

= Borscht =

Borscht is a tart soup popular in several East European cuisines , including Ukrainian , Russian , Polish , Belarusian , Lithuanian , Romanian and Ashkenazi Jewish . The variety most commonly associated with the name in English is of Ukrainian origin and includes beetroots as one of the main ingredients , which gives the dish a distinctive red color . It shares the name , however , with a wide selection of sour @-@ tasting soups without beetroots , such as sorrel @-@ based green borscht , rye @-@ based white borscht , cabbage borscht , etc .

Borscht derives from an ancient soup originally cooked from pickled stems , leaves and umbels of common hogweed , a herbaceous plant growing in damp meadows , which lent the dish its Slavic name . With time , it evolved into a diverse array of tart soups , among which the beet @-@ based red borscht has become the most popular . It is typically made by combining meat or bone stock with sautéed vegetables , which ? as well as beetroots ? usually include cabbage , carrots , onions , potatoes and tomatoes . Depending on the recipe , borscht may include meat or fish , or be purely vegetarian ; it may be served either hot or cold ; and it may range from a hearty one @-@ pot meal to a dainty clear broth or a smooth refreshing drink . It is often served with smetana or sour cream , hard @-@ boiled eggs and / or potatoes , but there exists an ample choice of more involved garnishes and side dishes , such as uszka or pampushky , that can be served with the soup .

Its popularity has spread throughout Eastern Europe and the former Russian Empire , and ? by way of migration ? to other continents . In North America , borscht is often linked with either Jews or Mennonites , the groups who first brought it there from Europe . Today , several ethnic groups claim borscht , in its variegated local guises , as their own national dish and consume it as part of ritual meals within Eastern Orthodox , Greek Catholic , Roman Catholic , and Jewish religious traditions .

= = Etymology = =

The English word borscht , also spelled borsch , borsht , or bortsch , comes from Yiddish ?????? (borsht) . The latter derives from the word ???? (borshch) , which is common to East Slavic languages , such as Ukrainian or Russian . Together with cognates in other Slavic languages , it comes from Proto @-@ Slavic * b?r??? ' hogweed ' and ultimately from Proto @-@ Indo @-@ European * bhr ? sti- < * bhares- / bhores- ' point , stubble ' . Common hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*) was the soup 's principal ingredient before it was replaced with other vegetables , notably beetroot . The beetroot borscht was invented in what is now Ukraine and first popularized in North America by Yiddish @-@ speaking Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe .

= = Ingredients and preparation = =

Typical Ukrainian borscht is traditionally made from meat and / or bone stock , sautéed vegetables , and beet sour , that is , fermented beetroot juice . Depending on the recipe , some of these components may be omitted or substituted .

The stock is typically made by boiling meat , bones , or both . Beef , pork or a combination of both are most commonly used , with brisket , ribs , shank and chuck considered to give the most flavorful results , especially if cooked on a high flame . Marrow bones are considered best for the bone stock . Meat stock is usually cooked for about two hours , whereas bone stock takes four to six hours to prepare . Meat and bones are usually removed afterwards and the meat is only added back into the soup about 10 ? 15 minutes before the borscht is done . Some recipes call for smoked meats , resulting in a distinctively smoky borscht , while others use poultry or mutton stock . Fasting varieties are typically made with fish stock to avoid the use of meat , while purely vegetarian recipes often substitute the stock with forest mushroom broth .

The vegetables most commonly added to borscht are beetroots , white cabbage , carrots , parsley root , potatoes , onions and tomatoes . Some recipes may also call for beans , tart apples , turnip , celeriac , zucchini or bell peppers . Parsnip may be used as a substitute for parsley root , and tomato paste is often used as well as or instead of fresh tomatoes . The traditional technique of

preparing the soup is to precook the vegetables ? by sautéing , braising , boiling or baking ? separately from the meat and only then to combine them with the stock . This distinctive feature of borscht derives from the practice of slow cooking in the Russian oven (traditional masonry stove , used for both cooking and heating) , wherein the differences in cooking times of individual ingredients had to be taken into account in order to ensure that all components reach doneness at the same time . The importance of this method is reflected in the Russian language , where a variant in which all vegetables are added raw directly into the stock is referred to by the diminutive form borshchok rather than borshch . Vegetables are usually julienned , except for potatoes and zucchini , which are diced . The beetroots may be partially baked before being sprinkled with vinegar or lemon juice to preserve the color and braised separately from other vegetables . Onions , carrots , parsley root , turnip and other root vegetables are sautéed (traditionally in animal fat , especially lard or butter) and then mixed with tomatoes or tomato paste . Dry beans are boiled separately . Potatoes and cabbage are boiled in the stock for about 15 minutes before the precooked vegetables are added .

