

The Cuisine of Russia

The Gourmet Cooking Club

February 12, 2014



Hosted by Sheree Williams
with
Mari Donnelly
Nancy Franich
Susan Lynch



- 1 - 48 ounce jar of dill pickles (homemade preferred) 4 - 5 inches long
- 1 - 8 ounce package of cream cheese
- 1 - medium onion, very finely chopped
- 3/4 tsp. Tabasco sauce or a hot red pepper sauce

Cut each end of the pickle off to create a flat surface. Using a thin potato peeler or a small sharp knife, core out each dill pickle. You can save the core for another use if desired. Stand the cored pickles on end on paper toweling and let drain until the liquid drains out, about 20 to 30 minutes. Meanwhile, in a mixing bowl, cream the cheese, add the onion and mix until blended. Add Tabasco sauce and mix well to incorporate. Using a cake decorator or a small spoon, stuff each pickle if necessary from both ends. Wrap the stuffed pickles in batches in plastic wrap and refrigerate until the cheese mixture is set, about 2 hours. When ready to serve, slice the pickles into 3/4 inch slices and place on serving plates. Cover and refrigerate any unused pickles. You may also use smoked salmon in the mixture, and also use different cream cheese.

Cuisine: Russian

Source: William (Uncle Bill) Anatooskin

Blini with Smoked Salmon

MAKES 18 TO 20 PANCAKES

I wrote this recipe for an article on entertaining in Martha Stewart Living magazine. Blini are little buckwheat pancakes that you can top with smoked salmon, caviar, and/or a dollop of crème fraîche. I make the batter early, but since they're best served warm, I prefer to cook them after guests arrive. Everyone's invited into the kitchen for drinks, and while I cook the blini, one of the guests assembles the toppings and serves them.

- 1/3 cup buckwheat flour
- 2/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 3/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons milk
- 1 extra-large egg
- 1/4 pound (1 stick) unsalted butter, clarified (see Note)
- 1/2 pound smoked salmon, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup crème fraîche or sour cream
- Fresh dill, for garnish

Combine the two flours, baking powder, and salt in a bowl. In a separate bowl, whisk together the milk, egg, and 1 tablespoon of the clarified butter, then whisk into the flour mixture. Heat 1 tablespoon of the clarified butter in a medium sauté pan and drop the batter into the hot skillet, 1 tablespoon at a time. Cook over medium-low heat until bubbles form on the top side of the blini, about 2 minutes. Flip and cook for 1 more minute, or until brown. Repeat with the remaining batter. (I clean the hot pan with a dry paper towel between batches.) Set aside.

To serve, top the blini with a piece of smoked salmon. Add a dollop of crème fraîche and a sprig of dill.

To clarify the butter, melt it in a saucepan over low heat. Remove the white foam that comes to the surface, then allow the butter to sit at room temperature until the milk solids sink to the bottom. Pour off the golden liquid and discard the white sediment.

To make ahead, reheat the blini in a 300-degree oven for 5 to 10 minutes before assembling.



Ingredients

6 cucumbers peeled and sliced

one medium sweet onion, thinly sliced & chopped into small pieces

6 tomatoes chopped

6 generous spoonfuls of red wine vinegar

fresh dill to sprinkle on top

mixed fresh greens

salt and black pepper to taste

Method

Combine all ingredients, mixing well and chilling thoroughly before serving.





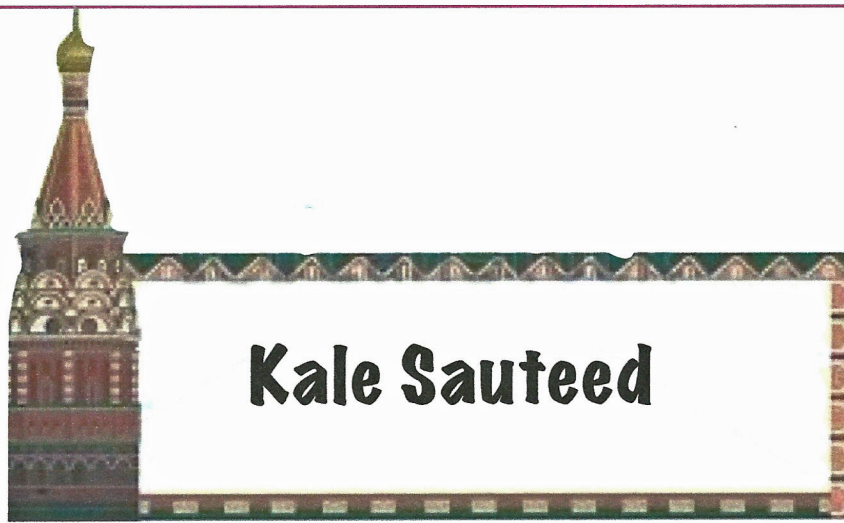
2 lbs. lean beef – top round is good, not too expensive, but still tender
2 medium onions, sliced (or one large one)
8 oz. mushrooms, diced or sliced
2 cups (16 oz.) sour cream
1 Tbsp. mustard, (Dijon is preferred)
salt, pepper
Dried dill weed – 2 pinches, optional
¼ cup white wine, optional

