potatoes and zucchini evenly among 4 clean ceramic baking pots (or one large casserole). Top the vegetables in each pot with the browned pork. Season lightly with salt and pepper. Spoon the sautéed mushrooms and onions over the meat in each pot. Top each with 2 tablespoons of sour cream. Pour ½ cup of boiling water or broth into each pot. Cover the pots tightly with their lids or aluminum foil.

Step 4: Bake and Serve

Place the pots on a baking sheet and bake in the preheated oven for 50-60 minutes, or until the potatoes are fork-tender. Remove the pots from the oven. Carefully remove the lids or foil and sprinkle the grated cheese evenly over each portion. Return the pots to the oven, uncovered, and bake for an additional 10-15 minutes, or until the cheese is melted and bubbly. Let the pots rest for 5 minutes before serving. Garnish with fresh herbs, if desired. Serve hot directly from the pots.

Pelmeni (Dumplings)



Prep. time

5 min



Cook time

1 h



Serves

4

INGREDIENTS

- ◊ 1 large eggs
- ◊ 3 cups flour
- ◊ 1 teaspoons vegetable oil
- ◊ 1 medium onions
- ◊ Salt — to taste
- ◊ Black pepper, ground — to taste
- ◊ $\frac{2}{3}$ cup water
- ◊ Bay leaves to taste
- ◊ peppercorn to taste
- ◊ about 3.5 lb pork



DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Prepare the liquid base for the dough

Crack 1 large egg into a measuring cup (about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup). Add $\frac{2}{3}$ cup water. You can replace this with a 50/50 mix of water and milk ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup + $\frac{1}{4}$ cup). Add $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt and whisk until smooth.

Step 2: Make the dough

Sift 3 cups flour into a large bowl. Sifting aerates the flour and prevents lumps.

Make a well in the center and pour in the liquid mixture. Add 1 teaspoon vegetable oil. Mix with a spoon until the dough begins to come together. Transfer the dough to a lightly floured surface and knead for 5–7 minutes until smooth, elastic, and non-sticky. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and let it rest for 40 minutes. (Resting allows the gluten to relax so the dough rolls out easily.)

Step 3: Prepare the filling

Peel the onion. Cut the meat and onion into chunks. Run both through a meat grinder or pulse in a food processor. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste. Add 1–2 tablespoons of ice-cold water to keep the filling juicy. Mix well.

4. Roll the dough

Cut off a piece of dough and roll it into a rope about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick. Keep the remaining dough covered to prevent drying. Slice the rope into small pieces.

5. Shape the dumplings

Roll each piece into a thin circle using a rolling pin. Place 1 teaspoon of filling in the center. Fold the dough over to form a half-moon and pinch the edges tightly so the filling is fully sealed. Bring the two corners together and pinch — forming the traditional pelmeni “little ear” shape. Repeat with the remaining dough and filling.

6. Cook the pelmeni

Fill a pot with water and add: 1 bay leaf, a few whole black peppercorns, $\frac{1}{2}$ onion (optional, for aroma). Bring the water to a boil. Add the pelmeni. Once they float, cook for 3–7 minutes, depending on size. Drain, transfer to a bowl, and toss with a small piece of butter.

Kapustnik (Tambov Beer-Battered Cabbage Pie)



Prep. time

X min



Cook time

60 min



Serves

4

INGREDIENTS

For the Batter & Cabbage:

- ◊ 1 small head of young green cabbage
- ◊ 2 large eggs
- ◊ $\frac{2}{3}$ cup light beer
- ◊ $\frac{3}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour
- ◊ Salt, to taste
- ◊ Ground black pepper, to taste
- ◊ Vegetable oil, for pan-frying

For the Filling:

- ◊ 14 oz mushrooms (such as cremini or white button), sliced
- ◊ 3 medium carrots
- ◊ 2 medium yellow onions
- ◊ $\frac{2}{3}$ cup mayonnaise



DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Prepare Cabbage Leaves

Carefully separate 12 large leaves from cabbage head.

Gently pound the thick stem ends with a wooden mallet to flatten.

Step 2: Make Batter

In a deep bowl, combine flour and salt.

Gradually add beer and beaten egg while constantly whisking until smooth batter forms.

Step 3: Fry Cabbage Leaves

Heat oil in skillet over medium heat ($\frac{1}{2}$ -inch depth).

Dip prepared leaves in batter and fry 2-3 minutes per side until golden.

Drain on paper towels.