The dominant tastes in borscht are sweet and sour . This combination is traditionally obtained by adding beet sour . It is made by covering sliced beetroots with lukewarm preboiled water and allowing bacteria to ferment some of the sugars present in beetroots into dextran (which gives the liquid a slightly viscous consistency) , mannitol , acetic acid and lactic acid . Stale rye bread is often added to hasten the process , but usually omitted in Jewish recipes , as chametz (leavened bread) would make the sour unfit for Passover meals . Sugar , salt and lemon juice may be also added to balance the flavor . After about 2 ? 5 days (or 2 ? 3 weeks without the bread) , the deep red , sweet and sour liquid may be strained and is ready to use . It is added to borscht shortly before the soup is done , as prolonged boiling would cause the tart flavor to dissipate . The beet sour is known in Slavic languages as kvas (literally ' sour , acid ' ; compare kvass) and in Yiddish as rosl (from a Slavic word originally referring to any brine obtained by steeping salted meat or vegetables in water ; compare Russian rassol ' pickle juice ' , Polish rosół ' broth ') . Apart from its employment in borscht , it may be also added to prepared horseradish or used as pot roast marinade .

As the traditional method of making borscht with beet sour often requires planning at least several days ahead , many recipes for quicker borscht replace the beet sour with fresh beetroot juice , while the sour taste is imparted by other ingredients , such as vinegar , lemon juice or citric acid , tomatoes , tart apples , dry red wine , dill pickle juice , sauerkraut juice , fermented rye flour and water mixture , etc . The soup is typically flavored with a wide selection of herbs , spices and condiments . Salt , black pepper , garlic , bay leaves and dill are among the most commonly used . Other aromatics often added to borscht include allspice , celery stalks , parsley , marjoram , hot peppers , saffron , horseradish , ginger and prunes . Some recipes require flour or roux to further thicken the borscht . A common opinion is that a good borscht should be thick enough for a spoon to stand upright in it .

= = Varieties = =

As the home country of beetroot borscht , Ukraine boasts great diversity of the soup 's regional variants , with virtually every district having its own recipe . Differences between particular varieties may regard the type of stock used (meat , bone , or both) , the kind of meat (beef , pork , poultry , etc .) , the choice of vegetables and the method of cutting and cooking them . For example , although the typical recipe calls for beef and pork , the Kiev variant uses mutton or lamb as well as beef , while in the Poltava region , the stock for borscht is cooked on poultry meat , that is , chicken , duck or goose . The use of zucchini , beans and apples is characteristic of the Chernihiv borscht ; in this variant , beetroots are sautéed in vegetable oil rather than lard , and the sour taste comes solely from tomatoes and tart apples . The Lviv borscht is based on bone stock and is served with chunks of Vienna sausages .

Many regional recipes for borscht have also developed in Russian cuisine . Examples include the Moscow borscht , served with pieces of beef , ham and Vienna sausages ; Siberian borscht with meatballs ; and Pskov borscht with dried smelt from the local lakes . Other unique Russian variants

include a monastic Lenten borscht with marinated kelp instead of cabbage and the Russian Navy borscht (flotsky borshch) , the defining characteristic of which is that the vegetables are cut into square or diamond @-@ shaped chunks rather than julienned .

As well as the thick borschts described above , Polish cuisine offers a ruby @-@ colored beetroot bouillon known as barszcz czysty czerwony , or clear red borscht . It is made by combining strained meat @-@ and @-@ vegetable stock with wild mushroom broth and beet sour . In some versions , smoked meat may be used for the stock and the tartness may be obtained or enhanced by adding lemon juice , dill pickle brine , or dry red wine . It may be served either in a soup bowl or ? especially at dinner parties ? as a hot beverage in a twin @-@ handled cup , with a croquette or a filled pastry on the side . Unlike other types of borscht , it is not whitened with sour cream . Barszcz wigilijny , or Christmas Eve borscht , is a variant of the clear borscht that is traditionally served during the Polish Christmas Eve supper . In this version , meat stock is either omitted or replaced with fish broth , usually made by boiling the heads cut off from fish used in other Christmas Eve dishes . The mushrooms used for cooking the mushroom broth are reserved for uszka (small filled dumplings) , which are then served with the borscht .

