

IZOLYATSIA. Platform for cultural initiatives



BORSCH IN ACTION

REPORT ON THE 1ST SEASON
OF COMMUNITY CULTURE BUS
TRIPS.

GASTRONOMIC
EXPLORATION BY A MOBILE
CULTURAL
CENTRE

Гуртобус

ІЗОЛЯЦІЯ
PLATFORM FOR CULTURAL INITIATIVES





BORSCH IN ACTION: COOKING AND EXPLORING IN THE MOBILE CULTURAL CENTRE

THE COMMUNITY CULTURE BUS/ GURTOBUS

In 2019, IZOLYATSIA Foundation turned a standard coach into a mobile cultural centre, with the goal of supporting cultural and artistic decentralization. During the travel season, Gurtobus held workshops with artists, public discussions, film screenings and exhibitions in 24 different locations in 13 oblasts of the country.

The Community Culture Bus program is based on the principles of participation, open dialogue, making modern artistic practices more accessible and the establishment of interregional cultural ties. By creating its own micro-networks during the trips, the Community Culture Bus has become an open platform for interaction between representatives of the creative industry and local communities.

The Community Culture Bus organizes events in cooperation with local cultural and educational institutions, public organizations, and activists, thereby creating conditions that are beneficial for the development of civic society.



Alevtyna Kakhidze takes the visitors of Gurtobus on tour around the bus

Working on the idea of a temporary public space inside of the bus and around it, we were aiming to make it interactive—to invite and empower our audience to make Gurtobus their own, adapt it to their personal experiences, and subsequently expand its relevance. That was exactly the motivation behind the idea to arrange an improvised field kitchen during the events, in which local chefs together with the team cook according to local recipes, share those recipes in an interview, and serve visitors.

Borsch was not chosen as the dish to be cooked in this field kitchen by chance—being one of the most important signifiers of Ukrainian culture, it doesn't have a uniform recipe, and, furthermore, borsch recipes can, and do, deliberately contradict each other. It is the combination of the versatility and variability of borsch that inspired us to conduct research based on a survey.

Alongside food anthropologist Olena Braichenko, we developed questionnaires that included questions not only about recipes, but also about the sociological, cultural, gender and regional aspects of cooking and food consumption, which brought the study into the field of food anthropology. In total, we have collected 173 questionnaires in 14 settlements in Ukraine, thus covering Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil, Chernihiv, Cherkasy, Kirovohrad, Zhytomyr, Chernivtsi, Poltava and Kharkiv oblasts.



After the first season on the road, the project was named Borsch in Action, because it really operates in many different ways – it archives the collected data, democratizes artistic space, makes the Gurtobus program interactive, and explores the culture of the cities visited.

In this report you will be able to familiarize yourself with the results of the gathered questionnaires and accompanying analysis. This document not only summarizes the data collected, but also gives feedback to visitors of Gurtobus, as well as to our local partners and cooks. The report can be seen as a kind of a map that depicts the experience of participating in Gurtobus against the larger context in which it is situated, which later resulted in this study by the mobile cultural centre.

Our study does not claim to be an academic one, but it may be useful or inspirational for researchers working in the fields of regional studies, food research, food anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, etc. Although the research is geographically diverse, it does not present a gastronomic picture of the entire country.

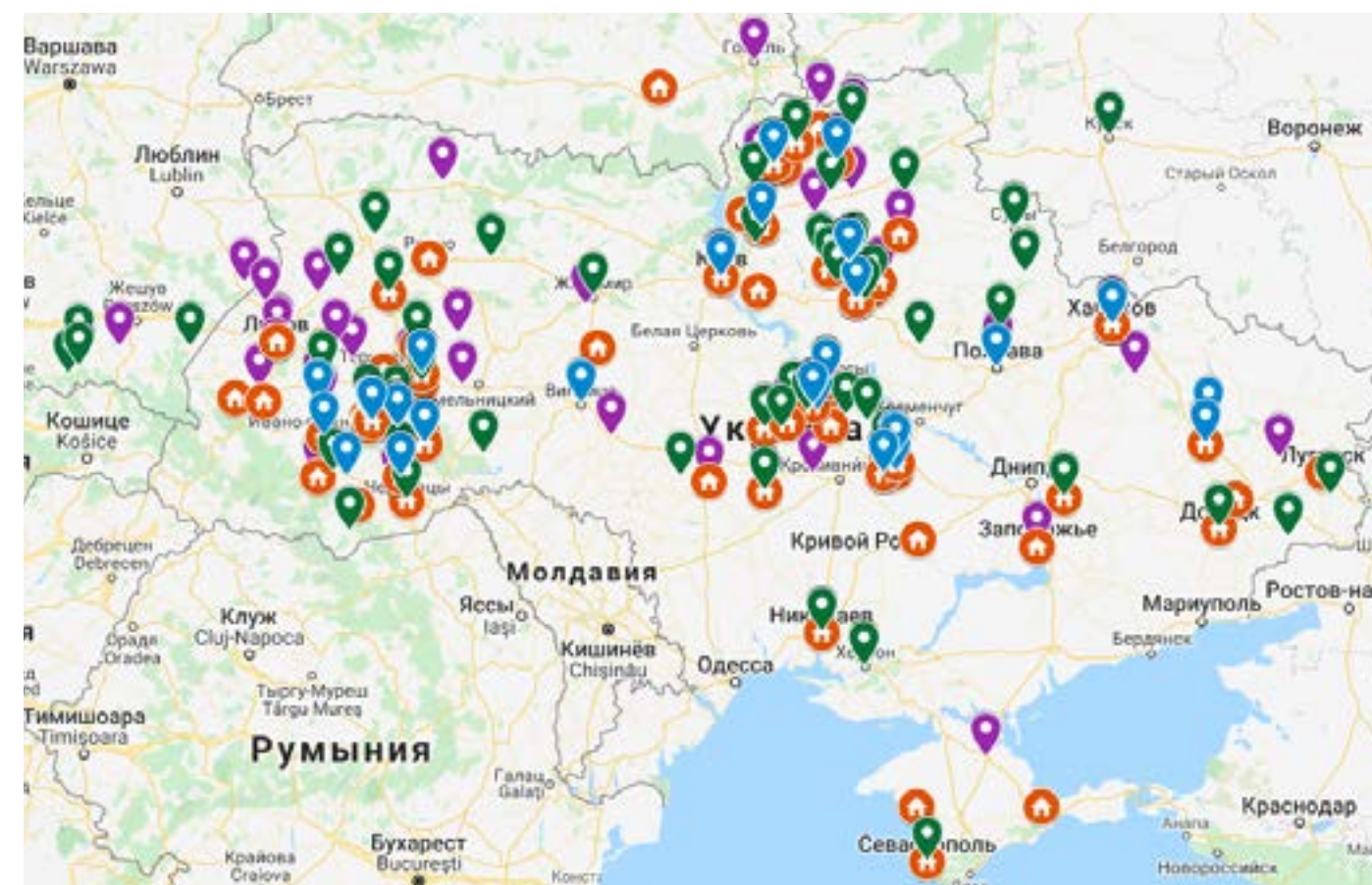
RESPONDENTS

Taking into account the decentralization ethos of the project, the report mainly presents the responses of residents of cities and towns with a population of 10 to 50 thousand people. However, the survey was also conducted in Kharkiv and Chernihiv. The geography of the study was not limited to the settlements visited by Gurtobus – the cities of residence of the respondents cover 12 oblasts in Ukraine, as well as other countries (Uzbekistan, Russia and the UK). The cities of birth of the respondents, their parents and their grandparents significantly expand the territorial boundaries of the study. This is an important factor, since the peculiarities of borsch recipes are often determined by both familial and regional characteristics.

