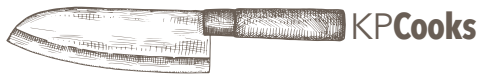


# Ukrainian Comfort Food



by Lisa Bryan, KP News  
from March April 2022



Art is an extraordinary bridge capable of transcending cultural divides. Not everyone is a poet, a sculptor, a dancer or musician. Cooking, however, is a performance art practiced daily around the world. The food of Ukraine is vibrant, rich and colorful — and like its people, worth learning more about.

Borscht is a soup that can be served hot or cold. There are countless recipes that vary from region to region and kitchens throughout Ukraine.

Like most soups, borscht benefits from homemade stock but can be made with boxed or canned for convenience. Many recipes include beef, pork fat, or poultry. The recipe below is meatless. If there was ever a time to learn how to make Ukrainian comfort, this is it.

## Ukrainian Borscht

- 4 medium-sized beets
- 2 tablespoons butter or oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, chopped
- 2 carrots, shredded
- 2 leeks, sliced thinly into rounds (white part only)
- ¼ cup parsley, chopped
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- 1½ quarts beef, chicken or vegetable stock
- 1 quart water
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 or 3 medium sized potatoes, cubed
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper or to taste
- sour cream (for a generous tablespoon dollop in each serving)
- fresh or freeze-dried dill to taste

Wash the beets, pierce with a fork and wrap each in aluminum foil. Roast in a 400-degree oven 60 to 75 minutes. Leave them wrapped until cool enough to handle.

Meanwhile, add two tablespoons of butter or oil to a frying pan on low to medium-low heat. Sauté the onions, leeks and carrots in frying pan until soft. Stir in parsley, tomato paste and vinegar. Remove from heat.

Bring the stock, water, salt and bay leaf to a boil in a 5-quart stock pot. Add diced potatoes,

cover and reduce the heat to medium low.

As the potatoes begin to cook, remove foil and peel the beets before shredding using a box-style metal grater. Add the sautéed vegetables and shredded beets to the soup pot, return to a boil, cover and remove from heat for 15 to 20 minutes.

Ladle into bowls, topping each with a generous spoonful of sour cream and sprinkle dill as a garnish to taste.

## Pampushky

These delicious, yeasted bread rolls, studded on top with garlic scapes, are the classic Ukrainian companion for dunking into borscht. Just out of the oven, the rolls are brushed with a light sauce of melted butter or sunflower oil, garlic and parsley. The flavor is every bit as fabulous as the rolls are beautiful.

Garlic scapes have a mild garlic taste. They are available seasonally and one of the many benefits of growing garlic in the garden. Scapes are the green stems that shoot up from the garlic bulb below ground to form flowers. Harvest them as the flower bud begins to form and the plant's energy will go into producing bigger garlic cloves instead of flowers. When unavailable, finely chopped garlic and parsley make a fine substitute.

The dough begins with making a sponge. It only takes seven minutes to make but needs refrigeration overnight to slowly ferment. Start the sponge the day before your meal and be rewarded with deepened flavor.

Pampushky can be baked in a round cake pan but turn out best when baked in a heavy cast iron skillet. As yeasted breads go, these rolls are not complicated to make, but need a little extra refrigerator time. It's worth it.

- 1 cup warm water
- 1 teaspoon white sugar
- 1 package (2¼ teaspoons) active dry yeast
- 2¾ cups all-purpose flour (plus 1 or 2 tablespoons if necessary)
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt
- 2 tablespoon sunflower or vegetable oil
- 1 egg yolk plus 1 teaspoon light cream
- 1½ tablespoons melted butter
- 1 green garlic scape or three garlic cloves finely chopped with parsley

Begin by making the sponge. Dissolve the sugar in warm water in a medium sized bowl. Add yeast and stir. Allow five minutes to proof the yeast. Foam and bubbles will form to prove the yeast is fresh.

Add remaining 1½ cups of flour and stir to form a thick paste. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate. By the next day the mixture will have grown in size and have a slightly stringy appearance. If using an upright mixer, secure the dough hook attachment and add the sponge to the mixing bowl.

Add the remaining ¼ cups flour and kosher salt. Start out on low speed until the sponge and flour are mixed. (If kneading by hand, mix the flour and salt with a wooden spoon and turn out onto a lightly floured surface and knead about five minutes.)

Increase the speed to medium low to knead the dough for about four minutes. The dough is close to ready when it cleans the inside of the metal bowl. The dough should have a slightly tacky but not sticky feel. If the dough is sticky, add another single tablespoon of flour but not more than two tablespoons or the rolls will become tough.

Finish the dough with a little hand kneading if necessary and divide equally into eight pieces. Grease the bottom and sides of the cast iron skillet or cake pan with vegetable or sunflower oil. Form balls from the pieces of dough and place seven pieces at equal distance around the edge of the skillet, placing the last ball in the middle. Brush the rolls generously with oil. Using a piece of plastic wrap large enough to cover the pan, brush one side of the wrap with oil to ensure it won't stick to the dough as it rises. Cover and place in a warm, draft-free spot for about an hour.

Preheat the oven to a baking hot 450.

Mix the egg yolk and light cream together, remove the plastic wrap and lightly brush the rolls with the egg wash. Bake until the rolls are golden brown, about 15 minutes. While the pampushky are baking, using a small bowl, mix the melted butter or oil, garlic scapes or chopped garlic and parsley. Brush the rolls with this garlic butter sauce immediately after the rolls come out of the oven.

We'd love to feature a dish from your KP kitchen that friends and family ask for. Email the details to [editor@keypennews.org](mailto:editor@keypennews.org) with your phone number; we'll be in touch. (Don't worry, we do most of the writing.)