Step 4: Prepare Filling

Sauté onion and carrot in oil until soft (5-7 minutes).

In separate pan, sauté mushrooms until golden and liquid evaporates.

Combine all vegetables, season with salt and pepper.

Step 5: Assemble

Place one fried cabbage leaf on serving plate.

Spread with mayonnaise, add vegetable filling.

Repeat layers 2-3 times, ending with cabbage leaf.

Step 6: Serve

Let stand 5 minutes to set.

Cut into rectangles and serve immediately.

Note:

For best results, serve warm. The layered structure should hold its shape when cut. Serve the kapustnik immediately while they are still hot and crispy. They are delicious with a dollop of sour cream or

Salomata (SLOW-SIMMERED FLOUR PORRIDGE)



Prep. time

10 min



Cook time

1 h



Serves

4

INGREDIENTS

Main:

◊ 1 cup wheat flour (or rye flour for a rustic taste)
◊ 3½ cups water (or 1 ½ cups water + 1 ½ cups milk)

◊ 2.5-3 oz unsalted butter (5-6 tbsp)
◊ ½-1 tsp salt, to taste

Optional:

◊ 1-2 tbsp ghee or melted butter (for serving)
◊ 1-2 tbsp sour cream
◊ Honey or sugar for a sweet version



DIRECTIONS

Step 1. Prepare the Flour

Sift the flour to remove lumps.

Optional but traditional: Lightly toast the flour in a dry skillet over medium heat for 3-5 minutes, stirring constantly, until it smells nutty and turns slightly creamy in color.

Step 2. Make the Base

In a heavy pot or Dutch oven, bring the water (or water + milk) to a boil.

Add salt.

Reduce heat to low.

Slowly pour in the flour while whisking vigorously to avoid lumps. The mixture should be smooth and thick.

Step 3. Add Butter

When the mixture begins to thicken and bubble, add the butter.

Mix well.

Cover with a lid.

Step 4. Slow Simmer (the key step!)

Oven method (most authentic):

Preheat oven to 250-285°F (120-140°C). Place the covered pot in the oven. Cook for 1-2 hours, stirring every 15-20 minutes.

Stovetop method:

Keep the pot over the lowest heat. Simmer for 60-90 minutes, stirring frequently, so it doesn't stick.

The porridge should become smooth, stretchy, glossy, and uniform.

Step 5. Serving

Serve very hot, traditionally in a rustic clay bowl.

Add on top:

◊ A spoonful of ghee or melted butter (traditional),
◊ Sour cream
◊ Honey for a sweet version

Nianya (Russian Stuffed Lamb Stomachs with Liver & Buckwheat)



Prep. time

1 h



Cook time

3-4 h



Serves

4

INGREDIENTS

For the Stomachs & Broth:

- ◊ 2-3 lamb stomachs (tripe)
- ◊ 1 onion, whole
- ◊ 1 carrot, whole
- ◊ 2-3 bay leaves
- ◊ 5-7 black peppercorns

For the Filling:

- ◊ 1.5 lbs lamb liver, heart, and lungs
- ◊ 1.5 cups buckwheat groats
- ◊ 2-3 large onions, finely chopped
- ◊ 2 tbsp butter or lamb fat, for frying
- ◊ Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste



DIRECTIONS

Step 1. Prepare the Stomachs (the most important step)

Rinse the lamb stomachs thoroughly under cold water. Turn them inside out, remove any membranes or excess fat. To reduce any strong odor, rub them with salt, let sit for 30 minutes, then rinse well.

Place the stomachs in a large pot, cover with cold water, and bring to a boil. Boil for 10 minutes, then drain this first broth entirely.

Cover the stomachs with fresh cold water. Add the whole onion, whole carrot, bay leaves, and peppercorns. Simmer on low heat for 2-2.5 hours until tender. Remove the stomachs and let them cool. Strain and reserve the broth.

Step 2. Make the Filling

While the stomachs are cooking, rinse the lamb heart and lungs. Cut into chunks and boil in salted water for about 1 hour until tender. Add the liver in the last 10-15 minutes of cooking.

Cook the buckwheat in salted water according to package directions until fluffy.

Finely chop the onions and sauté in butter or fat until golden brown.

Grind or finely chop the boiled offal (heart, lungs, and liver).

In a large bowl, combine the ground offal, cooked buckwheat, and sautéed onions. Mix well and season generously with salt and pepper.

Step 3. Assemble and Bake

Carefully stuff the cooled lamb stomachs with the filling, but do not overpack, as the buckwheat will expand.

