

Christmas (Rizdvo) Recipes

Ukrainians around the world celebrate Christmas according to the Julian calendar (January 7th). To commemorate Christ's birth, the evening before (Sviat Vechir/Christmas Eve) a ritual meal is prepared with 12 meatless dishes. A kolach, or a braided, ring-shaped bread, symbolic of eternity and life, serves as a centerpiece for the meal.

The recipes differ from region to region, but here are the ones that many prepare for the 6th. The total number of recipes given below is 14, but by choosing among the varieties, make only 12 of them.

Smachnoho! Enjoy!

Khrystos Rozhdayetsya! Christ is Born!

1. Kutya

2 cups cleaned wheat
3 to 4 quarts water
1 cup cleaned poppy seed
1/3 cup honey
2/3 cup sugar
1/2 cup hot water
1/2 cup chopped walnuts or pecans

Wash wheat in cold water and soak overnight in the 3 to 4 quarts of water. The next day, bring the water to a boil then simmer for 4 to 5 hours, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking. The wheat is ready when the kernels burst open and the fluid is thick and creamy.

Chop the poppy seed in a food processor and set aside. Mix honey, sugar and hot water. Before serving, mix the honey mixture, poppy seeds, and chopped nuts and wheat. More honey can be added to taste.

2. Meatless Borshch

1 large onion, chopped
3 tbsp. vegetable oil
1 cup fresh or dried mushrooms
2 cups beets, sliced into strips
1 cup diced carrots
1 potato, diced
1 tsp. fresh parsley
1/2 tsp. dill (fresh or frozen)
8 to 9 cups water
3 cups shredded cabbage
1/2 cup tomato juice
3 peppercorns
2 cloves garlic, crushed
salt and pepper
1 tablespoon lemon juice

Saute onion in oil until transparent. Add mushrooms, saute slightly and set aside. Cover beets, carrots, potato, parsley/dill with water and cook until barely tender. Add cabbage and cook until slightly tender. Add onions, mushrooms, tomato juice, peppercorns, garlic and salt and pepper to taste. Bring to boil. Add lemon juice and serve.

3. Baked/Fried Fish

Any variety of fish baked or fried, but if frying use only vegetable/olive/hemp oil (in keeping with the meatless nature of the meal).

4. Oselelsi (Pickled Fish)

2 filleted whitefish (preferably caught while ice fishing) or 4 salt herrings
2 large onions (sliced)
milt* (optional)
1 cup white vinegar
1/4 cup water
1/2 cup dry white wine
1 tbsp pickling spices
additional sugar if desired

Wash the whitefish (or herring) fillets and soak in cold water for about 12 hours, changing the water two or three times. Wash again and cut into the size you want to serve. Place into a jar or crockery layering the onions and milt between the fish. Boil vinegar, water, wine, spices, and additional sugar for 10 minutes. Let the boiled mixture cool. Strain and pour it over the fish. Let stand at room temperature for three to four hours. Then store in the fridge for another half day.

*Milt is the sperm sac from the male fish. It adds a salty taste and milky look to the pickled fish.

5, 6: Holubtsi (Cabbage Rolls) With Rice and Buckwheat Filling

To prepare the cabbage:

Place one large head of cored cabbage in a deep pot of boiling water to which salt has been added. Remove the leaves as they become soft. Cool and drain the leaves and remove any remaining core. Cut the leaves to the desired size (personally I cut them about 3" wide). Grease a casserole dish and place a few leaves of cabbage to line it. Put a tablespoon full of filling (filling recipes follow) into each leaf and roll it up tucking in the edges of the leaves as you roll. Arrange the holubtsi in layers, adding some fried onions and garlic (to taste, sauted in olive oil) between the layers. When the dish is filled, place extra prepared cabbage leaves over the top to prevent scorching. Cover and place in 325 degree oven for 1 1/2 to 2 hours or until both the cabbage and filling are tender. For a nice variation you could also use grape or beet leaves. Also, you could pour some tomato juice over the top to add flavour.