In the summertime , cold borscht is a popular , refreshing alternative to the aforementioned variants , which are normally served hot . It consists of beet sour or beet juice blended with sour cream , buttermilk , soured milk , kefir and / or yogurt , and is refrigerated . The mixture has a distinctive pink or magenta color . It is typically served over finely chopped beetroot , cucumbers , radishes and green onion , together with halves of a hard @-@ boiled egg and sprinkled with fresh dill . Chopped veal , ham , or crawfish tails may be added as well . This soup probably originated in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania , which comprised the territories of modern @-@ day Lithuania and Belarus , and it is still part of the culinary traditions of these and neighboring nations . The Lithuanian language is the only one in the region which actually refers to it as ' cold borscht ' (?altibar??iai) . In Belarusian it is known simply as khaladnik , or ' cold soup ' ; in Polish as ch?odnik litewski , or ' Lithuanian cold soup ' ; and in Russian as svekolnik , or ' beetroot soup ' .

Ashkenazi Jews living in Eastern Europe adopted beetroot borscht from their Slavic neighbors and adapted it to their taste and religious requirements . As combining meat with milk is proscribed by kosher dietary laws , Jews have developed two variants of the soup : meat (fleischik) and dairy (milchik) . The meat variant is typically made from beef brisket (pork is never used) and cabbage , while the dairy one is vegetarian , blended with sour cream or a mixture of milk and egg yolks . Both variants typically contain beetroots and onions , and are flavored with beet sour , vinegar or citric acid for tartness and beet sugar for sweetness . Galician Jews traditionally liked their borscht particularly sweet . Jewish borscht may be served either hot or cold , typically with a hot boiled potato on the side . In prewar Eastern Europe it was traditionally put up to ferment around Purim so that it would be ready four weeks later for the Passover holiday .

= = = Without beets = = =

Although in the English language borscht refers almost invariably to a beet @-@ based soup , in some culinary cultures there exist soups with the same or similar names where beetroots are absent or merely optional . The principal common trait among them is a tart flavor obtained by adding various sour @-@ tasting ingredients .

Green borscht (zeleny borshch) , a light soup made from leaf vegetables , is an example common in Ukrainian and Russian cuisines . The naturally tart @-@ tasting sorrel is most commonly used , but spinach , chard , nettle , garden orache and occasionally dandelion , goutweed or ramsons , may be added as well , especially after the spring season for sorrel has passed . Like beetroot borscht , it is based on meat or vegetable broth and is typically served with boiled potatoes and hard @-@ boiled eggs , sprinkled with dill . There is also a variety of Ukrainian green borscht which includes both sorrel and beetroots .

In Polish cuisine , white borscht (barszcz bia?y , also known as ?ur or ?urek , ' sour soup ') is made from a fermented mixture of rye flour or oatmeal and water . It is typically flavored with garlic and marjoram , and served over eggs and boiled fresh sausage ; the water in which the sausage

was boiled is often used instead of meat stock . In the Carpathian Mountains of southern Poland , variants of borscht are also made in which the tart taste comes from fermented milk products , such as whey or buttermilk . Although the deep red color of beetroot borscht may remind those unfamiliar with Polish cuisine of blood , the kind of borscht that does contain animal (usually poultry) blood mixed with vinegar is dark brownish @-@ gray in color and aptly called " gray borscht " (barszcz szary) , which is a regional name of the Polish blood soup better known as czernina .

In Romanian and Moldovan cuisines , a mixture of wheat bran or cornmeal with water that has been left to ferment , similar to that used in Polish white borscht , is called bor? . It is used to impart a sour taste to a variety of tangy Romanian soups , known as either also bor? or ciorb? . Variants include ciorb? de peri?oare (with meatballs) , ciorb? de burt? (with tripe) , bor? de pe?te (with fish) and bor? de sfecl? ro?ie (with beetroots) .

The Armenian version of borscht is a hot soup made with beef stock , green peppers and other vegetables , which may or may not include beetroots , and flavored with parsley and cilantro . In Chinese cuisine , a soup known as lu? s?ng t?ng , or " Russian soup " , is based on red cabbage and tomatoes , and lacks beetroots altogether ; also known as " Chinese borscht " , it originated in Harbin , close to the Russian border in northeast China . In ethnic Mennonite cuisine , borscht refers to a whole range of seasonal vegetable soups based on beef or chicken stock ? from spring borscht made with spinach , sorrel and chard to summer borscht with cabbage , tomatoes , corn and squash to fall and winter borscht with cabbage , beets and potatoes .

= = Garnishes and sides = =

The diversity of borscht styles is matched by the wide choice of garnishes and side dishes with which various kinds of borscht may be served .