Sew the openings shut with kitchen twine or secure them with toothpicks.

Place the stuffed stomachs in a baking dish or oven-safe pot. Pour in enough of the reserved broth to reach about one-third of the way up the stomachs.

Cover with a lid and bake in a preheated oven at 350°F (180°C) for 40-50 minutes. Then, remove the lid and bake for another 15-20 minutes to allow the tops to brown.

Step 4. To Serve

Let the "Nianya" rest for 10-15 minutes before slicing it into thick rounds, like a terrine.

Serve hot, drizzled with the cooking juices from the dish. It pairs perfectly with prepared horseradish, sharp mustard, or pickled cucumbers.

Slivnukha (Two-in-One Millet and Potato Meal)



Prep. time

15 min



Cook time

25-30 min



Serves

4

INGREDIENTS

- ◊ 5 medium potatoes (approx. 1.5 lbs)
- ◊ 1 cup millet
- ◊ Salt, to taste
- ◊ Butter, to taste



DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Prepare Potatoes

Peel the potatoes and cut them into thin, uniform strips (julienne cut). Place in a pot, cover with water (keeping about 1 inch above potatoes), add salt, and bring to a boil.

Step 2: Add Millet

When potatoes are partially cooked (about 5-7 minutes - tender but still firm), add 1 cup of rinsed millet. Continue cooking at a gentle simmer.

Step 3: Monitor Cooking

Cook for 15-20 minutes, making sure potatoes maintain their shape and don't become mushy. The millet should become tender and absorb most of the water.

Step 4: Finish the Dish

Drain any remaining water. Add butter to taste, mix gently, cover, and let rest for 5 minutes off heat.

Step 5: Serve

Serve hot with sour cream, or pour cold milk/cream over individual portions.

Note

Perfect potato texture is key - they should be cooked but still hold shape

Tambov Boiled-and-Smoked Ham



Prep. time

10 days



Cook time

14 h



Serves

15

INGREDIENTS

(for 2.2 lb of raw ham)

For Injection Brine (10% of ham weight)

- ◊ 3 oz water
- ◊ 0.5 oz Prague Powder #1 (Pink Curing Salt)
- ◊ $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon sugar

For Covering Brine (40-50% of ham weight)

- ◊ 15 oz water
- ◊ 2 teaspoons Prague Powder #1 (Pink Curing Salt)
- ◊ 3 tablespoons kosher or sea salt



DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Prepare the Ham

Thoroughly wash the ham. Trim excess fat and uneven edges, but leave the bones intact (pelvic and leg bones do not need removal).

Step 2: Prepare the Brines

Fully dissolve all ingredients for both the injection brine and covering brine. Ensure both solutions are well-mixed, sediment-free, and chilled to below 46°F. The ideal curing temperature is 37–39°F.

Step 3: Brine the Ham

Place the ham in a container large enough to fully submerge it in the covering brine. Evenly inject the entire ham with the chilled injection brine, paying special attention to areas near the bone. Pour the chilled covering brine over the ham, ensuring it is completely submerged. Cover the container and refrigerate for 5–7 days. Turn and massage the ham gently 2–3 times during this period to ensure even curing.

Step 4: Post-Brining Steps

Rinse the ham under cold water and smooth out any folds or creases. Tie the ham with kitchen twine or prepare it for hanging. The ham must be suspended vertically during smoking.

Step 5: Drying

Hang the ham to dry at 68–77°F for at least 24 hours. A well-ventilated area or smoking chamber is ideal. The surface must be completely dry before smoking.

Step 6: Smoking

Cold-smoke the ham at 68–86°F for a minimum of 6 hours. For traditional Tambov-style flavor, smoke at 90–113°F for 12–72 hours, adjusting smoke density to preference.

Step 7: Venting

After smoking, ventilate the ham for at least 24 hours in a well-ventilated space or smoking chamber.

Step 8: Boiling

Heat water to 194–203°F in a pot large enough to fully submerge the ham. Insert a meat thermometer into the thickest part of the ham. Use a rack to prevent direct contact with the pot's bottom. Maintain water temperature at 176–180°F until the internal temperature reaches 160°F. If no thermometer is available, boil for 50–55 minutes per pound for an 18–22 lb ham. Adjust time proportionally for smaller/larger pieces. A thermometer is highly recommended for accuracy.