The study covers a wide age group from 7 to 90 years old, which makes it possible to compare the similarities and differences in the perception of several generations. However, there is a gender imbalance among respondents with a significant predominance of women (10% – men, 88% – women, 2% – did not provide personal information).



Smila, Cherkasy oblast



| Age of respondents | from 7 to 90 years | |
|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| Age category | Number of people | Percentage of respondents, % |
| 7-17 | 26 | 15,3 |
| 18-30 | 31 | 1,92 |
| 31-40 | 45 | 26,01 |
| 41-50 | 23 | 13,29 |
| 51-60 | 17 | 9,83 |
| 61-90 | 24 | 13,87 |
| Age not specified/ | 7 | 4,05 |

WHEN DO PEOPLE START EATING AND COOKING BORSCH?

The questionnaire started a kind of dialogue and provided a connection with people: we could see their openness, their readiness for interaction, a desire to share personal memories and learn new things. John D. Holtzman¹ explored the relationship between food and emotional memory and the ability of cooking memories to 'pull' personal stories to the surface. Therefore, filling out the questionnaire becomes a kind of reflection, in the process of which various aspects of culture are revealed.

My close childhood friend and I used the code word 'borsch' to mark the times when we were thinking about the same things. For example, I look at a cloud and see a horse. At the same time my friend says: "Oh, look, it's a horse!". I reply: "Borsch." –

Marina, age 33, Kyiv; place of birth Horlivka, Donetsk oblast.

These childhood memories provide an opportunity to develop a thesis about the universality of borsch. Despite the possible differences in recipes, when it comes to borsch, everyone understands that they are talking about the same thing. Borsch acquires the symbolic meaning of a unifying element, which is understandable to everyone from childhood, despite significant differences between the recipes, as can be seen in the collected data.

Research has shown that borsch is mainly described as a main, traditional or favourite dish and is included in the diet from early childhood. For young children, special borsch without meat or an infant's version of the dish is often made. Most respondents start feeding children borsch before the age of one (fewer at the age of 2-3 and after 3).

¹ Holtzman J. D. Food and Memory / John D. Holtzman // Annual Review of Anthropology. – 2006.



At what age do your family start giving borsch to children?

| Number of people who answered the question | 112 | 64,74% |
|--|-----|---|
| before 1 | 27 | <p>Special borsch is given to infants from the age of 9-10 months. My daughter has been eating borsch since she was about nine months old and loves it very much.</p> <p>I gave my baby borsch when it was five months old. We have been eating borsch from the age of eight months. From 9-10 months to their last days.</p> <p>I gave my children borsch before they turned one year old, they love it very much. From the age of six months, only without vinegar.</p> |
| after 1 year old | 27 | <p>Kids love borsch and eat it from the age of 1. After 1 year of age (lean, without pork). Borsch is very good for both children and adults. I gave it to small children from one, they ate it with pleasure. Everyone in my family loves it. After the age of 1, you can give the child borsch if they have no allergies.</p> |
| 1,5 - 2 | 18 | <p>I started giving borsch to my children from the age of one and a half, only mashed in a blender. From an early age, maybe from the age of 2.</p> <p>We have been giving our granddaughter borsch since she was one and a half. Our borsch is very dietetic, and children from one and a half years can eat it. Borsch can be given to children at the age of two, because it is unsafe before that.</p> |
| 2-3 | 2 | From 2-3 years old, you have to blend it. |
| 3-3x | 9 | From the age of 3 (from the common table). |
| 4-5 | 6 | From childhood (five years). From the age of four. |
| from an early age / from childhood | 19 | <p>Borsch can be eaten by everyone and at all times. As soon as the child can eat it. Borsch is given even to the youngest. Borsch is given to children when they are given all other food. Children are given it at their request.</p> |
| I don't know, I don't remember | 4 | <p>I don't even remember the first time I tasted borsch. I don't really remember when I tasted borsch for the first time in my life—it was so early in my life.</p> |

Cooking borsch also begins relatively early: children usually begin making it in adolescence (59% of respondents).

My daughter cooked her first borsch when she was 10 years old (although she got mixed up and grated black radish instead of red beets). – **Natalia, age 43, Buchach, Ternopil oblast.**

20% of respondents think that people can start cooking borsch at any age:

They start cooking borsch when they want to learn how to do it. – **Nina, age 70, Buchach, Ternopil oblast.**

It really depends [on] how much a person likes to cook. – **Oksana, age 44, Skala-Podilska, Ternopil oblast.**

8.5% associate the beginning of borsch-making with the beginning of independent living:

Borsch-making starts after one gets married. – **Svitlana, age 39, Burshtyn, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast.**

I learned when I moved to another city to study. – **Nelya, age 30, Kharkiv.**

They start cooking borsch when there is nobody else around to make it (like their mother or grandmother). – **Julia, age 31, Pidvolochysk village, Ternopil oblast.**

WHO TEACHES PEOPLE TO COOK BORSCH?

Cooking borsch is often associated with family recipes that have been passed down from generation to generation. Borsch recipes show the coexistence of traditions and modernity, since they are partially adopted from the older generation and partially modified.

Mum taught me how to cook borsch, but I like to cook it differently. I like to experiment, try different options. Grandma put dried mushrooms in borsch, and my mother also added prunes. And I also like to fry lard. Mum taught me. And grandmother taught her. My grandmother traditionally cooked meat-free borsch with beans and dried pears.

60% of respondents answered that their mother taught them to cook.

Why does it have to be a mother – because customs and traditions are passed on to us through our parents.

It is customary for a daughter to learn from her mother.

As she was taught by her mother, and her mother by her mother and so on...

My mother cooked very tasty food and taught me how to cook too. My father would praise her cooking and say: "Darling, they don't even have borsch like this in palaces!"

My mother, because she is my mother and my example.

She is the best hostess.

And who else if not her.

Because she is a mother.

Because she knows how to.

14% of respondents learned to cook from their grandmothers.

The researcher of gastronomic culture V.V. Nikolenko notes that in large families, where there are people from many different generations, grandmothers are often involved in the processes of the child's socio-cultural integration (both at the conscious and unconscious levels), especially if the parents work in secondary and tertiary employment¹. Thus, grandmothers are still effective agents of culinary education and role models.

My grandma [taught me how to cook borsch], because my parents were at work all the time.

It was my grandmother who taught me, because she knows a unique recipe from her own mother.

Because I spent all my childhood with my grandmother in the village.

9% adopted the recipe for borsch from both mother and grandmother.

My mother and grandmother taught me, but I added a twist to my borsch – beans ground in a blender.

Grandmother had a stove and cooked on it, and she taught us, her grandchildren.

I learned to cook it by watching my grandmother and mother make it.

¹ Nikolenko, V. V. Hastronomichni determinanty suspil'noho zhyttia: sotsiologichnyi vymir: doctoral dissertation in social sciences: 22.00.01 /Nikolenko Vadim Viktorovich – Dnipropetrovs'k, 2015. p442.

8% of the respondents learned by themselves during the course of their life, “by trial and error.”

There are isolated statements that an aunt, great-grandmother, a wife, a husband, a father, a godfather's wife, a mother-in-law and a schoolteacher taught them how to cook.

And 5% do not know how to make borsch.

I have never cooked this heavenly dish myself, but I always have the opportunity to taste what my mother cooked.



WHO IS COOKING BORSCH?

