

Ukrainian Cuisine with Sonya Sanford

National Webinar Transcript

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Presented by:



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Jessica Jablon:

So, welcome, everybody. Welcome, we are excited to have you join us today for Sharsheret in the Kitchen, Ukrainian Cuisine with Sonya Sanford. I'm Jessica Jablon, California Regional Director at Sharsheret. And for those of you who don't know about Sharsheret, we help women and families facing breast and ovarian cancer, as well as those who are at elevated genetic risk through free, confidential, and personalized support and resources. We also provide health education throughout the country. One of our goals is to make sure that we're offering healthy living and cancer prevention information to you and giving you what support you need. So in addition to our virtual services that can be found on our website or by emailing us, you can also access prior webinars on a range of topics, as well as access our calendar of upcoming virtual programs through our website.

Before we begin, a few housekeeping items. Today's webinar is being recorded. Participants' faces and names will not be in the recording as long as you remain muted, and it will be posted in the next couple of weeks with a transcript. If you would like to remain private, you can turn off your video and rename yourself, or you can call into the webinar. Instructions are in the chat box now for both options. You may have noticed that all participants were muted upon entry. Please keep yourself on mute throughout the call. If you have questions for Sonya, put them in the chat box either publicly, or click Sharsheret in the chat box to submit a private question, and I will ask them throughout the program. We will send a follow-up email with tips and recommendations from today's webinar with the recording.

We're very excited to continue our Sharsheret in the Kitchen series, an initiative in partnership with Cedars-Sinai here in Los Angeles, to empower those of us at risk for breast and ovarian cancer to make healthier diet choices. We've had some really amazing guests for this healthier cooking series and we invite you to check out our prior Sharsheret, in the Kitchen webinars on our website at the link in the chat. You should have received the recipes for today's programs in advance. My colleague is going to put the link in the chat box now so you can download and print it or you can just see it on your screen. We want to thank our incredible sponsors, Cedars-Sinai, the Cooperative Agreement DP19-1906 from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention. It's because of their generous support that we have been able to continue to provide this series of webinars. We also want to thank our community partner, Woman to Woman, for being here today with us.

I can't believe it is already February, but that means that Sharsheret Pink Day is coming up next Wednesday, February 15th. Pink Day is the worldwide initiative spearheaded by students, communities, and organizations. We wear pink as a way to raise awareness and generate conversations. We engage in *Tikkun Olam*, repairing the world, through a wide range of educational and fundraising events. Now, just like Breast Cancer Awareness month or seeing someone wearing a pink ribbon can be hard for people who have been touched by breast cancer. We want to acknowledge that Pink Day can also be a hard day for some. And we want to remind you that our clinical team is here to support you and your loved ones. But ultimately, we believe these conversations save lives. So please, next Wednesday wear pink and post on your social media. And you can tag us @sharsheretofficial.

Pink Day is also a great time to be reminded of the signs and symptoms of breast and ovarian cancer. My colleague is going to put the link to our know the facts resources in the chat. We also have a know the facts resource for men, so she's going to put the link to that as well. And then as part of our pink day this year, we're excited to offer a Zentangle Pink Day Workshop on February 15th at 8:30 PM Eastern Time. Zentangle is an easy to learn, fun way to create beautiful works of art using structured patterns on a small paper format called Tiles. This workshop is designed to promote relaxation and creativity, no art background is needed, and we hope that we'll see you there wearing your pink. Now, before we meet Sonya, I want to

introduce one of our amazing volunteers and California Advisory Committee member, Danielle, who will be sharing her story with us.

Danielle Pullman:

Hi, y'all. My name's Danielle Pullman, and I was introduced to Sharsheret in October of 2017 when I attended a pink Shabbat service at my synagogue. After listening to the speakers' stories, I decided to test for the BRCA gene mutations, given the long history of cancer in my family. Unfortunately, around that same time, as luck would have it, I was diagnosed with cancer. A small lump was found. I'm lucky to have been introduced to Sharsheret prior to this, as had I not decided to do the genetic testing ahead of time, I would've certainly chosen to do a lumpectomy because we found the cancer super early. Later on, after doing all the testing, we discovered that the chances of the cancer coming back were extremely high. So I move forward with taking all the prophylactic measures to have the best outcome possible. I'm happy to tell you all that I am now five years cancer free.

When I was diagnosed, I decided to handle everything on my own. I thought I didn't need Sharsheret. I was wrong by the way, I was really, really wrong. So let me just say that. But I did make the decision to put my name on the Sharsheret peer support list once I was feeling better. While waiting for a match, I decided that it was important to help bring awareness to this amazing organization and community. The first step I took was to hold a webinar within the company I work for, which is Disney. I'm lead of the Community Outreach Committee within Shalom, which is our Jewish Business Employee Resource Group. So I was connected to Jessica, and together we created an amazing webinar program to introduce Sharsheret to our Shalom members. We had both a male and female speaker, a geneticist, as well as Jessica from Sharsheret, all speak.

Shortly thereafter, I created an employee team to participate in the Sharsheret West Coast Dash. We fund-raised, and I believe we raised somewhere around \$3,000, maybe a little more. I could be wrong. And it was a wonderful, extremely empowering, uplifting experience. It was the first time our team got together after COVID. It was a lot of fun. So I just want to really encourage you all if you do work, to reach out to your employers to see if they will consider having Sharsheret speak. It's amazing. Our entire group was so engaged and they've now made the commitment to include Sharsheret in ongoing efforts by continuing to contribute to the West Coast Dash. And we are going to continue doing webinars and staying involved as often as possible. So thank you for listening to my story and have a wonderful cooking experience.

Jessica Jablon:

Well, thank you, Danielle, so much. It's been such a pleasure getting to know you and working with you. It was unbelievable with the West Coast Dash, the amount of money that Team Shalom raised, and I'm just so glad that you're involved. We're really lucky to have you and so thank you.

