

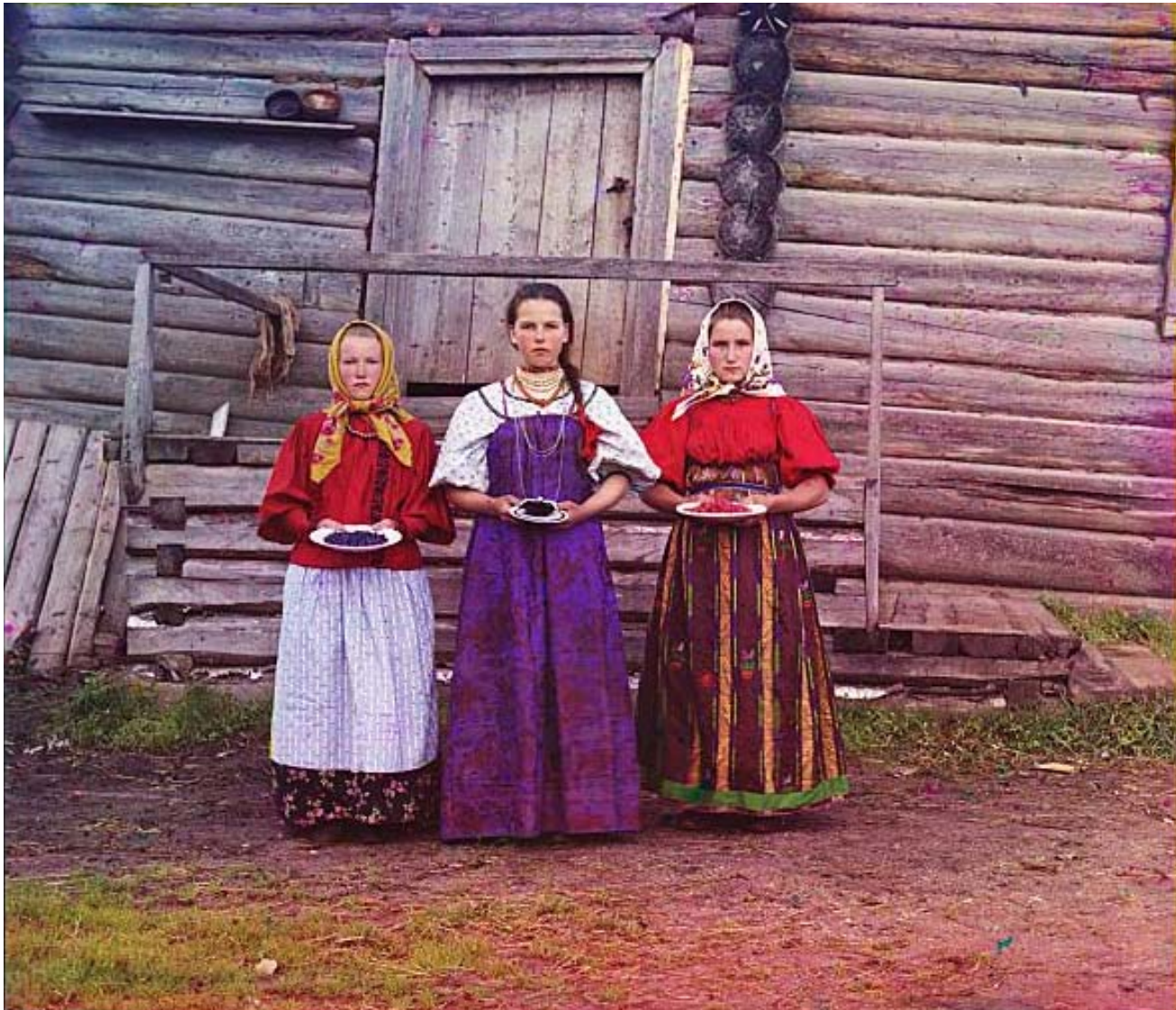


VOLUME XXVII, NUMBER 1 WINTER 2011

# Repast

Quarterly Publication of the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

## *Experiencing Russian Food*



**Three young peasant women offer berries to visitors at their *izba*, a traditional wooden house. The setting is 1909 in a rural area along the Sheksna River, near the town of Kirillov, 300 miles north of Moscow.**

Photo by Sergeĭ Mikhaĭlovich Prokudin-Gorskiĭ.  
From the Prokudin-Gorskiĭ photograph collection (Library of Congress).

# CHAA FALL PROGRAMS

The CHAA programs for Fall 2010 included talks in October and November. The speaker for September had to cancel, while December's program was our participatory theme meal (see page 4).

## Cake Decorating

Lois Hennessey's October 17 presentation, "Culinary Métier: Cake Decorating", kicked off a year-long programming theme in which culinary professionals demonstrate the nature of their work and trace the evolution of their profession. Chef Hennessey teaches in the Culinary Studies Institute at Oakland Community College north of Detroit. She is from a family, of Polish, Hungarian, and Italian heritage, that owned and ran a local bakery until nine years ago.

Hennessey explained that early European cakes tended to be bread-like and sweetened with honey. The French, who made cake an end-of-meal confection and came to rely upon sugar as a sweetener, probably played the biggest role in the evolution of cakes as we know them today. This is reflected in the prevalence of French terminology, such as *fondant* and *ganache*. *Fondant* is a sugar paste that can be used to furnish a cake with a thick frosting having an elegant sheen. A brush can be used to apply food color-

ing to it, and decorative shapes can be cut from it using tools much like cookie cutters. *Fondant* can now be purchased ready-made; most bakeries do so, as making it from scratch is a taxing job even for a machine mixer.

The U.S. is the main place that specializes in buttercream icing as an alternative to *fondant*. It is typically made of butter, commercial solid shortening, powdered sugar, evaporated milk, and extracts of almond and vanilla. Hennessey demonstrated the creation of a charming Halloween three-layer cake in the form of a pumpkin, including the use of a turntable, paring knife, and other tools to sculpt the cake profile; a pastry bag and spatulas to apply buttercream icing to the crumb coat; and an airbrush to apply food coloring to the icing. She also discussed the preparation of *ganache* using semi-sweet chocolate, butter, and heavy cream; and of chocolate glaze using chocolate, butter, corn syrup, and water.

## Heirloom Apples

Michael Dority gave a PowerPoint presentation on "Heirloom Apples" on November 21. A research microbiologist, Dority maintains a small orchard and garden near his home west of Ann Arbor, and grows a wide range of fruits and nuts, including over 70 varieties of apple.

The apple is the world's leading temperate food crop. In Europe, where apples are used in cooking, the per-capita consumption is double that in the U.S. Michigan, the third-leading apple-producing state after Washington and New York, has a nearly ideal geography for it. Apples were introduced to Michigan possibly by French governor Cadillac in 1701. Other important historical factors were Michigan State University, a land-grant college established in 1855, and the Gerber Co., established in Fremont, MI in 1927.

The domestic apple originated in Kazakhstan, Central Asia. Grafting of apples and other fruits is first documented in China c. 5000 BCE. Since apples made ideal fodder for pack animals, the Silk Road played a big role in dispersing the fruits. In North America, seeds were introduced by British settlers and French trappers. Apples were used mainly as dried fruit and to produce hard cider and vinegar; an orchard of at least 100 apple trees was a typical requirement for staking a homestead claim. An itinerant preacher with strong beliefs about fruit, John "Appleseed" Chapman (1774-1847), filled canoes with seeds remnant from cider mills and sold them to settlers up and down river valleys. The continent became an incubator of varieties superior for storage, drying, or pressing.

Until about 1900, production was mostly local and varied, helping to maintain diversity. Sample varieties are the Rhode Island Greening (RI, c. 1650); Detroit Red (MI, 1740?), probably a parent of the Macintosh; Baldwin (MA, 1784); Northern Spy (NY, c. 1800); Jonathan (NY, 1826); Grimes Golden, renamed Golden Delicious (WV, 1832); Winter Banana (IN, 1876); and Hawkeye, renamed Red Delicious (IA, 1880).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, diversity all but disappeared from the apple market. Candy and other sweets became more available, limiting fruit sales. Under Prohibition, the tart apple varieties used to make cider became commercially non-viable. Mass marketing and transport required standardized produce that shipped and stored well, and regional varieties collapsed. Breeding programs based at

*continued on next page*

# Repast

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## Book Review

# FONDNESS FOR THE GEORGIAN PEOPLE

by Art Cole

*Art and his wife Joanne are longtime CHAA members. Formerly in the automotive industry, Art is now President of Edwards & Drew, Inc., a logistics management firm. In our last issue, he and Joanne wrote about the 64<sup>th</sup> annual Persimmon Festival in Mitchell, IN.*

Darra Goldstein,  
*The Georgian Feast: The Vibrant Culture  
and Savory Food of the Republic of Georgia*  
Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993

Perhaps there is something about Americans studying Russia that drives them toward culinary endeavors. Darra Goldstein and Ari Weinzwieg (of Zingerman's fame) both studied Russian history, then turned to food—Ari as a career, Darra as an academic sideline. For over 30 years she has been a professor of Russian language and literature at Williams College in Massachusetts, but for culinary historians her more significant position is that of editor of *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture*. She has written several books on cooking and culinary history, with particular emphasis on Russia and its neighbors.

One might argue that, for purposes of adhering to this issue's theme, Georgia is no longer part of Russia, but for almost three quarters of a century the Georgian SSR was part of the USSR, and of course the USSR's most dominant leader for much of that time was a Georgian, Iosif Dzhughashvili, known for most of his political career as Josef Stalin. Georgia lies at the east end of the Black Sea, and was known to the Greeks as Colchis, the land of the Golden Fleece. Blessed with a mild climate and surrounded by forbidding mountains, the Georgian people have retained their own food and cultural traditions in the face of repeated conquests, probably influencing the foods of others more than others have influenced the foods of the Georgians.

*The Georgian Feast* is based on an extended visit Goldstein made with her husband to Georgia in the early 1990s, shortly after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Her descriptions of Georgian history, culture, and poetry arise from her long-standing interest, but her direct contact with the people and their culinary traditions makes the book more immediate and more personal.

Most of the recipes are clear and easy to follow, and have been tested by Goldstein or her parents. The ingredients are easily procured, although access to fresh herbs and seasonal fresh produce is essential to many dishes. The dishes themselves are usually easy to prepare and quite tasty, and the more labor-intensive exceptions are generally worth the time and effort. However, the recipe for *khashi*, a tripe soup and allegedly reliable

hangover cure “which should always be eaten early in the morning, preferably between 6 AM and 8 AM,” calls for suet, tripe, and a calf's foot, seasoned with garlic and mixed with milk before serving. These are not ingredients those anticipating a hangover are likely to have on hand—but then again, the very thought of requiring such a cure might be more effective than a temperance lecture. Curious whether Prof. Goldstein had ever tried the soup, I contacted her and she said that she had, and that it had tasted mainly of garlic. She also noted that *khashi* is usually sold in shops, not prepared in family kitchens.

