FROM SHTETL TO GOLDEN LAND

MEMORIES FROM A RUSSIAN KITCHEN

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Solyanka

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My husband, Rem, and I met in high school in Leningrad in the 1930s. We were in the ninth and tenth grades. Our youth, before the war, was joyful. We went to movies, the theater, museums, exhibitions, and famous parks. We went to dances, and met many well-known people from our country. In winter, we went skiing, skating and for sleigh rides. Our parents lived in Leningrad, also, and our grandparents lived in a small village. I think our lives were much more interesting than theirs.

We and our children liked the New Year holiday best. There was always a nice, big fir tree with many presents and lots of guests in our home. We often cooked our favorite recipes, like cutlets and solyanka. These are nice, nourishing dinner foods. Solyanka is good served with sour cream, green vegetables, pepper, lemon and olives.

Solyanka (Soup with pickles and various meats)

IRINA MENSHIKOV

3 qts water
1 lb beef*
3 onions, chopped
2 Tbs tomato paste
3 Tbs margarine
4 sour or dill pickles
½ cup sour cream (or substitute)
10 green olives, pitted
¼ lemon, sliced
3–4 bay leaves
salt to taste
dill, fresh
1 Tbs nonpareil capers, rinsed and drained

Using a large stock pot, gently boil the raw meat in 3 quarts of water for 25–30 minutes to make a broth. Remove the meat from the pot, cool and cut into small pieces.

In a frying pan, sauté onions in the margarine until transparent and then mix them with tomato paste. Simmer for 10–15 minutes, stirring constantly.

Peel the pickles and cut them into small pieces.

Add to the stock pot: meat, onion mixture, pickles, capers and bay leaves. Simmer for 10–15 minutes. Add salt to taste.

To serve, garnish with a tablespoon of sour cream (or substitute), a slice of lemon, olives and dill. Serves 10.

**This soup can also be made with turkey, chicken, sausage, veal or rabbit.*