

Shopska Salad

Traditional Bulgarian salad

Shopska salad is a traditional Bulgarian cold salad made from tomatoes, cucumbers, onion, raw or roasted peppers and sirene (Bulgarian cheese, feta cheese, white brine cheese). Shopska salad is a very distinctive Bulgarian dish. It is named after a group of very frugal people called shopi who live in the capital of Bulgaria, Sofia.



Ingredients

4 ripe tomatoes



2 long cucumbers



1 onion



1 red or green pepper



1/3 bunch of parsley



2 tablespoons (olive) oil



3 tablespoons of red wine vinegar



1 cup (1/2 lb) Bulgarian cheese (or feta cheese)



Preparation

Chop all tomatoes (we recommend leaving the pieces bigger), cucumbers and the pepper and put in a bowl.

Add the finely chopped onions and parsley. Sprinkle with the oil and vinegar and mix it all together. Grate the feta on top.



Tarator - Bulgarian Cold Cucumber Soup



This cold soup is among Bulgarians favorite foods for the summer. It is served as a first course instead of a salad or between meals as refreshment. You might even see it served in a glass. Most men here say it goes great with a glass of cold rakiya (Bulgarian grape or fruit brandy) or Ouzo.

Ingredients

1 large cucumber, peeled, seeded and chopped



4 cloves garlic



1/2 teaspoon salt



1/2 cup walnuts



2 tablespoons sunflower, walnut or olive oil



1 1/2 cups yogurt



1 to 2 teaspoons lemon juice, or to taste



1/2 cup cold water



Fresh dill



Preparation

Cut the cucumbers into cubes and put them in a bowl. You may also grate them but it changes the look and the consistency.

Beat the yogurt with a fork until it gets liquid and pour it over the cucumbers.

Add the crushed garlic, the walnuts and the minced dill as well as salt and oil to taste.

If needed add some water to make the soup as liquid as you like but take care not to make it too "thin".

Put into the refrigerator to cool or add ice cubes.

Serve cold.



Bob Chorba (Beans Soup)



Ingredients

1 lbs beans (use white beans if possible - haricot, etc.)



2 qt. water



2 onions, chopped



2 tbsp oil



3 tbsp flour



1 tsp paprika



4 tomatoes (or a can of tomatoes)



1 tsp oregano (or dried mint)



salt to taste



Preparation

Soak the beans in the water overnight. Next morning drain off the water, add same amount and bring to boil. If you don't want to wait one day to get this done, you can simply boil the beans for an hour, then discard the water, add water again and bring to a boil again. Simmer gently for about an hour or until the beans soften. In a separate pan fry the onions in the oil until golden brown, add the flour, stir and fry for less than a minute. Add the paprika, stir and add to the beans. Add the tomatoes and oregano as well. Leave the soup to simmer on a low heat for about 20 minutes.



Panagyurski Eggs (Eggs Panagyurski Style)

This dish is named after Panagyurishte, a small town full of history, one of them - this great recipe. In essence it is poached eggs with yogurt with a little twist.

Ingredients

3 eggs



1 cup strained yogurt



1 tsp oil



a pinch of paprika



salt to taste



2 tbsp of vinegar



1 clove garlic, crushed (optional)



1/4 gallon water



Preparation

Add the vinegar and a pinch of salt to about 1 liter (1 quart) of boiling water. Break the eggs directly into the water. Boil for 3 to 5 minutes, depending on how runny you like your eggs. Mix the yogurt together with the crushed garlic and very little salt. Put the eggs on top of that mixture. Heat the oil and add the paprika very carefully not to burn it (it takes 10 seconds or less to burn so be careful).

Immediately pour the curried oil over the eggs and the yogurt mixture and serve.

Note: A friend of mine used to prepare the dish by adding some crushed feta inside the yoghurt mixture which adds a tasty twist to its taste.



Monastery Gyuvetch

This dish used to be prepared at the Rila Monastery kitchen. Rila Monastery is one of the most famous Bulgarian tourist attractions and a milestone in Bulgarian culture and religion - it has survived almost untouched throughout the years of the Ottoman Yoke and has provided a shelter and education to many people in the years of oppression.



Ingredients

2 lbs beef



4 tomatoes, chopped



1/2 lbs mushrooms



1 cup rice



1 onion, chopped



15 olives, whole



a bunch of parsley



2 tbsp vegetable oil



1 tbsp butter



1 tbsp sugar



2 1/2 cups beef stock



black pepper, paprika and salt



Preparation

Cut the beef into cubes or small pieces and fry in a pan with a little oil for about 5 minutes or until brown. Add the onions, beef stock and paprika, 5 minutes later add the mushrooms and rice and simmer for about 15 minutes. Add the tomatoes, salt to taste, butter, sugar and olives, and cook for another 5 minutes. Preheat oven to 400F. Transfer the content of the pan into a baking dish and cook for about 30 minutes. Sprinkle with parsley and pepper before serving.



Saraliiska Banitsa



Ingredients

2 lbs flour,



1/2 cup walnut kernels,



4 cups sugar,



6 cups water,



vanilla,



pinch of salt,



2 tbsp butter.



Preparation

Combine the flour, salt and 3 cups water and knead a medium-hard dough. Roll into thin sheets (makes about 10). You can also use filo dough sheets from the store instead. Baste each sheet with butter and top with crushed walnut kernels. Roll the sheet and arrange either lengthwise or in a circle in a butter-lined dish. Bake for about 35 minutes in 375 F oven. After it has cooled pour over the hot syrup made from combining sugar, 3 cups of water and vanilla.



Mekitsi (Fried dough pastry)



Ingredients

2 lbs flour,



3 eggs,



1 lbs yoghurt (you can use regular milk instead)



a pack of yeast (or 1 tsp of baking soda),



1 cup water,



1/2 teaspoon salt,



1 cup full oil.



Preparation

Add yeast to some lukewarm water; let it stay for 5 minutes to get bubbly. Beat eggs and yoghurt and water together until they mix well. Add flower and continue to mix until you get soft dough. Let it stand for 1 hour. Roll into a sheet and cut out circles (you can use a teacup). Fry in plenty of oil (deep fryer will do) until golden brown. Serve powdered with sugar. They go well with jam or feta cheese too.

