

Russian 90A

Russian Cuisine

Nikolai Gogol *The Dead Souls* (1842)

- A lunch is served at the estate of the landowner Sobakevich. Chichikov and his host, first polishing off several varieties of pickles and unnamed appetizers, consume *nyanya*, "a well-known dish served with **cabbage soup**, consisting of a **sheep's stomach stuffed with buckwheat, brains, and pig feet**." Then **a rack of lamb**. Then "**pirogs**, each much bigger than a plate, then **a turkey** the size of a calf, chock-full of all sorts of good things: **eggs, rice, livers**... they went to the drawing room, where a saucer of preserves was already waiting..." The preserves, by the way, are "**black radish, cooked in honey.**"

Q. Of the dishes listed above, which one is particularly Russian?

N. Gogol *The Dead Souls*

- Later in the book: "While the guests were hard at their whist, there appeared on the table **beluga, sturgeon; salmon, pressed caviar, freshly salted caviar, herring, red sturgeon, cheeses, smoked tongues**"
- ... **a pie with mushrooms, dumplings, honey-stewed fruit.**"

Q. What is prevalent in this description?

Anton Chekhov *The Stupid Frenchman*

- The Frenchman looked around the restaurant and he felt scared. The waiters were running around delivering mountains of **Bliny. Customers were devouring mountains of bliny, lox, and caviar fearlessly and with great pleasure...** “What a miraculous country,” he thought. “Not only their climate but even their stomachs are full of miracles! Oh, what a country!”

Q. Why is the Frenchman surprised?

Russian Traditional Cuisine

- Variety of pies – pirogi, pirozhki
- A wide variety of soups
- Large number of fish and vegetable recipes – up to 250 days a year imposed by the Russian Orthodox Church (twice a week + lent before Easter)
- Extensive use of brined and pickled vegetables and fruit
- Fruit preserves – варенье
- The main technology used to be boiling, stewing, keeping on low heat. Why: cooking was done in a Russian stove

Note: Acquisition of territory led to additions to cuisine

Bread

- Kalachi >>>>>>>

Black bread (made with rye flour, yeast, slightly sour)



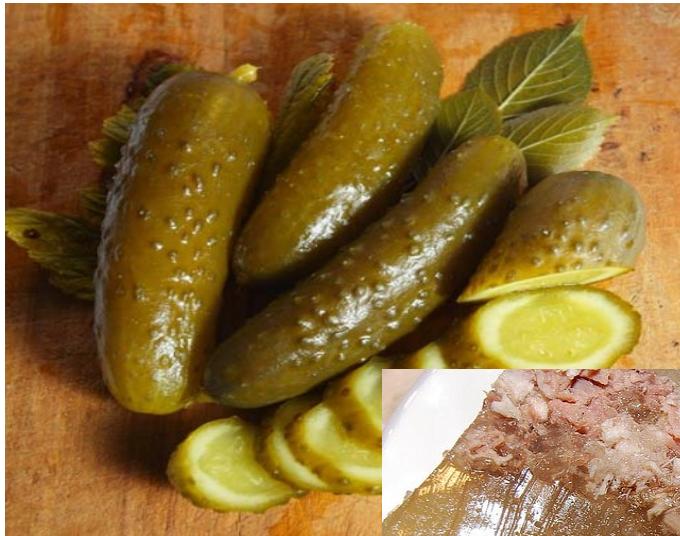
Fish

- Fish was important in pre-revolutionary cuisine, especially on Russian Orthodox fast days (between 192 and 216 a year; 40 days of Lent before Easter) when meat was forbidden.
- Freshwater fish such as carp were commonly eaten in inland areas, as well as sturgeon, salmon, pike and trout.
- A greater variety of fish—including saltwater species—were preserved by salting, pickling or smoking.

Zakuski

- Zakuski – appetizers
- “War and Peace” «... before a big dinner assembled guests [were] expecting the summons to zakuski»
- Zakusit’ – from the verb that means to ‘bite’
- The same verb means ‘to have a bite after a drink’
- E.g. If you drink vodka, you ‘chase’ with appetizers.

Zakuski



A History of Vodka

- Traditional medieval drink: mead
- Vodka appeared in XIV-XV centuries
- Vodka < from ВОДА (water)
- State (Tsar's) monopoly (license) on selling vodka since XV cent. (Ivan III) – since then several similar laws.