The distribution of household chores among family members, including cooking, occupies an important place in the system of gender studies. According to the survey, as well as teaching children how to cook, it is mainly women (the mother, wife, or grandmother) who cook borsch in their families. Only 6% of respondents answered that men cook, and 3.5% that all family members cook.

Everyone cooks: mum, dad, children.

To be honest, cooking is done by someone who doesn't want to get it in the neck.

If we compare the data obtained with all-Ukrainian statistics (research by the Ukrainian Centre for Social Reforms, 2018)¹, we can see that, according to our survey, the percentage of women who cook borsch is much higher than in Ukraine as a whole, where in 19% of cases only women cook in families, in 49% mainly women, and in 23% both men and women cook equally or together. This discrepancy in data can be explained by the fact that in small towns the distribution of economic activity is often as follows: men do work related to the use of physical labour (work in the yard, caring for livestock, house repairs, etc.), and women do work around the house, in particular cooking. However, according to the survey results, the cooking of borsch mainly by women is not always associated with the distribution of responsibilities. We received a number of other arguments: some believe that “this is her job,” others—this is a matter of experience, and some just like to cook.

I really love this process and I am creative. I often make a few adjustments.

Mother is the head of the family. All the cooking is on her shoulders.

My mum cooks the most delicious borsch, because she is the keeper of our family.
Women do it better.

Borsch also becomes a part of family traditions and an excuse for the whole family to meet up.



Grandma's borsch is the most delicious. And everyone comes for it. –
Andriana, age 34, Pidvolochysk township, Ternopil oblast

In this aspect, it is not so much about gender roles, but about the symbolism of borsch. Joint consumption of food not only satisfies hunger, but it is also a means of communication, and food becomes a symbol, a sign. Thus borsch in this context becomes an ideal example illustrating the sociocultural function of food.



Buchach, Ternopil oblast

FAVORITE BORSCH

As a result of the survey, we got an idea of the respondents' gastronomic preferences, which were usually described by taste characteristics, color, consistency.

| Consistency | | | |
|---|-------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Number of people who answered the question | 65 | 37,57% | |
| Consistency | Number of answers | Відсоток респондентів | Comments |
| Thick | 38 | 58,46 | Thick with lots of vegetables, beets, meat. Thicker is better. So thick that a spoon can stand up in it. Thick, tasty and fragrant. |
| Moderately thick / thick / fairly thick / not (very) thin | 11 | 16,92 | Moderately thick with a lot of meat! |
| Medium consistency / moderately thick | 4 | 6,15 | I regulate the density by changing amount of beans used. Depending on the amount of added ingredients. |
| Neither thick nor broth | 4 | 6,15 | Borsch has to be neither thick nor thin. Not too thick, but not too thin either. |
| Not thick/ liquid | 3 | 4,62 | Light, not thick, not fatty |
| Broth | 4 | 6,15 | |



The colour of one's favourite borsch

| | | |
|--|-------------------|---|
| Number of people who answered the question | 104 | 60,12% |
| Hue/Colour | Number of answers | |
| greenish | 1 | |
| greenish-yellow colour | 1 | |
| orange | 2 | It is red, like the hot blood of our ancestors. It can be different: crimson, dark, light, it all depends on the ingredients. |
| red-orange | 2 | Red from tomatoes, although I know that real Ukrainian borsch is red from beets. Red in colour, because we add tomato juice and red beets. |
| pale pink | 1 | Passionately red as blood. |
| with more of a terracotta shade | 1 | Red, all ingredients must be the same colour. The colour depends on my mood. |
| light red | 1 | |
| crimson red | 1 | |
| red | 58 | |
| bright red | 7 | |
| deep red | 16 | |
| burgundy | 5 | |
| beet red, beet | 5 | |
| saturated crimson | 2 | |

Speaking about their favourite borsch, the respondents also share family recipes and refer to both objective reasons (specific ingredients or cooking characteristics that affect the taste characteristics) and emotional ones, caused by additional circumstances in the preparation and consumption of borsch.

My favourite borsch is mine or my mum's. –
Vita, age 21, Smila, Cherkasy oblast.

The one I didn't cook! –
Olena, age 36, Kharkiv.

My favourite borsch is cooked over a fire by my husband. Our children love it. –
Tetyana, age 34, Holovkivka village, Cherkasy oblast.

Grandma's borsch is a favourite dish in my family. It is always made on Sunday with dumplings, red and with sour cream. – **Olga, age 32, Chortkiv, Ternopil oblast.**

My favourite borsch is cooked by my wife, and it doesn't matter if it's red or green, it's always delicious! – **Dmytro, age 36, Pidvolochysk, Ternopil oblast.**

My favourite borsch is the one my husband cooks, and he makes it with good tasty beans and green sorrel. It is thick and should be eaten with homemade sour cream and lard with garlic. – **Maryana, age 35, Pidvolochysk, Ternopil oblast.**

Attention is often drawn to the uniqueness of borsch, but most find it difficult to pinpoint what exactly distinguishes their recipe from others. When determining the uniqueness of borsch, they often talk about love, the mood in which it is cooked, and sometimes specific ingredients are mentioned: pears, wild mushrooms, basil, and so on.

BORSCH— AN EVERYDAY OR A FESTIVE DISH?

The study showed that for respondents, borsch is one of the most popular dishes and it is cooked more often than other dishes, in some families even every day.

It's cooked as a special everyday food. When you have borsch at home, you want to go home for lunch. – **Yulia, age 31, Pidvolochysk township, Ternopil oblast.**

I won't say that I often eat borsch, but I will not say no to it 1-2 times a week. –

Andriy, age 26, Pyriatyn, Poltava oblast.

Often with a smile I remember the following story about borsch: once our whole family was out at our relatives' wedding. Of course, at a wedding there are always different goodies, plenty of stuff... We returned home, barely made it over the threshold, as dad said to mum:

"Give me a bowl of borsch, I really feel like it." –

Valentyna, age 71, Kozelets.

Most of the respondents consider borsch to be an everyday food, but they often cook it for the holidays.

Is borsch an everyday food?

| | | |
|--|-------------------|---------------|
| Number of people who answered the question | 93 | 53,76% |
| Everyday or festive | Number of answers | Percentage, % |
| Everyday | 85 | 91,40% |
| Not everyday, festive | 8 | 8,60% |

Do you cook borsch for the holidays?

| | | | |
|--|-------------------|---------------|--|
| Number of people who answered the question | 67 | 38,73% | |
| Borsch for the holidays | Number of answers | Percentage, % | Comments |
| Cook | 42 | 62,7% | Borsch is a favourite dish, I cook it for holidays sometimes, not always. – Olya, age 43, Chortkiv, Ternopil oblast. I definitely cook it for holidays. – Nadiya, age 38, Zastavna, Chernivtsi oblast. Sometimes we cook it for holidays. – Victoria, age 13, Buchach, Ternopil oblast |
| Don't cook | 25 | 37,3% | This is not a holiday dish. – Fedir, age 19, Kyiv. For a holiday, more complex dishes than borsch. – Vasilisa, age 20, Kharkiv I do not cook borsch for holidays. – Olexandra, age 72, Pryluky, Chernihiv oblast. |



For many, borsch is a ritual dish. For example, in Pryluky borsch is cooked for weddings, and in Ternopil oblast (Buchach, Skala-Podilska, Chortkiv, Pidzamochochok) they cook a special borsch for Christmas Eve, or Christmas borsch with mushrooms, and in Chernihiv oblast borsch is cooked for christenings and commemorations. At the same time, traditions may differ even within the same oblast, for example, in Kirovohrad oblast in Znamianka, it is customary to cook borsch for a funeral, and in Protopopivka cabbage soup is cooked for this occasion.

