

## CHAPTER 2

# Culinary traditions, food, and eating habits in Russia

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The national cuisine is an integral part of every national culture and depends on such factors as the geographical location of the country, its climatic conditions, and the history, religion, and traditions that people have developed over many centuries. In the vast expanses from the White Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south, from the Baltic Sea in the west to the Pacific Ocean in the east, live the Russians—a nation united in language, culture, and way of life. The Russian Federation is multinational, and the peoples living on its territory have different cultural and everyday traditions, the specifics of which are determined by natural and climatic factors.

Russian cuisine is unique in many ways, it includes a whole range of products that are not typical of other national cuisines, including buckwheat, sour milk, and caviar. There are products that are almost never used elsewhere except in Russia, such as turnips, for example, which has become a national vegetable. Until the middle of the 19th century, it played the role in the Russian diet that is now taken by the potato.

Russian cuisine is widely known all over the world, and Russian national dishes take a worthy place in the international menu alongside Ukrainian borscht and vareniki, French sauces, Italian spaghetti, English pudding, and duck with oranges in Beijing.

## **General characteristics of Russian cuisine, and the influence of various factors on its formation**

Russian national cuisine has undergone an extremely long development, marked by several significant stages, each of which has left an indelible mark.

The old Russian cuisine developed from the 9th–10th centuries and peaked in the 15th–16th centuries. Although its formation covers an extensive historical period, it is characterized by common features that have been largely preserved to this day.

At the beginning of this period, Russian bread from the sour (yeast) rye dough first appeared, a staple that is unimaginable to have missing from the Russian menu. Flour products, including saikas (special Russian dessert bread), bagels, sochnies (cottage cheese pies), as well as donuts, pancakes, fritters, pies, etc., which appeared later, were prepared solely from sourdough, and are typical of Russian cuisine throughout its historical development. The bread was mostly rye bread. Moreover, the word “bread” itself meant a product made from rye. Later, rye was replaced by wheat. In addition to rye flour, early Russians used barley flour. Wheat flour was used for kalachi—one of the favorite delicacies of the local population. It is noteworthy that, in flour products salt was never added, with preference given to natural vegetable flavors.

The great majority of the population was at that time peasants, and the main part of their diet consisted of vegetables and cereals—products that could be grown on their designated plot of land. From these ingredients, pickles, porridges, bakery products, and soups were traditionally prepared. The most popular soups were: solyanka (soup of steeped meat, fish, or mushroom broth with spicy seasonings), kalya (fish or meat soup cooked on a pickled cucumber), ukha (fish soup), botvinya (cold soup on sour kvass, which is added previously boiled and whipped sorrel, beet tops, spinach, green onions, nettles, and other edible herbs, which were called, in Old Russian, “botva”), okroshka (from the verb “kroshit”—finely chopped—a cold soup), borsch, and rassolnik (soup, based on salted cucumbers, with cucumber brine also sometimes added). Later, with the advent of potato starch, they learnt to prepare sweet kissels (jellies), which remain popular in Russian territories.

Of the vegetables, Russians consumed a lot of white cabbage, which were eaten fresh, as well as in sauerkraut, stewed, and boiled. Turnips and swedes also played a major role in nutrition, with turnip in particular being one of the main vegetables for the Russian people. The situation changed only from the second half of the 19th century when potatoes were widely introduced.

Vegetables were not only eaten raw but also subjected to various cooking methods. Vegetables were cooked, baked, steamed, sour, salted, or marinated. The climate and fertile soils provide optimum conditions for growing a variety of cereals, and so a large amount of grain is grown in the Russian territories, with the various types of grain crops making it possible to cereal dishes, using whole and crushed grains.

One of the most common dishes is tolokno (oat flour) that is prepared mainly from oatmeal. This oat flour was crushed in a mortar or ground in a mill. The preparation technology includes the grain being presteamed, dried, lightly fried, and cleaned. Other varieties of flour-based pies were traditionally prepared from rye and wheat flour using various fillings including meat, curd, fish, berries, mushrooms, and eggs. The basis for the pie could also be noodles or porridge. Locally cooked loaves (karavays), pancakes, angel wings (khvorost) from dough, perepeches, and nuts were other typical Russian delicacies.

The passion for sour tastes is also reflected in the Russian infusion kissels, flour-based sour (fermented) jellies from oats, wheat, and rye, which appeared much earlier than the currently popular modern, mostly berry, jellies. Oatmeal, rye, and peas were included as part of a daily and ritual meal. These were made thick, salty or sweet, and served with cold milk (or peas with sunflower oil).

Everywhere noodles were prepared from unleavened dough and considered as a festive dish.

In a place of special honor were soups, which were then called “khlebova” which were usually cooked with raw vegetables and with other broths, and also based on flour. The final creations of the main types of Russian soups occurred in the 17th century when rassolniki, saltwort, pohmelki, kaly, and other types of soups emerged.

Typical for Russian cuisine were also various porridges, which, like bread products, were mainly flavored with mushrooms, forest berries, fish, milk, and rarely meat. The word “kasha”—porridge in Russia meant “food prepared from crushed foods” There were great varieties of porridge including sturgeon, herring, and even beluga porridges. Regardless of the porridge variety, the distinctive feature of Russian cuisine is porridges made from cereal. Soaked foods, including berries and apples, were widespread in Russia. Also, sauerkraut was popular and, further south, also salted watermelons.

It is also necessary to mention the special place of mushrooms in the national Russian cuisine. A small number of forest mushrooms grew in the country, so they were considered a valuable raw material. Each type of mushroom is handled in a specific way and they are usually salted or cooked separately. The same applies to fish, which are prepared in several ways including being boiled, dried, salted, baked, and less often fried.

Among nonalcoholic drinks, some distinctive drinks, namely sbiten, mors, mead, and kvass were popular. These drinks were national drinks, and by the 15th century, more than 500 varieties of kvass, and hundreds of variations of fruit and honey drinks were being consumed in Russia. In relation to alcohol production, the Russians did not have a particular predilection for its consumption, refuting the myth of Russia having a history of heavy drinking. Alcoholic beverages were prepared only for the holidays, and its alcoholic strength was minimal. Usually beer, braga, kvass, and honey vodka were brewed, with an alcohol strength ranging from 1% to 6% vol.

From flour and malt (wheat, barley) kvass and beer were typically brewed, and bread kvass was the main everyday and festive drink of all Russians.

In traditional Russian cuisine, the main and most popular of all condiments for food is sour cream. Its creamy taste adds to the taste of cereals, salads, soups, pastries, and many other dishes.

Also having a place of honor was cottage cheese, which is eaten in its pure form, or honey or fruit were added, and often cheesecakes were prepared.