Most often , borscht is dished up with sour cream , the East European version of which , known as smetana , is runnier than its American counterpart . The sour cream may be served in a separate pitcher for the diners to add the desired amount themselves or the borscht may come already " whitened " , that is , blended with sour cream . Sometimes the cream is thickened with flour before being added to the soup . Yogurt and a mixture of milk and yolks are possible substitutes .

Chopped herbs are often sprinkled on the surface of the soup ; dill is most common , but parsley , chives or scallion are often added as well . Individual helpings may be spiced up with minced hot peppers or garlic . Many kinds of borscht are served over halves or quarters of hard @-@ boiled chicken or quail eggs . Navy beans , broad beans or string beans are also a common addition .

Meat , removed from the stock on which the borscht was based , may be cut into smaller chunks and either added back into the soup or served on the side with horseradish or mustard . Bacon and sausages are also commonly used as borscht garnishes . Borscht based on bone stock may be served Old Polish style , with marrow from the bones .

Some kinds of the soup , such as Poltava borscht , may be served with halushky , or thick noodles of wheat or buckwheat flour . Siberian borscht is eaten with boiled meatballs (frikadelki) of minced beef and onion . In Poland and parts of western Ukraine , borscht is typically ladled over uszka , or bite @-@ sized ear @-@ shaped dumplings made from pasta dough wrapped around mushroom , buckwheat or meat filling . Mushroom @-@ filled uszka are particularly associated with Polish Christmas Eve borscht .

Borscht , like any other soup in East Slavic cuisines , is seldom eaten by itself , but rather accompanied by a side dish . At a minimum , spoonfuls of borscht are alternated with bites of a slice of bread . Buckwheat groats or boiled potatoes , often topped with pork cracklings , are other simple possibilities , but a range of more involved sides exists as well .

In Ukraine , borscht is often accompanied with pampushky , or savory , puffy yeast @-@ raised rolls glazed with oil and crushed garlic . In Russian cuisine , borscht may be served with any of assorted side dishes based on tvorog , or the East European variant of farmer cheese , such as vatrushki , syrniki or krupeniki . Vatrushki are baked round cheese @-@ filled tarts ; syrniki are small pancakes wherein the cheese is mixed into the batter ; and a krupenik is a casserole of buckwheat groats baked with cheese .

Pirozhki , or baked dumplings with fillings as for uszka , are another common side for both hearty and clear variants of borscht . Polish clear borscht may be also served with a croquette or paszteciki . A typical Polish croquette (krokiet) is made by wrapping a crêpe (thin pancake) around a filling and coating it in breadcrumbs before refrying ; paszteciki (literally , ' little pâtés ') are variously shaped filled hand @-@ held pastries of yeast @-@ raised or flaky dough . An even more exquisite way to serve borscht is with a coulibiac , or a large loaf @-@ shaped pie . Possible fillings for croquettes , paszteciki and coulibiacs include mushrooms , sauerkraut and minced meat .

= = History = =

= = = Origin = = =

Borscht derives from a soup originally made by the Slavs from common hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium* , also known as cow parsnip) , which lent the dish its Slavic name . Growing commonly in damp meadows throughout the north temperate zone , hogweed was used not only as fodder (as its English names suggest) , but also for human consumption ? from Eastern Europe to Siberia , to northwestern North America .

The Slavs collected hogweed in May and used its roots for stewing with meat , while the stems , leaves and umbels were chopped , covered with water and left in a warm place to ferment . After a few days , lactic and alcoholic fermentation produced a mixture described as " something between beer and sauerkraut " . This concoction was then used for cooking a soup characterized by a mouth @-@ puckering sour taste and pungent smell . As the Polish ethnographer ?ukasz Go??biowski wrote in 1830 , " Poles have been always partial to tart dishes , which are somewhat peculiar to their homeland and vital to their health . "

The earliest written reference to the Slavic hogweed soup can be found in Domostroy (Domestic Order) , a 16th @-@ century Russian compendium of moral rules and homemaking advice . It recommends growing the plant " by the fence , around the whole garden , where the nettle grows " , to cook a soup of it in springtime and reminds the reader to , " for the Lord 's sake , share it with those in need " . Simon Syrenius (Szymon Syre?ski) , a 17th @-@ century Polish botanist , described " our Polish hogweed " as a vegetable that was well known throughout Poland , Rus ' , Lithuania and Samogitia (that is , most of the northern part of Eastern Europe) , typically used for cooking a " tasty and graceful soup " with capon stock , eggs , sour cream and millet . More interested in the plant 's medicinal properties than its culinary use , he also recommended pickled hogweed juice as a cure for fever or hangover .