Danielle Pullman:

Thank you.

Jessica Jablon:

Now I'm so excited to welcome Sonya Sanford. Sonya is a writer and chef based out of Portland, Oregon. She's a screenwriter and food writer specializing in Ukrainian and Soviet food, modern Jewish food, and seasonal cooking. Her culinary background includes cheffing, food styling, teaching, and food writing. And she is the founder and owner of Beetroot Market

and Deli. She's a regular contributor to *The Nosh*, and you can find her recipes there, on her Instagram @sonyamichellesanford, and on her website, sonyasanford.com. And I highly recommend you follow her, as the fresh colors and beautiful food really look amazing. Please stay tuned to the end of our webinar and fill out our survey for a chance to win one of Sonya's favorite cookbooks, [The Gefilte Manifesto](#), [New Recipes for Old World Jewish Foods](#). Okay, welcome to Sharsheret in the Kitchen, Sonya, thank you for being here today. I'll turn it over to you.

Sonya Sanford:

Thanks so much, Jessica. Thanks for such a kind introduction. And Danielle, thanks for sharing your amazing story, and I'm so happy to hear that you're five years out from all that. So that's amazing. Yeah. So you know a little bit about me from Jessica. I also am the child of Soviet Ukrainian immigrants. I was the first-born American in my family, but I grew up in a Russian-speaking home. My brother was born there and all of my family on both sides all comes from Ukraine, so both sets of grandparents. And I grew up with a lot of Ukrainian food. It's complicated because in the Soviet Union, food became sort of nationalized across all the different regions and that was intentional. So Ukrainian food can look a lot like Russian food and Soviet food in general. But one of the most Ukrainian dishes is in fact borscht, which is what we're going to make today.

And it's one of those things where every single cook has their own recipe. Every single home has their own recipe and their own tradition. And it's really hard to find two recipes that are exactly alike. The central ingredient is of course beets. And there's sort of a couple reasons why I want to share this with all of you. One of which is beets are one of the most nutrient dense vegetables you can find. It's incredibly nutritious. You can make this recipe nearly year round. Beets and carrots and cabbage grow almost year round and then grow in various climates. So I was looking for something that sort of, 'cause I typically cook seasonally, that was just easy to make, that was really helpful and extremely nutritious. And this version of borscht is my grandmother's recipe, my maternal grandmother, Miriam. It's her recipe. She taught me how to make it.

And so while, like I said, everyone has an opinion, and it may not be exactly your style, this is to me the best version of course, 'cause it's her version. In our home, it was always traditional to make borscht without meat. So you may have seen many recipes that include beef or short rib or some kind of meat. We always kept ours vegetarian, and that's because we like to eat our borscht with sour cream. And in our home we kept kosher, so we weren't mixing meat and dairy. So that's exactly what I'm going to teach you and you have the recipe. One last point is we're making this hot. We typically ate this hot. There's a version of cold borscht that we would eat in the summer, but I think some people only have sort of familiarity with the borscht in the jar, or the borscht that you get cold in the summer. And really most people eat it hot, so just to clarify that.

And if you've never had it before, it will taste quite different than the kind that you can get in a jar at the store. So if you're a little afraid and this doesn't seem good, I promise you it's worth a try. So there's different ways to prepare the beets. And again, I'm using my grandmother's method. She always shredded her carrots and her beets. You can cube them small if you don't like the texture, just know that the color's going to completely leech out of the beets. So again, if you don't like the way that looks or you don't like the texture, then I recommend cubing your vegetables. I'm using about a pound of carrots and about a pound of beets. It ends up being about three medium large just beets this size, and two very large carrots or you can use three carrots. And you don't have to be terribly exact with any soup. You should do this to your liking.

Also, each carrot, each beet tastes different depending on the time of year, where you got it, et tetra. So these are all just guides. Use your heart, use your intuition. I have the stove going. I'm going to put that on medium heat to sauté or medium low, depending on what your stove is. I'm using sunflower oil. Again, that's because that's what my grandmother used, but you can use any oil you like. And you could use very minimal oil for this, it's just a little to sweat the vegetables. You could use olive oil, you can use whatever, avocado oil I often use. I typically stay away from coconut just because it has coconut flavor, but any neutral tasting oil is great. And if I didn't make this clear, I did this with the shredder attachment on my food processor, and I've certainly shredded this by hand as well if I didn't have a food processor, and my grandmother did both too. So you can use what you got.

And again, if you don't want to shred, then you can cube and the flavor will be the same. It's just a matter of texture. So I'm going to add all these carrots and beets to that pot. And I'm also going to add about, this is one large onion that I diced. And you don't need to dice it too small, you can dice it how ever's easy for you. I did a rough dice. My grandma, actually, this is the one place where we deviate. She would take a whole onion and just stick it in the pot, and she would sort of sweat the carrots and beets in a separate pan and then add them to the pot. I kind of just do things a little bit differently there, but everything else is hers, including the ingredients. I'm just going to grab a spoon.

Okay. So we're going to let this sweat, and that just means that you're basically softening the vegetables, allowing their flavors to come out in the oil before you start adding many other things to them. Especially with onions, it helps to build flavor in any soup to get them a little cooked. They have more depth of flavor after you sauté them, that's why you always see that happening. So we're going to do that efficiently for the sake of time, I'm just going to give it a second. And I don't want to waste any beets, scoop those out. And you can use the golden beets or the Chioggia beets, which are the candy-striped ones. I just find for borscht, the flavor of dark red beets plus the nutritional value of them is my preference. But you can use any beet you have, those just tend to be a little milder in flavor.

So while that softens, I also want to season it with salt. If you're watching your salt, then just use a little bit. But I think it also helps draw out the liquid, which will draw out the flavor. So at this stage, I kind of salt at every stage that I'm cooking. So I'll salt now and I'll salt each time I'm adding things to the pot. And again, if you're watching your salt, then don't do it that way. But I would say if you're going to use any salt at all, this is a good time to use it. So I'm just using salt, like a couple big pinches, but you can use it the way you like to. If you want to measure with a spoon, go ahead. But you're going to taste and adjust later once the soup is done.

