

HOUSEHOLD

DEPARTMENT



Conducted by

Katherine M. Caldwell, B.A.

MEALS WITH MARUSHKA

Russian Cookery—First of a Series of Recipes Compiled Especially for Everywoman's World

By Florence Randall Livesay



THE Russian lady with whom I have collaborated in the preparation of this series of articles on the cookery of her own land came to Canada just before war was declared. An adventurous spirit, she left a sheltered home to see something of other countries and their ways, and she was determined to maintain herself during her prospective year of absence by doing any kind of work that presented itself. As she said: "I had an English grammar in one hand, on the voyage, and a cook-book in the other."

On a Manitoba farm she learned how to make delicious Canadian pies; how to milk cows; how to laugh herself into a "fey" mood while she knelt beneath the kitchen table scrubbing the floor. She found everything "interessno," that much-used adjective on the lips of Russians; and in return gave me an idea of the Russian outlook on life. Frankly she confessed that meals bulk large in their idea of how a day should be passed. As she naively remarked: "We eat—you only make as if you eat."

It may be that we can learn from Russia how to gain a little more variety and other flavors in our dishes; and how to make the most of some fruits like the cranberry, which at present we neglect. At any rate, one may hope that the reading of what the Russians eat and drink may at least prove "interesting."

Religion and Cookery

IN Russia "Father" does not carve the duck; instead the mother, the head of the menage—working at home while her husband's duties lie elsewhere—sees to the details of the meals and the carving for her brood. The meat is placed on a platter, and is passed around either by servants or members of the family. The same procedure takes place with vegetables or dessert. In a more fashionable household all the carving is done by skilled servants in the kitchen; and in the little book which has been my guide the first directions are devoted to the dismemberment of fowls and the carving of meat, so that, when placed on a dish, it will be daintily arranged and easily served, while appearing, as far as possible, with disguising garnishing, like a whole chicken or roast.

"Povarennaya Kneyjeka," then, tells us: "When the hot fowl is carved place the back on a platter; then on top put pieces of the breast; on either side the wings and legs respectively; arrange the garnishing of fried celery leaves about it and make the bird appear as a whole, while ready to fall to pieces at a touch."

The cooking of fish is done in the same way; the fish in its entirety must appear on the table, "with all the appurtenances thereof." In its mouth a green leaf is placed—on the top, slices of lemon. As salmon and other fish in Russia are very large, a special serving dish is kept in every household, very long; while the cook has also a special pan, with apparatus to prevent the fish breaking when taken out of the oven. Cold fish is highly esteemed and is combined in many different ways, especially for supper parties. A favorite color scheme is the cold fish arranged with small surrounding portions of cooked carrots, beets, peas and potatoes, diced, and salad leaves; or sometimes fish jelly is added instead, the water in which the fish is boiled, having been thickened with flour.

That religion should be the key-note of a cookery book may seem strange to us, but the contents of the Russian Recipe Book put matters very decisively at the start. "Skaromni stol": What you eat if not fasting. These dishes are pirogi (pies) soups, sauce, vegetables with salads, Ruba (fish), kasha (porridge), pirogenoi (cakes) Under "Fasting Dishes" come soups, fish, sauce, vegetables, pies, cakes.

Sour cream, which enters so largely into the diet of the Russians, does so in great measure because of the enforced fasting. The seven weeks abstinence from butter means much curd and sour cream for the Pascha festival. There is a substitute for sugar, and oil from sunflower seed is used instead of butter; mustard and other oils are also much used.

In Hakluyt's Voyages, you can read what Master Anthony Jenkinson wrote home to London concerning the fasts of the Russians in the year of grace, 1557: "The Russes begin their Lent alwaies 8 weekes before Easter; the first weeke they eat eggs, milke, cheese and butter, and make great cheare with pancakes and such other things, one friend visiting another. In the next weeke they make and keepe a great fast . . . The Em-

peror's Majestie eateth but one morsel of bread and drinketh but one draught of drinke once in the day during that week. The other six weeks they keepe as we do ours, but not one of them will eate butter, cheese, eggs or milke."

Breakfast

THE Russian breakfast has until recently been the European one—a very light affair of rolls and tea; but more and more it is yielding to the introduction of more solid dishes, though the English bacon is not yet among these. No cereals are ever served.

Bread means a different thing to the people of Petrograd than to us. They have no need of the gems and hot biscuits and popovers which appeal so much to us. By the way, they do not use any baking powder, and rarely soda or cream of tartar, depending on eggs, which are plentiful and cheap.

WHEN Canadian housewives imagine that they have come to their wits' end compiling and using recipes which make for greater economy, then it is time for them to investigate the kitchen economics of other nations—nations probably less fortunate at the present time in the matter of food stuffs than are Canadians.

Florence Randall Livesay, the noted Canadian author, has made a special study of the customs of Russian women—more particularly has she secured from them their methods of cooking and preparing their food stuffs.

"Meals with Marushka" is the result of this investigation. She has obtained from Russian housewives recipes and menus that can be adapted to Canadian use, effecting thereby a large measure of thrift.

We recommend them to our readers as practical, interesting and satisfying.

Katherine M. Caldwell.