Hogweed borscht was mostly a poor man 's food . The soup 's humble beginnings are still reflected in Polish fixed expressions , where " cheap like borscht " is the equivalent of " dirt cheap " (also attested as a calque in Yiddish and Canadian English) , whereas adding " two mushrooms into borscht " is synonymous with excess . For the professors of the University of Kraków , who led a monastic way of life in the 17th century , hogweed borscht was a fasting dish which they ate regularly (sometimes with deviled eggs) from Lent till Rogation days . It was uncommon on the royal table , although according to the 16th @-@ century Polish botanist Marcin of Urz?dów ? citing Giovanni Manardo , a court physician to the Jagiellonian kings of Hungary ? the Polish @-@ born King Vladislaus II used to have a Polish hogweed @-@ based dish prepared for him at his court in Buda .

= = = Diversification = = =

With time , other ingredients were added to the soup , eventually replacing hogweed altogether , and the names borshch or barszcz became generic terms for any sour @-@ tasting soup . In 19th @-@ century rural Poland , this term included soups made from barberries , currants , gooseberries , cranberries , celery or plums .

When describing the uses of common hogweed , John Gerard , a 17th @-@ century English

botanist , observed that " the people of [Poland] and Lithuania use to make [a] drink with the decoction of this herb and leaven or some other thing made of meal , which is used instead of beer and other ordinary drink . " It may suggest that hogweed soup was on some occasions combined with a fermented mixture of water and barley flour , oatmeal or rye flour . Such soured , gelatinous flour @-@ and @-@ water mixture , originally known as kissel (from the Proto @-@ Slavic root * kysl? , ' sour ') had been already mentioned in The Tale of Bygone Years , a 12th @-@ century chronicle of Kievan Rus ' , and continued to be a staple of Ukrainian and Russian cooking until the middle of the 19th century . In Poland , a soup based on diluted kissel became known as either ?ur (from Middle High German sur ' sour ') or barszcz and later ? to distinguish it from the red beetroot borscht ? as barszcz bia?y ' white borscht ' .

The earliest known Polish recipes for borscht , written by chefs catering to Polish magnates (aristocrats) , are from the late 17th century . Stanis?aw Czerniecki , head chef to Prince Aleksander Micha? Lubomirski , included several borscht recipes in his Compendium ferculorum (A Collection of Dishes) , the first cookbook published originally in Polish , in 1682 . They include such sour soups as lemon borscht and " royal borscht " , the latter made from assorted dried , smoked or fresh fish and fermented rye bran . A manuscript recipe collection from the Radziwi?? family court , dating back to ca . 1686 , contains an instruction for making hogweed borscht mixed with poppy seeds or ground almonds . As this was a Lenten dish , it was garnished , in a trompe @-@ l'?il fashion typical of Baroque cuisine , with mock eggs made from finely chopped pike that was partly dyed with saffron and formed into oval balls . An alternative recipe for the almond borscht replaced pickled hogweed with vinegar .

Borscht also evolved into a variety of sour soups to the east of Poland . Examples include onion borscht , a recipe for which was included in a 1905 Russian cookbook , and sorrel @-@ based green borscht , which is still a popular summer soup in Ukraine and Russia . A Gift to Young Housewives by Elena Molokhovets , the best @-@ selling Russian cookbook of the 19th century , first published in 1861 , contains nine recipes for borscht , some of which are based on kvass , a traditional Slavic fermented beverage made from rye bread . Kvass @-@ based variants were also known in Ukraine at that time ; some of them were types of green borscht , while others were similar to the Russian okroshka .

Before the advent of beet @-@ based borscht , cabbage borscht was of particular importance . Made from either fresh cabbage or sauerkraut , it could be indistinguishable from the Russian shchi . Indeed , the mid @-@ 19th @-@ century Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language defines borshch as " a kind of shchi " with beet sour added for tartness . The significance of cabbage as an essential ingredient of borscht is manifest in the Ukrainian proverb , " without bread , it 's no lunch ; without cabbage , it 's no borscht . "

= = = Novel ingredients = = =

Beet (Beta vulgaris) , a plant native to the Mediterranean Basin , was already grown in antiquity . Only the leaves were of culinary use , as the tapered , tough , whitish and bitter @-@ tasting root was considered unfit for human consumption . It is likely that beet greens were used in variants of green borscht long before the invention of the beetroot @-@ based red borscht . Beet varieties with round , red , sweet taproots , known as beetroots , were not reliably reported until the 12th century and did not spread to Eastern Europe before the 16th century . Miko?aj Rej , a Polish Renaissance poet and moralist , included the earliest known Polish recipe for pickled beetroots in his 1568 book , Life of an Honest Man . It would later evolve into ?wik?a , or chrain mit burik , a beet @-@ and @-@ horseradish relish popular in Polish and Jewish cuisines . Rej also recommended the " very tasty brine " left over from beetroot pickling , which was an early version of beet sour . The sour found some applications in Polish folk medicine as a cure for hangover and ? mixed with honey ? as a sore throat remedy .