And I like to keep things on medium. I'm speeding it up here for the sake of our class, but at home I really like to not rush this and not let things burn, so I keep the heat low. The other thing I'm going to add is I would say a copious amount of chopped garlic. This is probably six cloves. Garlic's really important in this dish. If you don't eat garlic, you can still make it. I don't want to say that it's essential. Beets are essential. You can't make this without beets. Garlic, you could skip, but I personally think it's an important flavor. So if you like it and you can eat it, it's great to add. In fact, my grandparents, the way they would eat this is with whole clothes of raw garlic on the side and just slices of thick bread. And they would literally eat whole clothes of garlic and eat their soup at the same time, which I never was brave enough to do as a child, but was always impressed by.

There is something that garlic and beet, like the sweetness of beets and the sharpness of garlic just really pair well together. So we're going to let the garlic sweat for just a moment. And that's also really important, because the way that garlic tastes once it's cooked is sweeter and milder. So you don't want to have it with that raw, aggressive, sharp taste. So I'm going to let that do that. And while that's sweating, I'm just going to prepare my potatoes. So you can use any

potato you like for this, any single one. Red potatoes, Yukon Gold, russets, they all work, fingerlings, whatever you're into. If you don't like potatoes, you can skip them. If you want to have a little more heft to your soup and don't want to use potatoes, then I would recommend parsnip or rutabaga, if you're watching your starch. In fact, I love rutabaga in almost any soup. I think it's the most underrated vegetable. And in soups it just turns so sweet and carrot-y and mild and it adds just a nice layer of flavor. It's a little different than a carrot.

So yeah, so I'm not adding your de rutabaga here today, I'm just going to take my potatoes. I like to do a pretty big cube for borscht, because it's going to simmer for a while and I don't want the potato to totally fall apart. So I'm doing about one-inch pieces, but you could certainly do them smaller if you prefer it smaller. And you don't want them too big because again, you want to make sure they actually do cook. It's probably going to be roughly 40 minutes of simmering, depending. And I'm using about a pound of potatoes, which in this case is about three medium potatoes. These are Yukon Golds. If I was using russet, I might only use one russet. And I actually don't like a ton of potato in this. So this is another thing where if not a big potato fan, you could use one or two. Or if you're a big potato fan, you could use a little more. So I'll just finish doing this, and if you have any questions, feel free to ask. And Jessica, feel free to interrupt me if I miss anything.

Jessica Jablon:

Definitely will.

Sonya Sanford:

Okay. So just going to finish cutting this. We'll reserve it. We're not quite ready to add the potato. And these are all the simple foods that were available, right? Beets, carrots, onions, potatoes, cabbage, some variation of that were sort of what people had access to and for longer stretches of the year. Certainly in deep winter, not everything was available, but all of these are essentially storage crops. Okay.

Jessica Jablon:

A couple of questions came in.

Sonya Sanford:

Great.

Jessica Jablon:

Someone wanted to know if you could cook this dish in a pressure cooker.

Sonya Sanford:

Oh, that's a good question. If you did it in a pressure cooker, I've actually never done that. And I have a pressure cooker and use it often. I would say yes, you can, is my short answer. I think you could throw everything in at once. I would just set it for a little bit shorter time period than you might normally do, and then see how it is and maybe add time. Because the only thing is you don't want it to all turn to mush. Yes, I think it would bring out the flavor very nicely. I love the way pressure cookers, you really taste the vegetables in broth. What was the other question?

Jessica Jablon:

The other question was, other than russets and Yukon Gold, are there any other types of potatoes that would be good or not good? And how do you clean the potatoes since the skin is left on?

Sonya Sanford:

Yeah. I wash them and I scrubbed them. Actually, I've kind of missed one little spot. But I took out any yucky spots or dark spots with a little knife or with the end of my peeler. You don't have to leave the skins on if they bug you, but I find they taste better and they hold their shape better and there's no reason to peel them. But again, if you don't like skins, peel them. In terms of other potatoes, I would say, well, red waxy potatoes are great for this. It's really forgiving. So any potato, literally any potato. I can't think of one that would taste bad.

Jessica Jablon:

Even sweet potato?

Sonya Sanford:

No, a sweet potato I would not call a potato. A sweet potato would make this too sweet in my opinion. So again, if you were looking for a potato substitute, I highly recommend the rutabaga, parsnip or turnip actually would work well too. All of them have a potato-like texture, but without that starch. Okay. So I can start smelling the garlic, that's how I know the garlic is sweated properly. Once you really hits you, then you've done your job. And at this point I'm going to add tomato paste. And this is just a step that I think actually is important is to cook your tomato paste before adding liquid, just like we're doing with the garlic. So I'm eyeballing about a tablespoon. All the exact measurements are in the recipe, but again, I think with soups, you should just play around and do what feels right to you.

All right. So I'm just going to mix the tomato paste. So again, the tomato paste has a tinny flavor, and I find when you add it just straight to liquid, it doesn't entirely lose it. I know these are subtle flavors. If you forget the tomato paste, add it later, it's fine. But I like to cook it down and also caramelizes a little and it gets that just extra level of umami. So whenever I'm making a tomato sauce for pasta, I do the same thing. I always make sure to caramelize that tomato sauce with my onions. Okay. I'm going a little faster than I normally would. I would really give this a solid several minutes. And at this point we're adding canned tomato. Well, I have canned diced tomatoes. I also write in the recipe, you can use tomato puree or fresh tomatoes.

