A CLASSIC COOKBOOK

THE ART OF RUSSIAN CUISINE



By Anne Volokh
with Mavis Manus

Ukha iz Presnovodnoi Ryby

FRESHWATER FISH SOUP

Serves 6

- 1 recipe Clear Fish Soup (page 75)
- 2 pounds whitefish or perch fillets, cut into 2-inch pieces (see *Note*)
- 1 onion
- 1 carrot
- 1 parsnip
- 1 parsley root
- 3 bay leaves
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 3 potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
- Salt to taste
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh tarragon, chives, or parsley

Cut the onion, carrot, parsnip, and parsley root into julienne strips. Bring the strained fish soup to a boil, add the julienned vegetables, the bay leaves, and the pepper, and simmer for 10 minutes. Add the potatoes, taste for salt, and simmer 10 minutes more. Add the fish and simmer for an additional 10 minutes. Remove bay leaves. Serve in a heated tureen garnished with the chopped tarragon and accompanied by white bread, *pirozhki*, or Fish *Rasstegaï* (page 172). Use the cooked smelts from the broth and the cooked whitefish to stuff the *rasstegaï* (instead of serving them in the soup).

Note: Catfish and carp are also suitable for this dish. However, do not use pike, eel, or trout, which will produce a darker *ukha* and may have a slightly sour taste.

Variation Saltwater Fish Soup
Instead of the whitefish, use a combination of cod, sea bass, and ling. Prepare as for Freshwater Fish Soup, omit the tarragon, and garnish with lemon slices.

SELIANKA (SPICY SOUP)

Dalmatov, the famous actor, winked at the patriarch of the restaurant's waiters.

—What will you treat us to?

—To a selianka *à la Testov, of course—interrupted his friend Grigorovich.*

—We have a splendid selianka *today, my lords, with salmon and sterlet; and the sterlet, believe me, is like gold: fresh, pampered, a real treat.*

Vladimir Gilarovskii
Moscow and Muscovites

Selianka is an unusual soup. It is sometimes called a "liquid hors d'oeuvre," and it does indeed include a variety of olives, diced pickles, marinated mushrooms, capers, and, depending on whether it is a fish or meat *selianka*, an assortment of smoked and poached fish (salmon, whitefish, catfish) or meats (ham, frankfurters, chicken, veal, roast beef, tongue).

Selianka was, and is, a necessary item on the menu of any self-respecting Russian restaurant, whether Old World or New. Fish *selianka* is the spicier and has an exquisite taste. Dark amber, decorated with olives, a lemon slice, and chopped green herbs, it is a truly spectacular dish and would be suitable for the most elegant dinner. The meat variety, when "whitened" with sour cream, is also attractive and tasty, but much less expensive, and consequently it is good for both parties and everyday meals.

Rybnaia Selianka

SPICY FISH SOUP

Serves 6

- 1 recipe Clear Fish Soup (page 75)
- 1 pound fresh salmon or whitefish fillets
- ¼ pound smoked whitefish or smoked sturgeon
- ¼ pound smoked salmon
- 1 onion
- 1 carrot
- 1 parsley root
- 2 ounces celery root
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons catsup or tomato paste
- 2 Brined Cucumbers (page 423), Claussen Kosher Pickles, or delicatessen sour pickles, cut into ⅓-inch dice
- ½ cup pickle liquid
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 bay leaves
- 12 black Greek olives (loose, oil-cured, not canned)
- ¼ pound Marinated Mushrooms (page 438)
- 1 tablespoon capers
- 1½ tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice, or to taste
- 2 tablespoons each finely chopped fresh dill, parsley, and scallions
- 3 paper-thin slices of lemon, cut in half

Cut the fresh salmon and the smoked whitefish and salmon into 1-inch pieces. Reserve the fresh and smoked fish separately. Cut the onion, carrot, and parsley and celery roots into ½-inch dice. Warm the oil in a skillet and gently sauté the vegetables for 8–10 minutes, or until tender. Add the catsup, stir for 1 minute, and remove from heat.

