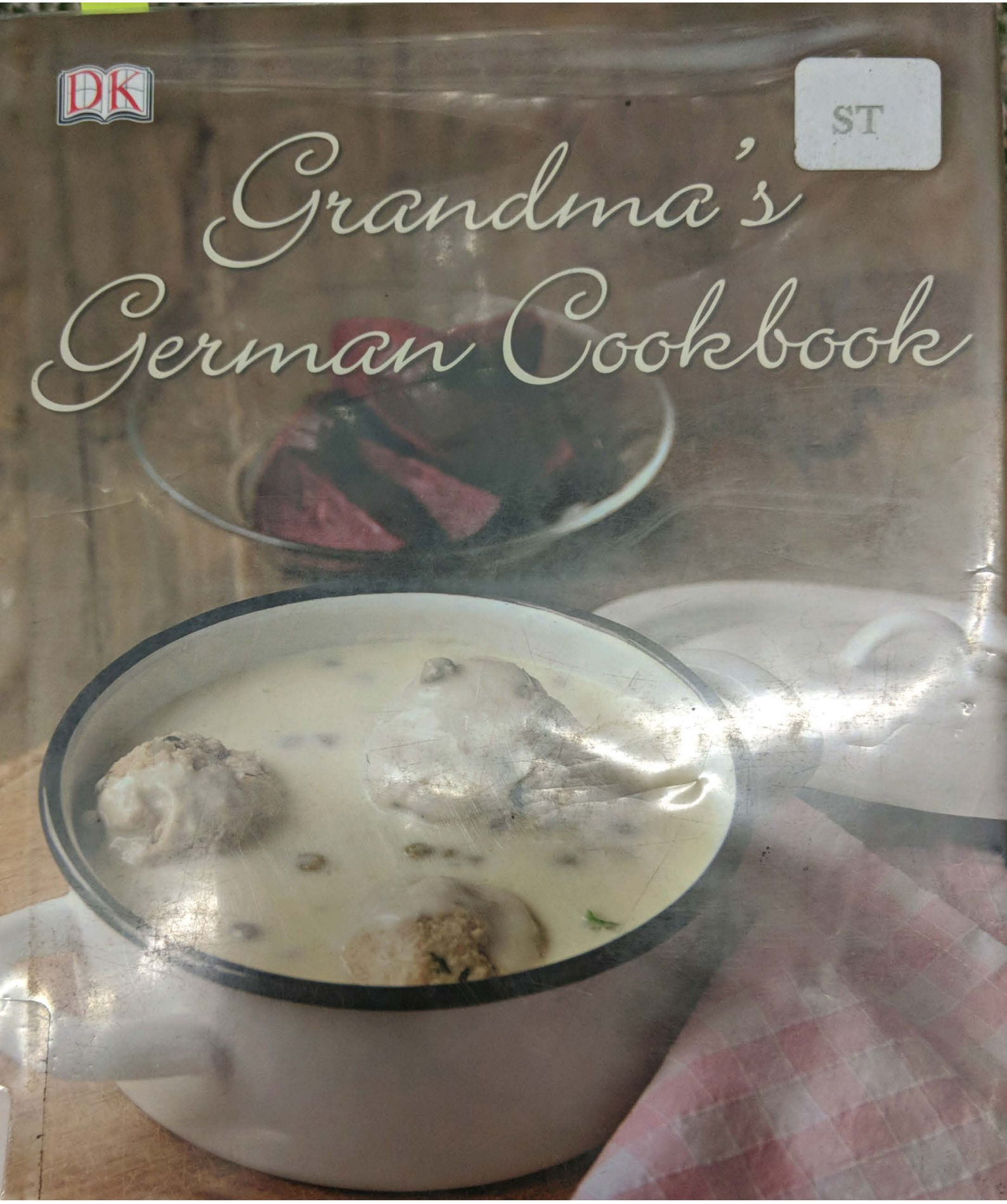

DK
ST
Grandma's
German Cookbook

Soljanka

To my friend Daniela, who grew up in Leipzig, Soljanka is a dish that fills her with nostalgia more than any other. Although it was very popular even in the former DDR, its belittlers insist that this tart, piquant, soup, of which there are countless versions, is made out of kitchen scraps. I don't know where its detractors tasted the dish, but they really should try Daniela's mother's version. Birgit

Serves 4–6

10½oz (300g) luncheon meat in thick slices
7oz (200g) kielbasa
2 cups onions
1 tbsp unsalted butter
4 red bell peppers
2 tomatoes
⅓ cup water
1 tsp mustard seeds
1 tsp caraway seeds
1 tsp cayenne pepper
1 tbsp sweet Hungarian paprika
5 allspice berries
2 bay leaves
1 tbsp tomato paste
1 tsp sugar
5½oz (150g) gherkins
3½fl oz (100ml) gherkin brine
2 cups vegetable or chicken broth
juice of 1 lemon
salt to taste
10½oz (300g) sour cream

Cut the luncheon meat and kielbasa into small cubes. Peel and dice the onions. Wash the red peppers and tomatoes. Remove the stems and seeds from the red peppers and cut into long, thin strips. Dice the tomatoes, keeping the juice. Melt the butter in a pot, add the sausage cubes and brown quickly. Add the onions and fry on high until nicely browned. Reduce the heat to medium and add the red peppers. Sauté for about 3 minutes. Add the tomatoes, their juice, and the water, and stir constantly to incorporate into the liquid the brown crust on the bottom. Reduce the heat to low. Add the mustard, caraway seeds, cayenne pepper, sweet paprika, allspice, bay leaves, tomato paste and sugar, stir, cover the pot and simmer gently.

Chop the gherkins finely and add them to the soup along with the gherkin brine. Pour in the broth, and bring it to a quick boil. Cover the pot, reduce the heat, and simmer over low heat for about 45 minutes, stirring now and then. Just before serving, add lemon juice and salt to taste. Place a dollop of sour cream on each plate of soup and serve.

Recipe photo on page 6

TIP Make two portions at the same time; Soljanka tastes even better when it is reheated. It also freezes well and is a great soup to serve at parties.