It may never be known who first thought of using beet sour to flavor borscht , which also gave the soup its now @-@ familiar red color . Jerzy Samuel Bandtkie 's Polish @-@ German dictionary published in 1806 was the first to define barszcz as a tart soup made from pickled beetroots . The

fact that certain 19th @-@ century Russian and Polish cookbooks , such as Handbook of the Experienced Russian Housewife (1842) by Yekaterina Avdeyeva and The Lithuanian Cook (1854) by Wincenta Zawadzka , refer to beetroot @-@ based borscht as " Little Russian borscht " (where " Little Russian " is a term used at the time for ethnic Ukrainians under imperial Russian rule) suggests that this innovation took place in what is now Ukraine , whose soils and climate are particularly well suited to beet cultivation . Ukrainian legends , probably of 19th @-@ century origin , attribute the invention of beetroot borscht either to Zaporozhian Cossacks , serving in the Polish army , on their way to break the siege of Vienna in 1683 , or to Don Cossacks , serving in the Russian army , while laying siege to Azov in 1695 .

Spanish conquistadors brought potatoes and tomatoes from the Americas to Europe in the 16th century , but these vegetables only became commonly grown and consumed in Eastern Europe in the 19th century . Eventually , both became staples of peasant diet and essential ingredients of Ukrainian and Russian borscht . Potatoes replaced turnips in borscht recipes , and tomatoes ? fresh , canned or paste ? took over from beet sour as the source of tartness . The turnip is rarely found in modern recipes , and even then , together with potatoes . In Ukraine , beet sour and tomatoes were both used for some time until the latter ultimately prevailed during the last third of the 19th century .

= = = Spread = = =

Over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries , borscht 's popularity spread beyond its Slavic homeland , largely due to such factors as territorial expansion of the Russian Empire , Russia 's growing political clout and cultural stature , and waves of emigration out of the country . As Russia grew to cover most of northern and central Eurasia , borscht was introduced to the cuisines of various peoples inhabiting the territories both within and adjacent to the empire , from Finland to the Caucasus and Iran , to Central Asia and China , and to Alaska (Russian America) .

Borscht 's westward expansion was less successful ; Germans used to scoff at the soup along with other East European fare . What helped familiarize Western Europe with borscht was the practice of Russian emperors , as well as Russian and Polish aristocrats , to employ celebrated French chefs , who later presented their own versions of the dish as a foreign curiosity back in France . One of the first French chefs to do so was Marie @-@ Antoine Carême , who worked briefly for Emperor Alexander I in 1819 . In his take on borscht , the original Russian soup served only as inspiration for an extravagant haute cuisine dish with an air of eastern exoticism . Apart from vegetables and beet sour , his recipe calls for a roast chicken , a fried chicken , a duck , a piece of veal , an oxtail , a marrow bone , one pound of bacon , and six large sausages , and suggests serving with beef quenelles , deviled eggs , and croûtons . Auguste Escoffier , Carême 's apprentice , who was mostly fascinated by the soup 's vivid ruby @-@ red color , simplified his master 's recipe , while also securing the place of potage bortsch (" borscht soup ") in French cuisine . Urbain Dubois and Émile Bernard , both of whom had been employed at Polish aristocratic courts , presented borscht to the French public as a Polish soup ; their cookbook , *La cuisine classique* , published in 1856 , contains a borscht recipe under the descriptive name , potage au jus de betteraves à la polonaise (" Polish @-@ style beet @-@ juice soup ") , which had been changed to potage barsch à la polonaise by the third edition in 1868 . In 1867 , beetroot borscht was served , along with herrings , sturgeon , coulbiac , Pozharsky cutlets and vinaigrette salad , at a Russian @-@ themed dinner at the International Exposition in Paris , strengthening its international association with Russian culture .