Tomato is another very important ingredient in this recipe. If you can't eat it, again, certainly omit it. But what it does is it balances out the sweetness of those beets. The beets on their own are just so sweet as they cook. So every traditional borscht has tomato in it, and because fresh tomatoes aren't available year round, I just switch it based on the season. They are available here, they weren't there. So here they are available year round. But because again, I cook seasonally, I tend to just keep canned tomatoes in the winter. So I'm going to add, this is about half a cup, which is I think every can is like a cup and a half. And if you want to not waste and add a whole can, that's totally fine too. It'll just be slightly more tomatoey, which honestly will probably taste good. I'm going to reserve those tomatoes that I didn't use for something else.

All right, so now I have my tomato in there. I'm going to add bay leaf. And yes, bay leaf does have flavor, even though people sometimes think it doesn't. I think it also is a necessary ingredient. This is one of those things where there's actually not that many ingredients if you're really thinking about a complex soup, and so each one to me matters. So I like to use a good bay leaf, one or two or however many you desire. I'm going to add the potatoes, and now I'm

going to add liquid. You can totally use vegetable stock, but more often I use just water because all of these things are flavorful on their own.

So I'm using about 12 cups of water, but you can eyeball it. Sometimes I want my borscht little bit looser, so I'll add more liquid. Sometimes I want a little thicker. You can start with the amount in the recipe and then modify it to your liking. At this point, I'm going to raise the temperature. I want that to come to a simmer, and I want to be a gentle simmer. So immediately after it comes to a simmer, I'll turn it down again. And I'll let that simmer slowly for about 30 minutes before I add the cabbage. This is just how my grandmother taught me, like I keep saying, but you can add the cabbage now and it will be fine. I just usually add it later because it doesn't take as much time to cook. And we'll just get that ready. There's a few more ingredients I add with the cabbage, but we'll start with the cabbage.

So I found this beautiful purple Savoy, but any cabbage will work. It's very versatile. And in fact, sometimes when I don't have cabbage, I add kale, or if I don't have any of that, I'll add the beet greens. If I get a whole bunch of beets, I'll just wash the beet greens really, really well and I'll add those. So you can use a combination of greens. You could use whatever cabbage you like. Savoy, green. I typically don't use purple cabbage for this, but you absolutely could. It may just darken the color of the soup a bit. But yeah, every single kind of cabbage works. I really like Savoy, it's kind of tender and pretty. So I'm a sucker for beautiful produce. But again, flavor wise, it doesn't radically change the dish. And then I'm just going to cut this into strips. I'll show you in a minute. It looks like there's a question. Is that right?

Jessica Jablon:

There is. Could you shortcut and use a bag of coleslaw instead of chopping up cabbage?

Sonya Sanford:

Absolutely. That's such a great tip. Yes, go for it.

Jessica Jablon:

And then someone else wanted to know, what stories did your grandparents tell at the table?

Sonya Sanford:

Oh, wow, that's such a sweet question. Yeah. I was so lucky that I lived in the same city as them and got to see them all the time and was at their table. The life was hard there and they were survivors. And so those stories weren't told with great frequency, unless I really asked about them. But more often we were just talking. My grandfather loved to tell jokes, he loved to tell kind of shtetl jokes. He spoke Yiddish and he would try to teach me Yiddish. And my grandmother and I often talked about food and cooking, which bore him tremendously. But he was really happy that we were getting along. So yeah, we would often talk about recipes, how she made something on the table. There was always a lot of laughter. Thank you for that question. They were really important people in my life and I always feel like she's with me in the kitchen. They both passed away actually recently, in 2019 and 2020.

Jessica Jablon:

Sorry.

Sonya Sanford:

But I was lucky to have them for so many years. So I'm just doing a rough chop on this. You can do strips, you can do diced, it does not matter. And like I said, any green will work, any cabbage will work, coleslaw will work. All of that works. And the coleslaw also has shredded carrot in it, which is already in the soup. So again, more shredded carrot doesn't hurt. All right. So the other ingredient that I love to add and I think is important, unless you really don't like chopping, is the stems of herbs. So I'm going to reserve the tops for the end. The tender parts of fresh herbs, if you put them into early in a soup, they just sort of wilt away and don't do very much. So I tend to add this actually at the very end when I turn off the heat, that's when I'll hit it with all the fresh parsley and dill.

But before then, what I'll do is actually chop up the stems of the parsley very fine. There's so much flavor in here. And by the time the soup cooks, you won't even notice it's in there. They'll sort of dissolve into the broth. And the other very important herb stem is dill. I can't think of a more important herb in Ukrainian cooking. I think dill, it just smells like my grandparents' kitchen. It was in salads, it was in soups. Everything had dill. If you don't like dill, omit it, but I really think if you haven't had it, this is a good place to try it. And if you love it, then add 10. So I take the dill stems and I'm reserving the frilly tops for the end with the parsley tops. And I'm going to finely dice both the dill stems and the parsley stems.

And if there's very woody bits, there's just very woody ends, I'll put those aside. And if you don't want to chop this, you could also put them in whole, or in cheese cough and then fish them out. You could tie them with a little twine and they would still offer flavor and you wouldn't have to do all this chopping. And I would say that's the hardest thing about borscht, is really just chopping vegetables. Other than that, it takes very little effort. Is there another question there?

Jessica Jablon:

No. Somebody's commenting on the genius of that method.

Sonya Sanford:

Yeah. I do this with chicken soup too. I do it with beans. If I'm making a pot of beans, I love to add cilantro stems, because cilantro and beans tend to go really well. It just adds so much more flavor. And again, I feel like there's just a lot of bland soups in the world. And obviously you can add Bouillon cubes or those kinds of ingredients and they definitely make it more flavorful. But I'm always looking for ways to not have to do that, I guess. And since I'm already going to add herbs, and then this doesn't go to waste. I also keep a bag of, I have a tremendous amount of parsley right now, and so I probably won't use all the stems of this for a soup. So I'll cut off the stems and I keep a bag in my freezer, and when I make stock, I throw in the frozen parsley stems or dill stems, again, because they add flavor for any broth, chicken broth, vegetable broth, any broth.