Typically, Russian fish are often steamed, stewed, baked, boiled, fried, or stuffed with various fillings (mostly mushrooms or porridge). Fish have been consumed with great creativity in Russian cuisine, and are enjoyed in salted, dried, sour, cooked dishes from the crushed flesh of fish, or they are jellied, and added to some typical soups, namely ukha soup, rassolnik, or solyanka. Caviar was considered a rare and valuable delicacy, and particularly popular is the fresh grainy sturgeon fish caviar, which is usually boiled in vinegar with poppy seeds or salt.

The most famous desserts are kalachi, gingerbread, honey, and jam. Traditional in Russian cuisine are baked apples or other baked berries/fruits. The Slavs boiled vegetables (mainly cucumbers and carrots) in honey in a water bath (never on open fire) in order to avoid burning the product and damaging its structure. The ready-made vegetables become transparent and acquired an elastic consistency; the dish is very similar to modern savory candied fruit.

As a typical dessert, crushed berries, dried in an oven in the form of flat cakes (the prototype of modern pastille), were eaten. Cakes were made from raspberries, rowanberry, viburnum, and other seasonal berries. Pastilla was consumed with drinks and even used in folk medicine as a cure for colds or vitamin deficiencies.

Already, in the early period of the development of Russian cuisine, a sharp division of the Russian table into lean (vegetable—fish—mushroom) and dishes containing meat, egg, and milk products emerged, which had a huge impact on its further development until the end of the 19th century. The artificial creation of the line between the fasting and nonfasting table, the isolation of some products from others, and the avoidance of their mixing, eventually led to the creation of some original dishes, however, the entire menu as a whole suffered as it became monotonous (Mejatova, 2000).

The next stage in the development of Russian cuisine was the period from the middle of the 16th century. At this time, not only did the further development of variants of the fasting and nonfasting table continue, but also the differences between the foods available to different classes and estates were especially pronounced. The cuisine of the common people from this time began to become increasingly simplified, and the cuisine of the boyars, and especially the nobility becomes increasingly refined. It collects, integrates, and generalizes the experience of the previous centuries in the field of Russian cooking, creating new, more complex versions of old dishes, and also borrowing for the first time and openly from a number of foreign dishes and culinary techniques, mainly of eastern origin.

The culinary tradition of the 17th century was strongly influenced by the eastern and, above all, Tatar cuisine, which was associated with the annexation of the Astrakhan and Kazan khanates, Bashkiria, and Siberia in the second half of the 16th century. During this period Russian cuisine included dishes of unleavened dough (noodles, pelmeni), as well as such products as raisins, apricots, figs, and lemons and tea, the use of which has become traditional in Russia. This significantly increased the varieties of sweet foods in Russian cuisine. Along with gingerbread, known in Russia before the adoption of Christianity, there were a variety of sweet pies, candies, candied fruits, and numerous jams, not only from berries but also from vegetables (carrots with honey and ginger, radish in molasses). In the second half of the 17th century, cane sugar was brought to Russia, from which—along with spices—candies, sweets, delicacies, etc. were mass produced.

The next stage in the development of Russian cuisine began at the turn of the 17th–18th centuries and lasted no more than a century—until the first decade of the 19th century. At this time, there was a radical disunity: if earlier, the cuisine of the ruling classes had retained its national character and its difference from the national cuisine was expressed only in terms of its quality, abundance, and the assortment of foods and dishes, then in the 18th century the cuisine of the ruling classes gradually began to lose its Russian national character.

The 18th century in Russia was marked by a new stage in the development of Russian society. Tzar Peter I not only moved the capital closer to western Europe and changed the chronology, but also forced changes in many customs. Russian cuisine began to develop under the significant influence of western European cooking, first German and Dutch, and later French. Since Tzar Peter's times, the Russian nobility has borrowed and introduced western European culinary traditions. Rich dignitaries, who visited western Europe returned with foreign cooks. At first, these were mostly Dutch and German, especially Saxon and Austrian, then Swedish and French chefs. Since the middle of the 18th century so many foreign cooks arrived that they soon almost completely replaced the cooks and serfs working for the higher nobility (Pohlebkin, 1978).

Only in the first half of the 19th century, after the Patriotic War of 1812, in connection with the general rise in patriotism in the country, did the leading representatives of the nobility begin to revive their interest in national Russian cuisine. In parallel with this process of the renewal of the attention to Russian cuisine of the ruling classes, which was carried out, so to speak, “from above” and was concentrated in noble clubs and restaurants in St. Petersburg and Moscow, there was another process—the collection, restoration, and development of forgotten old Russian recipes, which had evolved spontaneously in the provinces and in the landed estates until the 1870s. The source for this collection was the national cuisine, in the development of which a huge number of nameless and unknown, but talented serf chefs had been instrumental. By the last third of the 19th century, the Russian cuisine of the ruling classes, thanks to the unique range of dishes, their exquisite and delicate taste, began to occupy one of the leading places in Europe, together with French cuisine.

At the same time, it must be emphasized that, despite all the changes influenced by foreign cuisines, its main features were preserved and remain so up to the present, as they were retained in the kitchens of the general population. These main features of Russian cuisine and the Russian national table can be defined as follows: a large number of dishes, a variety of table snacks, a love for eating bread, pancakes, pies, cereals, the originality of the first liquid cold and hot dishes, a variety of fish and mushroom dishes, wide application of pickles from vegetables and mushrooms, and an abundance of festive and sweet foods including jams, cookies, gingerbread, Easter cake, etc.

The kitchens of the ruling classes during the first half of the 19th century continued to develop in isolation from the general population, and were heavily influenced by French cuisine. However, the nature of this influence has changed significantly. In contrast to the 18th century, when there was direct borrowing of foreign dishes (cutlets, sausages, omelets, mousses, compotes, etc.) and displacement of the original Russian ones, in the first half of the 19th century, another process appeared—the return of Russian culinary heritage, and in the second half of the 19th century, even the restoration of the Russian national menu began, albeit again with French adjustments.

The old Russian meat cuisine was distinguished by the preparation of dishes from the whole carcass of a bird or animal or a large piece of meat, mixing of products, and their grinding, although crushing was not allowed. Therefore, Russian cuisine, in contrast to French and German, for a long time did not include or want various minced meats, rolls, pâtés, and cutlets. Ancient Russian cuisine was alien also to all kinds of casseroles and puddings. The desire to prepare a dish from a whole large piece, and ideally from an entire animal or plant, was preserved until the 18th century. Shredded meat was used mainly for filling pies or stuffing geese, chickens, or lamb and pork legs. However, in most cases these were ready-made fillings, crushed by nature itself—grain (porridge), berries, and mushrooms (these, too, were not cut). Fish for fillings was only stratified, but not crushed. And only much later—at the end of the 18th century and especially the 19th century—already under the influence of western European cuisine, some fillings began to be crushed specially. Later, under the influence of western European cuisine, the Russian table became even more diverse.

