



In this picture taken on Thursday, a traditional chak-chak is displayed during the 2018 soccer World Cup at the Chak-Chak museum in Kazan, Russia.

AP Photos by Frank Augstein

Tatar’s national dessert is a hit

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN
AP Sports Writer

KAZAN, Russia — There are arguably more chak-chaks for sale in Kazan’s shops, cafes and restaurants than fans attending World Cup matches in the colorful city on the Volga river. Traditionally eaten at weddings in central Asia, the sugary treat has become the national dessert of Tatarstan, the oil-rich region which promotes itself as the “Land of 1,001 Delights.” In the lively Bauman pedestrian street in downtown Kazan, vendors from the fast food chain Tubetey, that specializes in halal Tatar cuisine, are handing out the dish made from soft deep-fried dough, sugar and honey.

“When I was a kid, my parents, my relatives, used to make them at home. I grew up with chak-chaks,” Nourbek Batulla, a 30-year-old dancer told The Associated Press. “I would not say that I eat chak-chaks every day, but this is typically the kind of thing I bring when I’m invited somewhere.” Chak-chaks come in dif-



Lisan Yarullina displays a traditional chak-chak during the 2018 soccer World Cup at the Chak-Chak museum in Kazan, Russia.

ferent shapes, most often in mounds, pyramids or noodles. During the World Cup, they are on display on the shelves of dozens of souvenir and food stores as Tatarstan’s tourism officials use the dish to promote their region. But it’s not just for the tourists. Chak-chaks are truly loved by locals. Expensive in the ancient times because honey was a very rare commodity, chak-chaks are sold for about 30 rubles in Kazan’s cafes — the equivalent of half a dollar — making them a very affordable

pleasure. During the mild summer evenings of the World Cup, families sit at cafe terraces to enjoy the delicacy in the city located about 500 miles east of Moscow. Chak-chaks are also very popular during Kazan’s big events. In 2005, when the city celebrated its 1,000th birthday, a chak-chak weighing 2,200 pounds spanning across a 13,266-square-meter area — almost twice the size of a soccer field — was made. More recently, a four-ton chak-chak, probably the biggest ever

made, was baked to celebrate the start of the World Cup.

In Kazan, one of the 11 Russian cities hosting matches, the debate over the best makers and recipes of chak-chak has yet to be settled. Batulla recommends Khlebzavot 3, a factory where customers can buy their favorite dessert directly from manufacturers.

A good place to try the sugary dish is the chak-chak museum, a private place located in a refurbished 19th century wooden mansion just a stone’s throw away from the Old Tatar district, on the left bank of the picturesque Kaban Lake.

There, Lisan Yarullina is taking visitors on a tour documenting Tatar’s daily life before the 1917 Revolution that culminates with a degustation of chak-chaks and tea.

“There are so many recipes,” she said. “Because it used to be a family-made thing, everyone has their own recipe, they are passed down through families. But the main ingredient is love. Without a good mood, it’s impossible to achieve something tasty.”

Pauline Frommer’s tips for a stress-free NYC visit

By BETH J. HARPAZ
AP Travel Editor

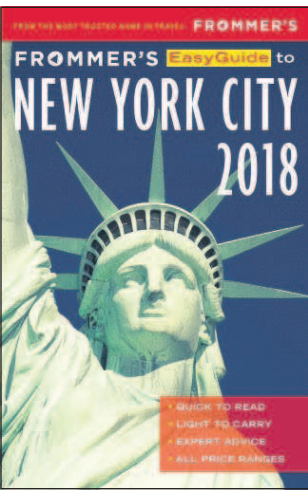
NEW YORK — New York City can be an intimidating place for visitors. But travel expert Pauline Frommer is here to help with a new book, “Frommer’s EasyGuide to New York City 2018.” Here are some tips and advice from Frommer’s recent interview with AP Travel’s “Get Outta Here!” podcast :

DEALING WITH NEW YORKERS

Are New Yorkers scary? Will they step over a body lying in the street or will they help a stranger? “New Yorkers are incredibly busy people. But kind as well,” Frommer said. “So if you walk up to somebody who’s rushing by, and ask them to stop, they may not stop. But if you stand on the street corner with a map, within seconds, you will have three people offering to help you.” As for crime, New York is statistically one of America’s safest big cities, but do keep an eye on your wallet and your purse. And here’s Frommer’s advice for dealing with people who approach you on the street, like costumed character actors in Times Square who offer to pose for photos and then demand payment: “Pretend you’re deaf. You just keep walking. ... You maybe can be polite and say, ‘Sorry,’ and keep walking, but you can’t give them an opening.”