Jessica Jablon:

Well, it's funny, I think dill we haven't had any conversations about. But the cilantro, people have very strong feelings about cilantro.

Sonya Sanford:

Yes, I'm aware. But if you don't have the gene that makes it taste like soap and you like cilantro, then I recommend it.

Jessica Jablon:

Right. Somebody was asking if you can use the food processor for the stems.

Sonya Sanford:

Yeah, absolutely. You totally can. Yeah. But not through the greater attachment, obviously just the regular attachment, the regular blade, you can absolutely pulse them. And I think you could do that with the cabbage too. So you could really do all your chopping in your food processor if you needed to. I kind of enjoy chopping obviously, otherwise I wouldn't have become a chef, but I understand that not everyone does. All right. So this is reaching a similar, I'm going to turn it down and we're going to move on to our next recipe.

The other part of Ukrainian cooking that I'm sharing today is pickles. Preservation and pickles are such an important part of our heritage. Jewish heritage, Ashkenazi heritage, but I would say Sephardic as well. Preserving foods was an essential part of all of our ancestors' lives, wherever they lived. And in Ukraine, pickling was very prevalent, partly because so much grew in Ukraine. I think you may have known that it was the bread basket of the Soviet Union. It's a very fertile place, especially in Southern Ukraine and along the Baltic Sea. So there was just so much produce in the summer and it was essential to preserve it and keep it. So I'm just going to teach you. One moment while I get a few ingredients.

Jessica Jablon:

Well, you have a bunch of people here who are really excited about having hot borscht for Passover.

Sonya Sanford:

Oh, good. Yes, I love it during Passover. It's so good and it's always nice to mix it up and have also vegetarian options during Passover. So yeah, so this pickle recipe is adapted from the Gefilte Manifesto, which is the book that you can enter to win. And it's one of my favorite cookbooks. It's an Ashkenazi cookbook, written by Liz Alpern and Jeffrey Yoskowitz, who happen to be great friends of mine, but I also actually genuinely love their cookbook. And this is just a riff on their recipe, because I think they are just experts on pickles and it's a naturally fermented pickle. And I think we all kind of get scared when we hear pickles, that you have to have special equipment and sanitary jars. Pickling scared me for a while too, but again, I had so much exposure to my grandmother constantly pickling things in her kitchen, that I definitely knew I wanted it to be part of my culinary life.

So what I did is, everything's in your recipe, but I took two cups of filtered water. It could be bottled water, it could be boiled with water, it could be filtered water, just not tap water. And again, it will work with tap water, it's just ideally it's filtered. I've certainly actually made pickles with tap water before. And then I took a tablespoon and one teaspoon of Diamond brand kosher salt. The brands matter because they have different levels of salinity. So for pickling, it helps to use the amounts and the brands given. But if you have a different kind of salt, you want to use like sea salt or Himalayan salt, you could easily do a Google search for these ratios. But for the sake of time, I'm sticking with this. And I have it here and it's actually sat for a bit and dissolved, but if I had just added the salt, I would just do this.

And then this is all you have to do to create naturally fermented pickles. It's water and salt, and that's all you need and a vegetable. And today I'm using just regular green beans, these are just standard green beans. You could use cucumbers, you could use Persian cucumbers. Ideally you would use pickling cucumbers in the summer. You could do this with beets, you could do this with radishes or carrots, but I really do like this with beans. And the key with this is that you want this to be very compact in the jar. You really want to make sure that everything is submerged. And if there's not enough liquid, then there's instructions about how to add more liquid because you want everything completely under. And if it starts floating, then you want to

put something clean in there to weigh it down. So sometimes I'll put a small dish. There's special pickling weights, they're called, that you can buy, but it's not necessary.

So once this is, and after we end I'll top this off, but you can see it's all quite tightly packed in there. Again, just salt and water in the proportions listed. And I'm using all these mason jars. The larger size are one quart. So I'm using a one quart jar to two cups liquid. I'm going to add a couple cloves of garlic that have been smashed. I'm going to add some peppercorns. You could add mustard seed. Oh, I'm going to add a bay leaf. Yeah, let me add a little one. And that's it. And then again, making sure everything is totally submerged, I'm going to cover this. And for the next few days, every day I'm going to open it up. I'm going to put it probably in a cool, dark place. It shouldn't be sitting in a warm place or on your fridge or in the window.

I'll put it in a cool dark place and every day for the next few days I'll open it, and that's called burping it. And that's literally all you have to do is open it, you don't have to do anything else. And then once you'll start seeing there will be bubbles that form, it'll start getting fizzy, it'll start smelling and looking fermented. And then once you have the desire, you can taste it and if it tastes like good to you after two days, then stick it in the fridge and your pickle's done. It will continue to ferment in the fridge, but you only keep it at room temperature for, I think, again, I put this all down, up to seven days maximum. So sometime half sours and full sour pickles, if you're familiar with those, are just sort of the number of days they've been fermented before they're canned or stored.

So I like mine more on the half sour side. So I usually opt for three-ish days and I taste it and then put it away. And that's it, that's all it takes to pickle something, which I just love. It's so easy. And you start with the clean jar, but other than that, you don't have to sterilize it, you don't have to boil a big pot of water. That's all you need to do. The other pickle I wanted to show you before we add our cabbage, is a quick vinegar pickle. So I love having pickled red onion just sitting in my fridge at any time. I just think it's such a nice pop of flavor on a rice bowl or a taco or a salad actually. And I use this vinegar ratio for just about again, any vegetable. You could use it for onions, cabbage, carrots, radish beans, cucumbers, fruit. I've used this to pickle peaches to do a quick pi pickle on a fruit.

