

KACHKA

A RETURN TO RUSSIAN COOKING

BONNIE FRUMKIN MORALES
WITH DEENA PRICHEP

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEELA CYD

SOLYANKA

мясная солянка



My grandfather Naum was a fantastic cook. And one of his specialties was his *solyanka*—ask anyone in my mother's family, and their eyes close dreamily remembering it.

Solyanka has many variations, but as a general rule, it contains odds and ends of smoked meat (or, in some regions, smoked fish), paired with a piquant element (olives, capers, maybe tomatoes). Dedushka Naum's version involved loads of Russian salami and pickles. And my riff is basically just a bit of a reboot, with slightly more refined garnishes. No reason to mess too much with a good thing.

YIELDS 8–10 SERVINGS

BROTH:

¼ pound hot-smoked salo*

¼ pound Moskovskaya salami*

¼ pound basturma*

1 large onion

4 Israeli pickles

½ cup marinated peppers (here) or store-bought pickled peppers

2 dozen pitted Castelvetrano olives

1 ham hock

4 quarts water

TO FINISH:

1 stick (½ cup) unsalted butter

⅓ cup fresh lemon juice

1 lemon, halved and thinly sliced

½ cup smetana (here) or European-style sour cream

½ cup hot-smoked salo,* cut into a ¼-inch dice

½ cup Moskovskaya salami,* cut into a ¼-inch dice

½ cup Israeli pickles, cut into a ¼-inch dice

½ cup marinated peppers (here), cut into a ¼-inch dice

½ cup thinly sliced pitted olives

1 handful parsley, coarsely chopped

To make the broth, roughly chop the meats, onion, pickles, and peppers, and toss them into a large stockpot. Add the olives, ham hock, and water, and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat until it's just high enough to maintain a gentle simmer, and cook for 2 hours (too much evaporation and you will end up with a salt bomb, so keep the heat low). After 2 hours, strain the broth, discarding the solids. The solyanka broth will keep for up to 1 week in the refrigerator or can be frozen.

To serve, bring the broth to a simmer, and whisk in the butter one pat at a time. Add a splash of lemon juice, a slice of lemon, and a dollop of smetana to each soup bowl. Throw in a pinch each of the salo, salami, pickles, peppers, olives, and parsley. Pour about 1½ cups of the broth into each bowl, and stir well to mix everything together. Serve hot.

If you want to get fancy, arrange all the garnishes in a shallow bowl, and serve the hot broth in a tea pot at the table. Instruct your tablemates to pour the broth onto the composition and stir everything together themselves.

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*This soup is all about using up odds and ends. If you don't have the cured meats listed, substitute with whatever is knocking around in your fridge.