HOTELADVICE

The idea that you’ll be in walking distance from



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everything if you stay in Times Square or midtown “is a myth,” Frommer says. So consider staying in downtown Manhattan or even in Queens, including Long Island City, which is just a subway stop or two away from Manhattan. You might end up in “a chain hotel, it might not have that much character,” but rooms can be had for \$149. To really save money, “visit in January or February,” Frommer said. “You can get a really nice hotel room in February for \$99 and that same hotel room in October will cost you \$329.”

GETTING AROUND

“Don’t be scared” of the subway, Frommer says. New Yorkers love complaining about their trains, but Frommer says compared with cabs, they’re cheaper (\$2.75 per ride) and usually faster. The trickiest part: Make sure the train is going in the right direction before you swipe your fare card. If not, you may have to exit and pay again on the other side, depending

on the station (some provide free transfers in either direction). By cab, Frommer says, it’s often faster to hail yellow taxis on the street than wait for Uber or Lyft drivers to arrive. Another option: the Via ride-sharing service, which charges a few dollars a ride. CitiBike, a bike-sharing system, is \$12 a day “for as many half-hour rides as you want,” Frommer says. “Biking is the fastest way to go anywhere. And there are certain streets now that have really good bike lanes that are separated from the traffic.”

A FEW FROMMER FAVORITES

—Museum: The Metropolitan Museum. “Not only does it have some of the greatest artworks in the world — Vermeer, Rembrandt, Sergeant — but it also has things that will engage the imaginations of history-lovers. You can go into an actual Egyptian temple. You can go into a room designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. And for those who don’t love museums, try this: You go into a gallery. You find one thing that interests you and just stand in front of that one thing for two minutes and let it work on you. ... Try and commune with it.”

—Freebies: The Staten Island Ferry and Shake-speare in the Park.

—Cruise: “The Circle Line hires out-of-work actors as its guides. So they’re also very well-spoken. They love the history. They know how to tell a story. ... The key is when

you enter, sit on the right side of the boat so you’re facing inwards toward Manhattan.” P.S. “The three-hour tour is too long; take the shorter one.”

—Neighborhood: “I’m a big history buff so I love taking friends down to the Financial District.” Sites include St. Paul’s Chapel, where George Washington prayed, and Federal Hall, where he took the oath of office.

—Inexpensive restaurant: Dhoulagiri Kitchen, 124 Lexington Ave., serving Himalayan food including fiery curries.

—Bar: The Aviary NYC, on the 35th floor of 80 Columbus Circle, with “spectacular” views. “Every drink there foams or steams or changes as you drink it ... It’s like a Broadway show!”

—Jazz: Smoke, 2751 Broadway. “They have great barbecue while you’re listening to the music,” she said. “They have really varied programming so one night Brazilian jazz, another night a classical guitarist and it’s a real neighborhood place.”

—Weekend itinerary for first-time visitors: “Get up high and go to the top of the Empire State Building or Top of the Rock. ... Go to one of our great museums, maybe take a walking tour. There’s some really good ones, some of them are free. And then, I think it’s not really a weekend in New York if you don’t see a show. It doesn’t have to be Broadway. ... And don’t forget New York City is incredible after dark. So also go to one of our great bars.”

Simple American buttercream makes flag sheet cake a patriotic delight

By AMERICA’S TEST KITCHEN

A big flag sheet cake is the perfect Fourth of July dessert; and at a time when patriotic-colored berries are at their best, vibrant blueberries and red raspberries are a fitting topping. We knew that our workhorse Yellow Sheet Cake was the ideal base for the cake, so our challenge when developing this recipe was simply determining the best frosting.