Cut beef in thin strips. Slice onions. Slice mushrooms.
Heat oil in large skillet. Saute mushrooms at high temperature until soft.
Remove from pan.
Toss in onions and sauté until soft – spoon out onto a plate.
Toss in beef strips and fry over high heat until cooked. They don't need to be cooked very long, just until barely done. There should be some juice from the beef. Add back the onions and everything else except sour cream. Stir and heat a little. Add sour cream and stir until heated, about 10 minutes. Serve over egg noodles.

Hints:

You may make all ahead of time. Just leave out the sour cream and leave everything in the pan, covered, and turn off the heat. Do not add the sour cream until ready to eat. It takes about 15 minutes to heat back up and heat up the sour cream.

If you add the wine, it might become too watery. Add 1 tbsp flour to the beef with cooking.



4–6 servings

Extra-virgin olive oil

3 cloves garlic, smashed

Pinch crushed red pepper

1 bunch baby kale, stems removed, cut into 1/2-inch lengths

1 bunch black kale, stems removed, cut into 1/2-inch lengths

Kosher salt

1/4 cup chicken stock

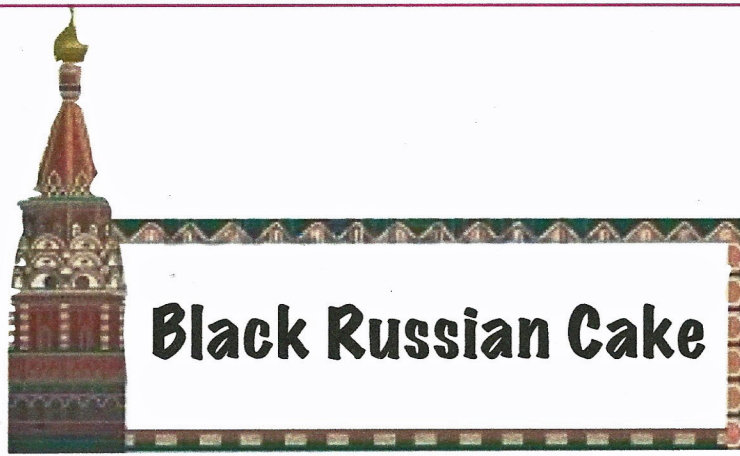
1 tablespoon sherry vinegar

You can also fold the kale and cut center membrane/stem out.

Coat a large saute pan with olive oil and add the garlic cloves and crushed red pepper. Bring the pan to a medium heat and cook the garlic until it gets golden and very aromatic. Remove the garlic and discard.

Add the 2 types of kale and stir to coat with the oil. Season with salt and add the chicken stock. Cover and cook for 5–7 minutes at least.

Uncover and stir to be sure that the kale is cooked evenly. Let the liquid evaporate. Sprinkle with sherry vinegar. Taste to make sure that the kale is seasoned perfectly.



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Cake

- 1 package dark chocolate cake mix
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1 package (3 ounces) instant chocolate pudding
- 4 eggs
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup strong coffee
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup crème de cacao
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Kahlua

Topping

- 1 cup powdered sugar, sifted
- 2 tablespoons strong coffee
- 2 tablespoons Kahlua
- 2 tablespoons crème de cacao

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine cake ingredients in a large bowl. Beat for 4 minutes until quite smooth. Pour into a greased bundt pan. Bake 45 to 50 minutes. Turn cake out onto serving plate. Punch holes throughout the cake with a skewer or ice pick.