For Christmas, I cook fasting borsch with dried mushrooms, beans, beets, cabbage, no sour cream. –

Irina, age 46, Skala-Podilska town, Ternopil oblast.

On the day of the pre-Christmas Holy Dinner, we cook borsch with mushrooms. –

Tetyana, age 43, Chortkiv, Ternopil oblast.

I cook lean borsch for Holy Evening [Christmas Eve]. –

Nadia, age 42, Pidzamochochok, Ternopil oblast.

For the holidays I cook 'Polish borsch' [a smooth thick dish of bright red colour with sour cream].

– **Marina, age 56, Pryluky, Chernihiv oblast.**

10 people noted that they cook Lenten borsch, adhering to certain restrictions during fasting or on religious holidays (Golodna Kutia, Christmas Eve, Christmas).

Borsch is our traditional dish. We cook it on Sundays – with meat if we are not fasting and with no meat if we are. – **Tetyana, 43, Chortkiv, Ternopil oblast.**

Lenten borsch for Christmas with dried mushrooms. I soak dried mushrooms overnight, then cook them. Pour boiling water over potatoes, cooked beans and mushrooms and simmer, add onions and carrots. When the potatoes are almost ready, I throw in the cabbage, then add sautéed veggies: grate the beets, chop the onion and cook everything with butter in a pan, add canned tomatoes a little later, fry a little. All the vegetables will simmer for a bit, and the borsch is ready. – **Irina, 46 years old, Skala-Podilska, Ternopil oblast.**

At Christmas, our family always cooked Christmas borsch. It is usually less thick, light and lean, without meat or animal fat. But always with porcini mushrooms, seasoned with sunflower oil. And a spoonful of sour cream is a must. – **Yaroslav, 45 years old, Smila, Cherkasy oblast.**

I cook it as everyday food, and on fasting days – Lenten borsch with prunes and fermented beets. – **Hanna, age 58, Pidzamochochok, Ternopil oblast.**

By tradition, borsch is cooked during fasting. – **Oleg, age 38, Buchach, Ternopil oblast.**

Researcher Brian Demchinsky notes that cooking borsch without meat is not so much determined by preferences as by cultural characteristics: in Ukraine, Christianity is divided into two branches (Orthodox and Greek Catholic), so there are geographical differences in cooking of borsch with meat and lean borsch. He also notes that vegetarianism is not typical of Ukrainian culture. Ukrainians consume various types of meat, but there are times of the year when, due to religion and tradition, lean borsch is cooked¹.

Among the respondents, only 4 people cook vegetarian borsch. During the project, a vegetarian version of borsch was cooked in Buchach and Kharkiv.

In my family, borsch should be with beans, perhaps because my parents replaced expensive meat with vegetable protein. Now I am making a vegetarian borsch with beans. – **Marina, age 33, Kyiv.**

My grandmother traditionally cooked lean borsch with beans and dried pears. – **Ksenia, age 31, Chernihiv.**

Grandma said she was cooking 'naked' borsch. This is the meat-free one. – **Lesya, age 63, Pidvolochysk village, Ternopil oblast.**

¹ Borscht – A Love Story. Bryan Demchinsky. Gastronomica: The Journal of Critical Food Studies, Vol. 15 No. 3, Fall 2015; (pp. 69-74)

The research showed that most often borsch is cooked in meat broth, mainly from ribs (poultry meat, periosteum, beef are rare in recipes). Animal fat is also used in the preparation of borsch (for frying or dressing), and during meals.

The tastiest borsch is cooked according to the recipe of my great-grandmother Olexandra Trofimenko (Orlovets village, Cherkasy oblast). Fry carrots and beets. Stew the freshly grated tomatoes to get rid of the excess water. Aged lard – in the frying pan + tomatoes + onions. – **Nelya, age 47, Smila, Cherkasy oblast.**

It is best with sour cream, lard and onions. – **Halyna, age 33, Priyutivka, Kirovohrad oblast.**

Borsch is the main Ukrainian dish. There should be meat, red beets, onions, carrots, cabbage, tomatoes, potatoes, a piece of lard (preferably canned). At the end add crushed lard with garlic and herbs. Serve with sour cream. – **Victoria, 8 years old, Pryluky, Chernihiv oblast.**

Mena, Chernihiv oblast



BORSCH INGREDIENTS

One of the peculiarities of borsch is its multicomponent nature. On average, about 15 ingredients are added to borsch. From the questionnaires we received a list of the main ingredients, which shows the similarity of the respondents' ideas about the composition of borsch, although there are certain individual and regional characteristics. After all, there is no single correct way to make borsch. For example, most people consider beets the main ingredient, but these cannot be added to green borsch. Some think that cabbage makes borsch what it is, while others believe that it can be removed without jeopardising the recipe. Some people cannot imagine borsch without tomatoes, while others do not use them at all.

Nova Praha, Kirovohrad oblast



Describe the main ingredients of borsch

| Number of people who answered the question | | | 92 | 53,18% | |
|--|-------------------|--|-------------------|-------------------|--|
| Ingredient | Number of answers | Percentage of respondents who identified the ingredient as the main one, % | Ingredient | Number of answers | Percentage of respondents who identified the ingredient as the main one, % |
| beet | 75 | 81,5 | saló (lard) | 5 | 5,4 |
| cabbage | 67 | 72,8 | oil | 4 | 4,4 |
| potato | 64 | 69,6 | dill | 7 | 7,6 |
| bean | 55 | 59,8 | eggs | 3 | 3,3 |
| carrot | 55 | 59,8 | water | 3 | 3,3 |
| onion | 51 | 55,4 | canned fish | 2 | 2,2 |
| meat | 50 | 54,4 | vinegar | 2 | 2,2 |
| tomato, tomato paste | 32 | 34,8 | sugar | 2 | 2,2 |
| pepper | 19 | 20,6 | fermented cabbage | 2 | 2,2 |
| garlic | 18 | 19,6 | adjika | 1 | 1,1 |
| sour cream | 17 | 18,5 | parsley root | 1 | 1,1 |
| tomatoes | 15 | 16,3 | olives | 1 | 1,1 |
| mushrooms | 14 | 15,2 | honey | 1 | 1,1 |
| seasonings, spices | 12 | 13,0 | docks | 1 | 1,1 |
| parsley | 10 | 10,9 | sorrels | 1 | 1,1 |
| greens | 26 | 28,3 | lemon | 1 | 1,1 |
| salt | 9 | 9,8 | citric acid | 1 | 1,1 |
| bell pepper | 8 | 8,7 | chili peppers | 1 | 1,1 |
| fermented beet / pickled beets | 8 | 8,7 | cherry | 1 | 1,1 |
| bay leaf | 5 | 5,4 | | | |



Fermented beet was a traditional component of Ukrainian borsch back in the 19th-early 20th century: 'Beetroot for borsch was always fermented, beet kvass diluted with water was poured into the pot. Finely chopped beets, potatoes, cabbage, carrots, sometimes beans were thrown into boiling water. Then the pot was put into the oven to boil, and then once again it would be taken out and seasoned (depending on the social standing and time of the year) either with onions fried in butter or lard, or onions with garlic, crushed with aged bacon in salotovka (kovhanka)¹. The use of fermented beets was sometimes associated with the seasonality of vegetables and the harvesting process: the beets were usually consumed fresh in the fall, and in winter they were stored in cellars and sourced for borsch. The seasonality of vegetables was also associated with green borsch which was cooked when the farm ran out of beets and the first greens appeared (sorrel, nettle, saltbush). According to the survey fermented beetroot is relatively rare in recipes, and is used mainly in certain locations—in Kirovohrad, Chernihiv and Ternopil oblasts.