Ritual dishes were a special category of food, and are closely intertwined with Russian religious beliefs and traditions. These dishes have a ritual importance and are used only for special occasions holidays or a rituals. Typical Russian ritual dishes include:

1. Kurnik, which is served at weddings. The dish is called the king of pies, a festive or royal pie. It consists of several layers of dough and various fillings—chicken, duck, lamb, beef, nuts, potatoes, porridge, etc. For weddings, the kurnik was decorated with figures made from a dough, and various decorative elements.
2. Kutia, which is served for Christmas/Kolyada. This is a memorial Slavic dish, which consists of wheat/barley or rice porridge, sprinkled with honey and sugar. In the porridge poppy, raisins, nuts, jam, and milk are also added.

3. Bliny (pancakes) are served on Maslenitsa, also known as Butter Week, Crepe Week, or Cheesefare Week). Maslenitsa is an Eastern Slavic religious and folk holiday, celebrated during the last week before Great Lent, that is, the eighth week before Eastern Orthodox Pascha (Easter). Until the 19th century bliny was considered a funeral dish. They are traditional Russian desserts, which have not lost popularity to this day. The product is made from a liquid dough, which is poured onto a hot pan and fried on both sides. Pancakes are served as a separate dish or wrapped in various sweet/salty fillings.
4. Kulich (Easter cake)/paska is served at Easter. It is a cylindrical festive bread, which is still baked to celebrate the main church holiday.
5. Fried eggs are served at the Trinity. In modern Russian cuisine, fried eggs have become a regular breakfast, where previously, the dish was served only for the feast of the triune deity.
6. Ovsyany kisel (oatmeal) or kholodnik is served on the evening of caroling, Ivan Kupala, and memorial days. It is a traditional drink with a dense consistency, more like a jelly or a loose marmalade. It was prepared by fermenting oatmeal.

In Russia, as well as elsewhere, religious holidays are accompanied by certain ritual foods, as well as dishes that are given special meaning and significance. Stewed goose is an integral part of Christmas, paskha and painted eggs are characteristic festive Easter foods, and fried pancakes have become a symbol of Maslenitsa (pancake or butter week, a religious and folk holiday, celebrated during the last week before Great Lent. Maslenitsa corresponds to the western Christian carnival). Traditional ritual dishes are a loaf at a wedding, and pies with apples on the name day.

It should also be noted that Russian cuisine is characterized by pronounced regional differences. This is due to the diversity of natural areas and the associated differences in plant and animal products, the different influences of neighboring peoples, and the diversity of the social structure of the population in the past. That is why the cuisine of Muscovites and Pomors, Cossacks of Don and Siberians differ greatly. While in the north reindeer, sea fish, rye pies, mash with cottage cheese, and many mushrooms are eaten, on the Don fried and stewed steppe fowl, a lot of fruits and vegetables, grape wine and pies with chicken are consumed. If the food of the Pomors is similar to that of Scandinavian, Finnish, Karelian and Lappish (Saami) peoples, the kitchens of Don Cossacks were influenced significantly by the Turkish and Nogai kitchens, and the Russian population in the Urals or Siberia follow the Tatar and Udmurt culinary traditions (Alkaev, 2000).

Regional features of another area have long been inherent in the cuisines of the old Russian regions of central Russia. These features are due to the medieval rivalry between Novgorod and Pskov, Tver and Moscow, Vladimir and Yaroslavl, Kaluga and Smolensk, and Ryazan and Nizhny Novgorod. Moreover, they do not manifest themselves as significant differences in the field of cooking, such as changes in the technology of cooking or in the availability of their dishes in each area, as was the case, for example, in Siberia

and the Urals, but in differences only between the same dishes, often insignificant, but, nevertheless, real. A vivid example of this is the popular Russian dishes such as soup, pancakes, pies, porridges, and gingerbread: these were made all over European Russia, but in each region there were the favorite kinds of these dishes, with small differences in the recipe, appearance, and reception and presentation to the table, etc.

Regional differences, both large and small, naturally, further enriched the Russian cuisine, and diversified it. And at the same time, they did not change the basic character, since in each concrete case they draw attention to the above-mentioned common features, which together illustrate the national cuisine throughout Russia from the Baltic to the Pacific.

### **Characteristics of raw materials used in Russian cuisine**

The old Russian cuisine began to evolve from the ninth century until the 15th century when it reached its peak. Naturally, the formation of the kitchen was primarily affected by natural and geographical conditions. A large number of rivers, lakes, and forests contributed to the appearance in the Russian cuisine of a large number of fish, fowl, mushrooms, and forest berries dishes.

It is believed that by sowing, growing, and collecting bread crops, a person first accepts his homeland. In the Russian lands from time immemorial rye, oats, wheat, barley, millet, and buckwheat were grown, from which cereals were prepared and cooked in different types of porridges. Porridge (kasha) was and remains a Russian national dish. It follows a Russian person throughout life—small children are fed semolina porridge cooked in milk, adults like buckwheat porridge, and kutya is prepared as a funeral dish. Kasha is considered the “progenitor” of bread. “Kasha is our mother, and rye bread is our dear father” says the Russian folk proverb.

Iconic drinks in Russia such as tea and vodka were not typical original traditional beverages. Tea first appeared in Russia in the 17th century and can be traced to a gift from the Mongolians to Tsar Michael I. After its introduction, tea became a major staple drink in the Russian diet and tradition (Pratt, 2000). As for alcoholic beverages, in Ancient Rus people drank low-alcohol fermented-honey beverages and berry juices. Vodka was first introduced to Russia in the 14th century by Genoese ambassadors who brought the first aqua vitae (“the water of life”) to Moscow and presented it to Grand Duke Dmitry Donskoy (Wikipedia). Vodka was immediately banned from importation and appeared again under Ivan the Terrible in the middle of the 16th century, at the same time that the first “tsar’s tavern” was opened.

Potatoes, as important staple food, became widespread in Russia only in the 18th century, and tomatoes in the 19th century. Gradually, recipes were expanded, in particular, salads were made from various vegetables, with meat and fish added, and also new culinary names appeared such as “spring” “health” and “sea pearl”.



In the initial period of the development of Russian cuisine, there was a tendency to use liquid hot dishes, which at that time received the common name “hlebova” or “varevo.” The most widespread were types of hlebov such as schi (cabbage soup), stewed soups based on vegetable raw materials, as well as various zatirukhas, zavarikhas, boltushkas, salamats, and other varieties of flour soups.

At the end of the 18th century, liquid dishes began to be called soups. Soups have always played a distinctive role in Russian cuisine. There is no wonder the spoon was the main tableware. It appeared almost 400 years before the fork. “With a fork, that’s a rod, and a spoon that’s a seine” was a folk proverb.

The assortment of national Russian soups is rich, including schis (cabbage soup), zatirukhas, ouhas (fish soup), rassolniks, solyankas, and okroshkas, and these continued to be modified in the 18th–19th centuries with the addition of various kinds of western European soups such as broths, cream soups, and various filling soups with meat and cereals, which were well received thanks to the love of the Russian people for a hot liquid food. However, the old traditional Russian soups like schi and oukha still illustrate the originality of the Russian table.