You can do watermelon, that's actually very common in Ukraine is to pickle fruit, plums, watermelon and all those things. I'm going to add this just to get this out of our way. Oops. Okay. And then I'm just going to cut up some onion. You can use a mandolin, you could slice this very thin, but in this case I'm just going to do, I don't know, a pretty thin slice. I want it all about the same size. And then separately, before we started in a pot, I had simmered together a little bit of vinegar, water, salt, and sugar. And I just brought it up to simmer until the sugar dissolved. So it takes about two minutes, three minutes, maybe max. And that's all it takes to make a brine. Pickling is just so easy. Again, that's why I love teaching it. And many of you may already be expert picklers and none of this is new, but I find that a lot of people just have never tried it before out of not knowing that it's very simple.

Okay. So then I'm just going to take my onion. This is about half an onion, we'll see how much it fills the jar. You can really stuff it in there. So this one pint mason jar would likely fit an entire onion if I really press it down. Also, if you don't have mason jars, I frequently reuse jars. Again, because we're not canning, we're not like putting this on a shelf, you can use any clean jar. You could use a water glass if you needed to and cover it. All right. I have my onions in there into this.

Jessica Jablon:

We have a question.

Sonya Sanford:

Yeah, go ahead.

Jessica Jablon:

How are you not crying from cutting the onion? I don't know. That's a great question. My knife is really sharp, I sharpened it just before we started. And that is always the secret for me not crying, or if you contact lenses, which clearly I don't.

So I'm going to add a few peppercorns to this too. I'm not measuring because I'm just eyeballing, but there are measurements listed for you. And the other one, I meant to add some dill sprigs, which I'll add to the green beans after. And so to this I'll add a bay leaf. And I have some black mustard seed, but you don't have to add any of this. You could add like nothing and just the vinegar brine and it will be delicious. So then I have the brine that's been already dissolved. And like I said, this is just a ratio of white vinegar, plain old white vinegar, sugar, water, salt. I don't have a great sugar substitute for this recipe. If you're watching your sugar, this is a little bit of a sweeter pickle. You could omit it, if you use this exact recipe, it might just taste a little off. So if you wanted to do something without sugar, I would just look up a quick pickle recipe without sugar. I'm sure there are many.

So again, I'm just going to pour, this is warm brine, it can be boiling hot and just put it over the onions. I'm going to let this fully cool before I put it in the fridge, and then I'm just going to put it in the fridge. It's not going to sit on my counter like the beans. These will sit, like I said, for three to seven days. This just sits on my counter until it's cool, then it goes in the fridge. Within five hours it's ready to use. And it only kind of gets better over time. And it lasts, I would say for up to, honestly probably three months, but it never lasts that long. So I would say safely for a month and maybe longer.

And then you always have pickled onions in your fridge or pickled anything because as we just talked about, it could be any ingredient at all. All right. And then the last recipe I wanted to share with you, it's not even a complicated recipe and many of you will probably be familiar, but it was just really common in our house to eat smoked fish. I don't know if it was that way for all of you, but it was such a part of our life. My grandmother made a lot of her own like gravlax type cured salmon. We lived in Seattle where salmon is really abundant. And so she was always kind of making her own also cured fish, which I love to do as well. But this isn't going to be that elaborate. We're going to use some store-bought smoked fish.

And I'm just sharing a very simple salad. And I think the reason is not because you don't know how to make a smoked fish salad, but I find that this one, it's one I served at my deli that people really loved, and it's one that is just a great thing to have in the fridge for breakfast, for sandwiches, or for a meal with borscht, to have a side of salad and smoked fish is just such a lovely meal. So I'm using smoked trout. In the northwest it's really hard to get whitefish. If you're from New York, you're very lucky because all the whitefish seems to be there. We actually do have whitefish locally like swimming, but no one's fishing it. There's no market for it, so it's very hard to get.

So typically, I love this particular recipe with whitefish, if you can get it and if not, smoke trout works. Or another thing that I really love, if I can get my hands on it, is smoke sablefish, which is also sometimes called smoke butter fish. Any of those fish will work. And then I just took off the skin. I'm going to start crumbling it up and making sure that I'm not getting any bones in there. If there's a bone, I just remove it. Obviously you can buy pre-made smoked fish, you can buy smoked fish that doesn't have anything added to it but is already sort of flaked. So you can just see what's available to you. I do really love trout, smoked trout. It tastes close to salmon or white fish, a little different from both. It's a tiny bit sweet. It's quite dry, it's flaky.

And I'm just going to finish doing this and then we're going to add a few of my favorite ingredients to it. So I find that any salad, whether it's tuna fish or smoked fish, any kind of smoked fish salad or most salads in general, potato salad, all those things, I love to add fresh herbs. And I think that's the ingredient that everyone says, "What is that?" And it takes so little effort to add a fresh herb, but it just adds that extra something. Okay. So that's good enough. And then we'll add a few more ingredients to this. I'm just making sure my borscht is not boiling. In general, you don't want to boil soups or stocks. It kind of muddles the flavor. It makes the broth cloudier. So I like to make sure I'm always cooking any broth or soup on a lower simmer.

And for this, I'm adding mayonnaise, both mayonnaise and sour cream. If you don't eat dairy with fish, then you can do a 100% mayonnaise. And I'm just using an avocado oil mayonnaise. And there are exact measurements for you written down, but again, I'm eyeballing it. I'm going to add a little bit of sour cream, because I think it adds just a really nice acidic creamy note to this. But again, for some people, for laws of Kashrut, they don't combine dairy and fish, and some do based on your community. And then I'm going to add to this a copious amount of dill and parsley in honor of my family and also because it tastes good. And actually there's one more thing I want to add to this that will make it special, which is a little bit of lemon zest.

I've already washed this really well. I prefer to use organic lemons if I'm doing lemon zest, but whatever lemon you have will work. And I'm just using a Microplane. You could use a regular zester, you could use the side of a box grater. There's lots of ways to get zest. And again, it's just a little tiny ingredient, but it adds that extra something to your salad. And let me chop up some of these herbs.

A couple questions.

Sonya Sanford:

Yeah.

Jessica Jablon:

Any favorite mayonnaise brands? They said they know people are very opinionated about mayonnaise brands. So what's your favorite?