Combine topping ingredients in a bowl. Mix well and spoon over the cake.

Natalie Wood and Robert Wagner

Family Recipes for a Russian Dinner

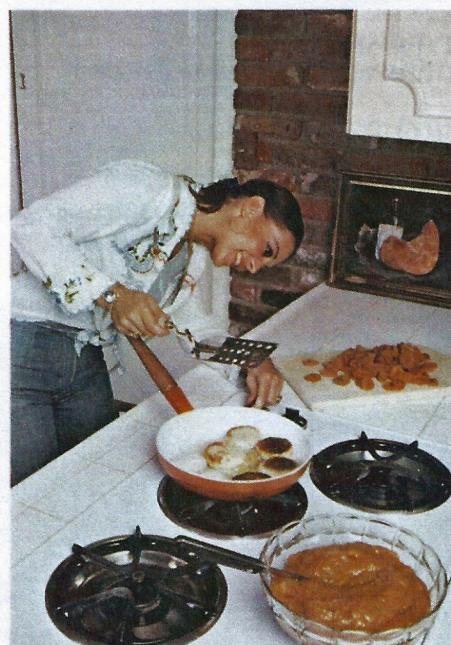
BY BARBARA WILKINS

WHEN SHE WAS BORN, the daughter of a carpenter in Santa Clara, California, she was christened Natalia Nickolaevna Zacharenko. The family soon simplified its name and she became Natalie Gurdin. She became Natalie Wood when she appeared in her first film at the age of four. The dinner she is serving for her actor-husband, Robert "R. J." Wagner, and their guests tonight was made from recipes she learned from her Russian mother when she was a child.

"I'm going to start with *Piroshki*, which are tiny meat pies," she says. "With them, I'll serve Russian vodka for those who want it. That's all I'm going to do for hors d'oeuvres. For dinner, I'll serve a cold vegetable salad made with potatoes, beets, carrots and beans. The carrots and beans are from our own garden. We grow just about everything there—artichokes, corn, strawberries, lettuce, chard, zucchini." The garden is R. J.'s pride and joy.

"The main course will be a traditional beef stroganoff, but instead of rice, I'm serving *Kasha*, small buckwheat kernels. There'll be black bread. The wines will be a 1962 Château Rothschild, and Pouilly Fuissé. So many of our guests drink only white wine. And for dessert I'm serving Russian pastries, *Tvorojniki*, with apricot puree, or *Kissel*."

The home in Beverly Hills that Natalie and R. J. have shared during this, their second marriage to each other, is two stories, painted white with blue shutters. Clusters of blue and yellow flowers are massed in the front yard. Inside, the comfortably furnished house rambles on and on. The living room, filled with antiques, pale, embroidered fabrics and a spinet piano, whose top is jammed with silver-framed pictures of their children, opens onto the bar area. "The living room is



TOP: Natalie spoons *Piroshki* filling into cream cheese pastry. ABOVE: She adjusts the temperature under sizzling Russian cheesecakes. Apricot *Kissel* in the foreground will be served on the side.

the least used room in the house," Nat admits. "But when we have six or eight, I insist we at least have coffee in there."

"We've had as many as eighty people in the house. When I have that many guests, I'll have a pianist or a magician to perk things up." (One recent large party was in honor of the Wagners' good friend, Laurence Olivier.)

Tonight, dinner is for six at the round table in the handsome dining room where many hanging plants contrast with the chaste white curtains at the windows. "I like to have six or eight if we're going to sit at the table, although it is a trifle crowded with eight.

But I do like to be at the table."

When Natalie and R. J. entertain 10 or 12, their guests are served at a buffet in the dining room, but they actually dine at tables set up in the den. When the Wagners invite just one other couple, the four will eat at the round poker table in the den overlooking the swimming pool.

Natalie rarely asks that her guests dress in any particular way. "I ask them to do whatever they want," she laughs. "The men don't have to wear ties, and the women can fluff up. Another thing we do when we're just a few is wear jeans."

The kitchen in which Natalie and her long-time cook, Willie Mae, prepare tonight's dinner has just been remodeled. Its floor is dark wood, and it has brick walls, pale wood cabinets, and white wallpaper splashed with vivid orange geraniums. Natalie herself presents a vivid picture, with her sparkling dark eyes and dark hair.