Mass migration from the Russian Empire to North America ? initially mostly by members of persecuted religious minorities ? was instrumental in bringing borscht across the Atlantic . The earliest waves of migration occurred at a time when cabbage @-@ based borscht was still the dominant variant of the soup in at least parts of Russia . The Mennonites , who began arriving in Canada and the United States from Russia 's Volga region in the 1870s , still eschew beetroots in their borscht ; instead , Mennonite varieties include Komst Borscht (with cabbage or sauerkraut) and Somma Borscht (sorrel @-@ based " summer borscht ") . According to the Jewish Encyclopedia published in 1906 , cabbage @-@ based kraut borscht was also more popular than the beet @-@ based variant in American Jewish cuisine at the time . Subsequent Jewish

immigration helped popularize the red borscht in America .

In the 1930s , when most American hotels refused to accept Jewish guests due to widespread anti-Semitism , New York Jews began flocking to Jewish owned resorts in the Catskill Mountains for their summer vacations . The area grew into a major center of Jewish entertainment , with restaurants offering all you can eat Ashkenazi Jewish fare , including copious amounts of borscht . Grossinger 's , one of the largest resorts , served borscht throughout the day , every day of the year . The region became known , initially in derision , as the " Borscht Belt " , reinforcing the popular association between borscht and American Jewish culture . As most visitors arrived in the summertime , the borscht was typically served cold . Marc Gold was one of its largest suppliers , producing 1 @, @ 750 short tons (1 @, @ 590 t) a year in his business 's heyday . Gold 's borscht consists of puréed beetroots seasoned with sugar , salt and citric acid ; it is usually blended with sour cream and served as a refreshing beverage , more aptly described as a " beet smoothie " . Such kind of " purplish , watery broth " is , according to Nikolai Burlakoff , author of The World of Russian Borsch , " associated in America with borsch , in general , and Jewish borsch in particular . "

In the Soviet Union , borscht was one of the most popular everyday dishes . It was described by James Meek , a British correspondent in Kiev and Moscow , as " the common denominator of the Soviet kitchen , the dish that tied together ... the high table of the Kremlin and the meanest canteen in the boondocks of the Urals , ... the beetroot soup that pumped like a main artery through the kitchens of the east Slav lands " . Among Soviet leaders , the Ukrainian born Leonid Brezhnev was especially partial to borscht , which his wife continued to personally cook for him even after they had moved into the Kremlin .

The soup has even played a role in the Soviet space program . In March 1961 , as part of a communications equipment test , a pre recorded recipe for borscht was broadcast from the Korabl Sputnik 4 spacecraft . The craft , carrying animals and a mannequin , had been launched into low Earth orbit in preparation for manned space flights . Actual borscht eventually made its way into outer space as space food for Soviet and , later , Russian cosmonauts . Originally , a puréed version of borscht was supplied in tubes . All ingredients for the space borscht (which include beef , beetroots , cabbage , potatoes , carrots , onions , parsley root and tomato paste) were cooked separately , then combined one by one in strictly controlled order , sterilized , packed into tubes , sealed airtight and autoclaved . In the 1970s , the tubes were replaced with packages of rehydratable freeze dried borscht with regular size bits of cooked vegetables .

= = In culture = =

= = = As a ritual dish = = =

Borscht is often associated with its role in religious traditions of various denominations (Eastern Orthodox , Greek and Roman Catholic , and Jewish) that are common in Eastern Europe . In East Slavic countries , " memorial borscht " is served as the first course at a post funeral wake . According to a traditional belief , the soul of the departed either feeds on or is carried up to heaven by puffs of steam rising from bowls of borscht and other hot dishes , such as blini , porridge , boiled potatoes or freshly baked bread . In the region of Polesye , straddling the Belarusian Ukrainian border , the same steaming hot dishes , including borscht , are given as an offering to the souls of deceased ancestors during the annual semi pagan remembrance ceremony known as Dzyady , or Forefathers ' Night .

In Poland and Ukraine , borscht is usually one of the dishes served at a Christmas Eve dinner . Celebrated after the first star has appeared in the sky on December 25 (Roman Catholic) or January 6 (Greek Catholic) , it is a meal which is at the same time festive and fasting , a multicourse affair (traditionally , with twelve distinct dishes) that excludes ingredients of land animal origin . Christmas Eve borscht is , therefore , either vegetarian or based on fish stock and is not typically mixed with sour cream . In Ukraine , the soup contains vegetables that are sautéed in

vegetable oil rather than lard , as well as beans and mushrooms . It may be also thickened with wheat flour dry @-@ roasted in a pan instead of the usual roux . The Polish version of Christmas Eve borscht is a clear ruby @-@ red broth . Both Ukrainian and Polish variants are often served with uszka .

