

UKRAINE

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For dessert, I made Ukrainian crepes called nalesniki. I filled mine with a lightly sweetened cheese filling, but Mouzi said you could put literally almost anything in them: meat, vegetables, jellies, herbs, mushrooms, fruit, whipped cream — anything.

Maybe so, but the filling I made with blended cottage cheese, cream cheese and sugar was absolutely heavenly — and I'm not a fan of cottage cheese. It could not have been better with the paper-thin crepes. I see no reason ever to fill them with anything else.

Mouzi said her favorite filling is whipped cream cheese and salmon.

Oh. Yeah, that would be great.

Crepes, cabbage rolls, borsch and Chicken Kiev — the Ukrainian food I made was all truly exceptional. It made one-quarter of my heart very proud.

BORSCH

Yield: 8 servings

6 cups beef or vegetable stock
2 bay leaves

1 ½ pounds beef bones with beef, optional

½ large onion, chopped, (plus 1 onion cut into quarters, optional)

2 medium carrots chopped, (plus 2 medium carrots cut into quarters, optional)

2 ribs celery cut into quarters, optional

3 cups cabbage, thinly sliced

1 tablespoon olive oil, divided

2 medium beets, peeled and cut into matchsticks

2 large potatoes, peeled and cubed

¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons tomato paste

1 teaspoon salt

½ tablespoon white vinegar

Pinch of granulated sugar

2 medium garlic cloves, grated

Pepper

2 tablespoons dill or parsley, finely chopped

Sour cream, for serving

1. If making optional double-rich stock, put broth and bay leaves in a large pot or Dutch oven and add bones and beef, 1 quartered onion, 2 quartered carrots and celery. Bring to a boil, lower heat and simmer 1 hour. Skim occasionally, as needed. Add water occasionally to keep liquid level about the same. Strain out bay leaves, bones, beef, onion, carrots and celery. Pull meat away from bones, and reserve. Proceed to step 3.

2. If using regular stock, pour stock and bay leaves into large pot or Dutch oven, and bring to a boil.

3. Add cabbage, cover and return stock to a boil. Reduce heat to low and cook 20 minutes.

4. Meanwhile, heat ½ tablespoon olive oil in a large skillet. Add ½ chopped onion and 2 chopped carrots and cook 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

5. Add remaining ½ tablespoon oil and beets. Cook an additional 3 to 4 minutes, stirring occasionally.

6. Transfer sautéed vegetables to the pot and add potatoes, tomato paste, reserved meat (if using) and salt. Cover, bring to a boil, and cook on low heat for 20 minutes.

7. Turn off heat. Add vinegar, sugar, grated garlic and pepper. Stir and let borsch sit 10 minutes. Add dill, stir and adjust any seasonings (especially vinegar) to taste. This soup tastes best the second day.

8. Serve hot with a dollop of sour cream and bread on the side.

Per serving: 437 calories; 24 g fat; 11 g saturated fat; 108 mg cholesterol; 27 g protein; 37 g carbohydrate; 8 g sugar; 6 g fiber; 772 mg sodium; 118 mg calcium — Adapted from a recipe by Olena Osipov, via ifoodreal.com

CABBAGE ROLLS (GOLUBTSI)

Yield: 12 servings

3 cups cooked rice, from

1 cup uncooked

Salt

¼ cup white vinegar

1 medium cabbage

1 pound ground pork, ground beef, ground turkey or a combination

4 medium carrots, grated, divided

2½ tablespoons olive oil, divided

½ tablespoon butter

1 ½ cups marinara sauce, your choice (preferably homemade), divided

1 large egg

1 tablespoon sour cream

Notes: This dish can be prepared through step 8 and refrigerated up to 1 day in advance of cooking.

• **These stuffed cabbage rolls are best when cooked in the oven, but they can also be simmered on top of the stove.**

• **To freeze, place room-temperature, cooked cabbage rolls in a single layer in freezer bags. Defrost in refrigerator overnight before reheating.**

1. If rice is uncooked, cook according to package directions. Set aside. Preheat oven to 450 degrees.

2. Fill a large pot or Dutch oven two-thirds of the way with water. Add ½ tablespoon salt and ¼ cup vinegar, and bring to a boil.

3. Peel and discard the top two leaves from the cabbage. Cut out the core with a knife. Place cabbage in the boiling water, bottom down; cook 5 minutes, then rotate and cook another 5 minutes. Pull off leaves and place them on a platter to cool. If interior leaves are not soft, return cabbage to water and boil a few more minutes. Leaves are done when they are soft and dull colored. Reserve 4 cups of water from the pot.

4. Mix ground meats and rice together in a large bowl.

5. Grate and sauté 2 of the carrots in 1 ½ tablespoons oil and the butter over medium-high heat. Once they are soft, add ½ cup marinara sauce and sauté 1 more minute.

6. Add carrot-marinara mixture to rice and meat. Add egg and ½ tablespoon salt. Mix well.

7. Remove the tough stem from the larger cabbage leaves. Place about 2 tablespoons of the meat mixture (more for larger leaves) in the center of each leaf of cabbage. Roll the leaf like a burrito, stuffing in both ends to form a package of meat and rice encased in cabbage. Arrange cabbage rolls in a large pot or Dutch oven.