Georgian cuisine is surprisingly varied with regard to vegetables, and unsurprisingly sparing of heavy meat dishes. Georgians are fond of outdoor dining and roasting meats over a fire or on the grill, but beans, bread, cheese, and vegetables comprise the larger proportion of the everyday diet. Unlike Russia, with its *zakuski* culture, in Georgia appetizers are not important in the dining tradition. Instead, a feast usually consists of a long sequence of dishes presented over an evening.

The pacing of major feasts (such as weddings or other celebrations) is controlled by a *tamada* who presides over the festivities, speeding up or slowing down the introduction of new dishes by telling stories, calling on singers or musicians, and proposing toasts. At a large gathering, the *tamada* is typically a professional hired by the host. In former times, the *tamada* was a skilled tradesman with extensive training in his craft. The book does not emphasize either daily or festive foods, but includes a generous representation of both; the clarity of the recipes makes the distinction obvious to the cook contemplating a menu.

In keeping with Georgian tradition, there are relatively few recipes for desserts, since Georgians prefer sweetened fruit; those wishing to make desserts should lay in a copious supply of walnuts and grapes.

*The Georgian Feast* is more than a cookbook: it is a personal reflection of the author's experience and her fondness for the Georgian people. She has an elegant and enthusiastic writing style that engages the reader, and presents the material in a way that is authoritative without being ponderous. The book contains an excellent glossary and useful translations of essential terms. Of special interest are the illustrations by the Georgian artist Niko Pirosmiani (d. 1918), whose primitivist paintings were found throughout Tbilisi, the Georgian capital, and whose work is now a national treasure. Many photographs of old Georgia are also included. Photographs of food are almost absent, though.

*The Georgian Feast* is the closest thing to a compendium of the culture and cuisine of the former Soviet Socialist Republic available to the average American cook, and is a useful addition to any kitchen or bookshelf where the owner has interest in a cuisine that is both exotic and familiar. ■

## CHAA Programs *continued from page 2*

USDA experiment stations developed leading new varieties, such as the Cortland (Geneva, NY, 1915) and the Melrose (Wooster, OH, 1944). Today, public tastes have swung to the very sweet, epitomized by the Honeycrisp, which David Bedford (Univ. of Minnesota) guided to market in 1984. Since it takes decades of scientific cross-breeding to perfect a new variety, patentability has become a key factor in commercialization.

# CHAA ZAKUSKI REPORT



## RUSSIAN HISTORY IN LITTLE BITES

On a snowy and cold December 12, some 23 intrepid souls made their way to the Earhart Village Clubhouse in Ann Arbor for the CHAA’s participatory theme on *zakuski* (appetizers). Ironically, the Russian-like blizzard forced the cancellations of some of those who’d planned to attend the Russian feast.

Nevertheless, the event was a great success. Not only was the food varied, delicious, and fortifying on a blustery day, but we learned so much from this experience— as will be seen in the report below, which we fear is as vast as the Russian steppes!

Many hands worked to pull off the event, but some should be singled out for praise. CHAA member Judy Goldwasser first suggested the theme after listening to a December 5, 2009 show about *zakuski* on National Public Radio’s “The Splendid Table”. Member Phil Zaret created, many years ago as part of his cooking-club experiences, an excellent 68-page booklet of *zakuski* recipes that several participants relied upon in preparing their dishes. The compilation includes, among much else, information found in a work by Culinary Historians of New York member Lynn Visson, *The Complete Russian Cookbook*, and its revision, *The Russian Heritage Cookbook*. Our members Art and Joanne Cole made Zaret’s book available online, and organized the logistics of this gathering, while CHAA program chair Laura Gillis provided support in many ways.

As we arrived, all of our *zakuski* were assembled on one long central table in the clubhouse room. After sharing our experiences preparing them, we eventually sat down at smaller tables each decorated with the colors of the Russian flag: a red

tablecloth decked with stripes of white and blue crepe paper. That was when we got to sample what we had created.

### But What Are *Zakuski*?

The *zakuska* tradition is different from our own tradition of the appetizer. The latter is simply a first (or early) course of a large meal. In the West, we usually eat this appetizer while sitting down at the same table as the courses that will soon follow, and wielding the same type of cutlery and dishware. That is not the case with *zakuski*. Nor are *zakuski* similar to Spanish *tapas*, which is an out-of-the-home phenomenon, engaged in by groups of friends at a bar or a series of bars, and historically not associated with a meal at all.

By contrast, *zakuski* are traditionally served in the home— not at the dining table but in an ante-chamber (adjoining room). In the middle of the room is a round table where the various foods that have been prepared are set out on an array of plates, along with *vodka* or other beverages, making a “spread” that is waiting for the guests as they arrive and assemble for the evening’s main gathering. The word *zakuska* means “little bite”, i.e., a taste of food that is meant to tide guests over until the main meal is ready to begin.

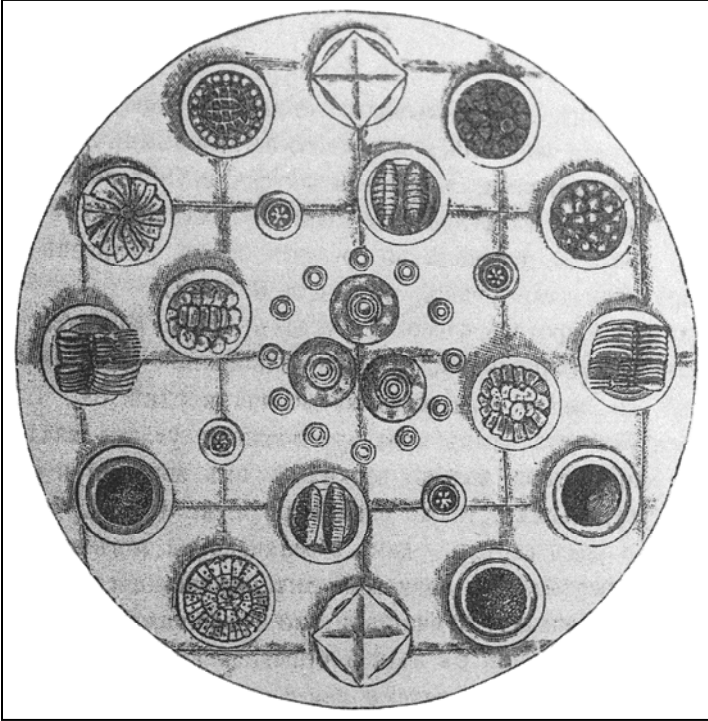
These bites are typically eaten buffet-style, popped into the mouth while standing and conversing, drinking and clinking and toasting. Thus, *zakuski* tend to be small and simple nibbles, usually cold rather than hot, and often eaten with the hands rather than requiring cutlery. They are chosen to complement the *vodka* or other drinks, and thus tend to be more intensely flavored (salty, sour, or highly seasoned) than would be true of a Russian main meal.

Historically, this “meal before the meal” was well suited to the conditions of northern Europe and Russia. Noble estates were separated by great distances and sometimes harsh weather and travel conditions; guests arriving one by one for a planned meal needed to be “tided over” as they gathered. The noble *zakuska* tradition arose in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century as the Russian aristocracy began to look to the West, adopting certain customs that they observed in Germany and Scandinavia and adapting them to the local character. Most fundamentally, *zakuski* are an



**Bill and Yvonne Lockwood’s hot-smoked whitefish was garnished with cherry tomatoes, green olives, and whole pickled mushrooms and gherkins.**

Photos:  
Mariam Breed



**This drawing of a suggested *zakuska* table is from Elena Molokhovets's renowned cookbook, *A Gift to Young Housewives*, 20<sup>th</sup> edition (St. Petersburg, 1897). Bowls of the "little bites" are arranged symmetrically around the perimeter, and bottles of *vodka* are placed along with glasses at the center of the table.**

expression of the deep-seated Russian tradition of hospitality, according to which the entertaining of guests in one's home is considered a privilege and honor. The central role of food in this concept is reflected in the very word for hospitality, *khlebosol'stvo*, whose roots are *khleb* (bread) and *sol* (salt).

#### Memories of Oldest Russia

According to an old Russian proverb, "It's a bad dinner with no bread"—and we were not found wanting for bread. On our *zakuska* table, foodstuffs characteristic of the earliest recorded history of this region had an honored place.

John and Carroll Thomson baked a loaf of *chorny khleb* (black bread), quartered slices of which serve as the foundation for many a *zakuska*. They adapted a recipe from Beth Hensperger's *Bread Bible* that uses lots of rye flour. (The same recipe is given in Deb Perelman's article, "Zakuski: Mighty Russian Morsels", an NPR website from March 2007.)

In history, rye was a grain especially well suited to leavening with sourdough culture, called *zakvaska* in Russian. Baking loaves every morning, using *zakvaska* kept over from the previous day to start the new batch, was a basic daily chore in most households of Old Russia. The loaves were baked in the traditional mammoth stove (*pech'*) of stone or brick, which also provided warmth and was the focus of family life. In a typical peasant home, the stove took up nearly a quarter of the living space. Bread-type doughs were also used to make a variety of *pirogi* (filled pies), a term derived from the fire (*pir*) of the oven in which they were baked.

The basic grains of the country were rye, millet, oats, barley and, in the far south only, wheat. Such grains were also used to make the important products *kasha*, *kvas*, and *vodka*, all of which have remained very popular. *Kasha* refers to any hot cereal porridge or gruel, baked in an oven at a falling temperature to a creamy consistency. Only much later did buckwheat groats (technically a fruit rather than a grain) become the standard choice for *kasha*. *Kasha* was originally a ritual food; in fact, the word signified "feast" in medieval times. *Kvas* remained the leading Russian drink from ancient through modern times and was only eclipsed by tea in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. A lightly fermented sour beverage, somewhat like beer, it is home-made from dried black bread or from yeasted grain mash. It is imbibed as a cool drink and also used as a soup base. *Vodka*, which is much higher in alcohol content, was originally fermented from wheat mash, later from rye, oats, or potato.

Such soured grains are also instances of a flavor component, sourness, that runs through much of the traditional food repertoire of the region. These sour flavors usually resulted from fermenting or pickling, which were ways to preserve foodstuffs for the long, cold Winters. The importance of this preservation was incarnated in one of the Lithuanian pre-Christian deities, Roguszys, who was god of pickles. Homemakers would routinely pickle not only cucumbers, beets and other vegetables but such fruits as apples, plums, and cherries, and even cheese. The traditional method was to submerge the items in an oak barrel filled with salted water, herbs, and spices, leaving them to ferment for several weeks. In general, no vinegar or heat was used in this *brining* process. Other items, notably mushrooms and cabbage, were moist enough to be fermented by a *dry-salting* technique.

#### Germanic and Byzantine Influences

Bill and Yvonne Lockwood presented us with *domashnee kopchenie sigov* (hot-smoked whitefish). They used a whitefish caught in Lake Superior by Native Americans and smoked by the Gustafson family, who are of Swede-Finnish descent. It was garnished with cherry tomatoes, green olives, and whole pickled mushrooms and gherkins.