Whipped cream, the most common topping for this summer cake, had little staying power and the juicy berries bled into the cream. A simple American buttercream in the form of our Vanilla Frosting worked much better and ably glued the stars and stripes to the cake.

Once our cake was topped with berries, we were able to bring the flag to the table. You may have extra frosting after coating the tops and sides of the cake. Wait until a few hours before serving to arrange the berries to ensure that they taste fresh at serving time.



America’s Test Kitchen via AP

This image provided by America’s Test Kitchen in May 2018 shows the cover for the cookbook “The Perfect Cake.” It includes a recipe for flag cake.

FLAG CAKE

Servings: 12-15
Start to finish: 1 hour and 30 minutes, plus 2 hours to cool the cake

Yellow Sheet Cake:
2 1/2 cups (10 ounces) cake flour
1 3/4 cups (12 1/4 ounces) sugar
1 1/4 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon baking soda
3/4 teaspoon salt
1 cup buttermilk, room temperature
3 large eggs, separated, plus 3 large yolks, room temperature
10 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled
3 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
Pinch cream of tartar
5 cups Vanilla Frosting:
1 pound (4 sticks) unsalted butter, each stick cut into quarters and softened
1/4 cup heavy cream
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
1/4 teaspoon salt
4 cups (16 ounces) confectioners’ sugar
Toppings:
5 ounces (1 cup) blueberries
15 ounces (3 cups) raspberries

Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 325 F. Grease and flour 13 by 9-inch baking pan. Whisk flour, 1 1/2 cups sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt together in bowl. Whisk buttermilk, egg yolks, melted butter, oil, and vanilla together in second bowl. Whisk flour, 1 1/2 cups sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt together in bowl. Whisk buttermilk, egg yolks, melted butter, oil, and vanilla together in second bowl. Using stand mixer fitted with whisk attachment, whip egg whites and cream of tartar on medium-low speed until foamy, about 1 minute. Increase speed to medium-high and whip whites to soft billowy mounds, about 1 minute. Gradually add remaining 1/4 cup sugar and whip until glossy, stiff peaks form, 2 to 3 minutes; transfer to third bowl. Add flour mixture to now-empty mixer bowl and mix on low speed, gradually adding buttermilk mixture and mixing until almost incorporated (a few streaks of dry flour will remain), about 15 seconds. Scrape down bowl, then mix on medium-low speed until smooth and fully incorporated, 10 to 15 seconds. Using rubber spatula, stir one-third of whites into batter. Gently fold remaining whites into batter until no white streaks remain. Transfer batter to prepared pan and smooth top with rubber spatula. Gently tap pan on counter to settle batter. Bake until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean, 28 minutes to 32 minutes, rotating pan halfway through baking. Let cake cool completely in pan on wire rack, about 2 hours.

While cake cools, assemble the frosting. Using stand mixer fitted with paddle, beat butter, cream, vanilla, and salt on medium-high speed until smooth, about 1 minute. Reduce speed to medium-low, slowly add sugar, and beat until incorporated and smooth, about 4 minutes. Increase speed to medium-high and beat until frosting is light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. (Frosting can be refrigerated for up to 3 days; let soften at room temperature, about 2 hours, then rewhip on medium speed until smooth, 2 to 5 minutes.) To assemble, line edges of cake platter with 4 strips of parchment to keep platter clean. Place cake on platter. Spread frosting evenly over top and sides of cake. Using blueberries, outline 6 by 4 1/2-inch rectangle in top left corner of cake. Make diagonal rows of blueberries within outline, leaving single blueberry’s width between rows. Lay additional blueberries evenly between rows to make blueberry checkerboard. Gently press blueberries to adhere. For red stripes, lay raspberries on their side and gently nestle them next to one another. There should be 4 short rows of raspberry stripes across top of cake and 3 long rows of raspberry stripes across bottom of cake. Gently press raspberries to adhere. Serve.



Carl Tremblay/ America’s Test Kitchen via AP

This undated photo provided by America’s Test Kitchen in May 2018 shows a U.S. flag cake in Brookline, Mass. This recipe appears in the cookbook “The Perfect Cake.”