



Sharsheret in the Kitchen - Ukrainian Cuisine with Sonya Sanford @sonyamichellesanford

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SONYA'S TIPS:

Borscht

- This is Sonya's grandmother Miriam's recipe, but she acknowledges that every family and every cook has their own recipe. Some borscht recipes are meat, but her recipe is dairy; some people eat it cold, but she eats it hot.
- You can cube the beets smaller if you don't like them shredded.
- None of the ingredient amounts need to be exact - like any soup!
- You'll notice that the flavor will change depending on the time of year, where you get your beets and carrots from, etc.
- You can get other types of beets, but the dark red ones have the best flavor and color for this dish. The yellow or rainbow beets are more mild.
- You can use any neutral tasting oil (avocado oil, olive oil), but she prefers sunflower oil. She doesn't recommend coconut oil because it will add coconut flavor.
- It's easiest to shred with your food processor, but you can do it by hand as well or cube them instead of shred.
- She salts each time she adds to the pot. If you're watching your sodium, don't do that, just add once when you're sweating the vegetables.
- She likes to cook this slowly and keep the heat on low.
- You can omit the garlic, but Sonya thinks it's a very important flavor to add, and measure with your heart. Her grandparents ate whole cloves of garlic on the side with this dish!
- If you're watching your starch/potato intake, you can use parsnips, rutabaga, or turnip instead of the potatoes. Sweet potatoes would be too sweet for the dish.
- She likes a thick chop for the potatoes so they don't fall apart. But you don't want them too big either.

- You can use any type of potato. She recommends yukon gold, russet, or a red waxy potato. You can also vary the amount of potato based on your preference. She washes and scrubs the potatoes and takes out any dark spots with a knife or the end of her peeler. They hold their shape best with the peel, but you can
- If you chose to cook this dish in a pressure cooker, you could probably throw everything in at once. She recommends setting it on a lower time than usual so you can check and add more time if needed.
- It's very important to cook your tomato paste before the next step. Give it several minutes to caramelize.
- You can omit the tomato, but it's important to balance out the sweetness of the beets. Or you can add the whole can of tomato if you're worried they'll get wasted! It will just taste more tomato-y.
- Sonya believes in the Bay Leaf even though lots of people think it doesn't have much flavor.
- You can use vegetable stock, but water is fine because all these ingredients have so much flavor!
- Any cabbage will work (Sonya's favorite is savoy), or you can use kale or beet greens (just wash them very well). Sonya doesn't usually use purple cabbage because it will darken the soup. You could use a package of cole slaw as a shortcut.
- She adds the tender leaves of herbs at the end, once the heat is off. But if you finely chop the dill and parsley stems, they'll melt away into the dish if you cook it in while the heat is still on. Or you could tie them in cheesecloth to not have to chop them up. This is a great trick for chicken soup (dill, parsley), beans (cilantro), and more. It adds so much flavor.
- Boiling soup muddies the flavor, so try to do it on a low heat and watch it so you can turn the heat down if it bubbles too much.
- You can substitute Greek yogurt for sour cream. Just start with a little less because it has tangier flavor. You could also use labneh.
- When she turns off the heat, she'll add nearly a whole bunch of fresh herbs (and save a little for serving).
- She also adds lemon juice at the end once the heat is off. It brightens the whole dish. A plain, light vinegar (not balsamic) like champagne vinegar or even red wine. She also adds lemon juice to chicken soup and lentil soup (or any lentil dish and bean dish).
- You could also add pepper.

Naturally Fermented Sour Pickles

- Pickling is a huge part of Ukranian cooking because so many things grew during the summer, so it was essential to preserve it.
- Sonya doesn't recommend tap water, but you can use it.

- Diamond-brand salt is used in Sonya's recipe. Each salt brand has different amounts of salinity. If you use a different brand, she recommends googling the adjustments needed.
- You can do this with any vegetable, but she likes green beans the best with this recipe.
- They do sell pickling weights, but they aren't necessary if you pack very tightly.
- She uses a 1 QT mason jar.
- You could also add mustard seed.
- Put it in a cool, dark place and every day, she'll open it (to burp it) for a moment. The recipe calls for 5-7 days before refrigerating, but if you like a half-sour taste, you might want to stop at 3 days. You can taste it every day to see what you prefer. It will continue to ferment in the fridge.

Quick Refrigerator Vinegar Pickles

- Pickled red onion is such a great flavor topper on a rice bowl, taco, salad, anything!
- You can use any vegetable or even fruit like peach, watermelon, or plums!
- You can use any clean jar because this isn't really canning.
- Having a very sharp knife can help you not cry when cutting an onion.
- It's delicious without the dill, mustard seeds, etc. All you need is the vinegar.
- You could omit the sugar, but it might taste a little off without it since this is a sweeter pickle.
- You can let the brine cool to warm or use it when boiling.
- Once cool, it goes in the fridge - this one doesn't stay out like the other.
- You could keep this in the fridge safely for a month, but they won't last that long.

Smoked Fish Salad

- Fresh herbs add so much to this and lots of people don't think to add them. Doesn't take too much effort, but packs a big punch. It also looks more beautiful!
- You can use any mayonnaise; she used Primal Kitchen avocado oil based mayo from Costco in this demo. She thinks Hellman's, Best Foods, and Dukes are most people's favorite brands. Her favorites are always from a Russian market. If you can go to one, she recommends getting mayo from there. Veganaise also has good flavor.
- You can substitute Greek yogurt for mayonnaise. Just start with a little less because it has more tangy flavor. You could also use labneh.
- Organic lemons are best if you're using zest. She recommends a micro plane, but you can use a zester or box grater too.
- You could also add sliced celery or a little pickle.

Miscellaneous

- Any enamel cast iron, stainless steel, or ceramic pot is good for soup. She steers clear of aluminum and non-stick pots and pans. Non-stick is often made with Teflon. But don't be afraid to use what you have!
- She answers emails and Instagram DMs, so reach out directly anytime!




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