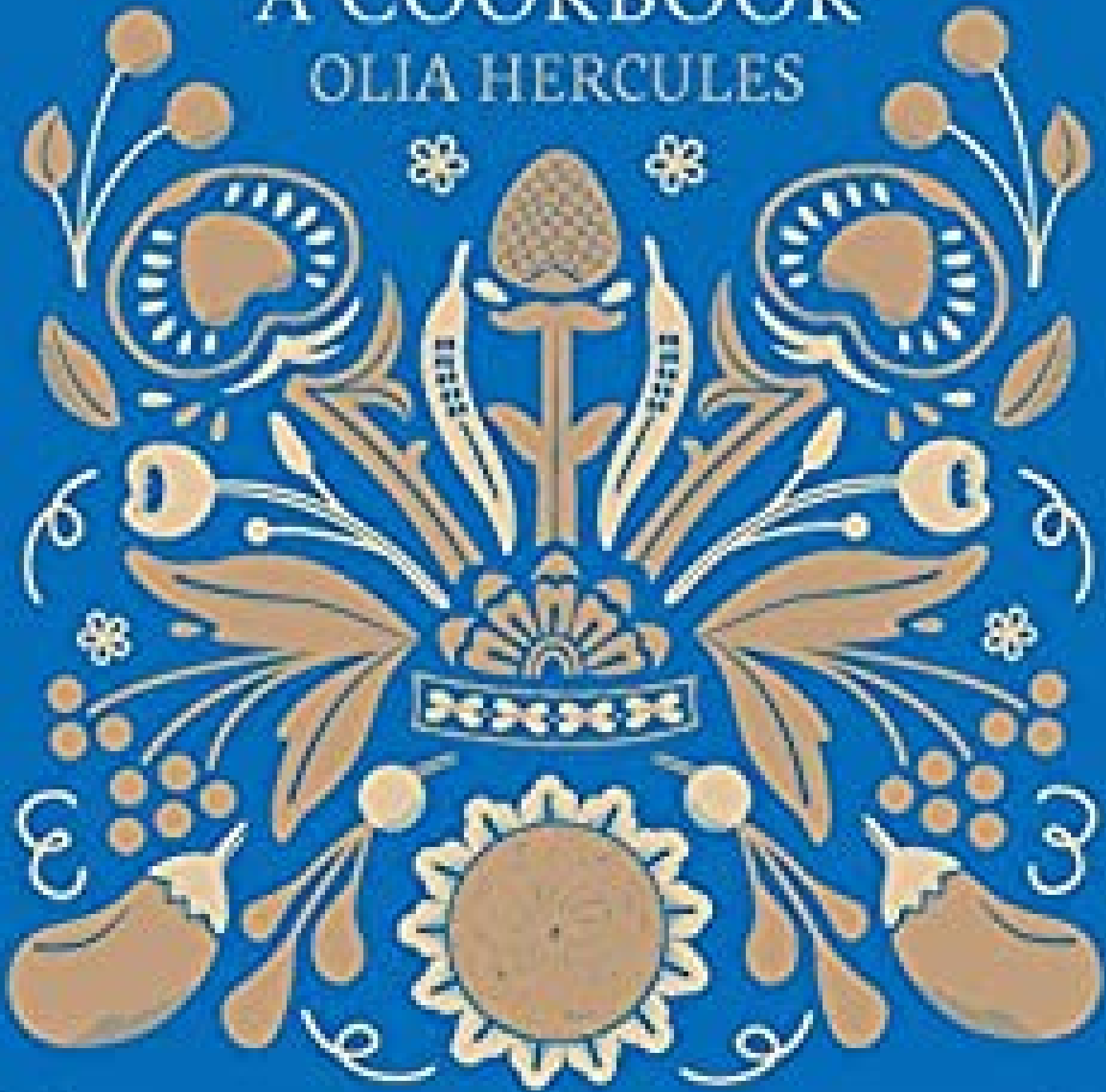
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Piquant Russian broth

Солянка | *Solyanka*

This is Rassol'nyk's (*see* recipe) nouveau-riche brother. The concept is similar – rich meaty broth and a sour element to cut right through the richness. But the addition of such decadent items as salami, olives, and lemon take it to a whole new level. It should be savory, spicy, and a little bit crazy-tasting. My grandmother used to make it with ox heart, boiled with some beef bones and then chopped into small pieces. Instead of the more traditional salami, I sometimes like to use diced and fried spicy chorizo. Needless to say, if you have no time to make stock, just use the good stuff from your local butcher and the broth will then be ready in a matter of minutes.

Serves 4

Stock

2 lb (1 kg) beef bones

2½ quarts (80 fl oz/2.5 L) cold water

1 onion, peeled but kept whole

1 bay leaf

10 black peppercorns

5 allspice berries

8 oz (250 g) good-quality salami, roughly chopped

3 tablespoons sunflower oil

1 onion, diced

1 tablespoon tomato purée

1 carrot, peeled and grated

1 teaspoon sugar

4 oz (125 g) button mushrooms, trimmed and sliced

3 gherkins, grated

about 6 tablespoons (3 fl oz/90 ml) gherkin brine from the jar

15 mixed pitted olives, sliced

2 teaspoons (10 g) good-quality capers

To serve

½ lemon, halved and thinly sliced

1 tablespoon chopped parsley

1 To make the stock, place the beef bones in a large saucepan and cover with the water. Add the whole onion, bay leaf, peppercorns, and allspice berries and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low as soon as the water boils and skim off the scum that rises to the surface. Cook for 1½ hours – the broth should reduce a little and smell strongly of beef.

2 Add the salami pieces to the stock.

3 Heat 2 tablespoons of the sunflower oil in a frying pan over medium heat and sweat the diced onion for 5 minutes. Add the tomato purée, carrot, and sugar and cook for another 5 minutes, stirring often.

4 Introduce the carrot mixture to your broth and wipe out the frying pan. Heat the remaining 1 tablespoon of oil and fry the mushrooms until they turn golden. Add them to the broth along with the gherkins and some of the gherkin brine. Taste and add some more brine if you think it needs salt.

5 Finally, add the olives and capers and cook for another 2 minutes.

6 Serve the *solyanka* with the lemon slices and chopped parsley.