The hot-smoking of fish and meat is a custom that came from Scandinavia in olden times. In the mid-9<sup>th</sup> Century many of the Slavic peoples were subjugated by the Rus', a Varangian (Viking) tribe led by a ruler called Rurik. They settled especially around Novgorod in the north and Kiev in the south, and established the first large state in this region: Russia. It was with the Rus' that Scandinavian and Germanic influences were first established in Russian culture and foodways. Besides hot-smoking, the influences also include the prominence of herring, which were caught in the Baltic (and later the North Sea), and could be salted or pickled for transport in barrels; cream sauces; *kisel'*, a cereal gruel made tart with berries and eaten cooled as dessert; and honey mead, which became the noble alternative to *kvas*. The oldest known written record of Russian food, a chronicle entry from 997 written in Church Slavonic, describes oat *kasha* eaten with mead.

Because of the role of fish in Christian fasting, the Lockwoods' dish also symbolizes the cultural influence of the Church. Trade between Russia and Constantinople had been established in 945, and in 988 the Varangian Russian ruler,

*continued on next page*

**ZAKUSKI REPORT** *continued from page 5*

Grand Prince Vladimir, converted to Orthodox Christianity. Russia gradually became Christianized, and the diet and other facets of culture were shaped by the annual cycle of church holidays, feasting, and fasting. Specific Byzantine ingredients that became fixtures of the diet at this time include lamb, eggplant, raisins, wine, cloves, and pepper.

The Orthodox Church decrees about 200 fasting days per year, when everything made from meat, milk, or eggs cannot be consumed. From this arose the central distinction between *postnyj* (fasting) and *skoromnyj* (feasting) foods, which were kept segregated. However, only the most observant Christians included fish in the *skoromnyj* category, and their numbers dwindled over the centuries, especially among the middle and upper classes. Thus, fishes such as whitefish, cod, salmon, sardines, and herring became very important for fast days. Salt-cod and stockfish (air-dried cod) had special importance in the diets of poor people and travelers.

The two sweet dishes brought to our gathering, although they qualify as desserts rather than *zakuski*, allow us to remark on a couple of other important ingredients from Old Russia: milk and honey.

Sherry Sundling used two milk products, curd cheese and butter, in her *pirozhoie s varen'em chereshni* (cherry jam cookies). Working with a recipe found in Lynn Visson's books, mentioned earlier, she prepared a dough from flour, cheese, and butter, then spooned some jam onto each flat round of dough. She folded these over into half-moons and pinched them closed before baking. Curd cheese (*tvorog*) was one of the three basic types of cheese produced in Old Russia. The others were sour cream (*smetana*) and brined cheese (*brynza*), the latter made from ewe's milk and akin to Balkan *feta*. All three types were rather simple; the cheese-making art wasn't highly sophisticated at the time, partly because milk was relatively scarce. Until later, when the first Western-style cheeses were introduced to Russia, most of the native cheese other than *tvorog* was eaten in *zakuski*.

On the other hand, the cake art in Russia became highly elaborated. Several different cakes and other sweets would often be prepared for a single grand meal. Jan and Dan Longone brought us *taplis namtskhvari* (Georgian honey cake), whose Russian equivalent is *medovaia kovrizhka* (*med* means both honey and mead). Jan used a recipe from Darra Goldstein's *The Georgian Feast*, and accompanied the cake with cherry preserves and whipped cream. Honey remained the standard sweetener in Russia longer than in many other world regions, not only because cane sugar was an expensive import but because the Orthodox Church proscribed its consumption on fast days, since animal products were used in refining cane sugar. Only in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, when beet-sugar production arose, did honey begin to take a second place to white sugar in Russia.

#### The Empires of Khans and Tsars

During the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, Genghis Khan and his descendants united much of Central Asia and portions of Russia in an alliance of Khanates, known in the West as the Mongol Empire. Among the consequences was the re-opening of the Silk Road and the rise to prominence of the city of Moscow. Certain food customs from Central and East Asia began to be integrated into the Russian diet.



**Block ice is being transported in St. Petersburg in this illustration from 1857. The use of ice to cool or freeze food has a much longer history in Russia than in the West. Frozen fish, for example, was a staple in Winter markets for many centuries. The “ice house” (*lednik*) is attested in print in 1482; this was a special structure at country estates, often built underground below the pantry, in which meat, fish, and beverages were placed on blocks of ice. In early Spring, the blocks were replenished with fresh ones that were stored, covered with straw, for the Summer. By the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, even a middle-class homemaker would routinely store ice in a pit within her cold-cellar, using it to chill or freeze items such as meat, fish, fowl, dairy products, fruit, berries, dumplings, aspics, and jellies.**

Illustration by Pharamond Blanchard from *Le Tour du Monde* 3:1 (1861), p. 196.

The list of such Asian foods begins with buckwheat, whose flour and groats became common ingredients for *blini* pancakes and *kasha* gruel, respectively. Sherry Sundling prepared us *grechnevyie blini s smetana i semga i ikra* (buckwheat pancakes served with sour cream, aged salmon [“lox”] and caviar). *Blini* are medium-thin pancakes made of yeasted batter, and represent a pre-Christian custom that was absorbed into Christian society. They were originally called *mlini* from a word meaning “to mill”, and they were eaten at prayers for the dead. Their round shape symbolized the sun returning in Spring after a long Winter; the Slavs had been sun-worshippers in pre-Christian times. With the rise of the Orthodox church, it became a universal custom to gorge on *blini* with melted butter and sour cream twice daily during the Butter Week religious festivities, marking the beginning of Spring and the last week before Lenten fasting. *Blini* were baked in traditional Russian stoves until these were displaced by European-style metal ranges in homes and shops in the late 1800's; with these, the pancakes can instead be fried in butter (or, on fast days, in vegetable oil) in a special indented *blini* pan placed on a stove-top burner. *Blinchiki*, the thinner, crepe-like, egg-batter version of *blini*, were often wrapped around a fruit, meat, or dairy filling and were called *blintzes* by the Jews settling in Central Europe.

Moscow was made the Russian capital by Ivan IV “the Terrible”, the first Russian tsar, crowned in 1547. In 1552-82, the tsars subjugated and annexed the key Mongol Khanates and





**This photo, taken in Uzbekistan sometime between 1865 and 1872, shows a street vendor of *purozhki* (pastries). The particular type of pastry is a meat-filled dumpling called *mantı*, still found today all across Asia from Korea to Turkey. The practice of making them spread along the Silk Road many centuries ago.**

Photo by N. V. Bogaevskii, from Konstantin Petrovich fon-Kaufman and A. L. Kun, *Turkestanskii Al'bom* (Turkestan Album) (Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 1872), Part 2, Vol. 2, plate 131.

Siberia, which multiplied the size and sweep of their territory. The resulting explosion in trade introduced many Asian foods to Russia.

One of these was the cold-smoking of sturgeon and other fish, a practice from the Caspian region. Julie Lewis prepared *siomga s maslom i khrenom* (cold-smoked salmon with horseradish butter) using a recipe from Diana Henry's *Roast Figs, Sugar Snow: Winter Food to Warm the Soul*. (The same recipe is given in "Zakuski: The Splendid Table Recipe Box", an NPR website from December 2009.) Trimmings of cold-smoked salmon, from the acclaimed Durham's Tricklements shop in Ann Arbor, were combined with hard-cooked egg yolks, butter, horseradish, lemon juice, and pepper, and the dish was served with rye bread and pumpernickel.

Other Asian food products and techniques that came to Russia included *pilaf* (Russian *plov*), made with rice or bulgur wheat; *kumys*, a mildly alcoholic beverage fermented from

mare's milk; the use of saffron, cinnamon, and other spices; and pickled cabbage (sauerkraut), based on a Chinese dry-salting method. Two Asian-derived foods, buckwheat *kasha* and *shchi* (sauerkraut soup), became the twin staples of the Russian peasantry—recorded in a rhymed expression, *Shchi da kasha, pishcha nasha* ("Shchi and kasha—that's our fare").

However, the Asian borrowings also affected the diets of the upper strata. Their repasts began to incorporate Oriental noodles (*lapsha*) and dumplings (*pel'meni* and *mantı*), tea, sugar, citrus, dried apricots and figs, ginger, and sugary sweets such as pies, preserves, syrups, and fruit drops. It was partly through this bounty of empire that sharper distinctions emerged between the diets of the upper and lower classes. Aristocrats lavishly entertained foreign ambassadors in Moscow, the capital. Noble tables were sometimes the setting for huge feasts of as many as 200 dishes and lasting 6-8 hours. An order of eight courses gradually became standard at such feasts: hot soups, cold dishes (cold soup or meat in aspic), roast meat or fowl, fish (boiled, poached, baked, or fried), savory pies (*pirogi*), buckwheat *kasha*, sweet pastries, and sweetmeats.

Perhaps no single ingredient more clearly trumpeted the long reach of the Tsars' empire than citrus, an exotic type of fruit because it was cultivated in warm, wet climates or in the hothouses of noble estates. The simple buckwheat pancakes of the masses contrasted with what came to be called *tsarkie blini*, "the Tsar's *blini*", in which orange-flower water was added to a batter made with refined wheat flour, butter, egg yolks, and heavy cream. The finished pancakes were sprinkled with sugar and lemon juice before serving.

Lemon juice was also used in the preparation of *yazika* (cow's tongue) [Phil and Barb Zaret], helping to elevate a peasant dish to new heights. The cold slices of cooked tongue were dressed with a marinade of olive oil and lemon juice, and served with black olives and a celery-onion relish.

*Chornyı chai s sirop iz kumaniki* (black tea with blackberry syrup) [Joanne and Art Cole] allowed us to partake of another key product of Asian origin. Tea was first introduced to Russia in 1638 when the khan Attyın-Khan gifted 200 quarter-pound packages of wild dried tea to Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich. (Mikhail's accession to the throne 25 years earlier had ushered in the period of Romanov rule, which would last until the October Revolution.) The *samovar*, an urn to heat water and keep it hot (the word means "self-cooker"), is similar in principle to a Mongolian hot-pot and had been introduced to Russia by Mongol invaders in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. Since that time, Russian nobles had been using it to make *sbıten'*, a hot, spiced honey drink; now, it would be adapted to make tea. The leaves were imported from China, where they were steamed and pressed into hard, smoky bricks that were packed into camel- or horse-caravan loads for the six-month voyage along the Silk Road. The bricks were so valuable that they often served as currency *en route*. Because of the expense of the imported leaves and sugar, not to mention the *samovar*, tea kettle, glasses, etc., the tea-drinking ritual was a privilege of the gentry, and it remained a luxury in Russia until the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. For sweetening, honey, fruit syrup or preserves were sometimes used instead of sugar, a custom that continued even when sugar eventually became inexpensive.