Drinking Vodka

- “Don’t pour vodka into an ordinary wineglass... – you don’t treat a sweetheart that way! Don’t gulp it down straight off! Rub your hands together, gaze at the ceiling, and only then slowly raise the glass to your lips. At once sparks from your stomach flash through your whole body... As soon as you’ve had your shot of vodka, you turn to the appetizers. The best appetizer is herring.”

Chekhov, a satirical short story *The Siren*

Traditionally, before drinking someone would say a toast and all would clink glasses!

Shrovetide (Maslenitsa)

- *Maslenitsa* is a time-honored Russian festival, and its origins, of course, are pagan. When the Orthodox faith arrived in the ancient state of Rus, “*Maslenitsa*” (“Butter Week,” or “Pancake Week”), like other festivals, became an intrinsic part of the [church’s calendar](#) of festivals. Aside from anything else, it is part of the preparations for Lent — that most difficult time when people are supposed to abstain from all animal-derived foods, as well as alcohol, bad language and bad thoughts in general.
- Source: **Seven things to do on the seven days of Maslenitsa**
- “The Barber of Siberia”
– a movie by N. Mikhalkov (1998, about the events in 1885)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8xZ1d0litU>

March 9, 2013 [Alexandra Guzева](#), RBTH

Bliny БЛИНЫ



N. Mikhalkov “The Barber of Siberia” (1998) Shrovetide/Maslenitsa



Boris Kustodiev (1919)



Boris Kustodiev (1920)



Soups

Russian Cooking

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWNI_6-4nQ (4 min) – Zakuski
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XKOqjjOrI7g> (3 min) – Soups



Soups

- Schi – cabbage soup
- Borsch
- Rassolnik
- Ukha
 - Sour-cream with soup



Commonly Used Vegetables

- Cabbage
 - Beets
 - Turnip
 - Potatoes
 - Tomatoes
 - Cucumbers
- Mushroom picking and
multiple mushroom recipes



Pirogi and Pirozhki

- Pirog – from ‘pir’ that means ‘feast.
- Dough and stuffing [meat, fish, eggs, onions, cabbage, apples, fruit, berries, etc.].



Kasha

- Buckwheat [гречка]
- Farina [манка]
- Fairy tale “Kasha from an Ax”

Masha + Kasha

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYniUCGPGLs>



- Щи да каша – пища наша. Our main sustenance, that's schi and kasha

Pelmeni



Milk products

- Sour-cream
- Tvorog (similar to cottage cheese)
- Prostokvasha (similar to yogurt)
- Syrniki: made from tvorog



Getting ready for winter: varen'e, pickled cabbage, pickled cucumbers

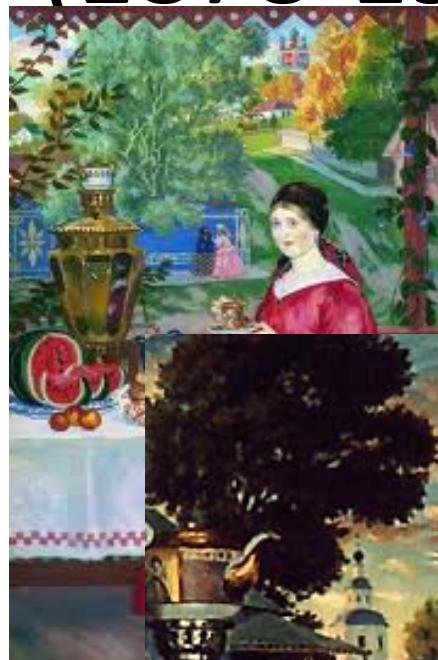
- Home-made jams (varen'e) – lengthy boiling with a lot of sugar
- Saurkraut [кислая капуста] – pickling in barrels
- Pickled cucumbers [соленые огурцы]

Drinks

- Kvas (500 kinds in XV cent.)
- Vodka (state monopoly) – known as mopolka
- Tea (samovar)



Kustodiev (1878-1927)



Cookbooks

- 17th century Domostroy (what one can eat during days of fast and the Lent)
- 1816 – the first cookbook “The Russian Cooking” «Русская Поварня»
- ***1861 -- A Gift to Young Housewives*** (*Подарок молодым хозяйкам, Podarok molodym khozyaykam*) by Elena Molokhovets