During these California Indian summer days, the Wagners still entertain around the pool on fine weekends. "People will bring their children in the morning and swim," Natalie says. "At some point, R. J. will barbecue chicken, or ribs, and we'll make a big green salad. After people take their kids home, they'll come back, and we often go into the poolhouse and have a little dinner there. We're home, and that makes our own kids happy, but it's a little bit special to be able to serve the dinner in the poolhouse."

Natalie cooks Sunday breakfast for all the Wagners in their cheerful new kitchen. "I make pancakes," says Natalie. "And the kids actually like oatmeal. I serve it with lots of butter, honey and cinnamon. I'll do cinnamon toast, eggs all different ways. Everybody likes bacon and those baby link sausages. Sometimes I'll fry hominy. *Huevos rancheros* with lots of sour cream are a big favorite with all of us."

Many weekends, though, Natalie and R. J. just collect a few friends and spend a couple of anonymous days on their 60-foot power boat, *Splendor*. (Nat's fifth anniversary gift to R. J. in July was a model of the boat.)

"We often entertain on the boat," says Natalie. "We'll take along six friends, usually, because the boat sleeps eight. We're very casual there. We barbecue, do salads. We have fresh fish if we get lucky. We catch albacore or perch, and sometimes we manage to get

hold of some lobsters. I'm cooking a lot of artichokes right now to take down to the boat tomorrow. And we'll have *pâté en croute*, quiche lorraine, lobster salad, champagne, red and white wine. I'm taking breakfast things for the following morning, and a tongue which I make from another recipe of my mother's. We can nibble on it all day.

Christmas is the Wagners' only annual party. "We always go out to friends on New Year's Eve," says Natalie. "And Thanksgiving is just for the family. But on Christmas, we have an open house. We'll have a huge buffet with ham, turkey, goose, stuffing, cranberry sauce, mince pies, pumpkin pies, eggnog, lots of different things, all laid out. Everybody comes. People with children come at eleven in the morning, and they stay for lunch. We just have shifts of people who wander in and stay for a bit. It usually goes on until midnight.

"All the stops come out when one of my daughters has a birthday. Friends come over and help me blow up helium

balloons," says Natalie. "Then we'll have some ponies, sometimes a clown or a magician. The birthday girl is crowned queen. Everybody dances around a maypole. The children have such a good time."

Like the good time Natalie and R. J. are having this second time around with each other, with their children, and with their many friends.

MENU

- PIROSHKI
- STOLICHNAYA VODKA
- VEGETABLE SALAD
- BEEF STROGANOFF
- KASHA
- PUMPERNICKEL
- TVOROJNIKI
- APRICOT KISSEL

**PIROSHKI
(Russian Meat-filled Pastries)**

10 to 12 servings

Cream Cheese Pastry

- 2 sticks butter, room temperature
- 8 ounces cream cheese, room

- temperature
- 1/4 cup heavy cream
- 2 1/2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon salt

Filling

- 3 tablespoons butter
- 2 finely chopped onions
- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 2 tablespoons sour cream
- 1/2 teaspoon Sauce Diable
- 1/4 cup cooked rice or 1/3 cup toasted pine nuts
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh dill
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 2 chopped hard-cooked eggs
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon water
- 1 cup sour cream

In a mixer, blend butter and cream cheese. Beat in cream. Blend in flour and salt. Wrap dough in waxed paper and chill in refrigerator for at least 1 hour before using.

In a skillet, heat butter and sauté onion until golden brown. Add ground beef and cook until lightly browned. Remove from heat and drain off any excess fat. Add sour cream, Sauce Diable, cooked rice or toasted pine nuts, dill, salt and pepper and hard-cooked eggs.



LEFT: Beef Stroganoff crowned with Crispy Onions is surrounded by steaming Kasha, beet-pink Vegetable Salad and a platter of crudités. ABOVE: Six at table makes a good group for Natalie's cozy Russian dinner.



LEFT: Natasha stands by as her mother gives Piroshki some last-minute attention. RIGHT: Courtney approves the flowers Natalie and R. J. select.

Roll out dough between sheets of waxed paper to 1/8-inch thickness. Cut into 2- to 3-inch rounds. Place 1 teaspoon of filling on each.