Sonya Sanford:

I wouldn't say it's the healthiest, but flavor-wise, Hellmann's and Best Food is my favorite and I think the favorite of almost every chef. Duke's is another one. But they have a lot of soy oils and canola oils. So if you're avoiding that, this is the primal kitchen, real mayonnaise made with avocado oils and it actually just has avocado oil, organic eggs, organic vinegar. And I got this at Costco, it was relatively inexpensive. I think it's fine. I don't think it's the most amazing tasting mayonnaise, but I think the ingredients are really good. Truly my favorite mayonnaise is one I find at Russian markets or Eastern European markets. If you have one in your area or nearby, they have the best mayonnaise. It's with very good ingredients and the flavor is amazing. And that's because mayonnaise is in everything, which is partly why I'm making, it's not just for the smoked fish, I'm making a mayonnaise-based salad, because that was something we ate in our family, on both sides of the family. Veganaise, if you're looking for a vegan mayonnaise, I think does have the best flavor.

Jessica Jablon:

There's also a question about, actually it came in twice at the same time. Can you substitute Greek plain yogurt for the sour cream?

Sonya Sanford:

Yes.

Jessica Jablon:

And someone asked about using non-fat Greek yogurt instead of mayonnaise.

Sonya Sanford:

Yes, absolutely. I love using yogurt in place of sour cream or in place of mayonnaise. It will be really tangy, so I'll would just start with a little bit less and taste it. But yes, those are great substitutes. I've also put labneh in this, if I didn't have. So a thicker yogurt works too. Labneh is essentially strained yogurt, which you can buy pre-made or make at home. Was there another question?

Jessica Jablon:

That's all we have for the moment.

Sonya Sanford:

Okay. And then I'm going to add a little bit of lemon. And again, all I'm ever trying to do is add freshness to something. So it's like take something pre-made, but it really becomes your own because you're adding fresh ingredients, you're adding it to your liking. And this is like, it becomes actually quite lovely with all these herbs. It looks different than just your regular smoked fish salad. And on a plate with some garnishes, it can be a nice thing to serve at a Shabbat lunch, or at a brunch that you're hosting, or just for yourself to have a nice meal.

And I also use, essentially, I don't put sour cream and tuna fish typically or any kind of dairy in my tuna fish, but this is very similar to how I would make a tuna salad. So you could absolutely add some sliced celery or even a little pickle if that's what you like. But that is my go-to smoked fish salad. And then the last things for the borscht, because we haven't forgotten about that before we go. I've been letting that simmer, I'm going to let it simmer longer after we wrap up here. But I'm going to be adding all of these herbs, really nearly a whole bunch. And I'll add them, like I said, at the very end. I will turn off the heat and there will be two important things I add, one of which is the fresh herbs we just talked about. And you could leave a little on the side to garnish each bowl to serve when you're serving it.

The other thing I add when the heat is off and the soup is fully done is lemon juice. So I'll add the juice of a whole lemon to this pot of soup. And that's very important, lemon juice. And in fact, my grandmother often used citric acid, which I don't understand how she started doing because I don't know if that was what was available, but she always said, you can use citric acid or you can use lemon juice. And you want that tanginess with the sweetness of the carrots and the beets. Even though you've added tomato, the lemon brightens it and takes it to a whole new level. And we added at the end because if you add it too early, it just cooks off and you won't taste it.

And again, right before you serve it, definitely try it, taste it, make sure it's at the right salt level for you, make sure if you want to add pepper or something. I haven't added pepper to this yet, but you could absolutely add pepper and then add your herbs and your lemon. And yeah, we have a few more moments if there's any last questions.

Jessica Jablon:

Somebody said that they add vinegar to their borscht.

Sonya Sanford:

Yeah, exactly. So anything acidic. So if you didn't have lemon, a plain vinegar, not a balsamic, but like a light vinegar, like a white champagne or probably even a red wine vinegar would work well. You just want that acidity.

Jessica Jablon:

I have a question for you. The pot that you are making the borscht in.

Sonya Sanford:

Yes.

Jessica Jablon:

It's very cool. How big of a pot is that? How many gallons?

Sonya Sanford:

This is probably bigger than what you need. I think this is... I just want to show you, if you can see how it's like about halfway full.

Jessica Jablon:

Yeah.

Sonya Sanford:

I forget how many quarts this is, but hold on. I'll tell you. Pardon in the sound. This one is a five quart pot, like a five to six quart pot and I often make it in this. So you don't need as giant of a pot. It's just the pot I always make borscht in, so I become attached to it. You could use a smaller pot.

Jessica Jablon:

I see why. It's such a bright and colorful, a happy pot, right?

Sonya Sanford:

It is a happy pot. I love to have a little color in the kitchen.

Jessica Jablon:

Right. Somebody asked if you add lemon juice to chicken soup or any of your other soups?

Sonya Sanford:

Yes. What a great question. I do add it to chicken soup and it really makes all the difference. Again, I add it at the very end. The other one I would say for me, sometimes I don't add it to chicken soup, sometimes I do. But the one I never make without lemon is lentil soup. Adding lemon to any pot or lentils, even not soup. And beans in general, I add vinegar or lemon at the end.

Jessica Jablon:

Somebody is asking any healthy pot you suggest for soup?

Sonya Sanford:

Like a healthy type of pot?

Jessica Jablon:

Yeah, maybe that's what the question is.

Sonya Sanford:

I stay away from aluminum personally for cooking, if that's what we're asking. But yeah, any stainless steel pot, enamel cast iron, or I think it's called enamel cast iron. This is an enamel, I think, stainless steel pot. Yeah. Any of those. Ceramic. There's so many. But yeah, my one thing is I just steer clear of aluminum and nonstick.

Jessica Jablon:

Yeah. Well, I loved you when you showed us the borscht, it's kind of got a pinkish color bringing us back.