Step 9: Cooling and Storage

Rapidly cool the ham under cold running water (50–54°F) for 15–20 minutes, or in a 50–54°F room for 4–6 hours. Pat dry with a clean cloth and refrigerate for at least 24 hours, until the internal temperature reaches 32–46°F. For long-term storage, freeze at 14 to 0°F for 10–24 hours. Portion before freezing and thaw portions in the refrigerator. Yield: 82–83% of the original raw weight.

Step 10: Serving

Slice the ham thinly. For optimal flavor, refrigerate for 1–5 days after the final cooling step before serving.

Desserts



Thin Russian Pancakes



Prep. time

5 min



Cook time

15 min



Serves

4

INGREDIENTS

- ◊ 3 large eggs
- ◊ 2 tablespoons sugar
- ◊ 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- ◊ 2 cups whole milk, warmed
- ◊ 2 tablespoons sunflower or other neutral vegetable oil, plus extra for greasing the pan
- ◊ ¼ teaspoon salt
- ◊ ¼ teaspoon baking soda



DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Mix the Eggs and Sugar

Crack the eggs into a mixing bowl. Add the sugar and salt. Whisk until the mixture becomes smooth and the sugar is mostly dissolved. Warm the milk until it's just lukewarm, then pour about ⅓ cup into the egg mixture and whisk again.

Step 2: Add the Flour

Sift the flour into the bowl. Add the baking soda. Whisk until the batter is completely smooth, with no lumps.

Step 3: Add the Remaining Milk and Oil

Gradually pour in the remaining warm milk in two additions, whisking well each time. Finally, add the vegetable oil and mix until fully combined. Let the batter rest for 15 minutes so it can thicken slightly.

Step 4: Prepare the Pan

Before cooking the first pancake, lightly grease the pan with just a drop of vegetable oil. A nonstick skillet or a dedicated crepe pan works best. Heat the pan well over medium-high heat.

Step 5: Cook the Pancakes

Stir the batter. Pour a ladleful into the hot pan, tilting and rotating it so the batter spreads into a thin, even layer. Cook over medium-high heat until the surface looks set and the edges turn golden brown. Flip with a spatula and cook the other side briefly. Stack the finished pancakes on a plate. To keep them warm, cover the stack with a lid.

Kulaga (Steamed Rye Berry Dessert)



Prep. time

1.5-2 h



Cook time

1 h



Serves

2-3

INGREDIENTS

- ◊ 1 tablespoon dry rye malt powder
- ◊ 2 tablespoons rye flour
- ◊ $\frac{3}{4}$ cup + 1 tablespoon water
- ◊ $\frac{3}{4}$ cup viburnum berries



DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Steep the Malt

Place 1 tablespoon of dry rye malt powder into a thermos or heatproof container. Pour in $\frac{3}{4}$ cup + 1 tablespoon of boiling water, stir to combine, and seal tightly. Let it steep for 1.5 hours to allow the malt to saccharify and develop a naturally sweet flavor. A multicooker on a "yogurt" setting may be used as an alternative.

Step 2: Combine Ingredients

After steeping, transfer the malt liquid to a thick-walled ceramic pot or oven-safe bowl. Add 2 tablespoons of rye flour and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of viburnum berries (or an equal amount of sieved berry purée). Do not add sugar. Mix until a smooth, lump-free consistency is achieved.

Step 3: Thicken the Pudding

Place the container in a preheated oven or multicooker set to 140-160°F (60-70°C), leaving the door slightly ajar. Heat for 1 hour, stirring occasionally, until the mixture thickens to a pudding-like consistency.

Step 4: Cool and Serve

Check the desired thickness. Allow the kulaga to cool completely, then refrigerate before serving. Chilling will further solidify the texture and enhance the flavors.

Note

If fresh, sweetened-by-frost viburnum is unavailable, you may use dried or frozen berries. Viburnum syrup or purée is also an excellent substitute.

Rhubarb pie



Prep. time



Cook time



Serves

75 min

45 min

8

INGREDIENTS

For the Shortcrust Pastry:

- ◊ 2 to 2 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- ◊ ⅔ cup cold unsalted butter
- ◊ ½ cup granulated sugar
- ◊ 1 large egg
- ◊ 1 tsp baking powder (optional, but makes the pastry more tender)
- ◊ A pinch of salt

For the Filling:

- ◊ 14 to 18 oz rhubarb stalks, chopped into ½-inch pieces
- ◊ ½ to ¾ cup granulated sugar (adjust to taste)
- ◊ 1 to 2 tablespoons cornstarch or potato starch
- ◊ 1 teaspoon vanilla extract or vanilla sugar (optional)
- ◊ ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon (optional, but recommended)

For Topping (Optional):

- ◊ Powdered sugar



DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Prepare the Rhubarb

Wash the rhubarb stalks. Peel them with a sharp knife to remove any tough, stringy skin.