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## Peter the Great's Reforms

At the dawn of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Russia turned to the West— Western ideas, Western technology, and Western culture. When still a young man, Tsar Peter I “the Great” spent a year of his rule (1697-98) traveling in Western Europe, and resolved to sweepingly modernize Russia along Western European lines. After his armies rid the Baltic region of Swedish domination, he founded the self-named port of St. Petersburg there as a beacon of Westernization, and in 1712 established the city as the new Russian capital. Peter imported French vines and began growing them in the Crimean region of the Black Sea. Wheat, olives, wine, and ale became more common on Russian tables. Caviar (sturgeon roe), from the Black and Caspian Seas and their rivers, first became popular at this time.

Dutch, German, and Swedish culinary influences loomed especially large in this period. Certain German baked goods such as the *krendel* and *torte* were adopted, as were fried steaks and cutlets, *schnitzel*, *wursts*, and the serving of fruits and jellies to accompany meat. The practice of providing guests with a generous spread of little bites to accompany drinks while awaiting the proper meal was also borrowed, but transformed into something characteristically Russian, designated by the term *zakuski*.

A fixture of the *zakuska* table was the German open-face sandwich, or *butterbrod*. The term was directly incorporated into Russian from the German *butterbrot*, although in Russian, the term is used even when butter isn't involved. At our table, Evan Lowery's *butterbrod s salat zdorov'ye* (open-face with “health salad”) featured a salad of grated carrot, garlic, ginger, sugar, and mayonnaise, served on rectangles of thin-sliced pumpernickel. In Russia, any salad of carrot, garlic, and mayonnaise is known as *salat zdorov'ye*, “health salad”, because carrots are thought to “thicken the blood”.

New World ingredients common in Northern Europe were also adopted, most importantly the potato, the German word for which, *kartoffel*, was borrowed by Russian. Peter the Great and others in St. Petersburg were instrumental in promoting the potato against the prejudices of other Russians, which held sway until well into the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Additional American ingredients borrowed from Northern Europe were the tomato, bell pepper, beans, and members of the sunflower genus. The last are important for their oil, which is good for fast days and much less expensive than olive oil; for their tubers; and for their seeds, which are eaten either raw, roasted, or pickled.

Potatoes were seen in three different salads on our *zakuska* table:

- *salat iz treska* (saltcod salad) [Joanne and Art Cole], based on a recipe in Zaret's book, used pieces of salt cod, boiled potato, and dill pickle, dressed with mayonnaise, vinegar, and horseradish, and beautifully decorated with scallions and parsley.
- *kartofellnyj salat s seliodkoj* (herring potato salad) [Randy Schwartz and Mariam Breed], a composed



**Evan Lowery's *butterbrod* of carrot salad on pumpernickel.**

salad from Zaret's book, used fileted pickled herring, sliced boiled potatoes and egg, grated apple, and black olives, arranged concentrically on a platter and drizzled with a dressing of sour cream and vinegar.

- *rossol'ye* (Estonian “red salad”) [Jane and Herbert Kaufer], based on a recipe from a friend of Jane's originally from Russia, used boiled potatoes, beets and egg with chopped onion and dill pickle, dressed with mayonnaise and served with pumpernickel. Often, herring or chopped beef or ham is also added to this salad.

Empress Catherine II “the Great”, who succeeded her husband Peter III in 1762, continued the Westernizing reforms, and annexed the Crimea in 1783. In the early 1800s her successor annexed most of the Caucasus region, including Georgia and Azerbaijan.

An example of the Caucasian foods that came to Russia is *lobio* (Georgian bean salad), prepared by Judy Goldwasser using a recipe from Perelman's article mentioned earlier. This spicy salad was traditionally made with the *lablab*, a dark bean of the Old World; Perelman's recipe calls for kidney beans, a common modern substitute. The salad also incorporates finely chopped walnuts, white vinegar, vegetable oil, onion, garlic, pepper, and other herbs and spices. A variant called *lobio tkemali* is dressed with a sauce made from tart wild plums and vinegar.

Other examples of Caucasian and Turkish borrowings by Russian cuisine include spit-roasted meat, skewered grilled lamb (*shashlyk*) and beef (*basturma*), Circassian chicken, eggplant “caviar”, *halvah*, Turkish delight, and *kefir*, a Caucasian beverage of ancient origin, fermented from cow's milk. (For those interested in tasting *kefir*, Darra Goldstein gives a recipe in her *À La Russe: A Cookbook of Russian Hospitality*, while a commercial version is sold at most Whole Foods and Hiller's



stores. This last is produced by Lifeway Foods, a Chicago-area firm founded and run by the Russian-immigrant Smolyansky family.)

French Influences

Catherine was a noted Francophile, and before long the hiring of French chefs became *de rigueur* among the upper classes. Wines (symbolized by the Cabernet Sauvignon brought to our gathering by Jan and Dan Longone) began to be paired with dishes; other wines, or punches made from them, were often served after dinner. The French fondness for coffee also

spread to Russia, and French styles of dining service and table setting became fashionable. The custom of a breakfast meal, and also tea as a separate meal, took hold.

Also representative of this French style is the chopping or grinding of meat and fish— a technique foreign to the traditional Russian kitchen, where Orthodox beliefs held that food should generally be eaten whole, as God provided it. Dishes adopted from France that use chopping and grinding include *patés*, *purées*, *mousses*, *farcis* (force-meats), *rissoles*, and *quenelles*. *Pateu de ficat de pasăre* (Romanian *pâté* of chicken liver) [Tavi

*continued on page 13*

Tolstoy and the Clash of Civilizations

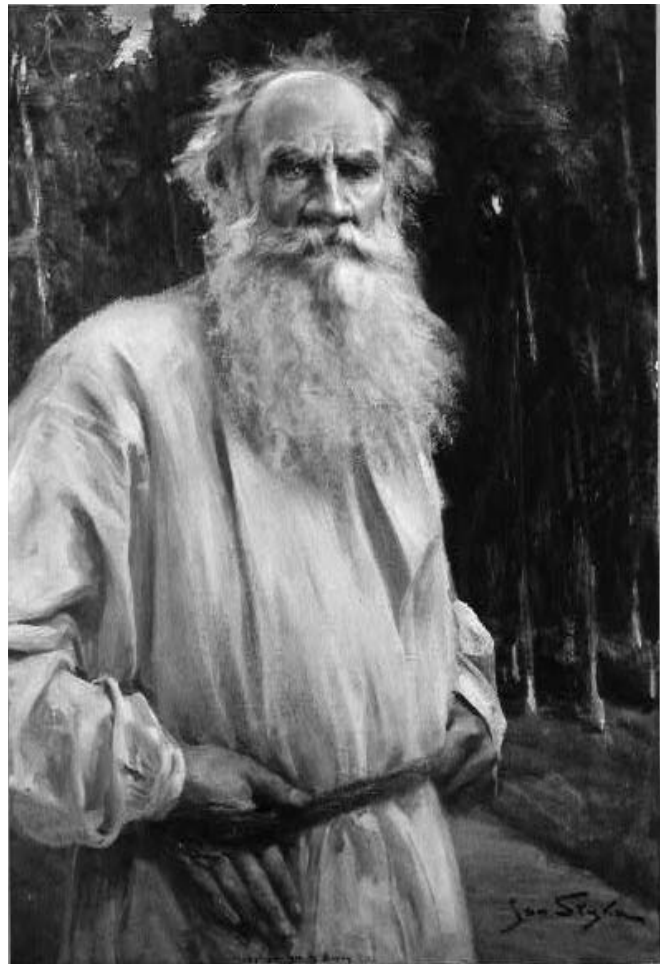
Our *zakuska* table was decked out in a year that also marked the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Lyevev Tolstoy (1828-1910), the great Russian writer and philosopher.

In his novels, Tolstoy vividly portrayed the dining habits and other customs of the common Russian people, and also those of the gentry who sought to imitate Western manners. In *War and Peace*, Count Rostov holds a banquet in honor of General Bagration that consists mostly of French *haute cuisine* dishes, such as turtle prepared with cockscombs and served in *sauce tortue*. For his daughter Natasha’s naming-day dinner, Rostov has his serf Taras prepare a feast of hazel grouse *sautéed* in Madeira, with pineapple ice for dessert. But at another point, when Rostov’s children visit their uncle’s house after a wolf-hunt in the country, the barefoot servant Anisya regales them with simple but delicious things that she has labored year-round to create, from buttermilk rye biscuits to mushrooms gathered from the forest and pickled, and nuts preserved in honey: “All these delicacies were of Anisya Fyodorovna’s preparing, cooking or preserving. All seemed to smell and taste, as it were, of Anisya Fyodorovna. All seemed to recall her buxomness, cleanliness, whiteness, and cordial smile.”

Tolstoy was a keen observer of this clash between the Westernizers and the Slavophiles. There was a momentous struggle going on over the direction that Russia should take, and gastronomy was a key battlefield in it. In *Anna Karenina*, when Oblonsky invites his future brother-in-law Levin to dine with him at a Moscow restaurant, Oblonsky exults in the oysters, Champagne, and other French extravagances, whereas Levin immediately loses his appetite. He pointedly comments that he’d rather have the standard peasant meal of buckwheat *kasha* and a bowl of *shchi* (sauerkraut soup)— neither of which the restaurant offers. Oblonsky is riled to defend his behavior. “That is, after all, the aim of civilization: to get pleasure and enjoyment out of everything”, he points out between smackings of his lips. “Well,” Levin retorts, “if that is his aim, I’d rather be a savage.”

These “savage” views become more clearly those of Tolstoy himself in his later years. He is troubled by the moral dilemmas that surround a hedonistic lifestyle, observing that masses of Russians suffer from hunger and cold, while “we, I, and thousands of others like me, overeat ourselves with beefsteaks and sturgeon.” Ultimately, Tolstoy would seek refuge in Christian asceticism, renouncing meat-eating, sex, and other “sweet pleasures”.

— RKS



“Tolstoy, the Man of Truth”, painted by Jan Styka in 1912.

# RUSSIAN POTATO SALAD: FROM CLASSIC TO CONTEMPORARY

by Sharon Hudgins

*Sharon Hudgins of McKinney, TX is a cookbook author, culinary journalist, and lecturer for international tours, who has also presented six papers at the Oxford Symposium on Food. She focused on Russian studies for her B.A. at the University of Texas in Austin and her M.A. at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. From 1993 to 1995, she was a professor and administrator for University of Maryland University College's education programs in Vladivostok and Irkutsk, Russia, and later wrote about those experiences in an award-winning book, The Other Side of Russia: A Slice of Life in Siberia and the Russian Far East (Texas A & M University Press, 2003). She has led five National Geographic tours across Russia on the Trans-Siberian Railroad, logging a total of 35,000 miles on Russian trains. Her article "Land of Plenty" on the foods of the Russian Far East appeared in Saveur 104 (August/September 2007).*

Russian potato salad is one of those simple dishes with a complicated past. Reputedly born in the kitchen of an elite Moscow restaurant around 150 years ago, it spawned an entire family of descendants who eventually migrated from the chandeliered halls of *haute cuisine* to Soviet workers' canteens, student cafeterias, Intourist hotel dining rooms, VIP banquets, all-you-can-eat "biznes lunch" buffets in modern-day Moscow, and Russian home tables from St. Petersburg to Vladivostok. Along the way, the recipe evolved, too, ultimately emigrating beyond the boundaries of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union to countries across the world, from East Asia to Turkey to North and South America. Today, Russian potato salad is "a taste of home" to many people living in places as diverse as Bulgaria, France, Spain, Greece, the United States, Argentina, and the Dominican Republic.

