THE TRADITIONAL COOKING OF RUSSIA & POLAND

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Fish Soup with Salted Cucumber and Capers

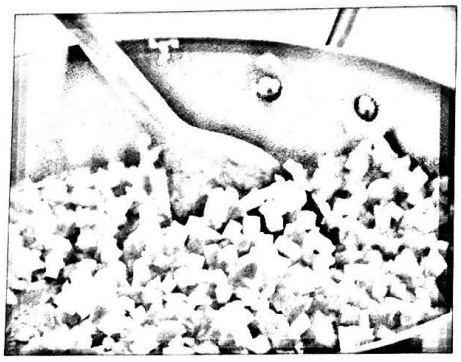
This fish soup is considered to be the queen of Russian soups. Its lovely, rich flavour is accentuated by the addition of salted cucumbers, capers and olives. If you can find sturgeon, use that instead.

Serves 4

2 onions
2–3 carrots
1 parsnip
200g/7oz Salted Cucumbers (page 79)
30–45ml/2–3 tbsp rapeseed (canola) oil
15ml/1 tbsp tomato purée (paste)
1 bay leaf
4–5 black peppercorns
1 litre/1¾ pints/4 cups home-made or good-quality fish stock
400–500g/14oz–1¼lb salmon, halibut and turbot fillets, skinned
8 green olives
8 black olives
30ml/2 tbsp capers plus 5ml/1 tsp juice from the jar
4 thin lemon slices
60ml/4 tbsp smetana or crème fraîche
45ml/3 tbsp chopped fresh dill, to garnish

1 Finely chop the onions. Dice the carrots, parsnip and finely dice the cucumbers.

2 Heat the oil in a large pan, add the onions and fry over a medium heat for 2–3 minutes, until softened.



3 Add the carrots and parsnip to the onions, and fry over a medium heat, stirring all the time, for a further 5 minutes until softened.



4 Add the cucumbers, tomato purée, bay leaf and peppercorns to the pan and fry for a further 2–3 minutes. Add half of the stock, cover and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 10 minutes.



5 Meanwhile, cut the fish into 2cm/¾in cubes. Add the remaining stock, green and black olives, the capers and the caper juice to the pan.

6 Return to the boil and add the fish. Reduce the heat and simmer for 5 minutes, until the fish is just tender, being careful not to overcook the fish.

7 To serve, spoon the soup into warmed bowls, add a slice of lemon, a spoonful of smetana or crème fraîche and dill.

VARIATION Soups with salted cucumbers as an ingredient are often called soljanka. Soljankas can also contain cooked meat. Just substitute the fish with a mixture of boiled beef, ham and cooked sausages.

Energy 389kcal/1613kJ; Protein 24.5g; Carbohydrate 9.1g, of which sugars 7.2g; Fat 28.5g, of which saturates 7.7g; Cholesterol 73mg; Calcium 74mg; Fibre 3.1g; Sodium 361mg.