Chop the stalks into ½-inch pieces.

In a bowl, toss the rhubarb with ½ to ¾ cup of sugar and 1-2 tablespoons of cornstarch. The cornstarch is essential for thickening the juicy filling. For extra flavor, add ½ teaspoon of cinnamon if desired.

Step 2: Make the Pastry & Crumble

In a large bowl, whisk together 2 to 2 ½ cups of flour, 1 teaspoon of baking powder, ½ cup of sugar, and a pinch of salt.

Add ⅔ cup of cold, cubed butter. Quickly rub the butter into the flour with your fingertips until the mixture resembles coarse breadcrumbs.

Add 1 large egg and mix just until the dough comes together. If it's too sticky, add a little more flour.

Take about two-thirds of the dough and press it evenly into the bottom and up the sides of a greased 9-inch springform or pie pan to form the base.

Step 3: Assemble the Pie

Preheat your oven to 350°F (180°C).

Spread the prepared rhubarb filling over the pastry base.

Using the large holes of a box grater, grate the remaining one-third of the dough directly over the rhubarb to create an even crumble topping.

Step 4: Bake and Serve

Bake for 35-45 minutes, or until the crumble topping is golden brown and the filling is bubbly.

Let the pie cool completely in the pan. This is a crucial step, as it allows the filling to set properly.

Before serving, dust with powdered sugar.

Soaked Apples with Oak and Cherry Leaves



Prep. time

40min



Fermentation

2 months



Yield

15

INGREDIENTS

- ◊ 11 lb firm winter apples (e.g., Antonovka)
- ◊ 2 cups sugar or 1 2/3 cups honey
- ◊ 1 cup rye flour
- ◊ 3 heaping tbsp salt
- ◊ 15 cherry leaves
- ◊ 15 blackcurrant leaves
- ◊ 10 qt filtered water

Optional Additions:

- ◊ 1 handful lingonberries (for color and aroma)



DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Prepare the Container & Apples

Thoroughly wash a 4-5 gallon wooden keg, enamel pot, or food-safe bucket with baking soda. Rinse with boiling water to sterilize. Wash the apples carefully and remove the stems.

Step 2: Layer the Apples

Place a portion of the cherry and blackcurrant leaves at the bottom of your container. Arrange a tight layer of apples, stem-ends up, on top of the leaves. Follow with another layer of leaves. Continue alternating layers until the container is full, finishing with a final layer of leaves on top.

Step 3: Prepare the Brine

Bring 2.5 gallons (10 L) of water to a boil. Let it cool slightly. Add the sugar (or honey) and salt, stirring until completely dissolved. Whisk in the rye flour until no lumps remain. Allow the brine to cool completely.

Step 4: Brine and Weight the Apples

Pour the cooled brine over the apples until they are completely submerged. Place a clean, sterilized wooden board or plate directly on the surface, and set a heavy, cleaned weight (like a stone) on top to keep the apples pressed down.

Step 5: Ferment and Age

Place the container in a warm room (60-65°F / 15-18°C) for 12-14 days. During the first 5-6 days, check daily to remove any foam and ensure the apples remain fully covered by the brine, topping it up with fresh, cooled brine if necessary. After two weeks, move the container to a cold cellar or refrigerator (39-43°F / 4-6°C) to finish fermenting. The apples will develop carbonation and be ready in 1.5-2 months.

Note

In ancient times, apples were fermented in large oak barrels under weights. Today, you can recreate this traditional method at home using a pot, a 3-liter jar, or a food-safe bucket instead of a massive cask. For best results, choose firm-fleshed autumn or winter apple varieties with a subdued color. If the apples aren't fully ripe, let them sit at room temperature to mature—a few days for autumn varieties, or 2-3 weeks for winter apples..