I throw sorrel, pickled beets in my green borsch. –
Lydia, age 86, Nova Praha, Kirovohrad oblast.

Green borsch with fermented beets and beans. –
Vira, age 67, Nova Praha, Kirovohrad oblast.

Green borsch has been mentioned in various oblasts, but turned out to be most popular in Ternopil oblast, in particular in Pidvolochysk. Sorrel is the main ingredient in green borsch, eggs and sour cream are also added. Some recipes include beets and beans.

My favourite green borsch with sorrel, which is cooked by my grandmother. –
Vasilisa, age 20, Kharkiv.

I cook red borsch with vinaigrette beets, as well as green borsch with beets and sorrel. –
Alina, age 35, Nova Praha, Kirovohrad oblast.

My favourite is green borsch with sorrel. – **Julia, age 14, Burshtyn, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast.**

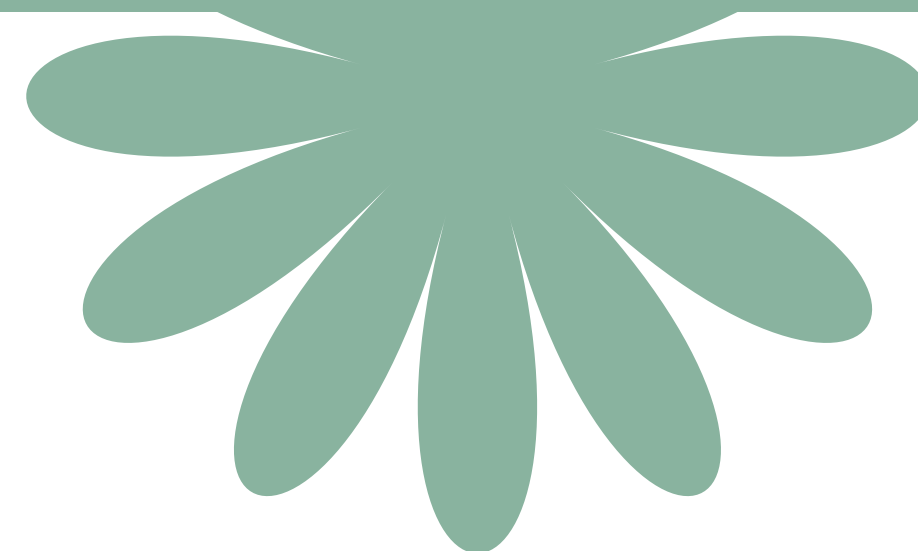
Green borsch recipe. Cook meat broth, add potatoes, sorrel, finely chopped onions and carrots. Chop boiled eggs and add to borsch. Pour in the sautéed root vegetables (onion, finely chopped + grated carrots). Season the borsch, add salt and pepper, bay leaf, chopped greens. Before serving add a spoonful of sour cream. – **Yulia, age 31, Pidvolochysk, Ternopil oblast.**

I like green borsch very much and cook it with pleasure. The main ingredients in borsch are, of course, sorrel and boiled eggs. And of course, it is not complete without meat. – Natalya, 56 years old, Pidvolochysk, Ternopil oblast.

I cook both green and red borsch. –
Halyna, age 56, Pidvolochysk, Ternopil oblast.

The best kind of borsch is the green one (with sorrel). –
Victor, age 46, Skala-Podilska, Ternopil oblast.

I cook 3 types of borsch. Festive – it should not boil, but simmer over low heat, I usually use young ribs and red beets, which I roast in the oven beforehand. The colour is red and it has medium consistency. Everyday borsch – or, as we say, quick and easy, is cooked with beet kvass, seasoned with crushed animal fat, garlic and sour cream. I cook green borsch in early spring, when nettles and sorrel appear. – **Valentina, 67 years old, Skala-Podilska, Ternopil oblast.**



Which one ingredient makes borsch borsch?

| Number of people who answered the question | 47 | 27,17% | |
|--|-------------------|---|---|
| Ingredient | Number of answers | Percentage of respondents who consider the ingredient to be the main one, % | Comments |
| beet | 38 | 60,7 | Beetroot, everything else probably does not define it to such a degree. – Fedir, age 19, Kyiv. Borsch without beets is not borsch. – Dmytro, age 18, Chernihiv. Red beetroot – borsch is impossible without it. – Oleg, age 38, Buchach |
| cabbage | 11 | 16,4 | |
| meat / meat with garlic / meat broth / animal fat | 4 | 6,6 | |
| tomatoes, tomato / tomato paste | 4 | 4,9 | |
| it is impossible to single out one of the ingredients / set of ingredients / all are important | 3 | 4,9 | There are many first courses in the world, but Ukrainian borsch is the best. Therefore, it is impossible to single out one of the ingredients, and it is all the more impossible to remove even one. |
| sorrel | 3 | 4,8 | Sorrel is the main ingredient of green borsch. – Julia, 31, Pidvolochysk. |
| love | 2 | 3,3 | |
| bean | 1 | 1,6 | |

Which ingredient can be removed without compromising the recipe?

| Number of people who answered the question | 62 | 35,84% | |
|--|-------------------|--------|--|
| Ingredient | Number of answers | % | Comments |
| bean | 20 | 27,8 | You can remove the beans, but it is better not to. – Anastasia, age 35, Pyriatyn. |
| none | 10 | 13,9 | Borsch should contain everything that belongs to it and nothing should be removed, otherwise it will not be borsch. – Valentina, age 67, Skala-Podilska village, Ternopil oblast. If you take away even one of the ingredients – it will no longer be borsch. – Andriana, age 34, Pidvolochysk, Ternopil oblast. If you remove even one of the ingredients, borsch will no longer be tasty. – Anastasia, age 13, Yarova village, Cherkasy oblast |
| cabbage | 9 | 12,5 | You may cook borsch without cabbage, if your children do not like it, and this does not compromise the recipe. – Lina, age 38, Pryluky, Chernihiv oblast. |
| meat | 7 | 9,7 | Well, you can remove ... I think meat. Of course, meat is a very important ingredient for a real Cossack, but sometimes I just want peace. – Nana, age 19, Chernihiv. |
| carrot | 7 | 9,7 | |
| potatoes | 5 | 6,9 | Sometimes I don't have cabbage or potatoes, and then I cook without them. I think that if you skip one ingredient at a time, then it's still ok. – Irina, age 41, London, birthplace Hlukhivtsi village, Vinnytsia oblast. |
| beet | 3 | 4,2 | |
| any except beets | 2 | 2,8 | |
| tomatoes, tomato sauce | 2 | 2,8 | |
| water | 1 | 1,4 | You can take the water out, nothing will change (although it will be a little thicker). – Victor, age 46, Skala-Podilska, Ternopil oblast. |
| dill | 1 | 1,4 | |
| bay leaf | 1 | 1,4 | |
| pepper | 1 | 1,4 | |
| Sour cream | 1 | 1,4 | |
| onion | 1 | 1,4 | |
| garlic | 1 | 1,4 | |
| Total | 72 | 100,0 | |

What exotic ingredients do you add to borsch?