A large role at the Russian table is played by the bread. For soup or other liquid foods, they are usually eaten with a pound to a kilogram of black rye bread. It is well known that Russians used mainly rye bread, and that wheat flour was used for *prospkhora*, and in domestic life for *kalachi*, which for the common people was a delicacy consumed only on public holidays.

From the dishes prepared from dough, pies and pancakes were the main products. Moreover, it should be noted that the initial symbol of the celebration was not pancakes, but pies with cottage cheese and brushwood—elongated dough with butter.

The dishes especially revered in Russia include porridge, oatmeal, and buckwheat.

As for meat and milk, these products were used relatively rarely, and their processing was not complicated. Meat, as a rule, was cooked in cabbage soup or porridge. Milk was drunk raw, baked, or sour. Dairy products included cottage cheese and sour cream, and the production of cream and butter for a long time remained almost unknown, at least into the 15th–16th centuries, when these products appeared rarely and irregularly.

To a lesser extent than soups, fish dishes retain their original significance on the Russian table. Some classic Russian fish dishes, for example, *telnoye*, have been lost. However, they are delicious and simple to prepare, and can be cooked using sea fish, which were used in Russian cuisine in the past, especially in northern Russia in Russian *Pomorye*. For the inhabitants of these areas, who had no bread in those days, cod, halibut, haddock, capelin, and *navaga* were used. “Without fish is worse than lack of bread” was a proverb of *Pomors*.

The fish known as *telnaya* in Russian cuisine is steamed or boiled, and is made in a special way from one fillet without bones, that is fried, stuffed (filled with stuffing from porridge or mushrooms), stewed, jellied, baked in its scales, or cooked in a frying

pan in sour cream, salted and dried. In the Pechora and Perm regions, fish, in addition, was soured, and in western Siberia stroganina (frozen raw fish) was used. Only the method of smoking fish, which was developed mainly only at the beginning of the XX century, was not widespread.

Characteristic of Russian cuisine is the widespread use of spices of a fairly large assortment. However, the decline of the role of fish, mushroom dishes, and fowl dishes caused a reduction in the types of spices used in Russian cuisine. In addition, since the 17th century, because of the high cost, people began to use a lot of spices, as well as vinegar and salt, not in the cooking process, but by putting them on the table for use while eating, so that it could be added to taste. Mustard has also been used in Russian cooking since ancient times. There are known methods of processing meat products with mustard before frying. Often, flavored oil was used. For flavoring, seeds of anise, coriander, fennel, dill or celery greens, and parsley were added to the oil heated in a frying pan or saucepan.

For centuries, along with the original dishes, a great deal has been borrowed from neighbors. It is believed that the yeast dough arrived from the Scythians and the Greek colonies of the Black Sea; rice, buckwheat, spices and wine from Byzantium; tea, lemons, dumplings from the eastern neighbors; and borscht and cabbage rolls from the western Slavs. Naturally, being in Russia, foreign dishes were assimilated with Russian culinary traditions (Pohlebkin, 1978).

### **Characteristics of technological processing methods used in Russian cuisine**

The concept of “national cuisine” means a combination of all technological techniques and other culinary skills, as well as the peculiarities of the composition of food products specific to certain people and its historical background that has evolved over the course of centuries of development. After all, the main difference between national cuisines lies not in what or from what they prepare, but in how they cook, with what methods, at what time, at what temperature, in what environment, and in what dishes. It is these details, these technological “little things” that are fundamental to the formation of the taste, consistency, and flavor of a dish. That is why it is necessary, while reading the recipes of Russian national dishes, to pay attention to the description of the preparation of products and the technology of their preparation, and to the basic national methods and cooking, which are often more important conditions for success than the composition of the products. In Russian recipes, only the minimum of necessary information is presented, and most attention is paid to the order of the storage of the products. At the same time, they indicate the types of dishes used in each case (if it is essential for the formation of the taste of the dish), the nature of the heat for cooking (low, moderate, or high), and also the duration of cooking: both general and specific operations.

The appearance of the hearth is also of great importance for the proper preparation of national dishes. The hearth makes it possible to obtain from the same products different consistencies and tastes, because the different temperature and pressure conditions created by different foci cause very different physical, chemical, and biochemical processes in products.

The distinctiveness of Russian national dishes is determined not only by the range of food products but also by the special features and specificity of their preparation in a typical Russian stove (Fig. 2.1). On a long period of development of the Russian national cuisine, the cooking process was reduced to cooking or baking products in a Russian oven, and these operations were carried out separately. What was intended for cooking, was boiled first and what was intended for baking, only baked. Thus, national Russian cuisine did not use combination or double-heat treatment. The heat treatment of food consisted of heating with the heat of a Russian stove, high or low, three stages — “before the loaves”, “after loaves,” “at the free spirit”—but always without contacting the naked flames, and, or with a constant temperature that is maintained, or with a falling temperature, as the furnace gradually cooled down, but never with increasing temperature, as in the case of the preparation of the stove. Food in a Russian oven was cooked almost without boiling because the temperature in the oven gradually decreased as the stove was first heated, and then cooked in it as the stove cooled down. Thus, the dishes were always obtained without boiling, but rather stewed or half-stewed, from which they acquired a very distinct taste. That is why many dishes of the old cuisine do not produce the correct flavor and texture when they are cooked in other temperature conditions. Especially delicious were porridge, pea soups, and cabbage soup cooked in this way. Using the Russian oven, people cooked food, baked bread, brewed kvass and beer, and dried food. They baked a large number of products, baked dishes, widely used for boiling and stewing, frying many products using whole carcasses and large chunks. This contributed to the spread of ceramic dishes (Alkaev, 2000).

For the excellent taste of the food, the shape of the crockery, temperature, and even heating from all sides contributed. Food in a Russian oven was usually prepared in clay



Figure 2.1 A Russian stove.



**Figure 2.2** Clay pot.

pots (Fig. 2.2) and cast-iron pots (Fig. 2.3), which had a narrow neck, a small bottom, and large convex sides. A narrow neck reduces evaporation and contact with air, thus contributing to the better preservation of vitamins, food, and flavoring substances.

Originally, Russian ovens were made without a chimney. Later, ovens with pipes appeared, and then the stoves began to be attached to furnaces and built-in ovens. However, the Russian oven did not only have a positive but, to some extent, also a negative impact on Russian cuisine—it did stifle the development of new technological methods.

The Russian oven, having been used for more than 3000 years, is now completely obsolete in urban areas and is gradually being replaced in rural homes. The furnace has been replaced by gas and electric plates, electric grills, and microwave ovens. Dishes cooked in the oven in ceramicware under a lid of dough, largely retain the taste and aroma of the old Russian cuisine. Since it is enough to simulate the thermal regime of the falling temperature created by it. Such imitation in modern conditions is possible. The introduction of gas or electric cookers led to the need to borrow a number of new technological methods and, along with them, western European cuisine, as well as to reform the dishes of the old Russian cuisine, by refining and development, with adaptation to the new technology. This direction turned out to be fruitful, as it helped to save many Russian dishes from obscurity.