Many culinary historians think that potatoes were first imported into Russia from Holland in the early 1700s, during the reign of Tsar Peter I (1682-1725). But these hardy tubers did not quickly become as popular and widespread in Russia as they are today. From the mid-1700s to mid-1800s, Russian leaders tried— by persuasion and by decree, with varying degrees of success— to induce landowners and peasants to cultivate potatoes, which were often viewed with prejudice and suspicion, partly because of their shape and composition and partly because people didn't know how to

cook and eat this new plant, or how to process it into useful substances such as dried potato starch (Toomre, pp. 54-55; Smith, pp. 26-30).

By the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, however, potatoes had not only gained acceptance in Russia but had also become so common, and so essential, to most people's diets that Russians often referred to them as "our second bread". Today, large potato patches adjacent to families' smaller kitchen gardens (separately planted with other root vegetables, cabbages, cucumbers, tomatoes, herbs, and flowers) are a common sight behind most village houses all along the nearly 6,000-mile Trans-Siberian railroad route between Moscow and the Pacific Ocean. Many of the urban Russians who have a *dacha* (Summer house) in the country also plant potatoes in their gardens, if they have enough land, even though potatoes are readily available, and not expensive, in food markets throughout the Russian Federation.

Potato dishes, hot and cold, have been a staple of Russian cuisine for over a century now, served in many forms at breakfast, lunch, and dinner— at home, on picnics, from street stalls, and in cafeterias, canteens, and restaurants throughout the country. Potatoes are an ingredient in several Russian appetizers, breads, pastries, and soups, as well as a common starch that accompanies main dishes of meat, fish, and fowl.

Russian midday and evening meals usually begin with one or more *zakuski*, appetizers that precede the soup course at lunch and the main course at dinner (when a soup course is seldom served). Often several *zakuski*— all served together on the table at the same time— start a Russian meal, with diners selecting whatever they want from the platters of food artfully displayed in front of them at more formal dinners or squeezed into any space available on a family's small table at home. On special occasions, home cooks might lavish up to ten or twelve different *zakuski* on their guests, in a show of hospitality and largesse. Outside the home, large banquets for official occasions or the parties of wealthy Russians can feature three dozen or more different hot and cold *zakuski*. The *zakuski* spread serves the same function at a meal as the overture to an opera or the first movement of a symphony— although the *zakuski* are usually so flavorful, colorful, and copious that the rest of the meal often pales in comparison.

Cold potato salad is such a standard appetizer in Russia that you seldom see a *zakuski* spread without it. (It's a "must" for New Year's Eve dinners and festive family gatherings.) Even if a home cook offers only one *zakuska* to start an everyday meal, it's often some version of this classic potato salad. But cold potato salad is also such an "old favorite" that you'd think the "old" might have trumped the "favorite" by now, in contemporary Russia where modernization continues to struggle with tradition and where young, urban, chic Russians often seem to prefer the imported to the homemade. On the other hand, comfort foods well rooted in a person's (and culture's) past do provide a sense of stability in a rapidly changing environment, and that might be one explanation for the endurance of this long-loved dish.

## Origins and Variants

First known in Russia as “*Salat Oliv’ye*”, this potato salad is said to have been created in the 1860s by Lucien Olivier, a chef of French or Belgian origin, at his fashionable Ermitage restaurant in Moscow. An aristocratic recipe that included grouse, crayfish, truffles, and olives, this elegant potato salad evolved into more proletarian fare in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, from an upscale restaurant item made with costly ingredients to an everyday dish composed of inexpensive, readily available products: potatoes, carrots, and bottled or canned green peas, occasionally perked up with onions and cucumbers (fresh or pickled), all napped with commercial mayonnaise, sour cream, or a blend of the two.

As the popularity of this salad spread, it acquired other names, too: “*Stolichnyi Salat*” (Capital City Salad) and “*Moskovskiy Salat*” (Moscow Salad), in reference to its reputed origin in Moscow. But although the creation of this dish is attributed to that specific restaurant chef in Russia’s capital, it’s not hard to imagine that in many places throughout the country Russian home cooks of the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, who had never heard of Olivier’s fancy salad, combined chopped leftover cooked meats and fresh or cooked vegetables, including the increasingly available and acceptable potatoes, and bound them together with soured cream (an ingredient used in Russia long before mayonnaise came on the scene). Was the idea of a cold potato-meat-and-vegetable salad really “invented” in a single famous restaurant— or also in hundreds of home kitchens after potatoes became a staple of the Russian root cellar?

A perusal of several Russian cookbooks published in English from the 1960s to mid-2000s (many written by Russian émigrés), as well as several cookbooks published in Russia from 1955 to 2001, indicates that a number of other ingredients can be included in potato salads now called “*Oliv’ye*”, “*Olivier*”, or “*Stolichnyi*”. (Although this dish is known as “Russian Salad” outside of the country, that term is hardly ever used in Russia itself.) Recipes list such ingredients as cooked beef, veal, mutton, pork, tongue, chicken, and sausage; smoked or boiled fish, salted herring, and other seafood; French beans and white beans; marinated mushrooms, pickled capers, white or green cabbage, sauerkraut, asparagus, artichokes, cauliflower, celery stalks, and celeriac; orange and apple pieces; and horseradish, prepared mustard, fresh parsley, and dill.

When beets are added— and especially when a *mélange* of this type is tossed with an oil-and-vinegar dressing instead of napped with mayonnaise and/or sour cream— this salad is often called “*Vinegret*”. But writers of Russian cookbooks are not always in agreement about the names of these salads. Some also call potato-based beet salads dressed with mayonnaise or sour cream “*Vinegret*”. Others make the distinction between potato salads bound with mayonnaise (*Oliv’ye*, *Stolichnyi*) and those tossed with oil and vinegar (*Vinegret*), regardless of whether beets are included in the mixture. And some Russian-language recipes, for both *Oliv’ye* and *Vinegret*, even have the cooked ingredients first mixed with a small amount of mayonnaise, then further dressed with oil and vinegar.



**A fish vendor in Russia, in a 1923 pen and ink drawing by Boris M. Kustodiev.**

Originally from Vsevolod V. Vojnov, *B. M. Kustodiev* (Leningrad, 1925)

Admittedly, the nomenclature of Russian potato salad can be somewhat confusing, both in Russian and in English, because the naming of these salads is based on definitions that are highly flexible and not generally agreed upon. A recent online search for images of “Russian Potato Salad”, “*Salat Oliv’ye*”, and “*Salat Olivier*” reinforces that observation. Most of the photographs showed the standard, late-20<sup>th</sup>-Century Russian restaurants’ and home cooks’ now-classic version of this dish— ivory-colored potato salad made with carrots, peas, and mayonnaise— whereas other photos showed red- or pink-colored salads made with beets, some with vinegar-and-oil dressing, some with mayonnaise and sour cream.

I first tasted *Salat Oliv’ye* in the 1970s, at a restaurant in Istanbul run by two elderly Russian émigrés. Their version included chunks of white-meat chicken and a few pickled capers, all dressed with a lemony mayonnaise. Later in Paris I came across a similar dish— without the meat, but with the addition of chopped onions and hard-cooked eggs— known in France as *Salade Russe*. The 1938 edition of *Larousse Gastronomique* describes two more-complex versions of this dish— one a salad of various vegetables mixed with tongue, lobster, sausage, mushrooms, and truffles, seasoned with mayonnaise, shaped into a round dome, and decorated with anchovy filets, truffles, tongue, capers, and *cornichons*. An even grander presentation has the salad ingredients bound with stabilized mayonnaise, formed in a tall, elaborate copper mold, and enrobed in aspic. The versions I ate in Paris were decidedly more plebian.

Traveling around Spain in the 1980s, I discovered that a *tapa* often served in bars was *Ensalada Rusa* (or *Ensaladilla Rusa*)— similar to the French version of Russian potato salad, but with a Spanish twist: plenty of garlic infusing the mayonnaise, with canned bonito or tuna added to the mix-

*continued on next page*



**POTATO SALAD** *continued from page 11*

ture, and sometimes chopped green olives and roasted sweet red peppers included, too. At one bar in Castile, the memorable *Ensalada Rusa* was even bound with traditional *alioli*, made solely with extra-virgin olive oil, raw garlic, and salt.

I finally ate Russian potato salad on its home soil in the early 1990s. But I wasn't impressed: the desultory versions served in Moscow and St. Petersburg restaurants tasted merely like drab cousins of the more fully flavored French and Spanish versions that had already won my heart in Paris, Barcelona, and Madrid.

When my husband Tom and I moved to Vladivostok in the Russian Far East in 1993, we began making Russian potato salad at home. Inspired by his experience of this dish in Western Europe and by the fine seafood available locally in our part of Asian Russia, Tom soon developed his own version that we called "Vladivostok Potato Salad" (see recipe below). Starting with the basic potato-carrot-pea recipe, and incorporating both mayonnaise and sour cream, he added ingredients that contemporary Russians of our acquaintance did not include in this dish even though they were available in the local markets: olive oil, lemon juice, fresh garlic, Kamchatka crab meat, and shiny red-orange Pacific salmon roe. Russians who tasted Tom's version of "their" potato salad were invariably seduced by his take on

## Tom's Vladivostok Potato Salad

*This salad is best made at least 2 to 4 hours before serving, for all the flavors to meld. Add the crab mayonnaise topping and salmon caviar garnish just before serving.*

### Potato Salad:

- 2½ lbs. firm boiling potatoes, peeled and cut into ½-inch cubes
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 3 medium carrots, peeled, cooked, and cut into ¼-inch cubes
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 cup frozen green peas, lightly cooked
- 2 hard-cooked eggs, chopped

### Dressing:

- ¾ cup mayonnaise
- ¾ cup pure sour cream
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 3 to 4 large garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1½ teaspoons salt

### Crab mayonnaise:

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 3 large garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 6 oz. lump crabmeat, crumbled

### Garnish:

- 4 oz. salmon caviar (not canned)
- Large sprig of fresh dill
- Pickled sweet red pepper strips

Put potatoes into a large pot, cover with water, add salt, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until tender, about 5 minutes. Drain the cooked potatoes in a colander. Make the dressing and the crab mayonnaise while the potatoes are cooling.

**Dressing:** Whisk together mayonnaise, sour cream, olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, and salt. (If you taste the dressing at this stage it will seem too salty. Don't panic. When the dressing is added to the potatoes and other vegetables, the salt will be absorbed by those other ingredients.) Cover and refrigerate until needed.

**Crab mayonnaise:** In another bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise and garlic. Gently fold in the crabmeat. Cover and refrigerate until you are almost ready to serve the potato salad.

Gently toss the potatoes, carrots, and onion together in a large bowl. Add peas and hard-cooked eggs, tossing again gently to keep the peas from being mashed. Pour the dressing over the salad and mix gently with a wooden spoon, trying not to mash the vegetables together. Cover and refrigerate until serving time.

