

Standard Borsch

(adapted from *Traditional Ukrainian Cookery* by Savella Stechishin)

1 ½ pounds soup meat with bone
10 to 12 cups cold water
1 teaspoon salt
2 medium beets, cut in thin strips
1 small carrot, cut in thin strips
1 medium potato, diced
½ cup thinly sliced celery
½ cup diced string beans or cooked white beans
2 to 3 cups shredded cabbage
¾ cup strained tomatoes or tomato juice
½ clove garlic, crushed, if desired
1 tablespoon flour
Beet kvas or lemon juice
Salt and pepper
Chopped dill
½ cup sour cream

Cover the meat with the cold water, add the salt, bring slowly to the boiling point, then skim. Cover and simmer for 1 ½ hours. Add the onion and beets; cook 10 to 15 minutes or until the beets are almost done. If young beets are used, cook them together with the other vegetables.

Add the carrot, potato, celery and string beans; continue cooking for about 10 minutes. When cooked white beans are used, they should be added after the cabbage is cooked to retain the white color.

Finally, put in the cabbage and cook until it is tender. Do not overcook.

Stir in the tomatoes or tomato juice and the crushed garlic, if it is used. Blend the flour with 3 tablespoons of cold water, spoon into it some soup liquid, and then stir into the borsch. If a thickened borsch is not desired, omit the flour.

Add a small quantity of the beet kvas or lemon juice or any other mild acid commonly used in borsch, taking care not to use too much. A good borsch should be pleasantly tart but not sour.

Season to taste with salt and pepper, and bring it to the boiling point. Flavor it with the chopped dill.

When ready to serve, add some thick sour cream or rich sweet cream. The amount of cream will depend on personal taste. It may also be served without cream. Some prefer to put the cream into each serving. This is the custom in central Ukraine.