It is because the Russian has a delightful variety of good bread always obtainable, that he does not care for much else. He selects his tit-bits for breakfast or lunch with a nice discrimination. There are eight or nine bakers on every important street, a bake-shop at every corner. Each day brings its own choice—Pátkofski, the horseshoe loaf; rosenchiki, the round bread; salonya bulki, delicious little coils of gold-brown, slightly salted on top; the small, flat strips of dried-out crispy bread known as suhari; real Russian bread, kalachi, folded on top like a knob, and only good when hot; suchkii, ring-shaped bread; bubeliki and branki, doughnut-shaped, to be cut in half and well buttered. Lastly, the French or Polish Francoiskie or Polskoi bulki.

The Samovar is expressive of the Russian temperament in its leisureliness—there is always time for everything. It is on duty practically all day, and while at a meal the family may drink tea for an hour, sipping and talking in pleasantly restful mood. Hot wood coals are placed in the receptacle beneath; the water is poured into the reservoir, and when it boils a pinch of tea from China—always of excellent quality, clear, pale-yellow in the brewing, with faint aroma and flavor—is put into the tea-pot, and this process goes on throughout the meal as occasion requires. A housekeeper's reputation would be lost if any tea-leaves slipped through the tiny sieve. With this tea no cream or milk is required, as it spoils the delicate flavor, and this explains the inevitable slice of lemon. Sometimes, however, a spoonful of jam or preserves is added, as a concession to individual taste.

Russian peasants seem to enjoy a cup of tea with the greatest gusto of any nation; they sit in a little group round the table, upon which their arms rest, and drink the steaming tea out of their saucers.

"He left his spoon in his cup!" said a Canadian society girl in speaking of a titled Russian who had been her mother's guest while passing through Canada. What seemed a gaucherie was the most natural thing in the world, for in Russia men do not drink tea out of cups, but out of a glass fitted into a silver holder, known as pod-stakanik (under-glass). In this way these tea connoisseurs can hold up the glass to the light and satisfy themselves as to its color.

Soups

THERE is said to be no Russian equivalent for the English simile, "As thin as a match." Marushka laughingly says that is because her people take so much soup. "Always a good full dish for dinner; and we make good soups!"

In the first place dinner is begun with a little appetizer; hors d'oeuvres—Zakuska—in the shape of salted herring, caviare, etc. Small pasties are then served with the soup—Piroshki—filled with bits of rice or meat, possibly mushrooms. Or perhaps it will be grinki, pieces of toasted bread and cheese, or buckwheat porridge, as in the popular Teshi y Kasha (soup and porridge).

Again, a slice of Perog may be offered. This is the pie with a thin crust above and beneath, with browned bread-crumbs on top, the filling being of meat and onions. It is cooked in a large roasting-pan and is something of a stand-by whenever one is hungry, or for the children's school lunch.

Sour cream is a necessity as a flavoring at table for certain soups, each one helping himself to the amount desired.

In the old fairy stories where the heroine is reduced to rags she always manages to live on nettles. If she had been a Russian this could have been made into tasty fare. Here is a recipe for Krapiva—soup made of nettles; or of spinach and sorrel.

Take two pounds of nettles or spinach and sorrel; boil and strain after letting it simmer with soup bones. Then make the "Podboltka"—the preparation of milk and flour or sour cream and flour used to thicken soups—of two tablespoonfuls sour cream, one and a half of flour, boil till it thickens.

At the table a hard-boiled egg is placed in each plate and the soup is poured over it; some prefer to have sour cream on the table instead of the "Podboltka."

Borsch

THIS soup, made of beets, is a very popular one. The ingredients are five beets, either baked or boiled and cut in long strips; bouillon or stock is added, with an onion and seasoning of salt, pepper, cloves, bay leaves, chervil, etc. Cook half an hour before serving.

The peasants do not use tomatoes, but city people make this soup with five tomatoes, fried in butter, put through a sieve and with the addition of mixed flour and butter. This is poured into the Borsch and when the tureen is on the table three tablespoonfuls of sour cream are added, and a little dill.

Stchi—Lenyeway (Lazy Soup)

CUT half a head of fresh cabbage in pieces; add to water in which soup bones are boiling. When soft, add a little flour and let it boil up once or twice; do not strain. At table, add sour cream to taste. This soup can be made with salted cabbage in the same way, but then no sour cream is added. The usual seasoning is left to the discretion of cooks.

Soup Made from Fish

INTO boiling water throw two onions, parsnip and one carrot, with a little celery, salt, etc. When boiled take out; add to the water in which these have been cooked the fish desired. These are always small and after being cleaned and scaled are cooked whole; the Russians use yrusch, shelk, perch, etc., mostly.

Make a "podboltka" to thicken slightly. Boil together until the fish is cooked. At table, serve a fish in each plate.

THERE is a soup of which Russians are very fond, made of the giblets of geese, together with feet, legs, wings and the necks. A pair of geese is needed. The above mentioned articles are boiled, the froth being skimmed at intervals; seasoned to taste, thickened with mixed butter and flour and just before serving slices of salted cucumber, cut in the round, are added.

"We even have iced soup, which we eat in summer," says Marushka, "but though I have eaten it, I must say I am not fond of it."

It contains a large amount of "quass," the beverage of which Russians are so fond. This soup is greatly beloved of the peasantry, but it can be obtained in the most exclusive restaurants in Petrograd.