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# HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE  
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

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SUBJECT: Recipes from Russia...Information from the food specialists of the United States Department of Agriculture.

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From the frozen wastelands of the Arctic to the sloping plains of the Baltic Sea, from the rich loamy earth of the Black Belt across mineral-packed mountain ranges and the distant stretches of Siberia...south to the wide sandy steppes... through countless forests, over wide long rivers in Russia. A country covering so much territory...so full of different resources and activities that it's hard to imagine all her people having any one habit in common.

But they do. For example...be they from the South, North, East or West, most Russians eat certain dishes which have been popular for generations. It's a Russian custom to drink tea...morning noon and night. The Russians like it hot, in a tall glass...sometimes with a bit of lemon. And when they have time...which isn't often these days ....and the tea...they enjoy an afternoon glassful too. Coffee is seldom served.

All of us have heard of the famous Russian borsch...beet soup. It's eaten all over the country...and there are many, many variations of it. Did you know that every Russian homemaker knows almost countless ways to prepare fish? It's one of their favorite foods...especially in the North where it's most plentiful. They love dill flavoring and use it widely along with their dark, dried mushrooms.

One of the customary Christmas dishes is a rice porridge that's served for dessert. In a moment...I'm going to pass on to you a Russian recipe for borsch...one for a favorite dish and one for rice porridge. If you find meals becoming somewhat monotonous toward the end of the holiday season...you might like to try one.



of these. But while you're getting a pencil and paper...I want to tell you one little item about Russian Christmas dinners.

Their main meal...you know...doesn't come on Christmas day. It's held on Christmas Eve...either before or after Mass. But it's never served until after the first star has risen in the sky. Then some hay is spread over the table...under a white table cloth. (It's symbol of the crib in Bethelhem.) And the feast gets underway. At this feast, red meat is never served. It isn't eaten on such a religious feast-day. Consequently, if we'd been guests in Russia last Christmas Eve night, we'd probably have found the meal built around fish...cold in jelly or boiled or baked.

The Russian homemaker is noted for her hospitality. While she may not...and often doesn't...have much stored in her larder, she's quick to bring out what she has and offer it gladly to her guest. The guest always breakes bread and sprinkles it with salt on entering her home. It's a sign of friendship...a custom that dates way back into Russian history.

But now for those recipes. Here's the one for borsch. For six people... you'll need 6 large beets....8 cups of soup stock...one tablespoon of butter or other tablefat...salt....pepper, a teaspoon of sugar...one tablespoon of vinegar or lemon juice and half a cup of sour cream. For soup stock...you can use either that made with soup meat and bones or the prepared stock. The beets are washed.... peeled and shredded fine. Cover them with a third of the stock and cook for 15 minutes. Add the rest of the stock and keep on cooking until the beets are soft. Add the butter or tablefat...season to taste with salt and pepper then put in the sugar and vinegar or lemon juice. Now.....let the soup simmer for at least 20 minutes. Take it from the stove and add the sour cream before serving. Just put a spoonful of cream in each bowl after the soup has been poured up. The beet borsch has a slightly acid flavor that blends well with boiled or mashed potatoes.



If you're looking for a low-cost novel dessert...you might like to try this rice porridge. To serve four people...measure one standard cup of rice and boil it in milk until it's tender. Mix chopped nuts and raisins into it while it's still warm...spray with honey and put it on a platter...trimming it with raisins. The rice should not be put into a form...and you want to serve it while it's still hot. This is one dish you could almost certainly count on having, were you eating Christmas dinner in Russia during normal times.

As for the fish recipe...it's a favorite way the Russians have of preparing sea-bass or some fish like it...say sea trout or snapper or white perch. You take four or five onions...some cooking oil...a can of tomatoes...two garlic cloves with salt and pepper. First put the sliced onions in the hot oil...Stir them and let them simmer until they're brown. Add the tomatoes..sliced...the garlic...salt and pepper. Cook that for about 20 minutes then add your cleaned fish. Pour in two or three glasses of hot water and cook it for another twenty or thirty minutes. You'll come out with a filling..spicy...savory dish that will warm up the coldest of the cold. It's excellent with corn bread.

Well...there we are...three recipes from Russia. And while our countries are on opposite sides of the globe and are separated by all the war zones...talking about her food and favorite dishes seems to bring the Russian homemaker closer to us. Certainly close enough for us to wish her the best year ever in 1945.

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