Just before serving, mound potato salad on a round serving platter, forming it into a shallow dome. Spread the crab mixture evenly over the top and sides of the salad, like icing a cake. Decorate top of salad with salmon caviar arranged in the shape of a crab, placing the sprig of dill, like seaweed, next to it. Arrange red pepper strips around the base of the salad

Makes 8 servings.

**TIP:** A day in advance, cook all the vegetables and eggs for this salad, and make the dressing and crab mayonnaise. Keep them all chilled, in separate bowls, in the refrigerator. Two to 4 hours before serving, combine the vegetables, eggs, and dressing, and refrigerate until needed. Just before serving, garnish the potato salad with crab mayonnaise and salmon caviar as directed.

(Adapted from the version published in *Saveur* magazine online, No. 104, August/September 2007, <http://www.saveur.com/article/Recipes/Toms-Vladivostok-Potato-Salad>)

an old theme. They dropped heavy hints about hoping to eat it again at our dinner parties, and asked for the recipe to add to their own culinary repertoires. Later, in 2006, he had an opportunity to prepare his potato salad in Vladivostok again, for several good cooks who became equally enamored of it. And who knows? Tom's "Vladivostok Potato Salad" might now be a "family recipe" among some people in the Russian Far East, already handed down to the next generation—or might even be offered on restaurant menus in Vladivostok—another small example of the circuitous journey, and considerable evolution, of this dish, from 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Moscow to tables around the world.

A recent Internet search turned up stories and memories of Russian potato salad from places as far apart as South Korea and Chile. It would be interesting to trace the history of the spread of this dish across the globe, since it is now so popular in several countries widely separated from Russia by geography and culture. Emigration, exile, and the lure of better economic opportunities elsewhere surely played their part in the dissemination of this potato salad from Russia to other regions, as much as personal taste preferences, local ingredients, and the skills of individual cooks have influenced how the recipe evolved, both in Russia and elsewhere. I wonder how many different versions of Russian potato salad are now made in thousands of kitchens around the world every day? ■

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### ZAKUSKI REPORT

*continued from page 9*

and Jan Prundeanu] corresponds to the Russian *pashtet pechonka*. Using a recipe from one of his old Romanian cookbooks, Tavi boiled some locally-sourced chicken livers with onions, milk, and butter, then ground them finely and combined with more butter. He served the *pâté* with sliced dill pickle. Such *pâtés* are often baked and served in a pastry-dough casing, just as in France.

Indeed, the use of lighter bread and pastry doughs in Russia was another practice adopted from French *haute cuisine*. The two types of savory pastries brought to our table exemplified this in their respective use of a *brioche* or *challah* type of dough, which is yeasted, and a puff pastry, which is unyeasted.

Sonia Manchek used a highly yeasted dough to encase her *kartofel'nyj pirozhki* (potato-filled pastries). She used a filling of mashed potato, sauerkraut, and sautéed onion. The filling is spooned onto rounds of dough, which are then folded over, pinched, and formed into oval-shaped pastries. Sonia baked the pastries, dipped them in garlic butter, and served them with beet horseradish. Both *pirogi* and *pirozhki* are hot, stuffed pastries from Russia, in which the pastry dough completely surrounds the filling, and they are baked on a sheet rather than in a pan or mold. The *pirogi* are large rectangular pies, pierced with some holes at the top to release steam during baking, whereas *pirozhki* are smaller, oval, turnover-style individual pastries.

Laura and Dan Gillis, who vacationed in St. Petersburg last Summer, brought a grand type of *pirog* called *kulebjaka s kapustoi* (cabbage coulibiac). Following a recipe in Time-Life's *Foods of Russia*, Laura made a cabbage filling seasoned with parsley and dill, and encased it in puff pastry. With extra bits of the pastry, she decorated the top crust with a wonderful floral design. In the old days, *kulebjaka* usually combined a number of different layers of filling, such as chunks of fish or meat, vegetables, mushrooms, chopped hard-boiled egg, and rice or buckwheat kasha. There are celebrated versions named after Baidakov and Lyonechka, each one having 12 layers separated by *blinchiki*.

The list of French cooking techniques adopted in Russia also includes rich hot or cold sauces, delicate seasonings, butter *sautés*, vegetable *consommés*, the poaching of meats in *court bouillon*, and the prevalence of *ragôts* and other stews, *soufflés*, *crèmes*, puddings, etc. While the Russian masses largely continued their traditional foodways during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the cuisine of the upper classes began to lose its distinctive national character due to the wholesale importation of foreign traditions from France and other countries.

This trend slowed when cookbooks began to be published in Russia in the late 1700s and became common in the 1840s. Many of the cookbooks helped to preserve the older traditions and heritage dishes of Russian cookery, and in some cases were expressions of Russian or regional pride. The most prominent cookbook was Elena Molokhovets's *A Gift to Young Housewives*, first published in St. Petersburg in 1861, the year in which serfdom was abolished. It was encyclopedic, incorporating both traditional and foreign-influenced dishes. The book went through 40 editions, totaling nearly 300,000 copies, up to 1917.

# THE RUSSIAN FOOD I REMEMBER

by Phil Zaret

*Phil and his wife Barbara are longtime CHAA members. He was raised in the New York City area, attended the University of Michigan, and made a living as the owner-manager of a local photocopy shop. Since his retirement, Phil has done volunteer work for the UM library system, including binding and repairing books, and compiling culinary references found in manuscripts at the Clements Library. His previous article for Repast (Fall 2004) was on ancient Roman liquamen and other fish sauces.*

I always thought we were Russian. My earliest memory of the family gatherings we went to, was being in a room full of large people babbling away in a language I couldn't understand a word of. Everyone spoke English except when the "relatives" were assembled.

At home, fairly often, something would appear on the table that was not the typical American fare we usually ate. It was "Russian" food. I didn't realize, of course, that most of the people in the small town where I grew up in New Jersey probably never heard of that kind of food and probably wouldn't eat it if offered.

It wasn't all strictly Russian food. In fact, there was Ukrainian food mixed in with it, as my father's family was from the Ukraine. And there was Romanian food, as well—my mother's family was from Romania. How was it that my mother came to cook all these exotic dishes, when the rest of her cooking— all good cooking, I might add— was so mainstream? I can only assume she learned it from my father's mother, Grandma Fanya. Before I was born, Grandma Fanya had lived with us and must have imparted her dishes to my mother.

And why did we eat so little Romanian food, when my mother, as a child, had her mother to teach her? Personally, I believe my mother wanted to forget her childhood, which was difficult. She would occasionally talk about *mamaliga*, Romanian cornmeal mush, with utter disgust. She never made it. I can only assume she must have had it three times a day growing up and just hated it. We did, however, have Romanian eggplant caviar. It was Romanian because she carefully sliced canned black olives and mixed them in as the last step. I've never seen it served that way anywhere else.

My mother was an excellent cook. She was a practitioner of "slow cookery", simply because that was the way to make really good food. Ironically, my brothers and I were such voracious eaters that the instant the slow-cooked food got to the table, it was devoured. I can remember Pete, Eli and myself in a frenzy inhaling dozens of *blinchiki*

(blintzes), which my mother had slaved over for hours. Besides *blinchiki*, we would regularly have *shchi* (sometimes called *borscht* by people who can't pronounce *shchi*), stuffed cabbage, *kasha*, *shashlyk*, *bitki* and, of course, sour cream with pretty much all of them.

*Shchi* was a meal unto itself. It had meat, potatoes, cabbage— sometimes beets— and sour cream added generously at the table. *Shchi* could be called "cabbage *borscht*" to differentiate it from "beet *borscht*". Beet *borscht*, mostly eaten cold, was pretty much beets and not much else— besides sour cream. We had bread with every meal— not home made— but often rye or pumpernickel.

*Blinchiki* were a treat. These are thin crepes with a dab of filling, folded in a variety of ways. My mother went for the rectangular shape of folding, though I've since seen them folded in squares or even open-ended. She would only use one kind of cheese— farmer cheese— there was no substitute. She also made meat-filled *blinchiki*— more nutritious fare— but we preferred the cheese-filled ones. They were always served, of course, with plenty of sour cream.

Stuffed cabbage— sometimes called cabbage rolls— were, like *blinchiki*, the result of hours of labor. One or two of them were a whole meal. Preparation of the leaves alone took time and care. The meat and rice filling was hardy, and they were served with a thin tomato sauce— and sour cream. *Bitki*, or meatballs, were served less often, and probably could pass for any old meatballs, except they were called *bitki*.

*Kasha*, or buckwheat groats, was a side dish and served as filler, much like noodles or rice or potatoes. We might have *kasha*, potatoes, and bread at one meal, getting our full complement of carbohydrates.

*Shashlyk*, often called *shish kabob*, was a summertime treat hot off the barbie. My mother had a special, very large jar in which she marinated the *shashlyk*. Leg of lamb was cut in large chunks, along with green peppers, onions, mushrooms, and tomatoes, and marinated for at least a day in olive oil, lemon juice, and lots of garlic. Tough meat would get tender and melt in your mouth.

My father's contribution to our Russian cuisine was his flavored *vodka*. I don't come from a drinking family, so, when someone drank, it attracted attention. Once a year my father would buy a large bottle of *vodka*— maybe a quart— and into it he would put a few slivers of orange peel. Gradually, as the year wore on, the *vodka* would take on a slightly orange tinge and the orange peels would get lighter in color. The bottle sat on a kitchen shelf in full view and one could plainly observe the changes. My father would take one drink of *vodka* a week— probably half a shot— just before our big Sunday dinner. One could observe the level of the *vodka* in the bottle gradually going down, like sand in an hour glass.

We had a healthy diet. My mother would buy margarine instead of butter, always served vegetables, and limited the

*continued on page 18*



# A FOOD TOUR OF ST. PETERSBURG, RUSSIA

by Laura Gillis, with Lauren Gillis, Dan Gillis,  
Natasha Serova, and Tiina Kupiainen

*CHAA Program Chair Laura Green Gillis is a graduate of the Culinary Studies Institute at Oakland Community College (Auburn Hills, MI), and recently worked as a catering manager for Zingerman's for a few years. Her previous article for Repast was "Michigan Producers of Handcrafted Cheese" (Fall 2006). Laura's husband Dan is Project Manager at Gillis Electric, Inc., in Livonia, MI. The couple lives on the outskirts of Northville and they have been CHAA members since 2006.*

## Monday 6/14

Two parental travelers, Laura and Dan, and our graduate-student-abroad daughter, Lauren, explored her academic home, St. Petersburg, Russia, early last summer, just as the school year was winding down. When we arrived at our flat overlooking the Moika Canal, we found an expression of the hospitality we were to experience throughout the trip: a chilled bottle of *vodka*, the only inhabitant of the refrigerator and a most welcome new friend. It was White Nights—the season when the sun remains above the horizon most of the night—so it was easy to stay up a bit longer surrounded by early evening skies; at midnight it felt like the end of the day was just beginning. We noshed on potato chips (about which more later), slurped yogurt drinks, and toasted our arrival with the *vodka*. It was an auspicious start to a very special trip. The culinary highlights are featured below.