Sonya Sanford:

Yeah.

Jessica Jablon:

It seems like it was the perfect recipe to be talking about pink day with.

Sonya Sanford:

Yes. And especially when you add the last thing I don't think I mentioned. At the beginning I mentioned we always served it with sour cream, but when you add that sour cream in, then it really turns pink, so it'll be perfect for pink day.

Jessica Jablon:

I'll make your borscht for pink day. Yes. And I think, yeah, this has been amazing. Are there any other things that you want to add?

Sonya Sanford:

Is there one last question about nonstick?

Jessica Jablon:

Oh yeah, someone just asked is non-stick good? She said she's sorry she missed it.

Sonya Sanford:

Oh, no. I typically don't use non-stick because it's made often with Teflon. But I'm also a believer of getting into fear is actually more damaging than whatever you're using. And so use what you have and don't be afraid. And getting in the co kitchen and making your own soup is going to be so nourishing and delightful. But yeah, if you're asking if you're going to go out and buy a pot for soup, then I would say non-stick is something I'd avoid.

Jessica Jablon:

And is cast iron good?

Sonya Sanford:

Yeah, I love cast iron. It's just for a soup, if it's not enamel cast iron, meaning it doesn't have some kind of protection if it's pure cast iron. I think with tomato-based things and acidic things, it can kind of just start to taste a little metallic like it leeches some of the cast iron, which doesn't hurt you in any way, but it just might not taste as good.

Jessica Jablon:

Well, and now people are just saying thank you.

Sonya Sanford:

Well, thank you all. I'm so happy to be here with all of you and thank you for inviting me. Definitely always reach out if you have any questions I didn't answer. I answer all my DMs on Instagram. I answer any email. If you email me and you don't hear back, check your spam because I really do answer them. So always feel free to reach out and yeah, I'm so just happy to be able to share this with all of you.

Jessica Jablon:

Well, thank you so much. We are so grateful that you were here today. I loved hearing your recipes and I loved hearing about your grandma, like your grandmother, that was just so special for all of us. And so thank you for being here. We recommend that you follow Sonya on her social media and check out her website. Her social media is being put in the chat. I'm just going to do that. And a special thanks again to Danielle for sharing her powerful story with us this morning. We're really grateful. Please take a moment to fill out a brief evaluation survey that is linked in the chat box now. Like I mentioned before, we're giving away one copy of one of Sonya's favorite cookbooks to someone who fills out the survey. Evaluations really do inform our future programming, so thank you for taking just a couple minutes to fill it out.

Please never forget that our social workers and genetic counselor are here for you and your loved ones. Sharsheret provides emotional support, mental health counseling, and other programs designed to help navigate you through the cancer experience. All are free, completely private, one-on-one. Our number is 866-474-2774, and you can also email us at clinicalstaff@sharsheret.org. Finally, I want to share a couple of exciting webinars coming up. First is the Pink Day's Untangle workshop I mentioned earlier, happening on February 15th at 8:30 Eastern. Then we have a peer support training webinar on Wednesday, February 22nd at 8:00 PM, 5:00 PM Pacific. Whether you have already enjoyed the rewarding experience of serving as a peer supporter or are still waiting for your first Sharsheret match, or are considering becoming a peer supporter, please join us. And then finally, mark your calendars for the next Sharsheret in the Kitchen, which is going to be on March 22nd at 11:00 AM Pacific, 2:00 PM Eastern.

Join new cookbook author and mama chef blogger, Karen Nochimowski. She teaches us how to make a few delicious healthy dishes from her debut cookbook, *Six Minute Dinners And More, a Hundred Super Simple Dishes With Six Minutes Of Prep And Six Ingredients Or Less*. Please check out our website regularly to see what topics are coming up. The link for that is in the chat. And you can also access the recordings and transcripts of all of our past webinars on our website. From all of us here at Sharsheret, thank you for joining us today and we look forward to seeing you on Pink Day next Wednesday. Thank you.

About Sharsheret

Sharsheret, Hebrew for “chain”, is a national non-profit organization, improves the lives of Jewish women and families living with or at increased genetic risk for breast or ovarian cancer through personalized support and saves lives through educational outreach.

With four offices (California, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey), Sharsheret serves 150,000 women, families, health care professionals, community leaders, and students, in all 50 states. Sharsheret creates a safe community for women facing breast cancer and ovarian cancer and their families at every stage of life and at every stage of cancer - from before diagnosis, during treatment and into the survivorship years. While our expertise is focused on young women and Jewish families, more than 15% of those we serve are not Jewish. All Sharsheret programs serve all women and men.

As a premier organization for psychosocial support, Sharsheret’s Executive Director chairs the Federal Advisory Committee on Breast Cancer in Young Women, Sharsheret works closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and participates in psychosocial research studies and evaluations with major cancer centers, including Georgetown University Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center. Sharsheret is accredited by the Better Business Bureau and has earned a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator for four consecutive years.

Sharsheret offers the following national programs:

The Link Program

Peer Support Network, connecting women newly diagnosed or at high risk of developing breast cancer one-on-one with others who share similar diagnoses and experiences

- Embrace™, supporting women living with advanced breast cancer
- Genetics for Life®, addressing hereditary breast and ovarian cancer
- Thriving Again®, providing individualized support, education, and survivorship plans for young breast cancer survivors
- Busy Box®, for young parents facing breast cancer
- Best Face Forward®, addressing the cosmetic side effects of treatment
- Family Focus®, providing resources and support for caregivers and family members
- Ovarian Cancer Program, tailored resources and support for young Jewish women and families facing ovarian cancer
- Sharsheret Supports™, developing local support groups and programs

Education and Outreach Programs

- Health Care Symposia, on issues unique to younger women facing breast cancer
- Sharsheret on Campus, outreach and education to students on campus
- Sharsheret Educational Resource Booklet Series, culturally-relevant publications for Jewish women and their families and healthcare Professionals

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