Syrniki (Cottage cheese pancakes)



Prep. time

10 min



Cook time

25 min



Serves

2

INGREDIENTS

- ◊ ¾ cup Cottage Cheese (9% fat)
- ◊ 1 tablespoon sugar
- ◊ ½ teaspoon vanilla sugar
- ◊ A pinch of salt
- ◊ 1 large egg
- ◊ 2 heaped tablespoon flour, for the dough
- ◊ 2-4 tablespoons flour, for dusting and coating
- ◊ 2 tablespoons oil
- ◊ 2 tablespoons butter



DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Make the Dough

Press the farmer's cheese through a fine-mesh sieve into a large bowl using the back of a spoon. If your cheese seems very wet, place it in a piece of cheesecloth (folded into 4 layers), gather the ends, and gently squeeze out any excess liquid. Add the sugar, vanilla sugar, and a pinch of salt to the bowl with the cottage cheese. Mix well with a spatula. In a small bowl, beat the egg lightly with a whisk or fork. Add it to the cottage cheese mixture and stir until fully combined. Add 2 heaped tablespoons of flour to the bowl. Mix with the spatula until you get a uniform, soft dough. The dough should be soft but firm enough to hold its shape; if it's too sticky, add 1-2 more tablespoons of flour, one at a time. Cover the bowl and place the dough in the refrigerator for 15 minutes to chill.

Step 2: Shape the Pancakes

Lightly dust your kitchen counter with flour. Place the chilled dough on the counter and, using your hands, roll it into a thick log about 2 inches in diameter. Cut the log into rounds no thicker than ¾ inch. Gently coat each round on all sides with the extra flour used for dusting. Place the coated pancakes on the floured counter until ready to cook.

Step 3: Fry the Pancakes

Heat the oil and butter in a large, heavy-bottomed skillet over medium heat. Cook the pancakes in batches (don't overcrowd the pan) for about 2 minutes per side, until golden brown. Reduce the heat to very low, cover the skillet with a lid, and let them cook for an additional 3 minutes to ensure they are heated through.

Step 4: Finish in the Oven (Optional)

For extra fluffiness and to ensure they are cooked all the way through, you can transfer the fried pancakes to a baking sheet and finish them in a preheated oven at 400°F for 5 minutes.

Serve warm with sour cream, jam, or honey.

Drinks



Homemade Berry Compote



Prep. time



Cook time



Serves

10 min

20 min

8

INGREDIENTS

- ◊ 8 cups water
- ◊ 1 cup blackcurrants, fresh or frozen
- ◊ 2 medium apples, cored and sliced
- ◊ 8 large strawberries, hulled and halved
- ◊ 7 plums, pitted and quartered
- ◊ 1 cup + 2 tablespoon sugar, or to taste
- ◊ $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon citric acid (or juice of $\frac{1}{2}$ lemon)



DIRECTIONS

Step 1. Prepare the fruit

Sort through the berries carefully and rinse them well. Hull the strawberries, remove the pits from the plums, and core the apples. (Adding apples is optional — use them if you like a slightly sweeter, fuller flavor.)

Step 2. Start the compote base

Pour the water into a pot and bring it to a boil. Add only the black currants first and let the water come back to a boil.

Step 3. Add the remaining fruit

Add the sliced strawberries, plums, and apples to the pot.

Step 4. Sweeten and simmer

Bring to a boil again. Add the sugar and simmer over low heat for about 5 minutes. Taste the compote — if it's not sweet enough, add a little more sugar. You can also add the citric acid for a light tang.

Step 5. Cool the compote

Turn off the heat and allow the compote to cool completely.

Step 6. Serve

Serve chilled for the best flavor.

Birch Sap



Prep. time

20 min



Cook time

15 min



Serves

12

INGREDIENTS

- ◊ about 3.2 quarts / 12.7 cups birch sap
- ◊ 5.3 oz / $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar
- ◊ 1 teaspoon citric acid (level, not heaping)



DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Heat the Birch Sap

Pour the birch sap into a saucepan.

Warm it gently over medium-low heat until a light foam forms on the surface.

Do not let it come to a boil if you want to preserve its natural nutrients.

Step 2: Remove the Foam

Skim off all the foam carefully with a spoon or skimmer.

Continue heating gently, but without boiling.

Step 3: Add Sugar and Citric Acid

Add the sugar and citric acid to the hot sap.

Stir until both are completely dissolved.

Step 4: Prepare the Jars

Wash the glass jars thoroughly.

Rinse them with boiling water to sanitize.

Let the jars drain upside down.

Step 5: Fill and Seal

Pour the hot birch-sap mixture into the prepared jars.

Seal the jars tightly with sterilized lids.

Step 6: Wrap and Cool

Wrap the sealed jars in a towel or blanket.

Allow them to cool slowly to room temperature.

Store in a cool place once fully cooled.

Note

Birch sap is a clear liquid harvested from birch trees during the early spring when the sap begins to flow from the roots upward. It is collected by tapping the tree trunk—drilling a small hole and inserting a spout or tube to drain the sap into a container. This tradition is common in Russia, Northern Europe, where the sap is valued as a seasonal, nutrient-rich beverage.