Rice Filling

2 cups rice
2 cups water
2 teaspoons salt
1 medium onion, chopped
4 tablespoons olive oil

Wash rice well. Add water and stir in salt. Bring to boil and cook for one minute. Stir and cover. Turn down heat and simmer until rice starts to get tender. Remove from heat and let stand covered until the rest of the water is absorbed. The rice at this stage will only be partly cooked. Saute chopped onion in olive oil and add to the rice. Season to taste. Cool and roll into cabbage.

Buckwheat Filling

2 cups buckwheat groats
2 teaspoons salt
4 cups water
4 to 5 tablespoons olive oil
4 cups water

Brown groats very lightly in the oven. Place in pot with boiling salted water. Add 4 tbsp olive oil. Cook until water is absorbed. Cover and bake in a 350 degree oven for 30 minutes. After baking allow the buckwheat to cool. Saute chopped onion in 1 tbsp of olive oil. Add the sauted onions to the cooked buckwheat. Cool and fill the holubtsi.

7, 8, 9: Varenyky (pyrogies) With Potato, Sauerkraut, and Prune Filling

Dough

4 cups flour
2 tsp. salt
2 tbsp olive oil
2 eggs well beaten
1 cup water

Combine flour and salt. Add remaining ingredients. Knead until smooth and elastic. Cover and let stand at least 15 minutes. Roll out thin on a floured board. Cut out rounds with a glass or beer mug.

Add 1 tbsp of filling (recipes given below) to each round of dough, fold over and pinch the dough together well. When boiling add a little salt and oil to the water so they don't stick together. When they come to the surface, they're ready.

Potato Filling

1/2 cup chopped onion
2 tbsp. vegetable oil
2 cups mashed potatoes
salt and pepper to taste

Saute onions in oil. Add potatoes, season to taste, and mix well.

Kapusta (sauerkraut) Filling

2 cups sauerkraut
1/2 cup onion, chopped
4 tbsp. vegetable oil
pepper to taste

Bring sauerkraut to boil in some water. Rinse, cool, drain and squeeze out water. Chop finer if you want. Saute onions in oil and add to sauerkraut. Season with pepper to taste.

Prune Filling

1 cup prunes
1/2 cup water
honey

Bring prunes and water to a boil, let cool and drain. Chop prunes very fine and add honey to taste.

10. Cooked Beans

2 cups white beans
7 cups water
1/8 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
2 cloves garlic
1 onion, diced
2 tsp. cooking oil

Boil beans in water, adding baking soda and salt when almost done. Continue simmering until beans are tender. Drain if necessary and set liquid aside for later. Mash beans well, adding bean liquid a little at a time until it is of a thick consistency. Crush garlic and stir into beans. Saute onions in oil and put on top of beans before serving.

11. Kapusta and Peas

1/2 cup dried peas, either split or whole
2 cups sauerkraut
1/2 cup water
1 medium onion, chopped
1/4 cup vegetable oil
2 tablespoons flour
1 clove garlic, crushed
salt and pepper

Soak peas overnight. Rinse and drain. Cover with fresh water and cook until tender. Drain. Rinse sauerkraut in cold water and drain. Add the water and cook for 15 minutes. Combine peas and sauerkraut, draining and reserving the liquid.

Saute onion in oil. Sprinkle flour over onions and brown lightly. Add liquid from cooked sauerkraut and peas. Add crushed garlic and stir until sauce thickens.

Stir sauce into sauerkraut and peas. Add salt and pepper to taste, simmer for 30 minutes and serve.

12. Beets with Mushrooms

3 cups chopped beets
1/2 teaspoon lemon juice
1 cup mushrooms (fresh or canned)
1 medium onion
3 to 4 tablespoons oil
1 clove garlic, chopped finely
salt and pepper to taste

Chop the raw beets finely and then boil in a bit of water until tender yet firm. Add lemon juice to beets. Simmer for 5 minutes.

Rinse mushrooms in hot water. Drain. Saute onion in oil, then add mushrooms and crushed garlic and simmer for a half hour. Combine with beets and simmer 15 minutes longer. Salt and pepper to taste and serve hot.