Dishes that are customarily cooked in other types of furnaces are recommended to be cooked in the oven, and in some cases, on open fires such as a barbecue or tandoor, that use a heated atmosphere similar to that of a Russian stove. For this purpose, special procedures are followed. In one case, an unprotected, large piece of meat is placed directly on the oven grate over the fire and a high temperature is used for a short time; in another cases, the products are placed in a tightly enclosed clay or cast iron dish or plate with thick walls before being placed in the lower part of the oven close to the fire, maintaining the same moderate temperature and for a long time.



**Figure 2.3** Cast iron pot (chugunok).

Finally, in urban conditions, it is possible to simulate baking in the ashes, using aluminum foil as a food wrapper and placing the food (potatoes, vegetables, meat, fish) densely wrapped in the foil in the oven. With the right combination of the appropriate types of heating and dishes in modern urban conditions, more than 90% of dishes can be cooked on a gas stove (Mejatova, 2000).

### **Features of food culture**

At the end of the 18th century, the Russian historian I. Boltin noted the characteristic features of the Russian table, and not only that of the more affluent. In the countryside, four meals were taken, and in the summer when at work five: breakfast or interception, a snack, before dinner, or at noon, lunch, supper, and breaks. These meals, taken in central and northern Russia, were preserved in the south, but using different names. Therefore, at 6–7 o'clock in the morning, they had breakfast, at 11–12 they had brunch, at 2–3 pm they had lunch, at 6–7 they had their evening meals, and at 10–11 supper. With the development of capitalism, the working people in the cities began to eat at first three times, and then only twice a day: they ate breakfast at dawn, and had lunch or dinner when they returned home. At work, they only had an afternoon snack, usually eating cold food. Gradually, dinner was used to describe any complete meal, a full table with a hot brew, sometimes regardless of the time of day (Pohlebkin, 1978).

A great influence on the entire Russian way of life, including the Russian cuisine, was made with the adoption of Christianity. With the spread of Christianity in Russia, there was a sharp division of the Russian table into leaner food. Observance of fasts for up to 212 days a year (in different years this varied) led to a wide variety of flour-, vegetable-,

mushroom- and fish-based dishes. During fasts, over indulgence was not allowed, and so meat and dairy food, eggs and sugar, and in strict fasts, even fish, were banned. Fasts could be for multiple days (the Great Lent, Christmas, Epiphany, and others), or for a single day (Wednesdays and Fridays).

After fasting, there were holidays, and then the fasting diet was replaced by the ordinary one. There were also many festive days, up to 174–190 per year, with the annual system of holidays being strongly associated with nature and the labor cycle. Therefore, the celebration was as natural a necessity as work.

The boyar table was characterized by an extremely large number of dishes, at up to 50, and at the royal table, there could be 150–200. Huge in size, these dishes, included the swans, geese, turkeys, sturgeon, or beluga. As part of the presentation, there was a desire to decorate the dishes. Food products were built into palaces and fantastic animals of gigantic proportions. Court dinners turned into a pompous, glamorous, lush ritual that usually lasted 6–8 h from 2 in the afternoon until 10 at night, and included about a dozen courses, each of which consisted of a dozen varieties of large or small, winged game or salted fish, and a dozen types of pancakes or pies.

Adopted in the 18th century, the “French” system, when all the dishes were put on the table at the same time, was replaced by an old Russian way of serving, where one dish replaced another. At the same time, the number of changes was reduced to four to five, and such a sequence was introduced in the serving of dinner, at which heavy meals alternated with light and exciting appetizers. In addition, the table was no longer served with whole meats or poultry, instead, before serving, they were cut into portions. At the same time, they stopped decorating the dishes, because it was no longer necessary. Reformers also advocated the replacement of dishes from crushed and whipped products, which were significant in the kitchens of the ruling classes in the 18th and early 19th centuries, with dishes from natural, more typical Russian cuisine products. Thus, all kinds of chops (lamb and pork) appeared from a single piece of meat with a bone, natural steaks, klops, langets, and entrecotes. At the same time, the efforts of culinary specialists were aimed at eliminating the plainness and difficult digestibility of certain dishes. Therefore, they began to use widely garnishes using potatoes, which appeared in Russia in the 1770s century. For Russian pies, they suggested using a soft flaky dough made of wheat flour instead of sour rye. They introduced a method of preparing the dough with pressed yeasts, so that the sourdough, which had required to be prepared 10–12 h before use, was ready after 2 h. French chefs paid attention also to snacks. In the 18th century, the German form of serving snacks—sandwiches—prevailed, and in the 19th century snacks were served on a special table, with each kind of special dish beautifully decorated, and thus their range was expanded to include a number of old Russian snacks, not only meat and fish, but also mushroom and vegetable sauerkraut dishes. Their abundance and diversity never ceased to be a constant subject of surprise for foreigners.

Russian cuisine has gone a long way in its development. At this stage, there were periods of formation, improvement, and flourishing, but there were also periods of decline, there were bright original finds, successful borrowings, but there were also losses. However, the festive Russian table remains very diverse, and the Russian house is hospitable.

### Features of cooking of selected Russian dishes

**Solyankas**—these are thick spicy soups that combine the components of cabbage, sour cream, and pickles (pickles, cucumber brine), with a significantly strengthened sour—saline—sharp base as a result of the addition of spices such as olives, lemons, capers, tomatoes, lemon juice, and pickled mushrooms.

Dishes similar to solyankas are not found elsewhere around world.

To prepare solyankas, strong broths (meat, fish, mushroom) are diluted with pickled cucumber brine. The sharp taste of these broths strengthens the secretions of the digestive glands, so solyanka can be high in calories and contain a large amount of fatty foods. Salty meat, fish (with a set of different types of meat, poultry, and fish) and simple (or mushroom) solyankas are notable.

The liquid and thick parts of the solyanka are cooked separately and combined for 5–15 min before serving to warm them up and create the fragrance.

To prepare a meat solyanka (Fig. 2.4), cucumber brine (0.2–0.4 L) is brought to the boil and the scum removed. The brine is combined with a meat broth (1.25 L), and brought to the boil.

Boiled beef (200 g), fried beef or veal (200 g), ham (100 g), sausages (100 g), and chicken fillet (250 g) are cut into small cubes. Salted mushrooms (1–1.5 cups) and fresh cabbage (200–250 g) are doused with boiling water and cut into cubes. Tomatoes (two), pickled cucumbers (two), and an onion are cut into small cubes.



Figure 2.4 Meat solyanka.

Prepared foods with spices: parsley (one tablespoon), dill (one tablespoon), green onion (two tablespoons), capers (one to two tablespoons), olives (12), black pepper (10 peas), sweet pepper (3 peas), and sour cream (100 g) are laid in a clay pot, boiling broth is poured over and then it is placed in the oven for 10–15 min or in a saucepan on a low heat, not allowing to the boil, for 10–15 min.