8. Heat the remaining 1 tablespoon oil in a skillet and sauté remaining 2 grated carrots with 1 teaspoon salt. Stir until soft. Add sour cream and remaining 1 cup marinara sauce. Sauté 1 more minute and remove from heat. Pour carrot-tomato sauce over the cabbage rolls.

9. To cook, add enough



Golubtsi, cabbage stuffed with ground beef.

Colter Peterson/St. Louis Post-Dispatch-TNS

Nalesniki, a Ukrainian crepe, filled with cottage cheese, cream cheese and sugar.

Colter Peterson/St. Louis Post-Dispatch-TNS

reserved water to almost cover the cabbage rolls. If using in the oven, cover and place on a rack in the bottom third and cook at 450 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes. Reduce heat to 350 degrees and cook 1 hour more.

10. If using the stove, bring pot to a light boil, then cover and simmer 40 minutes over medium heat.

Per serving: 242 calories; 12 g fat; 4 g saturated fat; 45 mg cholesterol; 10 g protein; 22 g carbohydrate; 5 g sugar; 3 g fiber; 393 mg sodium; 56 mg calcium

— Adapted from a recipe by Natasha Kravchuk, via natashaskitchen.com

CHICKEN KIEV

Yield: 6 servings

4 to 8 ounces softened butter, depending on size of the chicken breasts

1 to 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives, parsley, tarragon or chervil (or 1 to 2 teaspoons chopped thyme or rosemary), depending on size of chicken breasts

Salt

6 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, see note

Salt and pepper

Oil for deep frying

2 large eggs

¼ cup water

½ cup all-purpose flour

3 cups breadcrumbs

Note: If chicken breasts are larger than 8 ounces apiece, slice them in half horizontally. In that case, use 3 breasts to create 6 pieces of chicken.

1. Mix the butter thoroughly with the chopped herbs, adding salt if butter is unsalted. Chill briefly. If the chicken pieces are small, use the lesser amounts of butter and herbs; if quite large, use the greater amounts.

2. Place the chicken breasts between sheets of plastic wrap or

waxed paper and pound lightly with a flat mallet or cast-iron skillet to make them ¼-inch thick. Sprinkle with salt and pepper.

3. Place 1 ½ to 3 tablespoons of filling in the center of each chicken breast. Fold the edges over to enclose the filling. Place the stuffed chicken breasts briefly in the freezer before breading them.

4. Meanwhile, pour oil deep enough in a pot to cover a rolled chicken breast. This requires a lot of oil; you may wish to use a medium-sized pot and cook the chicken in batches. Bring oil to a temperature of 375 degrees.

5. Beat the eggs with the water in a bowl. Dip the stuffed chicken breasts first in flour to coat well, then in the egg mixture, coating them all over. Finally, roll them in bread crumbs.

6. Carefully place 1 or more of the chicken breasts in the hot oil; the temperature will immediately drop. Try to keep the temperature around 350 degrees while you deep fry the breasts until golden brown and completely cooked, about 13 to 15 minutes.

Per serving: 567 calories; 25 g fat; 12 g saturated fat; 185 mg cholesterol; 36 g protein; 47 g carbohydrate; 4 g sugar; 3 g fiber; 1,253 mg sodium; 121 mg calcium

— Adapted from "Craig Clai-

borne's the New New York Times Cook Book" by Craig Claiborne and Pierre Franey

UKRAINIAN CREPES (NALESNIKI)

Yield: 15 servings

24 ounces cottage cheese, see note

8 ounces cream cheese, softened

¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons granulated sugar, divided

5 eggs, beaten

1 ¼ cups all-purpose flour

2 cups milk

½ tablespoon mild-flavored oil

¾ teaspoon salt

4 tablespoons (½ stick) butter, melted

Notes: You can also use ricotta or mascarpone. In those cases, do not rinse before using.

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Rinse cottage cheese well in a colander or sieve, and let drain. Dry on paper towels.

2. Beat together the cottage cheese, cream cheese and ¼ cup of the sugar until fairly smooth. Set aside.

3. Beat together the eggs

and flour until most of the flour clumps are gone. Gradually add milk over low speed until mixture smooths out. Beat in the oil, salt and the remaining 2 tablespoons of sugar.

4. Place a nonstick 11-inch skillet over medium heat (you'll have to lightly grease with butter or oil if using a pan that is not nonstick). When the pan is hot, pour a scant 1/3 cup of batter onto it; quickly tilt and shake from side to side for the batter to spread evenly. Use less batter for a smaller pan. Cook until edges crisp slightly, and flip over. Cook an additional 45 seconds before removing. Stack and repeat.

5. Spread the filling thinly over the top of each crepe. Roll tightly, and arrange in the prepared baking dish. You will need part of a second layer on top of the first. Brush both layers with melted butter, cover dish with aluminum foil and bake 25 to 30 minutes. Cut in half before serving.

Per serving: 215 calories; 13 g fat; 7 g saturated fat; 94 mg cholesterol; 10 g protein; 16 g carbohydrate; 7 g sugar; no fiber; 341 mg sodium; 114 mg calcium

— Adapted from a recipe from alyonascooking.com

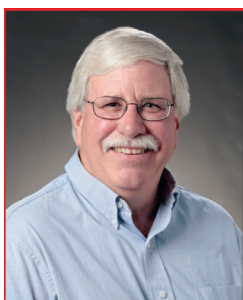
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