Oat Kisel



Prep. time

10 min



Fermentation

2-3 days



Serves

8-12

INGREDIENTS

For the Oat Starter:

- ◊ 3 cups old-fashioned rolled oats (Steel-cut oats or long-cooking rolled oats) (such as "Hercules" brand, if available)
- ◊ 6 ¼ cups filtered water, at room temperature
- ◊ 5-6 tablespoons plain kefir, unsweetened yogurt, or prepared oat starter
- ◊ ½ cup whole oat groats or coarse-cut oats (to enhance fermentation)



For Cooking the Kissel (per serving):

- ◊ 5-8 tablespoons of the oat concentrate (from the recipe below)
- ◊ ¾ - 1 cup water
- ◊ Salt, to taste
- ◊ Honey, butter, or unrefined oil (like olive), for serving
- ◊ Fresh berries, nuts, or seeds, for garnish

DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Preparing the Oat Starter (Fermented Base)

Place rolled oats and whole oat grains into a clean jar. Pour in cool water and add kefir (or another fermented starter). Stir thoroughly using a wooden or silicone spatula. Cover the jar with cheesecloth and secure it with a rubber band. Leave the jar at room temperature in a dark place for 2-3 days. Stir the mixture once a day.

The starter is ready when it develops a light tangy aroma and small bubbles appear on the surface. The liquid will separate — this is normal.

Avoid using metal strainers or containers for fermentation — metal can interfere with the fermentation process and cause oxidation.

Adjust the texture to your preference: the more concentrate you use per serving, the thicker the jelly will be. Start with 5 tablespoons and experiment.

Step 2: Straining and Separating the Concentrate

After the fermentation period, place a plastic strainer lined with cheesecloth over a pot and pour the contents of the jar into it. Let the liquid drain naturally, then gather the edges of the cheesecloth and gently squeeze out the remaining liquid. You will get a cloudy, milky liquid — this is the base for the oatmeal jelly. Pour this liquid back into a clean jar or container and let it sit undisturbed for 12-18 hours.

A thick white sediment (the concentrate) will settle at the bottom, and a clearer liquid (oat kvass) will rise to the top.

Step 3: Cooking the Hot Oatmeal Jelly

Carefully pour off the top layer (oat kvass). It can be enjoyed as a refreshing drink. Transfer the white sediment — the concentrate — into a clean jar. It will keep in the refrigerator for up to 10 days. To prepare one serving: place 5-8 tablespoons of the concentrate into a small saucepan. Mix with a little cold water until smooth. Add 1 cup of hot water and place over medium heat. Stir continuously and bring to a gentle boil. Cook for 2-3 minutes until the mixture thickens to your liking.

Step 4: Serving

Pour the hot jelly into bowls. Add a pinch of salt and a small piece of butter, or a spoonful of unrefined olive or flaxseed oil. Add honey if desired — ideally when the jelly has cooled slightly to preserve its nutritional benefits. Serve immediately as a full breakfast or a light dinner. You can garnish with fresh berries, nuts, or chia seeds.

Homemade Kvass



Prep. time

75 min



Cook time

8-14h



Serves

8

INGREDIENTS

- ◊ 1 ½ sugar
- ◊ 0.85 cup active rye sourdough starter
- ◊ 12 cups water
- ◊ 7–9 oz toasted rye bread (preferably dark whole-rye bread)
- ◊ 3–4 sprigs fresh mint
- ◊ Raisins, to taste — for natural carbonation and serving (optional)



DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Preparing the Bread Base

Cut the rye bread into large cubes (about ¾ inch). Spread them out on a baking sheet and toast in the oven at 320°F (160°C) until they turn a pleasant golden-brown color. Avoid over-toasting — if the bread becomes too dark or burnt, the kvass will taste bitter. You should end up with 7–9 oz of toasted rye bread. While the bread cubes are still hot, transfer them to a large jar or enamel pot. Add the sugar and the sprigs of mint. Gently bruise the mint with your hands to release its aroma.

Step 2: Steeping the Base

Bring 6 cups (1.5 liters) of water to a boil. Pour the boiling water over the mixture of toasted bread, sugar, and mint. Stir thoroughly to dissolve the sugar. Cover the jar loosely with cheesecloth and let the mixture cool to 86–95°F — warm to the touch, but not hot. This may take several hours; you can leave it overnight.

