



Greenwich Village

SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Ukrainian Christmas Borscht with Vushka

Makes 8 cups; about 6 servings

A special meatless borscht is always served for the Ukrainian celebration of Christmas Eve. At the Darmochwal home – where Mykola, the son of the original owner of **Veselka**, presides over the dinner – the meal always includes this clear borscht with little Vushka dumplings floating in it.

Ingredients

- 2 pounds beets
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup white vinegar
- 1 carrot, diced
- 1 stalk celery, diced
- 1 leek, diced
- 1 small onion, diced
- 4 cups chicken stock
- 2 bay leaves
- 5 whole allspice berries
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
- Salt



1. Trim and scrub the beets and chop them, preferably, in a food processor fitted with the metal blade.

2. In a medium pot, combine the chopped beets, 4 cups water, and the white vinegar. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer, uncovered, until the beets are soft and the liquid is a bright deep pink, about 45 minutes. (You may want to place a pot lid slightly ajar over the pot to keep your stovetop from getting splashed.) Strain and set the juice aside.



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3. Meanwhile, in a stockpot, combine the carrot, celery, leek, onion, chicken stock, bay leaves, and allspice berries. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer, uncovered, for 45 minutes. (Again, you may want to place a pot lid slightly ajar over the pot.)
4. Strain out and discard the vegetables and aromatics and return the strained stock to the pot. Stir in the beet juice and simmer gently for 5 minutes over medium-low heat.
5. Add the sugar gradually, about 1 teaspoon at a time, stopping to taste between additions. You may not want to use all of it, depending on how sweet your beets were. Stir in the freshly ground black pepper and garlic. Season to taste with salt.
6. To serve, ladle the borscht into individual soup bowls and float a few cooked Vushka in each bowl.

VUSHKA

Veselka makes Vushka ("Little Ear" Dumplings) during the Christmas season to serve in their Christmas borscht. They are so addictive that the staff make a solemn promise at the start of the season not to eat any, otherwise there wouldn't be any left to sell! Vushka are made with the same dough used for pierogi, but made with water instead of milk, and the dough is rolled thinner and cut smaller.

Filling

- ¼ cup dried porcini mushrooms
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 small onion, minced
- 4 cups roughly chopped button mushrooms
- Salt

- Freshly ground black pepper

Dough

- 1 large egg yolk
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 3¼ cups all-purpose flour



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1. To make the filling, rehydrate the dried mushrooms: Place them in a small bowl and pour about 1/4 cup boiling water over them to cover. Set aside until softened, about 10 minutes. Drain the porcini, reserving the liquid, and set both aside.
2. Heat the vegetable oil in a large saute pan. Add the onion and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until the onion is translucent but not browned, about 5 minutes.
3. Add the fresh mushrooms and cook until the mushrooms have given up all their water and are greatly reduced in size. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
4. In the bowl of a food processor fitted with the metal blade, combine the cooked fresh mushrooms and the rehydrated porcini mushrooms. Carefully spoon out the clear soaking liquid from the porcini mushrooms and add it to the food processor, leaving the silt undisturbed at the bottom of the bowl. (Alternatively, strain it through a clean coffee filter.) Pulse the mushroom mixture three or four times until it is finely ground but not a paste-it should retain some chunks of mushroom and should not be runny or soupy. Set the filling aside while you make the dough.
5. To make the dough, in a measuring cup with a lip, combine the egg yolk, oil, and 1 1/2 cups lukewarm water. Whisk with a fork for 1 minute. Place the flour in a large bowl. Make a well in the center and pour in the wet ingredients, about one-third at a time, using your fingers or a fork to incorporate the wet ingredients between additions.
6. When you have added all the wet ingredients, use your hands to fold the dough together. If it seems too dry and rumbly, add water, a few tablespoons at a time. If it seems too sticky, add a little more flour, about 1 teaspoon at a time, to avoid making it too dry.



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7. Transfer the dough to a lightly floured board and knead for 3 minutes. Again, add very small amounts of flour if the dough is too sticky to knead. When the dough is smooth and thoroughly incorporated, form it into a ball, transfer it to a small bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 45 minutes. Clean and dry your work surface. Set aside a floured jelly-roll pan, platter, or cutting board for the finished vushka.

8. Divide the dough into three sections. Place one section on a well-floured work surface and roll out very thin-until almost translucent-with a well-floured rolling pin.

9. Cut the rolled dough into 1 1/2 X 1 1/2-inch squares. Dot the center of each square with about 1/2 teaspoon of the mushroom filling.

10. Fold squares in half to form triangles, sealing the edges tightly. (If the dough seems to be drying, lightly moisten your fingertips with water to seal the edges.) Pinch the two opposing corners together to form the "little ear" shape. As you finish filling and sealing each dumpling, place it on the floured jelly-roll pan; do not stack. (If it's very humid when you're making these, you may want to sprinkle a little flour on top of the vushka as well.) Repeat with second half of dough and the remaining filling.

11. Cook the vushka in abundant salted water until they float, 2 to 4 minutes. Drain and serve in Christmas Borscht.

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The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation was founded in 1980 to preserve the architectural heritage and cultural history of Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo. GVSHP is a leader in protecting the sense of place and human scale that define the Village's unique community.

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