



Gratz Insider, December 2015 - Story Continuation

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The Gratz Gourmet

The first recipe is for an iconic Eastern European classic: *borscht*, in Yiddish, or *borsch*, in Russian. In Ukraine, Luba's family ate cold vegetarian borsch in the summer and steamy, savory beef borsch in the winter. For them, living in the urban area of Kiev, borsch was a dinner dish. However, Luba explains that for Ukrainian villagers, who faced long hours of demanding physical labor, hot beef borsch was served every day for breakfast as a hearty source of energy.

Beef borsch is a great comfort food for a bone-chilling night. With winter approaching, check out the recipe from Luba's grandmother below.

Borsch

2 pounds crosscut beef shank (also possible to use chicken)

6 medium-sized potatoes

½ head of cabbage

2 pounds raw red beets

1 green pepper

1-2 medium-sized onions

3-4 stalks of celery, with or without leaves

1 carrot

1 14-oz. can of ready-to-eat beans (any type, any brand)

Juice from ½ lemon

Fresh dill

2-3 tablespoons catsup

Salt and pepper

2-3 teaspoons honey*

½ gallon water

1. Bring meat to a boil in water and skim off fat from top of pot.
2. Add salt and pepper.
3. Reduce heat to between low and medium. Partially cover pot, allowing some air to get in. Simmer.
4. Wash beets very well.
5. Add beets, celery and peeled whole onion to simmering meat.
6. While mixture is cooking, peel and cut potatoes into small chunks. Peel and chop carrot. Cut cabbage into thin slices. Cut green pepper. If you like onion, peel and chop second onion; if not, don't use second onion.
7. When beets are soft, remove them from pot and run them under cold water. Once they have cooled, peel and chop them.

8. When meat is soft, which requires at least an hour of simmering, remove whole onion.
9. Add chopped carrot, and bring soup to a boil. Then, lower temperature and simmer, partially covered, for about 20 minutes because carrots take more time to soften than other vegetables.
10. Add potatoes, cabbage, green pepper and optional chopped onion.
11. Bring soup to a boil again. Then, lower temperature and simmer, partially covered, for 15-20 minutes.
12. Add beets, can of beans (including liquid from can), juice from lemon, catsup, honey (to taste), more salt and pepper (if needed) and fresh dill.
13. Completely cover pot with lid and turn off heat. Let stand on burner for 5 to 10 minutes.
14. Serve and enjoy.

* If you prefer, you can substitute honey with two tablespoons of sugar. Luba's grandmother opted for honey because in the Ukrainian village where she lived, sugar was often in short supply. When you are adding either sugar or honey to borsch, do it to taste, depending on your desired sweetness.

Luba also provided us with a vegetarian recipe from her grandmother for a dish called vinegret, which is a beet salad that is enjoyed all over Russia and in the former Soviet republics. Unlike eating some lighter American green salads, Luba explains that when you eat vinegret, "you feel like you ate something!" Her grandmother's vinegret recipe appears below.

Vinegret

- 2 medium-sized red beets
- 2 medium-sized carrots
- 2 potatoes
- 1 small onion
- 2 scallions
- 2 medium-sized pickles
- 1 cucumber
- 1 14-oz. can of ready-to-eat cannellini beans (any brand)
- Salt and pepper
- 2-3 tablespoons olive or canola oil

1. Wash beets very well.
2. Boil beets, carrots and potatoes, removing them as they get soft. Potatoes will come out first, then carrots and then beets.
3. Cut pickles and cucumbers into small cubes.
4. Dice onion and scallions.
5. Cut carrots and potatoes into small cubes.
6. Peel beets and cut them into small cubes.
7. Mix beets, carrots, potatoes, onion, scallions, pickles and cucumber in large bowl.
8. Rinse beans and add to mixture.
9. Add salt and pepper to taste.
10. Mix with olive or canola oil and serve.