Preheat oven to 400°F. Beat egg lightly and stir in water. Paint egg-water mixture on edges of pastry. Fold dough over filling, forming an oval or crescent. Seal and decorate edges with tines of a fork. Place *Piroshki* on a greased baking sheet, and brush with remaining egg-water mixture. Make a knife slash in the middle of each one to allow steam to escape. Bake until golden, about 15 to 20 minutes. Serve with sour cream.

Piroshki freeze beautifully.

VEGETABLE SALAD

6 servings

- 3 medium boiling potatoes
- 4 unpeeled carrots
- 5 peeled fresh beets
- 1 peeled whole onion
- 3 or 4 peppercorns
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 lemon slice
- 1/3 cup mayonnaise
- Salt and pepper

Red cabbage leaves

In a large pot combine potatoes, carrots, beets, onion, peppercorns, bay leaf and lemon. Cover with water. Boil gently, covered, 30 to 40 minutes, until vegetables are fork-tender. As each vegetable completes cooking, remove with tongs and cool. Peel and chop potatoes, slice carrots, julienne beets, chop onion.

Combine chopped vegetables with mayonnaise. Season with salt and pepper. Chill.

To serve, line a 2-quart glass bowl with red cabbage leaves. Fill center with chilled vegetables.

BEEF STROGANOFF

6 servings

- 2 pounds filet mignon, cut into thin strips or bite-size pieces
- Butter
- 1 1/2 pounds sliced fresh mushrooms
- Seasoned salt
- Seasoned pepper
- 1/2 cup sherry
- 2 cups sour cream

Crispy Onions*

In a large skillet, sauté meat in butter until brown but still rare and juicy, about 3 to 4 minutes. Remove from pan and set aside.

Add more butter to pan and briefly sauté mushrooms. Add seasoned salt and seasoned pepper to taste. Add sherry and cook until bubbling.

Return meat to pan. Over very low heat stir in sour cream, blending thoroughly. Heat well, but do not allow to boil.

Serve immediately, garnished with *Crispy Onions*.

**Crispy Onions*

6 servings

3 large brown onions

Oil

Peel onions and cut into 1/4-inch slices. Place in a pot and cover with water. Boil 5 minutes. Drain and cool in ice water. Drain and pat dry with paper towels.

Deep fry onions in hot oil until very brown and crisp. Drain on paper towels. Keep warm until ready to serve.

continued on page 56

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KASHA

6 servings

- 1½ cups whole buckwheat groats, uncooked
- 1 slightly beaten egg
- 3 cups boiling water
- ⅓ cup melted butter
- 1 teaspoon salt

Combine buckwheat with egg. Place a large deep skillet over high heat. Add buckwheat mixture to pan, *stirring constantly* to prevent burning.

When each grain is separate and dry, add boiling water. Cover and simmer for ½ hour. Stir in butter and salt.

TVOROJNIKI (Russian Cheesecakes)

6 servings

- 1 pint ricotta cheese
- ½ cup flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon rind
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ⅓ cup sugar
- 1 beaten egg

Clarified butter

Apricot Kissel* or powdered sugar

In a blender or food processor mix ricotta cheese until smooth. Transfer to a small bowl.

Combine cheese with flour, baking powder, lemon rind, vanilla, sugar and egg. Chill at least an hour.

With well-floured hands, form chilled cheese mixture into flat round cakes about 2 inches across and ½ inch thick.

Sauté cakes on both sides in hot clarified butter until golden.

Serve hot with Kissel or powdered sugar. *Cheesecakes may be reheated.*

*Apricot Kissel

- 1 pound dried apricots
- 1 12-ounce can apricot nectar
- 1 cup water
- ½ cup sugar
- 1½ teaspoons grated lemon rind

Combine apricots with nectar and water in a 2-quart saucepan. Allow to stand several hours or overnight. Cook, covered, over *very low* heat until tender, about 20 to 25 minutes. Cool slightly. Puree fruit in a blender or food processor. Add sugar and lemon rind. Blend well. Serve with *Tvorojniki*. □



**Stuffed Dill Pickles
Blini with Smoked Salmon**



Classic Georgian Salad



**Beef Stroganoff
Kale Sauteed**

Black Russian Cake