## Tuesday 6/15

Lunch at Stolle-Штоли, Konushenny Lane 1/6 and other locations  
<http://www.stolle.ru/eng/main.html>

Lauren was completing her second academic tour of duty in St. Petersburg and knew the city well. Serving as tour guide, hostess, and translator, she took good care of us. Our first experience with Russian food was at Stolle, a popular fast food chain, or “café-pie network”. It was an excellent start. Though fast and a chain, the food and its presentation elevated Stolle above expectations. The food was delicious, very fresh, and served buffet-style in the comfortable dining room. Enticing aromas wafted up as we stepped down from the street, but we were not prepared for the artfully decorated stuffed pies, or *pirozhki*. Bakers embellish the exterior of the pies with curved slashes and appliquéd bits of dough to form floral designs. The beautiful, crusted pies, both savory (fillings include salmon, cabbage,

egg and spring onion, and spiced ground beef) and sweet (apple, lemon, and mixed berry), are covered in a rich yeast dough similar to *brioche*, shaped into free-form 18- by 12-inch rectangles, egg-washed, then baked until golden. Servings are sliced to order, and the lack of a sneeze guard added to the rustic presentation. Strong, hot tea is the traditional accompaniment.

Dinner at The Idiot-Идиот, 82, Naberezhnaya Reki Moyki (on the Moika Canal Embankment)

Named for Fyodor Dostoevsky's classic novel, this below-street-level restaurant holds a series of small dining rooms and is the ultimate comforting environment. With worn upholstered chairs, sunken antique sofas, homey food, and pleasant service, it is no wonder the place is popular with students, travelers, and ex-pats. There is no reason to hurry at The Idiot, where diners begin the evening meal with a complimentary shot of *vodka*. Thus warmed, we ordered a colorful sampling of *zakuski*, traditional Russian *hors d'oeuvres* that are meant to stimulate the palate and welcome guests. Small plates of pickled things, a vinegary bean salad, hard cheese, a chewy, not-too-salty salami, slivers of smoked fish, and crusty black bread made us feel very welcome indeed, and sated. But we did order entrées: vegetable cutlets (minced broccoli, cauliflower, garlic, spinach, and onion, mixed with bread crumbs and milk, then pan-fried and topped with a creamy mushroom sauce), mushroom *pel'meni* (pastry dumplings stuffed with cooked, seasoned mushrooms, then boiled), and a beefy beet *borshch*. Mushrooms are an essential in the national diet, and mushroom hunting is deeply engrained in Russian culture. As a result, Russians have a way with mushrooms, marinating them for *zakuski* and utilizing them in dishes as varied as *pel'meni* and *strudel*. The ads claim, “Dostoevsky loved this place” and we can see why.

## Wednesday 6/16

Dinner at The Pot-Bellied Hut Tavern-Пузата Хата Корчма (Pyzata Hata Korchma), Ulitsa Nekrasov, 40

We spent a delightful evening at this Ukrainian casual restaurant in the company of two charming graduate students, Natasha and Anastasia, both from the Ural Mountain region of Russia. Impossibly petite, they held their own at a feast that began with honey *vodka* followed by a ruby-red *borshch*. The second course was a round of salads, which Russians construct out of nearly everything but lettuce, which is difficult to grow and expensive. Our two favorite salads were the *vinagret* (comprised of boiled red beets and carrots, potatoes, onions, marinated cucumbers, and sour cabbage, dressed with vinegar and vegetable oil, salt and pepper) and the popular Salad Olivier. Lauren has tasted Salad Olivier across St. Petersburg and pronounced this version the very best. Created in the 1860s by chef Lucien Olivier of The Hermitage Restaurant (Moscow), it is a cold potato salad dressed with mayonnaise and contains tinned peas, pickles, hard-boiled eggs, carrots, diced meats such as beef tongue or ham, and diced sausages. Mounded on a platter and set before you, it is irresistible. Our favorite entrée was Chicken Kiev. Well-cooked and moist, it erupted with the traditional and satisfying spurt of melted butter when pierced with a knife. For dessert we loved *sirniki*,

*continued on next page*



**ST. PETERSBURG** *continued from page 15*

lightly-sweetened fried cheesecakes. The tavern interior is clean and colorful, with plank benches and long wooden banquet tables, and servers in colorful national costumes.

**Thursday 6/17**

Lunch at Teremok Blini House, Теремок, 91, Nevsky Prospekt and other locations and kiosks

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Teremok/19842583154>

The most popular fast-food in Russia is the *blini*, due to its grab-and-go easiness and seemingly endless variety of fillings. The thin, large *blini* we sampled were filled with ham and cheese, mushroom and cream, and sausage and mild cheese. We also tried a chilled Summer soup with vegetables, and drank beer and *mors*, a unique, slightly-fermented berry drink that tastes like mellowed cranberries and is served cold. It is very hard to find outside Russia. Dessert *blini* feature such fillings as chocolate, pineapple or cream cheese. Teremok also serves traditional breakfasts of semolina or *grechka* (buckwheat) *kasha*. More akin to American fast-food chains in atmosphere, the restaurant's bright plastic chairs and tables, fluorescent lighting, and young uniformed servers make you feel right at home. Very

inexpensive and conveniently located, Teremok is an excellent solution for sudden peckishness.

Dinner at Kafe Lagidze - Кафе Лагидзе, 3 Belinskogo Ulitsa

Just steps from the Fontanka River, this below-street-level Georgian eatery has thick white stucco walls, low ceilings, and at least one sullen waitress. We hastily ordered dry Georgian red wine and the much-loved traditional appetizer, *khachapuri*, a puffy, yeasty bread stuffed with melted *suluguni* cheese, in the shape of a pizza—scrumptious. *Suluguni*, the most popular cheese in Georgia, is a white, moderately-salty cows-milk cheese that melts nicely. Georgian cuisine is reputed to be spicier than Russian, but we did not find it so that night. We shared an entrée that was served in an elevated iron *wok*. Under the covering of two loaves of *lavash* laid flat was sautéed beef, garnished with slices of sautéed eggplant, potato, and red pepper, which were pressed against the side of the *wok* as if they had been spun around in a carnival ride. We don't know what it was called, but we loved it. Tasty stuffed eggplant rolls encasing a mixture of finely-chopped walnuts, garlic, parsley, and mayonnaise are characteristic of Georgian cuisine. Georgians have emigrated to other Soviet republics, particularly Russia, and the cuisine is very popular in St. Petersburg.



“A Fruit Seller’s Shop, St. Petersburg”, from *Illustrated London News*, April 18, 1874.

## Friday 6/17

Sightseeing break at L'Europe Restaurant in the Grand Hotel Europe - Великая Гостиница Европа, Mikhailovskaya Ulitsa 1-7

Grand, indeed! An indulgent treat at the sidewalk café of this posh, 5-star hotel revived us. It is exquisite and expensive, with a superb presentation. Even the bread basket with butter was elegant. A bowl of cool gazpacho, an iced coffee, and a linen place mat equals happiness.

Dinner at Teplo-Тепло ("Warm"), 45 Bolshaya Morskaya Ulitsa

Our most elegant meal suited the occasion: the pre-ballet dinner. About a 15-minute walk from the Mariinsky Theatre, home of the Kirov Ballet where such greats as Pavlova, Nijinsky, Nureyev, and Baryshnikov reigned, Teplo is lovely and warm, and you feel as though you're in a dear friend's country cottage. Small dining rooms unfold after each other, creating a cozy atmosphere but a challenging route to the bathrooms. The food is delicious, classic, full-fat and reasonably priced. Many of the foods that are considered in the West to be traditionally Russian actually come from the Franco-Russian cuisine of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, including such popular dishes as Veal Orloff, Chicken Kiev, and Beef Stroganoff. One person in our party had a fine version of Beef Stroganoff, creamy and tender. Another chose pikeperch, which is also known as zander in Europe and is closely related to our North American walleye. A fresh-water fish, it yielded a 10-inch fillet that was sautéed in butter and served with rice pilaf. Another diner ordered linguine with shrimp. These were all delicious, nicely composed plates. The custom-made menus are like miniature works of art, featuring vintage photographs on one side and menu items on the other. We would have returned many times had we stayed longer. It's that kind of place.

## Saturday 6/18

Visit to Chocolate Museum - Музей шоколада (Muzei Shokolada), Nevsky Prospekt 17 and other locations

Across from Gostiny Dvor, the gigantic Hermitage-size shopping center in the heart of St. Petersburg, you enter the Chocolate Museum through a dark nondescript archway. You'll know you are in the right place, however, by the woman dressed as the Statue of Liberty or the man dressed as George Washington on the sidewalk, steering shoppers inside. Not exactly a museum, the shop exhibits everything in molded chocolate: animals, Disney characters, Fabergé eggs, and chess sets. We came away proudly with a 6-inch dark-chocolate bust of Lenin.

A quick snack at a *shaverma* shop, one of many similar after-bar places on unknown side streets

The name is very Soviet in nature. The sign tells exactly what they sell inside, straightforward and without any advertising: *shaverma* (what we call *shawarma*). An enormous loaf of *lavash* was stuffed with chicken kabob meat, chopped cucumbers, tomatoes, garlic sauce, and cabbage, folded, pressed in a *panini* and served with small paper napkins. Drips don't matter. What else do you need on your way home from the bar? Cheap, fun, mobile and nutritious, it delivered pure, uncomplicated sustenance.

*continued on next page*

## Carême and Dining à la Russe

We're currently in the bicentennial year of what was probably the first introduction of the Russian style of meal service to the West: what the French came to call *service à la russe*. This way of serving food would become prevalent in Western Europe in the final decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

In late 1810 or early 1811, about two years before Napoleon's invasion, Russian ambassador and noted gastronome Prince Aleksandr Borosovich Kurakin held a dinner in Paris in the Russian style. Instead of displaying on the table a large "service" of prepared dishes awaiting the guests, the dishes were presented in a series of manageable "courses", each cleared away before the arrival of the next. In addition, in the Russian style servants carved individual portions on sideboards, instead of placing entire roasts, puddings, etc., on the dining table. Although it was not as visually impressive as the French style, and required precise kitchen timing and a large corps of servants, the Russian style assured that food was served quickly at the proper temperature and that all guests had the opportunity to sample all dishes.

Among those who initially objected to *service à la russe* was the great French chef Antonin Carême, who cooked for Tsar Aleksandr I during his stays in France for peace talks between 1814 and 1818, a period in which Russian troops occupied Paris. One of Carême's key objections was that the simpler, more efficient Russian style of service had no need for *pièces montées*, the decorative French set-pieces in which a grand dish would be mounted on a monumental base. These were a specialty of his. "The Russian manner is certainly beneficial to good cooking," he commented, "but our service in France is much more elegant and of a far grander and more sumptuous style."

Carême, who had a solid grounding in classical architecture, often created elaborate set-pieces inspired by Greco-Roman buildings and vases. In particular, he considered confectionery to be a branch of architecture.