Serve solyanka with sour cream. It can be placed in it a circle of peeled lemon.

**Kholodets (or studen)** appeared in the north and among the nomadic peoples who cooked a rich broth of meat and bones, and noticed that the remaining broth always freezes in the cold. This is due to the substance contained in the bones and meat that form the jelly. Later, this meal was taken adopted by travelers, merchants, soldiers, and hunters. Kolodets was carried, more often, in birch bark feedbags. To keep warm in the winter, it was warmed up at a fire and eaten as a rich broth or cold and cut into pieces. The kholodets was appreciated not only because it was convenient to carry and easy to keep, but also because this dish can warm well in dank or frosty weather (Pokhlebkina, 2007).

In general, kholodets and studen are the same. Basically, this dish is called studen in the northern and northwestern regions of Russia, while in the south and southeast it is more often called kholodets. In addition, sometimes the name “kholodets” is applied to a dish made from pork or pork–beef broth, to distinguish it from a dish obtained solely from beef broth. In the past, studens were cooked for Christmas and New Year. Mention of the kholodets is found in ancient chronicles and charters. This noble dish, in many ancient culinary treatises, is called only “royal food.”

To make a studen (Fig. 2.5), one head (veal or pork) and four legs (veal or pork) are cut into equal pieces, covered with water (1 L of meat to 1 L of water) and cooked for 6–8 h on a very low heat, without boiling, until the volume of water is reduced by half. For 1–1.5 h before the end of cooking, onions (one to two), carrots (one), parsley root (one), are added and after a further 20 minutes, black pepper (10 peas), sweet pepper (five peas), five bay leaves, and a little salt are also added. Then the meat is removed, separated from the bones, cut into small pieces, put into a separate bowl, and mixed with chopped garlic (one head) and a small amount of ground black pepper. Broth with the



Figure 2.5 Studen.



remaining bones is boiled for another 0.5–1 h (until its volume does not exceed 1 L), and then salt is added, before filtering and pouring back with the boiled prepared meat. It is then allowed to cool for 3–4 h.

Studen is served with horseradish, mustard, pounded garlic, and sour cream.

**Telnoye**—this dish is made from fish. An intact telnoye, which is made from whole fillets, and tapped—from crushed fillets—are distinguished. Freshwater or sea fish can be used. For intact telnoye, it is recommended to take a fish that is not very large, preferably 30–35 cm in length, although any size of fish can be used for a tapped telnoye. Preparation of the food consists of two operations: preparation of the telnoye, and its boiling in water with spices.

For **tapped telnoye** (Fig. 2.6) fillets of fish (500 g) are cut into pieces not larger than 0.5–1 cm, kneaded with a wooden spoon, and mixed with finely chopped onions (two), dill (one tablespoon), parsley (one tablespoon), black ground pepper (half a teaspoon), salt (half a teaspoon), whipped egg (one), and flour (one tablespoon). All are mixed until homogeneous, molded as a thick sausage, panified in flour (one tablespoon), and then tightly wrapped with a gauze cloth and bandaged.

To boiling water (1.25 L) are added salt (two teaspoons), two to three bay leaves, black pepper peas (seven to eight peas), fennel seeds or anise (a quarter teaspoon), and dip telnoye wrapped in a napkin for 15 min.

The finished product is cooled in a serviette for 5 min, taken out and served in warm with boiled potatoes with dill and onions, horseradish, and olives. Telnoye can also be served cold with horseradish.

**Kasha**—this is one of the most common dishes in Russia.

For a long time, Kasha (porridge) was not only loved in Russia but also used in solemn ceremonies. It was used at feasts, weddings, and christenings, and therefore in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, the word “kasha” was equivalent to the word “feast.”

The variety of Russian kashas is due to the variety of cereals produced in Russia. In addition, almost from each type of grain, several types of cereals are made—from whole to crushed in various ways. The most common cereals for cooking kashas are buckwheat, millet, oatmeal, rice, and barley.



Figure 2.6 Telnoye.

The consistency of porridge in Russian cuisine is divided into three main types: gruel (or liquid kashas), smear (or viscous kashas), and steep (crumbly). These species are distinguished by the ratio of cereals to liquids.

However, kasha in its pure form is not yet kasha. Its taste largely depends on what it was flavored and seasoned with. For this, it is necessary to know and understand what is suitable for each type of cereal and kasha, for the best combination. The most common additives to cereal are oils (animal and vegetable) and dairy products (milk, sour milk, sour cream, buttermilk, cream, and cottage cheese). Less commonly, meat, fish, peas, eggs, mushrooms, and onions are used as additives. To create a sweet taste, in addition to sugar, honey, jam, raisins, dried apricots, nuts, fresh fruit, and chocolate are used. Spices used include black and red pepper, celery, parsley, parsnip, garlic, tubby, cinnamon, zest, vanilla, and nutmeg.

**Guryev kasha** (Fig. 2.7) is cooked using several methods.

Preparation of nuts: 500 g of nuts (hazel, cedar, walnut) are cleaned from the shell, placed in boiling water for 2–3 min, the peel removed, dried, pounded in a pounder, and one teaspoon of warm water is added to each tablespoon of nuts.

Preparation of the froth: milk (1.25 L) is poured into a flat pan (cast iron frying pan), put in a heated oven, and the resulting strong froths removed when they begin to redden, putting them in a separate bowl. Collect 12–15 strong milk froths.

Preparation of semolina: on the remaining milk, semolina (0.5 cup) is added, and boiled to create a thick well-boiled semolina porridge. Crushed nuts, sugar (0.5 cup), butter (two tablespoons), ground cinnamon (two teaspoons), or ground lemon zest (three to four teaspoons) are added and then it is mixed.

Preparation of Guryev porridge: into a wide flat saucepan prepared semolina porridge is poured to form a layer of 0.5–1 cm, which is covered with foam, again a layer of porridge thinner is poured, reglazed with foam, etc. In the penultimate layer, a little strawberry or pitted cherry jam and ground anise (0.25 teaspoon) are added. it is placed



**Figure 2.7** Guryev kasha.

for 10 min in a preheated oven, at a low temperature. It is then taken out, and the remaining jam (total 0.5 cup of jam) and crushed nuts are poured over. It is served in the dishes in which the porridge was prepared.

**Pancakes (bliny)** are one of the oldest Russian food products. They appeared in pagan times, until the ninth century. Bliny are an economical flour dish, for which a minimum of flour is required with maximum of the liquid (milk or water) because for pancakes, the dough is prepared with a sufficiently liquid consistency. Also, the volume of dough is increased due to the use of yeast. Russian pancakes have a peculiar consistency: they are soft, friable, spongy, lush, light, translucent, with a clearly discernible pore pattern. They easily absorb the melted butter and sour cream, and are juicy and tasty (Pokhlebkina, 2007).