Step 3: Fermentation

Once the mixture has cooled, add the rye sourdough starter and stir well. Cover the container with cheesecloth or a lid (set on loosely to allow gases to escape) and place it in a warm spot, ideally 77–82°F. If your kitchen is cool, keep it near a heater or inside the oven with the light on (but the oven turned off). After 6–8 hours, you'll notice signs of fermentation: bubbles on the surface, a light foam, and a pleasantly tangy, bready aroma. Taste the kvass — if the acidity and flavor feel right, it's ready. If not, let it ferment 1–3 hours longer.

Step 4: Straining and Bottling

Strain the kvass through cheesecloth or a fine strainer into a clean container. Press the soaked bread mixture well — it holds a lot of flavor. Pour the strained kvass into plastic bottles. Add 2–3 raisins to each bottle — they help with natural carbonation and give the drink a light sparkle. Seal the bottles tightly and leave them at room temperature for 2–4 hours to build up natural fizz. Then refrigerate to chill completely.

Step 5: Serving

Serve the kvass well chilled in tall glasses. You can add a few ice cubes and a sprig of fresh mint for extra freshness.

Where to eat?

Where to eat?



Debut. Cafe 5,0 ★

A long-standing favorite that continues to enjoy high demand and rave reviews for a reason. Café Début masterfully delivers a nostalgic yet fresh take on classic comfort food, alongside a selection of European classics, in a cozy, welcoming setting. It's the perfect spot to experience the hearty, soul-warming dishes that feel like a visit to grandma's house, or to enjoy a familiar international favorite.

Loc.&Time: 79, Sovetskaya St., 10:00-23:00
213B/1, Michurinskaya St., 10:00-22:00

Must-Try Dishes from Our Recipe Book:

- ◊ Borscht
- ◊ Pelmeni with Sour Cream
- ◊ Syrniki with Sour Cream and Jam
- ◊ Blinchiki (Traditional Pancakes)
- ◊ Olivier Salad with Tambov Ham

Average Bill: 500 – 1000 RUB

Tolstoy Graf 4.0 ★

A cozy spot where Russian generosity meets European elegance. This highly-rated cafe is a reliable choice for a satisfying meal.

Loc.&Time: 4A, Ploshchad Leva Tolstogo,
11:00-23:00

Must-Try Dishes from Our Recipe Book:

- ◊ Skoblyanka,
- ◊ Tambov Borscht,
- ◊ Meat Solyanka,
- ◊ Homemade Chicken Noodles.

Average Bill: from 600 RUB



Bufet 4,8 ★

Bufet is a warm and inviting café-patisserie in Tambov, offering creative twists on comforting homemade dishes. Here you'll find carefully crafted pastries, high-quality grain coffee, and snacks made from natural ingredients. With its cozy atmosphere and thoughtful design, Bufet feels personal and soulful—an authentic place you'll want to return to.

Loc&time: 4A, Oktyabrskaya St., Mon-Fri 7:00-23:00
Sat-Sun 8:00-23:00

Must-Try Dishes from Our Recipe Book:

- ◊ Cottage cheese pancakes with homemade jam
- ◊ Olivier salad with beef tongue
- ◊ Borscht with pork lard spread and sour cream
- ◊ Homemade chicken noodle soup
- ◊ Black dumplings with pike
- ◊ Buckwheat with mushrooms
- ◊ Veal dumplings
- ◊ Russian Layered Herring Salad ("Shuba")
- ◊ Fried potatoes with oyster mushrooms and pickles

Average Bill: 1000–3000 RUB



Mama Lyubit Cafeteria 4.0 ★

For an authentic and quick taste of Russian home-style cooking, look no further than this modern cafeteria. "Mama Lyubit" (which means "Mama Loves") offers a classic self-service line where you can see all the dishes, making it easy to choose. It's a perfect spot for a hearty, affordable, and no-fuss lunch, capturing the essence of a comforting meal in a clean and casual setting.

Loc&time: Nikolaya Virty St., 16, 1st floor
Mon-Fri 10:00-18:00

Must-Try from Our Recipe Book:

- ◊ Borscht,
- ◊ Meat Solyanka,
- ◊ Homemade Chicken Noodles.
- ◊ Sauerkraut (Kvashenaya Kapusta)
- ◊ Vinegret Salad (a vibrant beet and vegetable salad)
- ◊ Syrniki (Cottage cheese pancakes)
- ◊ Berry Compote (Yagodny Kompot)

Average Bill: from 180 RUB