Eventually, Carême consented to go to Petrograd to serve as a chef at the Tsar's palace. Indulging there his love of architecture, the chef made a vast set of drawings for monuments and other embellishments that he envisioned for the city, using design features often similar to those of his *pièces montées*. *Gastronomica* editor and Russian scholar Darra Goldstein writes that it was her discovery of this similarity that first got her interested in culinary history; she published her observations in the *Slavonic and East European Review*.

Carême left Russia after only a brief stay, disgusted by the corruption of the palace kitchen staff and the resultant rigorous supervision. Before returning to France, however, he did invent a dish or two, including the famous *Charlotte Russe*.

— RKS



**ST. PETERSBURG** *continued from page 17*

**Sunday 6/19**

Dinner at Evrasia - Евразия (“Eurasia”), Nevsky pr. 88  
 Good and cheap best describes Evrasia, a Sushi-Uzbek restaurant on Nevsky Prospekt, the wide, bustling thoroughfare that is the heartbeat of St. Petersburg. Evrasia is the largest chain of Japanese sushi bars and restaurants in the region, and reminded us of the fusion restaurants in New York that house previously unconjoined cuisines. Oh, and they also have some Mexican dishes. An ’80s-era disco feel is created by the salmon-colored sheer draperies and room dividers. We continued down a traditional food path by ordering classic dishes such as *plov*, the Uzbek national dish that is now very popular in Russia: rice pilaf with stewed lamb, raisins, and carrots, seasoned with cumin, coriander, and garlic. *Lagman* is a soup with spicy beef, vegetables, and a thick noodle. Uzbek dumplings, or *manti*, were stuffed with beef and vegetables, boiled and then fried.

A Note about Potato Chips

Finally, mention must be made of the potato chips of St. Petersburg. Lay’s brand has a substantial business in Europe with a diverse array of flavored chips, which we instinctively reached for when we noticed them on the very lengthy snack shelf in the small, low-ceilinged grocery. (As travelers we have found a familiar comfortability in grocery stores and fresh food markets all over the world. Yet they are also a source of excitement, providing a culinary world of discovery. For instance, we could go on and on about the frozen food section of an upscale food market in a swank neighborhood of St. Petersburg. Imagine: self-serve frozen vegetable and seafood bins!)

Intrepid culinary sleuths, we scoured the city and tried every flavored chip. Laura’s favorites were Thai Pepper, a perfect balance of heat and spice with a surprisingly light, clean taste, and Creamy Forest Mushroom, a satisfyingly mild, earthy flavor, like a crispy version of mushroom soup. Dan liked the seafoody taste of the Crab chips, and the basil-infused Mozzarella with Pesto. Lauren had the opportunity to study all manner of snacks, an integral part of the student lifestyle, and her favorite chip flavors were Shashlik, a robust grilled-lamb flavor, and Creamy Forest Mushroom. Other fun flavors were Bacon (what we call *prosciutto*) and Red Caviar (not bad!).

Saying Goodbye - до свидания

By the time we left St. Petersburg we were satisfied about our first exploration of the city and its cuisines. Russia’s former imperial capital, the cultural heart of modern Russia, the home of Peter the Great and Catherine the Great, has so much to offer visitors beyond its architectural treasures and dramatic history. Not the least is the bounty and variety of culinary experiences. We tried traditional fare and popular classics and found the food consistently fresh and tasty, even at inexpensive places. We toast the Russian people and their culture with *Na zdorovye!* (“For health!”), and look forward to setting out on our next culinary adventure. ■

**I REMEMBER** *continued from page 14*

sweets strictly. But she would never stint on the sour cream. Sour cream was the perfect complement to all foods. I have a clear vision of her eating her lunch, which often consisted of leftover peas and raspberry jam mixed with sour cream. Delicious!

As I grew older, I realized we weren’t as “Russian” as my father portrayed us to be. His father, who immigrated to the United States in 1905, came from Odessa, a Ukrainian city on the Black Sea. His mother came from Nikolayev, another large Ukrainian city. I always assumed that my last name “Zaret”, which was shortened from Zaretsky, was a Russian name. Not true. It’s exclusively a Ukrainian name. The letter combination “tsk” does not appear in Russian. In Russian the name would be “Zarechny”, meaning, “on the other side of the river”. So, if they were from the Ukraine, why did everyone speak Russian, not Ukrainian? Simply explained, Ukrainian was the “peasant” language. The sophisticated folk spoke Russian, the language of culture.

I’m sure some of my interest in food came from the varied diet I had as I grew up. I was exposed to the reality that there was more out there than just hamburgers and fries. My mother was not a great food experimenter. She, like most mothers, was not going to constantly risk having her cooking rejected by recalcitrant children. She had, however, no difficulty getting us to eat her few Russian specialties. They were delicious and we looked forward to them. ■



# MORSELS & TIDBITS

Between March 30 and April 6, **Leonard Barkan**, Professor and Chair in the Department of Comparative Literature at Princeton University, will present four public lectures at the University of Michigan on the theme, “Sweeping the Unswept Floor: Food Culture and High Culture; Antiquity and Renaissance”. The talks are part of the Thomas Spencer Jerome Lecture Series. For details, visit <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/kelsey/newsevents/calendar> or contact Kimberly Johnson at 764-936-6099.

Between April 29 and May 1, the Greater Midwest Foodways Alliance will present its fourth **Midwest Eats!** symposium at Kendall College in Chicago. The theme this year is, “Foodways of the Great Depression”. Visit [www.greatermidwestfoodways.com](http://www.greatermidwestfoodways.com) for further information.

The **Oxford Symposium** on Food and Cookery is celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year by choosing a theme on “Celebrations”. The conference is scheduled for July 8-10, 2011 at St. Catherine’s College, Oxford, UK. Visit <http://www.oxfordsymposium.org.uk/> for further information.

The Culinary Historians of Ontario have now become the **Culinary Historians of Canada**, reflecting plans to evolve into a truly nationwide organization. Congratulations to President Bob Wildfong and our other friends in Canada!

We mourn the loss of longtime CHAA member **James W. Goss**, 69, who passed away on January 6 after a lengthy illness. Our sympathy goes to his wife and fellow CHAAer, Rita Goss. Jim spent most of his career as an accountant, although he also had degrees in journalism and law. He was an avid collector of books and other items. He was a member of the Associates Board of Governors of the University of Michigan’s Clements Library., and in his retirement years had a small business in rare and used books.

CHAA member **Bill Lockwood** gave a presentation, “Finnish American Milk Products in the North Woods”, at the Friends of Finland celebration of Finland’s Independence Day in Flint, Michigan, November 6, 2010.

On March 2-6, CHAA founding members **Jan and Dan Longone** attended the Paris Cookbook Fair, where Jan presented a talk on the role and history of charity cookbooks in the U.S. To mark the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Alexis Soyer, author of the world’s first charity cookbook, this year’s fair featured the first international exhibition of charity cookbooks, with 240 books on display from 85 countries. On April 9, Jan will be speaking to the Culinary Historians of Southern California on “The Old Girl Network: Charity Cookbooks and the Empowerment of Women”. The Janice Bluestein Longone Culinary Archive at the University of Michigan was the subject of an article by UM alumnus **Steve Rosoff**, “A Feast for the Mind”, in *Michigan Alumnus* (Winter 2011).

CHAA member and Web Editor **Kim Bayer**, who is President and Chair of Slow Food Huron Valley, played a

leading role in organizing SFHV’s third annual HomeGrown Local Food Summit, which took place Feb. 28 – Mar. 1 at Washtenaw Community College. This year’s event featured talks by **Ken Meter** (food system analyst, Crossroads Resource Center) and **Dan Carmody** (President, Detroit Eastern Market), a town meeting of “business pitch” ideas for food initiatives, and a Michigan Good Food Film Festival.

The sixth annual African-American theme dinner at Zingerman’s Roadhouse in Ann Arbor on Jan. 11 featured a talk by New York culinary historian and author **Jessica B. Harris** in conjunction with her new book, *High on the Hog: A Culinary Journey from Africa to America* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2011; 291 pp., \$26 hbk.). The book is an historical survey of African-American foodways from the Atlantic crossing to the present. Harris delves into the contributions of diverse social forces, such as West African slaves in early America, Afro-Caribbean peoples, sharecroppers, and urban dwellers. She includes the lives of some historical figures, from down-home cooks to ambitious chefs, food entrepreneurs and book publishers, and also recounts stories from her own life and travels.

We note three other new books on early American food history—

- Food writer **Dave DeWitt** is the author of *The Founding Foodies: How Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin Revolutionized American Cuisine* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2010; 317 pp., \$16.99 pbk.). The book explores views and practices relative to food, dining, and agriculture among some of America’s founding families, and weaves-in sundry stories and recipes, such as the macaroni spinach bake of the Jefferson home, and the fruitcake of Martha Washington.
- **Christopher Kimball**, founder of *Cook’s Illustrated* magazine, has written *Fannie’s Last Supper: Re-Creating One Amazing Meal from Fannie Farmer’s 1896 Cookbook* (New York: Hyperion, 2010; 260 pp., \$25.99 hbk.). Kimball tells the story of his massive effort to pull off a 12-course, 12-guest dinner party cooked on a coal stove and based on Farmer’s techniques and recipes.
- **William Woys Weaver** has created another wonderful slice of Americana, *Culinary Ephemera: An Illustrated History* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2010; 299 pp., \$39.95 hbk.). Based on over 30 years of collecting and study, and dedicated to our Jan Longone, this volume covers everything from product labels and postcards to menus and match covers— all profusely illustrated in color, like an art-exhibit catalog.

**On the Back Burner:** We invite ideas and submissions for *Repast*, including for these planned future theme-issues: Fresh Foods, Preserved Foods (Spring 2011); Civil War Sesquicentennial Issues (Summer 2011 and Fall 2011). Suggestions for future themes are also welcome. ■

# CHAA CALENDAR

(Unless otherwise noted, programs are scheduled for 4-6 p.m. and are held at Ann Arbor Senior Center, 1320 Baldwin Ave.)

Sunday, March 27, 2011

Ann Arbor District Library  
(343 South Fifth Ave.)

Andrew Smith, culinary historian, on his recent books,  
*The Potato: A Global History* and  
*Starving the South: How the North Won the Civil War*

Sunday, April 17, 2011

2:00 p.m. or 4:00 p.m.

(select either tour, 90 minutes each),

Mindo Chocolate Makers, Dexter, MI

Barbara Wilson, owner,

“Culinary Metier: Chocolate Making, Bean to Bar”

Thursday, April 28, 2011

University of Michigan

William L. Clements Library

(Co-sponsored with the Clements Library)

Kelly Sisson Lessens,

Ph.D. Candidate in American Culture, UM,

“‘To gladden and bless the nations of the earth’:

King Corn in the Kitchen, 1877-1918”

Sunday, May 15, 2011

Eric Villegas, chef, restaurateur,

and author of *Fork in the Road*,

on Michigan foods and value-added food

REPAST

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Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

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