13. Compote

Choose an assortment of dried fruits such as apples, apricots, prunes, peaches, pears, figs or raisins and soak the fruit overnight in water. Next day, simmer until tender and add honey to sweeten to taste.

14. Pampushky

2 packages yeast
8 cups flour
4 eggs
2 tablespoons melted butter
3 cups milk
2 teaspoons sugar
1 teaspoon salt

Dissolve yeast as instructed on package. Let stand 10 minutes. In a large bowl, put in part of the flour (about 6 cups), making a well in the middle. Beat the eggs lightly, add melted butter, milk, sugar and salt. Add this mixture to the flour along with the yeast. Mix well and knead until dough is soft and not sticky adding the remaining flour only as necessary.

Knead about 10 minutes. Cover and let rise in a warm spot until double in bulk. Punch down and knead lightly. Let rise

again. (OR for a quicker, easier dough, make a batch of sweet dough in a bread machine with a manual setting, letting the machine take care of the kneading.)

Take a small amount of dough and roll on a lightly floured table. It must be fairly thick. Cut out rounds, coffee mugs work well. Place a small amount of one of the fillings (filling recipes below) in the centre, bringing the edges together and pinch well to seal tightly. Place pampushky seam side down on lightly floured surface, cover and let rise a while, about 15 minutes. Do not let overrise. Deep fry in canola oil, heated to about 375 F, for about 3 minutes, turning them to brown on both sides. When removing, try to have most of the oil back into the pan, then place pampushky on thick layers of paper towel to absorb additional oil.

Some alternative fillings for pampushky:

Poppy Seed (Maky) Filling

1 cup poppy seeds
1 cup raisins (optional), rinsed and drained
1/3 cup honey
1/2 cup finely chopped nuts
1 teaspoon vegetable oil

Grind the clean dry poppy seed in a coffee grinder and add to the moistened raisins. Combine well the honey, nuts, vegetable oil and then fold into the poppy seed.

Apricot Filling

1 pound apricots
Sugar to taste
1/4 cup crushed walnuts
Dash of cinnamon
1 tsp. of lemon juice

Boil apricots until soft. Drain thoroughly. Put through a food processor or blender. Add the remaining ingredients. Blend well.

Prune Filling

The same recipe as for apricots but substituting 1 lb. of pitted prunes.

Ukrainian Christmas Honey Cake

Few people can resist the haunting beauty of the Carol of the Bells, which takes its tune from the wonderful Ukrainian carol of Shchedryk, Shchedryk, Shchedrivochka. Ukrainians are known for producing rich, complex lyrics embodied by ancient melodies in the Ukrainian tradition. These wonderful carols are a blend of voices that have become a sacred and cherished sound of the holidays in Ukraine. This recipe is a product of simple ingredients blended into a beautifully harmonic dessert!

1½ hours | 20 min prep

2 Cakes

- * 1/2 cup butter
- * 1 cup granulated sugar
- * 4 large eggs, separated
- * 1 cup honey
- * 1 cup sour cream
- * 3 cups cake flour, sifted
- * 2 teaspoons baking soda

- * 2 teaspoons baking powder
- * 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- * 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- * 1/4 teaspoon salt
- * 1 cup raisins
- * 1 cup walnuts, chopped

1. Pre-heat the oven to 300-F degrees.
2. Generously grease and lightly flour two loaf pans, and set aside.
3. In a large mixing bowl, prepare the batter: Cream the butter and sugar together with a hand-held mixer until light and creamy.
4. Add egg yolks, one at a time, and continue to beat the mixture after each additional yolk is incorporated.
5. Add the honey and sour cream and mix again.
6. Beat the eggs whites in a small mixing bowl until stiff peaks form.
7. Sift together the cake flour, baking soda, baking powder, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt.
8. Fold the flour mixture and the egg whites, ALTERNATING EACH MIXTURE (flour and then egg whites), into the cake batter.
9. Fold in the raisins and walnuts.
10. Pour the batter into the prepared loaf pans.
11. Bake for 1 hour, or until a toothpick inserted into the cake comes out clean.
12. Remove the cakes from the pans and place on a wire rack to cool.
13. Slice and serve slightly warm.
14. Serves 10 to 12.