| Ingredient | Number of answers | % | Comments |
|---|-------------------|--------|---|
| Number of people who answered the question | 31 | 17,92% | |
| do not add exotic ingredients | 7 | 22,6 | |
| prunes | 3 | 9,7 | |
| onion | 2 | 6,5 | |
| turmeric seasoning | 2 | 6,5 | |
| bell pepper | 2 | 6,5 | |
| salo | 2 | 6,5 | In our family, at the end of cooking, we grind a piece of aged lard with onions. It adds spice. – Vira, age 67, Nova Praha, Kirovohrad oblast. |
| avocado | 1 | 3,2 | It is tasty with ripe avocado. – Ksenia, age 31, Chernihiv. |
| canned sprats in tomato sauce | 2 | 6,5 | |
| cherry tree leaf instead of bay leaf | 1 | 3,2 | |
| zucchini | 1 | 3,2 | |
| paprika, sugar, mixed beans, peas, beans | 2 | 6,5 | |
| fresh cucumbers | 1 | 3,2 | |
| broccoli, cauliflower, asparagus, hot peppers | 1 | 3,2 | |
| pears | 2 | 6,5 | |
| cherries, apple | 2 | 6,5 | Add cherries to borsch – very tasty! You can add anything that does not impede the taste, but without 'excesses'. – Victor, age 46, Skala-Podilska. |

Since most of the respondents live in rural areas, they have the opportunity to grow their own food, and most of them have a negative attitude towards preserved meals.



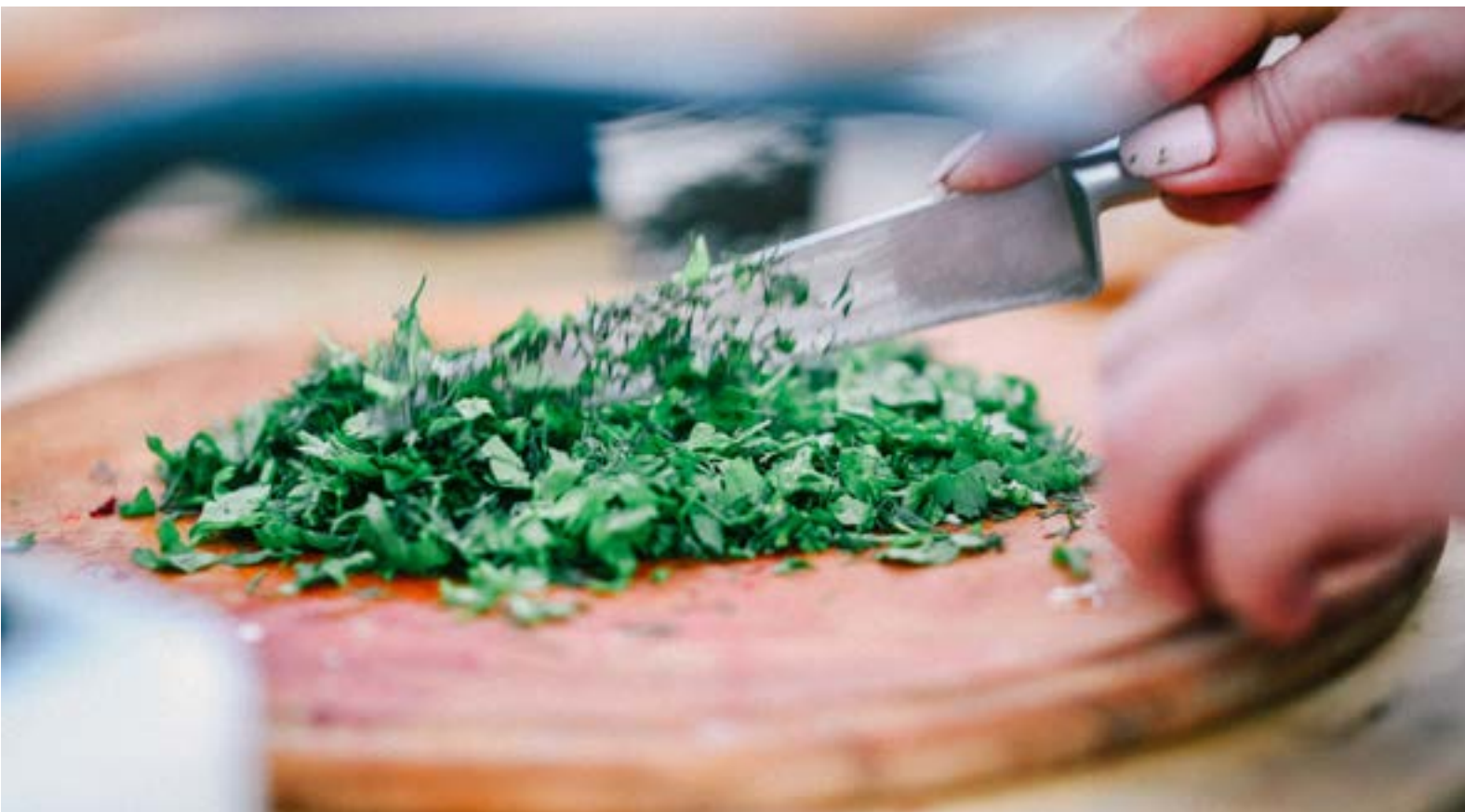
Burshtyn, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast

Where do you buy food (market, supermarket, grow yourself)?

| | | |
|--|-------------------|--------|
| Number of people who answered the question | 89 | 51,45% |
| Where do you buy produce? | Number of answers | |
| at the market | 28 | |
| in the supermarket | 16 | |
| grow ourselves | 51 | |
| in the grocery store | 7 | |

How do you feel about adding preserved products to borsch (packaged dressing, tomato sauce, canned beans)?

| | | |
|--|-------------------|---|
| Number of people who answered the question | 74 | 42,77% |
| Attitude towards preserved products | Number of answers | Comments |
| decidedly negative | 3 | It is unacceptable to use preserved products. |
| negatively | 36 | Badly, because there is no goodness in them. Only natural products should go into borsch. When preserved products are added to borsch, it loses half of its taste. One's own ingredients from the garden are much healthier. |
| ok, neutral | 18 | Calmly, with understanding. For sautéed veggies I use home-made ketchup. Happily: tomato sauce and beans. Pre-packaged products are fine. I prefer fresh vegetables, but I also add preserved products. |
| positively | 13 | I think well of pre-packaged products (tomato sauce, canned beans). I think that the main thing is to make borsch delicious, so pre-packaged products are not a problem for me. Sometimes I add tomato sauce and mayonnaise. Sometimes I add canned beans. |
| very well | | Borsch with pre-packaged products (beans) is very tasty. I add all the pre-packaged products. |



In some questionnaires, recipes and individual ingredients are inextricably linked to the mention of the city or oblast where the respondent tasted it.