Pancakes are distinguished and named for the type of flour or cereal used in their production: wheat, rye, buckwheat, buckwheat-wheat, millet, and semolina. There may also be differences in cooking technology, for example, boiled bliny. In addition, the range of pancakes can be increased by their various uses. The first option is to eat the pancakes with fat or spicy additives: serving them with butter or sour cream, or wrapping them around salted fish (salmon, pink salmon, herring, keta) or caviar. The second option is to add filling to the pancakes during the baking process. Most often, onions, hard-boiled eggs, and cottage cheese are used as the filling. In this case, chopped onions, chopped eggs are poured into the middle of the pan and poured over with dough. In another case, an almost baked pancake, without removing it from the pan, is spread on top with a thin layer of cottage cheese, pounded with a raw egg, greased with butter and quickly turned over to the other side, pressing it against the heated surface of the pan.

One of the varieties of bliny is so-called pancake pies, that is, a few pancakes stacked in a pile, between which is spread the filling. As a filling, minced meat, overcooked with onions, and mixed with chopped steeped eggs is most often used. On the sides, the pile of pancakes is smeared with a mixture of eggs, flour, and milk, which is then lightly cooked in an oven.

For cooking of **buckwheat-wheat bliny** (Fig. 2.8) yeast (25 g) is diluted in warm water (2.5 cups), then all the wheat flour (1.5 cups) and an equal volume of buckwheat flour (1.5 cups) is added and is allowed to rise.



**Figure 2.8** Buckwheat-wheat bliny.

The remaining buckwheat flour (two cups) is added and again it is allowed to rise.

The dough is cooked with boiling milk (two cups), before cooling and then adding sugar (one teaspoon), salt (one teaspoon), and butter (25 g), and then baking on melted butter.

Among the sweet Russian dishes a special place is occupied by **curd pastes**, which have the old name Paskha (Easter), with most having been developed in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Paskha appeared first as a food for the rich. Simple people could afford such an expensive dish only once a year, usually during a large religious holiday and at a time when milk was available.

Curd pastes raw, boiled (warm) and confectionery, in the preparation of which only cottage cheese is cooked, the rest of the products are added in raw form. All pastes have much in common in the composition of their main products, but differ by the technology used in their preparation (Pokhlebkin, 2007).

The main products in pastes are cottage cheese, butter, sour cream, cream, sugar, and eggs; in additional nuts, candied fruits, raisins, and various spices (most often vanilla and lemon peel) may be added. Cottage cheese and sugar are present in all pastes. Sour cream, butter, and cream are not always used at the same time, and eggs are used even less often—entirely, or only the white or yolk.

The technology for cooking raw pastes is to mechanically mix all the recipe ingredients. At the same time, a strict sequence of mixing of products is established, and, moreover, mixing and grinding are carried out carefully and for a long time, in some cases for an hour.

For the boiled paste, the products are mixed and cooked on a very low heat for an hour, and sometimes some of the products are added later in raw form. Also, confectionery refers to raw pastes, which are then baked in the oven. Confectionery pastes after manufacture are not pressed, as are the raw and boiled pastes.

To prepare the cottage cheese **lemon paste** (Fig. 2.9), curd (1.4 kg) is squeezed for 6 h under a press, then triturated with the rest of the ingredients: butter (100 g), eggs (three), cream (300 g), and zest of lemons (from two to three lemons). The prepared mixture is put on a very low heat for 1 h, and stirred continuously without allowing it to boil. It is then cooled and placed under a press for 16–20 h.

**Gingerbread (pryaniki)** is a product with many spices. The first gingerbread appeared in Russia in the ninth century as a simple mixture of rye flour with honey and berry juice, which was called honey bread. Pryaniki took its name in the ninth to twelfth centuries, when more spices were added, and when the presence of a smell due to the presence of spices, and not honey, was the most characteristic sign. In Russian gingerbread carnation, cinnamon, cardamom, orange or lemon zest, nutmeg, tubberry, Jamaican pepper, anise, mint, and ginger are added. Previously, galangite, matsis, coriander, and occasionally vanilla were added.



**Figure 2.9** Boiled lemon paskha.

Also, mandatory and characteristic components of gingerbread are black or white confectionery syrup, caramelized sugar (ginger), and honey. Sometimes jam, dried berries, and marmalade are added to the gingerbread, which is either introduced into the dough or used a glue or interlay two gingerbread surfaces.

In addition to these ingredients, gingerbread dough contains flour, and in some types of gingerbread a small amount of eggs and milk are added (one to two yolks or one glass of milk to 0.5–1 kg of flour). Such a recipe composition of gingerbread dough causes its special density, as during the preparation no disintegrants are used.

In the old Russian cuisine, the leavening agents used were usually honey and sour cream, which were introduced in amounts of 100–200 g per 1 kg of flour. In combination with honey, sour cream causes a little fermentation. The resulting gases contribute to a slight loosening of the texture. It is this weak loosening that helps to create a special consistency of gingerbread. Currently, in the manufacture of gingerbread, baking powder, soda, or ammonium are used as leavening agents.

The technology of making gingerbread dough consists of simple mixing of all ingredients, most often simultaneously, or in two stages when preparing custard cakes. However, the gingerbread should be kneaded very carefully in order to obtain a homogeneous mass.

A wide variety of gingerbreads (pryanik) are conditioned by the variation in flavor and aroma components. Different parts of Russia produce gingerbread with their own unique attributes. The gingerbreads from Tula, Moscow, Vyazma, Gorodetsk, and Rzhev are widely known. For any type of gingerbread, any main component is a characteristic. There are honey, pastry, sugar, wheaten, rye, lemon, almond, mint, and raspberry pryaniks. The names of some gingerbread cookies reflect the distinctive technological method used in their manufacture (raw, choux, broken) or appearance features (curly, hand-written, printed, zhemka, i.e. pressed, stamped with a stencil).

Most Russian pryaniks (except for mint and Vyazma) are covered with glaze, most often white, sometimes colorful, including pink. Some types of gingerbread, for example, those from Tula, Gorodetsk, and Vyazma, also have a relief pattern.

For the preparation of **honey gingerbread (homemade)** (Fig. 2.10) honey (500 g) is boiled on a low heat until it becomes reddish, and the foam is removed. With part of the honey rye flour (100 g) is boiled before being mixed with the rest of the honey. It is then left until cool to warm and whitened.

**Kulich** resembles an English cake, however the dough in the cakes is more elastic, dense, and fibrous, and not as friable as in cupcakes.

Kulichs are baked in Russia two or three times, or even once a year, for the largest holidays connected with a change in the season. This was either in the New Year, or early spring before the beginning of the agricultural year, or in the fall on the occasion of harvesting and the end of the agricultural year. The main reasons for such a rare cooking of cakes are the relatively high cost of kulichs, which require a lot of expensive food ingredients, as well as the laboriousness and length of the process of making them—it takes more than 6 h to mature and bake the dough.

The main component of kulich pastry is higher grade wheat flour. The main requirement for the quality of flour is that it should be as dry as possible. Before preparing the dough, the flour is twice sieved through an extremely fine sieve.