Bring the fish soup to a boil, add the cooked vegetables, fresh salmon, diced pickles, pickle liquid, black pepper, and bay leaves, and simmer for 8–10 minutes, or until the fish is just cooked. Add the smoked fish, olives, mushrooms, capers, and lemon juice, and simmer for 2 minutes more. Remove the bay leaves. Serve garnished with the chopped herbs and thin lemon slices. Good accompaniments are Fish and Mushroom *Kulebiaka* (page 159) or Fish *Rasstegaï* (page 172), or Rice and Egg *Pirozhki* (page 166).

Miasnaia Selianka

SPICY MEAT SOUP

Serves 6

FOR THE STOCK

- 1 pound lean beef chuck
- 1 beef marrow bone
- Breast and wings of 1 chicken
- 1 small onion
- 1 carrot
- 1 parsley root
- 2 ounces celery root, peeled
- 1 leek (white part only)
- 5 whole black peppercorns
- 5 allspice berries
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon salt

- ¼ pound smoked ham, cut into ½-inch dice
- ¼ pound frankfurters, cut into ½-inch dice
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- ¼ pound Marinated Mushrooms (page 438)
- 10 ounces Homemade Sauerkraut (page 427), Claussen sauerkraut, or French *choucroute*
- 2 Brined Cucumbers (page 423), Claussen Kosher Pickles, or delicatessen sour pickles
- 2 tablespoons capers
- 12 black Greek olives (loose, oil-cured, not canned)
- ¼ teaspoon sweet paprika
- 1½ tablespoons sour cream (*optional*)
- Salt to taste
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh dill
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped scallions (green part only)

MAKING THE STOCK

Place the beef, marrow bone, and chicken parts (with skin) in a 5- to 6-quart stockpot, add 2 quarts of water, bring to a boil, and skim thoroughly. Add the remaining stock ingredients and simmer, uncovered, for about 20 minutes. When the chicken is cooked, remove and reserve it and continue cooking the stock for 30–40 minutes more, or until the beef is tender. Strain the stock, discard the vegetables, bay leaf, and spices, and return the chicken and beef to the broth. When the stock has cooled, cover and refrigerate it. Remove the fat when it has congealed on the top.

ASSEMBLING THE *SELIANKA*

Heat the stock until warm, remove the beef and chicken, and cut them into ½-inch dice, discarding the chicken skin and bones. Place the diced meats in a bowl and cover to prevent them from drying out while you assemble the rest of the ingredients.

In a heated 3-quart tureen, combine the beef and chicken with all the remaining ingredients except the stock and the chopped dill and scallions. In a small bowl, mix the sour cream with ½ cup of warm stock. Bring the remaining stock to a boil and pour over the mixed ingredients, stirring gently with a wooden spoon. Add the sour cream and stock, and taste for seasoning. Cover and allow the flavors to mingle for 3–5 minutes. Serve in heated soup bowls garnished with the chopped dill and scallions. Rice and Egg *Pirozhki* (page 166) are a good accompaniment.

BEEF STOCKS AND CONSOMMÉS

Russian stocks and consommés are fragrant, bracing, and, in combination with the traditional soup accompaniments (see page 73), make a splendid first course.

All stocks freeze well, and it is useful to have a supply on hand ready to be reheated and served with a garnish or to be used as the basis for many of the soups in this chapter.

Restaurants and the kitchens of grand estates cooked large amounts of beef stock: Yellow Beef Stock for all clear soups and White Beef Stock for *shchi*, borscht, and so on. Additional ingredients are added to the pot as their cooking time requires. Many of these soups need not be clarified (page 82).

There are three types of beef stock: white, yellow, and brown. The ingredients are almost identical, and, with several important differences, so are the methods of preparation. In white stock, the meat and vegetables are cooked without any preliminary treatment; for the yellow stock, half the vegetables are browned before being boiled with the meat; and for the brown stock, both the meat and the vegetables are browned before boiling. For consommé, use double the amount of meat