Dad told me about an interesting recipe, but I have not tried this borsch yet. In the post-war period, his grandmother cooked borsch with small crucian carp they caught. It was here, in Kharkiv oblast, in Liman. – **Nelya, age 31, Kharkiv.**

In Vinnitsa oblast, my grandmother cooked white borsch (beets were pink and white there). Borsch was seasoned with a chunk of aged salo (it was ground with millet grains in a pot). Borsch was cooked in a stove in a clay pot, grandmother added everything that grew in the garden: beets, beans, potatoes, cabbage, carrots, onions. The unforgettable taste of borsch, the taste of my childhood at my grandmother's. – **Valentina, age 60, Buchach, my mother is from Vinnitsa oblast.**

My grandmother cooked with dumplings, they were very large and delicious. – **Anna, age 30, Pryluky, grandparents are from Petrivka, Poltava oblast.**

I did not like the branded borsch in a restaurant in Dnipropetrovsk with smoked plums. – **Lydia, age 86, Nova Praha, Kirovohrad oblast.**

I remember borsch from the stove, which my grandmother cooked with dumplings. – **Tetyana, age 59, Chernihiv.**

Red borsch from Lemkivshchyna, with fermented beets. Prepare the beetroot brine (sour beets, carrots, onions, parsley (root)). When they are cooked, add brine, cooked mushrooms and all the spices (salt, hot and allspice, broth cubes, butter, etc.). At the end, add whipped sour cream with flour, herbs and boiled grated beets. – **Nina, 70 years old, Buchach, Ternopil oblast.**

Borsch is eaten with a bit of brown bread, salo, garlic or salted sprats. Once while visiting somewhere I tried borsch with canned sprats. The recipe seems to have originated from Donetsk. – **Natalia, age 30, Chernihiv.**

Borsch is different every time, because its composition depends on the season and mood. There is Southern borsch, with pepper, deep and rich in colour. There is raw borsch cooked with orange – very tasty and full of vitamins. There is borsch without cabbage, there is borsch with canned sprats, there is Belarusian borsch, for which potatoes are cooked separately. – **Irina, age 63, Chernihiv.**

Memories evoked by borsch are often connected with family and home comfort, and borsch is often associated with the «taste of childhood.» Kirovohrad oblast.

We have always used the same saucepan for making borsch – a thick-walled one with handles. The borsch was tasty in the way it can only be so in childhood. – **Vira, 67 years old, Nova Praha, Kirovohrad oblast.**

Borsch is home, it's homemade food. Memories of the family. I don't like having borsch while visiting somewhere or in a café. – **Olena, age 40, Chernihiv.**

Since childhood, my grandmother's borsch has always been and still is the most delicious borsch that I have ever eaten. Wherever I have been and wherever I have had this dish, the taste is completely different, and the borsch is not as tasty. – **Khrystyna, 14 years old, Buchach, Ternopil**

Many responses mention cooking borsch in an old-style stove. Mostly, these are associated with childhood and grandmothers. This allows us to track the generation that used the stove and the time of its replacement with the modern oven (we also learn from the questionnaires that today, in the absence of a stove, even a microwave oven becomes an alternative). The peculiarity of cooking in the Russian stove is that heat comes from all sides, the dishes take longer to cook, but they are more flavoursome.



From early childhood I remember that I usually ate borsch for lunch and if there was no borsch for lunch, then everyone was hungry – even the cats. And my grandmother cooked the most delicious borsch in the stove in a small 5-liter pot. – **Tetyana, age 46, Holovkivka village, Kirovograd oblast.**

My grandmother cooked borsch in a clay pot in the stove. The taste was extraordinary. – **Valentyna, age 46, Smila, Cherkasy oblast.**

I like to cook borsch with the ‘taste of the stove.’ – **Svitlana, age 39, Zastavna, Chernivtsi oblast.**

Borsch was super tasty when my grandmother cooked it in the stove. – **Olga, age 40, Burshtyn, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast**

It is best to throw all the ingredients in a cauldron and cook in the oven – then you get the most delicious borsch. – **Tetyana, age 43, Chortkiv, Ternopil oblast.**

We often cook borsch in the oven. – **Nadiya, age 44, Zastavna, Chernivtsi oblast.**
Sometimes wild pears are added to borsch and it's cooked in the oven. – **Oksana, age 29, Chernihiv.**

I remember my grandmother's borsch in the oven. The one with pears. – **Ksenia, age 31, Chernihiv.**

Buchach, Ternopil oblast



To capture contemporary culinary habits and explore how gastronomic preferences change over time, we asked respondents to share their signature recipes. Below are some of the collected recipes from different oblasts of Ukraine.

Chernivtsi oblast:

Beets are pickled in advance, always cut into strips. The beans are soaked and boiled in advance. Sautéed vegetables are prepared: carrots, onions. Then everything is mixed and seasoned with salt and pepper. Our borsch is served with pastries. This is the so-called ‘babka kapronova’ or ‘Babă neagră’: milk, egg, burnt sugar, flour, soda, butter. It is cooked in the old-style stove (a simpler option is the conventional oven). – **Nadiya, age 44, Zastavna.**

Cherkasy oblast

I cook the beans separately (preferably with a meat bone or a piece of lard). Then, I cook potatoes in the meat broth, add fried carrots, cabbage, and onions. When the potatoes are done I add cooked beans and beetroot stewed in a pan with tomato juice. Boil for 5 minutes. At the end add garlic and black pepper. – **Valentina, age 46, Smila.**

We boil meat. Peel potatoes, onions, chop peppers, cabbage... Put in a saucepan, add a minimum of water and bring to a boil. Throw in preserved beets and beans. When it starts to boil add beans and beets, tomato juice and spices. Season with garlic crushed with lard, salt, and add mushrooms. Bring to a boil and wait for it to ‘sweat’ over a low heat. – **Yaroslav, 45 years old, Smila.**

Kirovohrad oblast

Boil meat and beans in salted water. Then add borsch beets and potatoes. Meanwhile sauté onions and carrots in vegetable oil, add tomato and ½ tablespoon of flour. Simmer for 10 minutes and put everything into the pot. Add salad peppers, cabbage, and finely chopped parsley root. In the summer I add dill stem, which is then removed from the borsch. Fresh greens are added separately. – **Vira, 67 years old, Nova Praha.**



Ivano-Frankivsk oblast

1) Fry the beet sticks (after soaking them in a small amount of vinegar to preserve the colour).

2) Fry the onions with crackling.

Pre-boil the potatoes with cabbage and meat on the bone and put the beets and sautéed veggies in there.

Boil everything a little, add spices to taste and let it brew! After all, borsch is delicious on the second day. – **Svitlana, age 39, Burshtyn**

I make borsch without cabbage. Ingredients: potatoes, carrots, onions, beets, pork, sour cream, flour, greens. I throw everything together and only at the end add sour cream with flour (as a dressing) and greens. In summer beets get cooked quickly because they are young. In winter I cook the beets separately and then grate them afterward. – **Maryanka, age 28, Demyanov village, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast.**

I cook broth from the bones of pork, chicken or other meat adding the beans. Stew the beets, onions, carrots, peppers and tomatoes in a frying pan. After that, I add the potatoes to the broth with the stewed vegetables. At the end, I grind millet grains with smoked animal fat in a pot and add it to borsch. Bay leaf, pepper, dill fleurette – and borsch is ready. – **Svitlana, age 39, Burshtyn, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast.**

Ternopil oblast

I cook broth from the bones of pork, chicken or other meat with beans. Stew beets, onions, carrots, peppers and tomatoes in a frying pan. I add the potatoes to the broth and then the stewed vegetables. At the end, I grind millet grains with smoked animal fat in a pot and add it to borsch. Bay leaf, pepper, dill fleurette, and borsch is ready. – **Lesya, age 63, Pidvolochysk.**

Prepare home-made canned beets – grated and preserved in jars. Potatoes, beets, carrots, onions, meat, parsley, water. A cherry tree leaf can be used instead of laurel. – **Victoria, 13 years old, Buchach.**

A friend makes preparations for borsch in a jar that Yukhym uses. First, he soaks the beans for 10 hours or more. For borsch he uses ribs, adds beans, onions, bay leaves, peppercorns, carrots, green cabbage, dressing. – **Yukhym, age 87, Chortkiv.**

I get water from the 'Royal' sump, it is soft, everything cooks well in it. I put young ribs in cold water, then beans, potatoes, cabbage, beets, previously baked in the oven, cut to strips. I make borsch dressing in a Rondell pan, fry lard, onions, stew carrots, add sour cream and tomato, season with crushed lard, garlic and herbs. At the end I add a sliced apple. Borsch will be infused and delicious! – **Valentina, 67 years old, Skala-Podilska.**

First, cover chopped potatoes with cold water, after they boil a little while, throw in the chopped cabbage, a whole onion, 6 cloves of garlic. Separately fry the onion and carrots, throw them into the pan, separately stew 3 grated red beets and add them to the pan, 1 spoonful of vinegar, 1 spoonful of tomato paste, salt, pepper, seasonings, dill, parsley to taste. When the borsch is cooked, pour it into a plate and top with a spoonful of sour cream.