The remaining ingredients—butter, eggs, milk or cream, sugar, and especially yeast—must be fresh and of very high quality. Dry or long-stored yeast is not used to make cakes. Sugar is best used refined, containing the least amount of impurities possible.

This classic kulich contains flavor additives (candied fruits, raisins, candied dried lemon or orange peel), and must be tinted with saffron. These components are mandatory. Although they can change (raisins can be replaced with candied fruits or almonds) they should always be present in the cake. In addition to these flavorings and flavoring additives, such spices as vanilla, saffron, zest, cardamom, and cloves also are used in the



Figure 2.10 Honey gingerbread (homemade).

kulich dough, but in more moderate quantities than in gingerbread and other combinations. As a rule, the dominant flavor of one spice is usually emphasized, rather than a bouquet of several spices, as in gingerbread. Spices in cakes are designed to give a slight aromatic hint: cardamom, citrus or vanilla, sometimes saffron. They should not “”overcome the special flavor of the dough and its characteristic taste.

Kulichs differs in the taste and aroma of the dough, as well as in its moisture content. The ratio of flour and other components in cakes can vary considerably (for example, from 10 to 100 eggs per 2 kg of flour). However, even such variations do not change the characteristics of the kulich pastry, because it depends not so much on its composition, as on the manufacturing technology and its processing.

Dough for kulichs is made slowly. Regardless of the differences in the formulations, the basic stages of preparing the dough for kulichs are the same and are performed in the following sequence:

1. Preparation of the starter;
2. Preparation of yeast mixture—liquid dough;
3. Preparation of pouring—a mixture of eggs and milk;
4. Preparation of a preliminary, first dough;
5. Preparation of the main, second dough;
6. Preparation of the final, third dough;
7. Baking.

Each of these stages differs from the previous one in that an additional component or several components are introduced into the dough. Between the stages, there are intervals in which the dough should be proved. Thus, the dough in cakes rises many times. This is its main technological feature, and explains the length of time required for cooking kulichs.

A special feature of preparing a kulich pastry is that it must be thoroughly kneaded to obtain a certain structure of the dough. Also, when preparing cakes, it is necessary to observe a strictly defined temperature regime. It is best to raise the wadding dough to a room temperature of 25°C. At the same time, the kulich dough cannot be put in a place where the heat comes from below. In this case, the dough will not grow upward but will begin to lose its shape during proofing and baking.

The oven must be preheated before inserting the cake because only in this case will it maintain a uniform temperature during baking, which is very important. The order and duration of baking also have their own rules.

First, the cakes are baked in thin-sheeted tins with a removable bottom. The tins must be laid out with paper, and oiled with butter, and not just greased.

Second, the kulich pastry is always laid in the tin to half its volume or a maximum of two-thirds, so that it increases with baking, and in the process, it is almost doubled.

Third, the duration of baking of cakes depends mainly on their weight: a cake weighing less than 1 kg (but not less than 500–600 g) is baked in 25–30 min, one weighing



1 kg is baked in 45 min, one weighing 1.5 kg is baked for 1 h, and a 2 kg cake is baked for 1.5 h. It is not recommended to make cakes of weight less than 500–600 g, because they easily dry out in the oven, losing a significant part of the flavor and the taste is impaired.

Correctly cooked cakes can be kept for a week or longer.

Preparation of **home-made kulich** (Fig. 2.11) is performed in the following sequence.

For the starter in 0.5 cup of boiling milk, 100 g of flour is brewed, quickly stirring with a wooden spoon until an elastic mass is created.

Simultaneously, the yeast (50 g) is diluted in 0.5 cup of lukewarm milk, mixed with 100 g of flour and left for 10 min.

The yeast mixture is prepared by combining the starter and the diluted yeast, which is then covered and left to rise for 1 h or more.

The yolks (10), sugar (250 g), and salt (1 g) are poured into a homogeneous mass, and whipped.

Half of the poured mixture is mixed into the yeast mixture, adding 250 g of flour, and allowed to rise for 1 h. Then the another half of the filling added, along with 500 g of flour and the mixture is then kneaded the dough of a uniform consistency.

In the finished dough, a small portion of warm liquid butter (200 g) is poured and mixed, before adding the spices: lemon zest (three teaspoons) or cardamom powder (one teaspoon), matsis (0.5 teaspoon) or grated nutmeg (0.5 teaspoon), saffron tincture (one teaspoon), vanilla sugar (three to four teaspoons), cognac (25 g), and the dough is then left to rise.

After the second rising of the dough, it is precipitated to the original volume, raisins (70 g) and candied fruits (15 g) are added to it, after having first been rolled in flour, and the dough for the third time is left to rise.

The finished dough is divided into two parts (two kulichs), which are placed in tins to half the tin volume, while fill from above with raisins (30 g) and candied fruits (10 g), before again being left to rise to two-thirds of the tin volume. Then it is greased with egg yolk and baked at a moderate heat for 45 min.



Figure 2.11 Kulich.





Figure 2.12 Sbiten.

**Sbiten**—This is a winter drink, in the place of tea before its appearance in Russia. Sbitneys (Fig. 2.12) have always been popular drinks that are only drunk hot. The very word “sbiten” comes from the verb “sbivat” in the sense of “uniting, collecting together the dissimilar parts” Sbitens are relatively simple to prepare. They are obtained by boiling honey, cooking sbiten flavorings (spices, juices), and then combining and boiling these two parts.

To prepare sbiten, honey (150 g), diluted with water (200 mL), is brought to the boil, and the foam removed. Sugar (100 g) is diluted with water (200 mL) and boiled separately. The two parts are then combined, and boiled together, however it is not allowed to boil so much as to evaporate a lot of water. In the remaining water (1–1.5 L), spices are brewed [dry herb of St. John’s wort (two to three teaspoons), cloves (two buds), black pepper (five to six grains), ginger powder (0.25 teaspoons) cinnamon (one teaspoon), mint (two teaspoons)] for 15–20 min in a closed vessel. This is allowed to stand for another 10 min, and is then filtered, the honey–sugar mixture added, and finally placed on the heat without bringing to the boil. It is only drunk while hot.

## Conclusion

Russia is a multicultural country, where you can taste a variety of, sometimes very exotic, dishes of many nationalities—from the Tatar chak–chak (dessert made from dough with honey) to the Yakut stroganin (fresh frozen fish or meat). However, traditional Russian cuisine can be found in every corner of the country.

Russian cuisine has come a long way from the development of wooden barrels and cast-iron stoves to the latest technology and global recognition. This was facilitated by urbanization and a departure from the class and social structure of society. The presented culinary tradition that shaped Russian cuisine is a significant part of the Russian identity

and culture. The national cuisine has been formed under the influence of the specific climate, economic, geographic, and social conditions of the country. Traditional Russian food was created through the love for the land, the long hard winters, immense physical labor, and the variety of ingredients available.

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