

Borscht

50g butter
1 large red onion
3 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed
1 large carrot, diced
1 large potato, peeled and diced
1 stalk celery, chopped
1 teaspoon caraway seeds, crushed in a pestle & mortar
400g raw beetroot, peeled and diced
1 teaspoon sugar
200g white cabbage, shredded
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
1½l beef stock
Juice of ½ lemon
1 cooked beetroot, grated
Soured cream and chopped chives or dill to serve

Melt the butter in a large saucepan and gently sauté the onion for a few minutes until soft. Then add the garlic, carrot, potato, celery, caraway seeds and raw beetroot. Turn the heat down very low, cover, and leave the vegetables to 'sweat' for about 5 minutes. Stir in the sugar, stock, vinegar, and plenty of freshly ground black pepper and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat and simmer, covered, for about 20 minutes. After 15 minutes, add the cabbage. Before serving, add a little lemon juice and the grated cooked beetroot. Check for seasoning, and adjust with salt, pepper, sugar and/or lemon juice. Blend to a smooth puree. Serve topped with a spoonful of sour cream, some chopped dill and some Pierogi (see recipe below).



Pierogi

Dough

1kg 00 pasta flour, plus extra for dusting
1 egg, lightly beaten
1 tablespoon of vegetable oil
250ml of water, lukewarm

Filling

1kg large potatoes, peeled and cut into quarters
sea salt
freshly ground black pepper
300g of twaróg or curd cheese
2 tablespoons of vegetable oil, preferably organic
1 tablespoon of butter
1 large white onion, very finely chopped

Make the filling to start with, as this will need time to cool completely before being used to fill the pierogi. Place the potatoes in a large pan of cold water, add a pinch of salt and bring the water to the boil over a high heat. Turn the heat down and simmer gently for 15 minutes or until the potatoes are soft when pierced with a knife. Drain and leave to dry out completely. Mash the potatoes with the cheese. While the potatoes are cooking, heat the oil and butter in a large frying pan. Cook the onion over a low heat for at least 10 minutes or until completely soft and slightly caramelised. Leave to cool slightly. Add the onion to the mashed potato mixture and season well with salt and pepper. Leave to cool completely before filling the pierogi. You can make this filling up to 2 days in advance.

To make the dough, sift the flour onto a large wooden board or work surface. Make a well in the centre and add the beaten egg and the oil along with a few tablespoons of warm water. Using a knife, begin to mix together, adding a little more water 1 tablespoonful at a time. At first the dough will be quite soft and sticky. Use your hands to bring the dough together into a ball. Once the dough has come together, knead it on a floured surface for 4–5 minutes. The dough should become quite elastic. If it is too wet, add a little more flour. Place the dough in a bowl, cover with a damp tea towel and set aside for 30 minutes. Divide the dough in half and keep one half covered with a damp tea towel to prevent it from drying out. Sprinkle your work surface with flour and roll out the dough until it is about 3mm thick. Have a floured tray or board to hand. Using a pastry cutter or an inverted glass tumbler, cut out 8cm circles of dough. Continue until all the dough is used. Cover the circles with a damp tea towel until you are ready to start filling – or cut out a few circles at a time and fill them as you go along, keeping the dough covered with a damp tea towel. To fill the pierogi, place a circle of dough in the palm of your hand and add a teaspoon of filling in the centre of the circle. Fold the dough over to enclose the filling. Using your thumb and finger, pinch the dough along the edge so that the pierogi is well sealed. Lay the pierogi in rows on the floured tray and cover with a damp tea towel while you make the rest.

To cook the pierogi, bring a large pan of water to the boil. Carefully drop the dumplings in one at a time. Keep the water at a gentle boil. The pierogi are cooked when they float up to the top, usually after 2–3 minutes. Lift them out using a slotted spoon, drain in a colander and set aside while you cook the rest. You can serve the pierogi boiled, as they are, or you can gently fry the boiled pierogi in a frying pan with a little vegetable oil or butter so that they pick up a little golden colour.