At the end, when the borsch is ready, you can grate three large cloves of garlic, and instead of tomato paste, you can add tomatoes. Although my mother first cooked the broth from pork ribs, and then added potatoes and everything else according to the recipe. – **Lesya, age 41, Pidlissya, Buchach district.**

Kyiv

Sauté vegetables in oil a little: onions, carrots, peppers, tomatoes. Soak and boil the beans. Then I boil potatoes, add vegetables, grate beets, and add cabbage. I add fresh herbs. The secret ingredient is dill seeds. – **Maryna, age 33, Kyiv.**



Chernihiv oblast

Prepare meat broth with chunks of meat. Add diced potatoes, peppers, bay leaves. Separately sauté chopped onions, grated carrots, add grated beets, simmer for 5 minutes, add broth if necessary. Finally, add grated tomatoes and bell peppers, as well as lemon juice. Add stewed vegetables to the broth with potatoes. After 5 min. put mixed herbs in borsch, after 3 minutes – finely grated (crushed) garlic and herbs. Turn off the stove. Let borsch stand for 15-20 minutes. – **Maryna, 56 years old, Pryluky.**

The basis is classic (meat broth), cabbage, potatoes, beets, carrots, onions. All the ingredients can be modified depending on preferences. I cook it following several recipes, and it all depends on the time of the year (for example, cold borsch is better in summer), as well as on whether the fast is on now or not (I cook lean borsch during Lent). – **Svitlana, Kozelets**

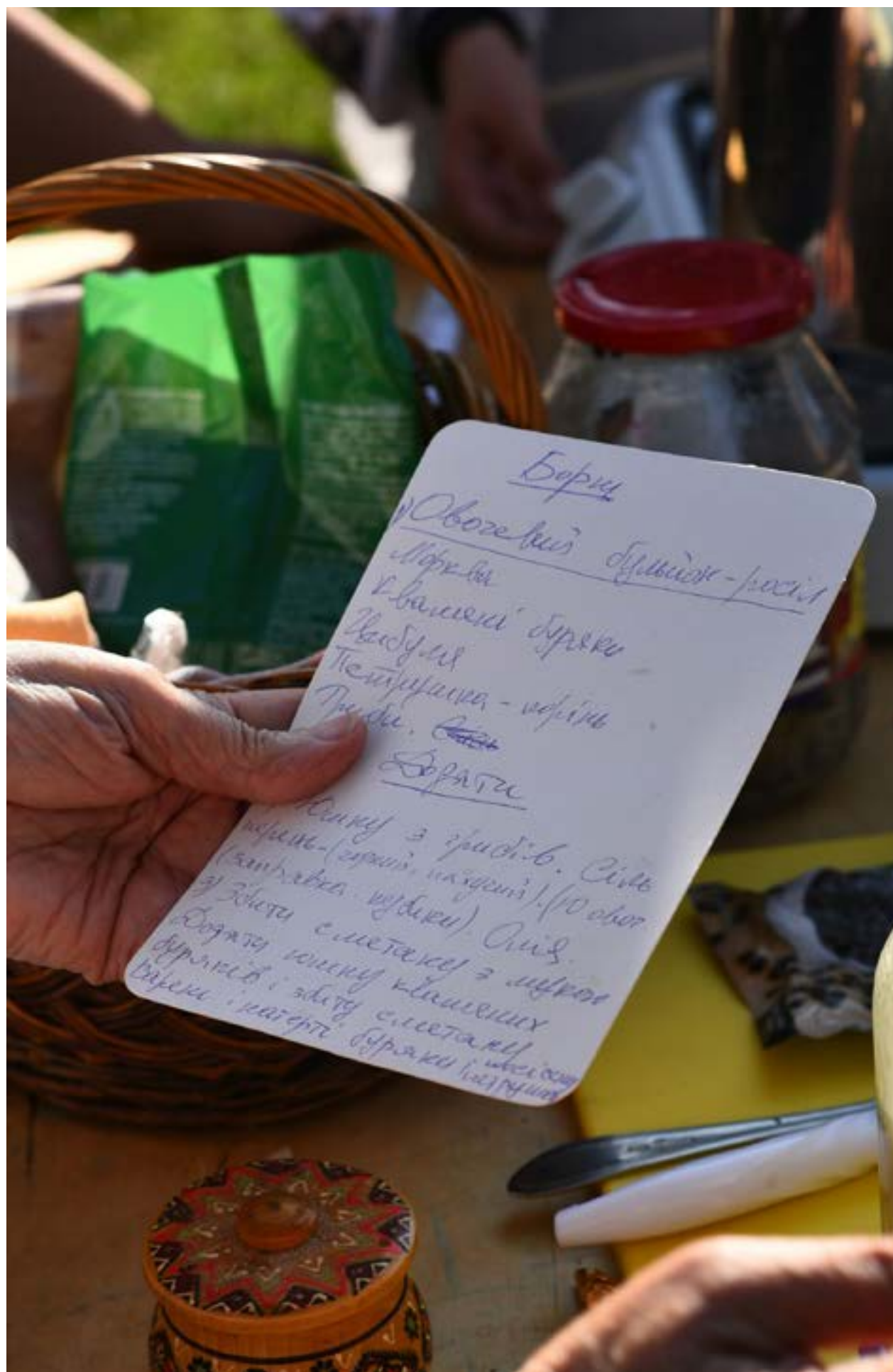
Now this is our favourite dish in our family. We are vegetarians, so borsch is always made with beans and fresh beets. I sometimes add honey or sauerkraut if it is not sweet enough or sour enough. Family recipe – lean borsch with pears. Cook, as always, with beets but add 5-6 pears dried in the oven. Tasty with fresh herbs. – **Ksenia, 31, Chernihiv**

Kharkiv

The beans are cooked separately, rinsed. Any vegetables (asparagus, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, bell peppers, peppers, beets, carrots, onions ...) are fried in coconut oil in large chunks and covered with water. Cook them for about 15-20 minutes and add tomato paste and herbs/spinach, sorrel, dill, parsley and anything you want. All this should be brought to a boil, then turn off the stove and you can treat your guests to it. – **Maryna, age 35, Kharkiv.**

First you need to make homemade chicken broth. At the same time, it is necessary to make sautéed vegetables – fry onions, chopped carrots and grated beets in a frying pan. When the vegetables are ready, you need to add tomato juice (thick and preferably homemade) or tomato paste to them and stew a little. Add chopped potatoes to the broth, and when they are almost cooked, pour the sautéed veggies into the pan. After that, you need to cook borsch for 10 more minutes, add shredded cabbage to it and cover with a lid, let it infuse. Eat borsch with sour cream. – **Yulia, age 24, Kharkiv.**





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Get familiar with eight detailed recipes [via link](#)



Kozelets, Chernihiv oblast



Photos by Ruslan Synhaievskyi