



Olivera Grbić

Serbian Cuisine

Translated from Serbian by: Vladimir D. Janković

ALL THE TRADITIONAL PLATES

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INTRODUCTION

Since ancient times, mores and amenities have played an important role in preserving the identity of a people. Most of the Serbian population in the Middle Ages were *seabri* – farmers with a rich tradition, and all the richness of Serbian cuisine is derived from its geographic, ethnic and cultural diversity, which result from centuries of population mixing. Through the preserved Serbian cuisine recipes, the reader will get to know some ethnic motifs, and only a small part of huge Serbian natural resources. Today we witness many examples of the adjustment of tradition to a completely different, modern way of life. However, the old values and respect for nature have never been entirely suppressed in Serbia.



Cold Appetizers

When it comes to the traditional cold appetizers in Serbian cuisine, the aspic (*pihtiye*) should be certainly mentioned first. This Serbian dish is made from pork legs, head, ears, and other parts that give a good jelly. In some parts of Serbia the smoked meat is added too, so this dish, cut into equal cubes, is simply a must on each slava menu. With aspic, which is prepared mainly during winter, in the time of numerous Serbian slavas, sauerkraut salad and pickles are served, and domestic brandy: strong plum, apricot or quince *rakija*.



NISH STYLE ASPIC



INGREDIENTS:

3,3 lb (1½ kg) of clean porc legs,
meat of leg or ears
1 bunch of greens
1 bay leaf
A few grains of white pepper
1 onion
1 head of garlic
Salt to taste

RECIPE:

Aspic is served as appetizer, and you prepare it this way: take 3.3 pounds (1½ kg) of clean porc legs, meat of leg, and ears (avoid those excessively greasy parts). Wash all thoroughly, put in a larger pot and pour water, until the meat is submerged. Cook over a low heat. When the foam appears on the surface, take the pot off the heat and add a bunch of greens, a bay leaf, a few grains of white pepper, one onion, a head of garlic, and salt, if needed. Cooking should take 4–5 hours, which depends on when the meat softens. When the meat starts falling off the bones, and aspic water becomes sticky, you'll know that the dish is ready. Take off the pot then, and wait until its content settles down. Remove the fat from the surface, then pour the content through a strainer. When strained, separate meat from the bones, chop the larger parts from the leg, and divide it in several deep dishes. Sprinkle with chopped garlic, pour soup over each dish, and then store the plates in a cool place, until the aspic is set.



STERLET ASPIC



INGREDIENTS:

2 lb (1 kg) of sterlet
1 lb (½ kg) of onions
½ lb (¼ kg) of mushrooms
8.5 fl oz (¼ l) of olive oil

RECIPE:

Take 1 kg (2 lb) of sterlet, ½ kg (1 lb) of onions and (¼ kg) ½ pound of fresh mushrooms. It is more difficult to clean sterlet than any other fish; the best way is to scald it in boiling water, and then skin it; you should remove its gills and discard them. Chop the onions as finely as you can, salt them and add in a cup (2,5 dl) of olive oil, then fry over a low heat. When the onions are half fried, chop the mushrooms into small pieces, and add them to the onions. While the onions turn to mush, add the chopped fish, and let it simmer for a couple of minutes. Add some cayenne pepper, ground white pepper, and carefully stir with a spoon. Pour the warm water over fish, until it has submerged, and boil for a half an hour. While boiling, do not stir the fish with a spoon, just shake the pot occasionally. Before removing the pot from heat, add some finely chopped parsley, and allow it to simmer a little bit more. Remove the pot from heat, pour the content in the dishes, and put them in a cool place for the aspic to set.



BEAN ASPIC

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 lb (1 kg) of pork feet
- 0.9 gal (4 l) of water
- 1 onion
- 10 grains of pepper
- 1 bunch of greens
- 2 lb (1 kg) of Tetovo beans



RECIPE:

One kilo (2 lb) of pork feet, washed in several waters, put in a pot and pour 4 liters (0.9 imperial gallon) of cold water. As soon as the water boils, add a garlic head, 10 grains of pepper, some greens, then salt everything, and boil. The soup should be cooked over low heat. When it boils, remove foam from the surface. In a separate pot place some Tetovo beans, boil them, then change the so-called first water, pour the second one, add some onion, and cook until the beans begin to dissolve. Add salt to taste, and divide equally in deep dishes. Pour the aspic soup, previously strained, over each dish. Arrange the meat over the beans, and leave to cool.