While Christmas in Poland is traditionally linked to red borscht , Lent ? the fasting period that leads up to Easter ? is associated with a meatless version of white borscht , or ?ur . Youths used to celebrate Holy Saturday , the last day of the fast , with a mock " funeral " of the white borscht , in which a pot of the soup was either buried in the ground or broken , sometimes ? to the crowd 's amusement ? while being carried by an unsuspecting boy on his head . On the next day , the white borscht would reappear on the Easter table , but this time , in its more coveted , meat @-@ based guise with sausage , bacon and eggs .

In Eastern European Ashkenazi Jewish tradition , vegetarian borscht served with sour cream and boiled potatoes on the side , known as peysakhdiker borsht , is considered an essential dish during the Passover period . As the holiday is observed in spring (March or April) , the preparation of Passover borscht used to provide an opportunity to use up the beet sour left over from pickled beetroots that had been consumed during winter , remaining potatoes that had been stored throughout the winter and sour cream that was readily available in the new calving season . Cold borscht blended with sour cream is also popular on Shavuot (Feast of Weeks) , a holiday customarily associated with dairy foods , observed in late May or early June . Seudah Shlishit , or the third meal of the Shabbat , often includes borscht as well .

= = = As an ethnic dish = = =

Borscht is associated with and claimed by several ethnic groups , especially Ukrainians , Russians , Poles , Lithuanians and Ashkenazi Jews , as their own national or ethnic dish and cultural icon . Such claims are not necessarily mutually exclusive , as the soup 's history predates the emergence of modern nation states , with their ever @-@ shifting borders , in Eastern Europe . Borscht , in the words of Burlakoff , " is perfectly suited to a global culture . " He describes it as " a global phenomenon " , in which " local variants are so numerous and diverse that it is hard sometimes for a non @-@ specialist to grasp that any single example of it is something that is part of a unified tradition . " In his view , borscht " is an almost perfect example of ... ' glocalization ' ? a phenomenon that is global in distribution but reflective of local needs and ways in its variants and adaptation ; ... a highly localized product that became globalized , and in the process adapted to conditions other than the original ones . " However , according to Irina Perianova , a Russian linguist and anthropologist , " people tend to be very proprietorial about their food and proud of it . " A " connection between culinary and territorial claims " may be observed , which results in the culinary area turning into " a battlefield generating and proliferating all kinds of myths . "

In its currently most popular , beet @-@ based version , borscht most likely originated in what is now Ukraine . Borscht 's role as a staple of everyday Ukrainian diet is reflected in the Ukrainian saying , " borscht and porridge are our food " (compare the equivalent Russian saying , where borscht is replaced with shchi) . The hearty soup in which the beetroot is just one of sundry vegetables , as opposed to the typically Polish clear beet broth , is still known in Poland as " Ukrainian borscht " .

In the Soviet Union , government @-@ sponsored cookbooks , such as The Book of Tasty and Healthy Food curated by Anastas Mikoyan , Cookery and Directory of Recipes and Culinary Production , promoted a unified Soviet cuisine with standardized and nutritionally " rational " versions of traditional dishes . The same cooking techniques and recipes were taught in culinary vocational schools throughout the country , establishing a common cooking style in Soviet cafés and restaurants . Though inspired by the cuisines of the country 's various ethnic groups , many recipes were presented as part of an overall Soviet heritage , disassociated from their individual geographic origins . By many people both inside and outside the Soviet Union , borscht was increasingly seen not as an ethnic Ukrainian soup , but as a Soviet or ? metonymically ? Russian dish . This approach was criticized by William Pokhlebkin , a preeminent Russian food writer , who unequivocally

described beet @-@ based borscht as one of the " dishes of Ukrainian cookery " which " have entered the menu of international cuisine " . " One could understand " , he wrote , " and forgive foreigners for calling borscht or varenyky Russian national dishes , but when it turns out that they gleaned the information from Soviet cookbooks or from restaurant menus , one is embarrassed for our authors and chefs , who popularize the national cuisines of our peoples [that is , the ethnic groups of the Soviet Union] with such ignorance . "

According to Meek ,

Pokhlebkin and the Soviet Union are dead , yet Borshchland lives on . Recipes , like birds , ignore political boundaries ... The faint outline of the Tsarist @-@ Soviet imperium still glimmers in the collective steam off bowls of beetroot and cabbage in meat stock , and the soft sound of dollops of sour cream slipping into soup , from the Black Sea to the Sea of Japan and , in emigration , from Brooklyn to Berlin .

= = = Secondary = = =

= = = Primary = = =

= = = Reference works = = =