

# UC Berkeley

## UC Berkeley Previously Published Works

**Title**

The Ethnomusicologists' Cookbook, Complete Meals from Around the World

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3769p3w6>

**ISBN**

9780415838665

**Author**

Sonevytsky, M

**Publication Date**

2015-07-24

**DOI**

10.4324/9780203780930

Peer reviewed

Volume II

# The Ethnomusicologists' Cookbook

Edited by  
Sean Williams

COMPLETE MEALS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

ROUTLEDGE

# CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS, HUTSUL REGION, UKRAINE

*Maria Sonevytsky*

Ne pechy pechenoho khliba.  
(*Don't bake bread that has already been baked.*)

**Menu:** *Borshch* (Beet Soup) with *Khlib* (Bread), *Salat z Kapustoju* (Cabbage, Parsley, and Dill Salad), *Banosh z Hrybamy i Brynzoju* (Creamy Polenta with Wild Mushrooms and Feta Cheese), paired with *Horilka z Medom i Pertsem* (Vodka Infused with Honey and Pepper), and pickled vegetables. *Kutia* (Wheat Berry, Poppyseed, Raisin, Honey, and Walnut Pudding) for dessert.

**Preparation Time:** *In advance:* *Horilka:* 3–14 days. *Borshch:* 1 day with 60–90 minutes to prepare. *Kutia:* Start the night before and plan for 4 hours to assemble on the day.

**Day of meal:** 1 hour.

**Cooking Process:** The infused vodka should be started first, 3–14 days before you plan to serve it. *Borshch* is always best when it gets at least a day to mature, so you are advised to start it the day before. The wheat berries for *kutia* should be allowed to soak overnight and can be prepared days in advance if you prefer. On the day of the meal, you can purchase a loaf of bread (pumpernickel or rye with caraway seeds are both good options), or, if you're feeling ambitious, bake it fresh. Make the *salata* first on the day of the meal and let it sit in its dressing. Make the *banosh* with mushrooms shortly before serving. Begin with *borshch*, served with bread, raw sliced garlic, and *horilka*, and then follow with *banosh* and salad. Serve *kutia* for dessert. Toast between every course, or more frequently if moved. Serves six people.

## *The Recipes*

---

### BORSHCH (*BEEF SOUP*)

*Borshch* is a flexible soup: you can make it as thin or as hearty as you desire, with a vegan or meat (ham or beef is recommended) stock. The list of ingredients below and suggested quantities are merely suggestions—feel free to add or subtract to the heartier elements, and make a basic stock to your liking. I personally like to add cauliflower, kidney beans, and peas to my heartier *borshch*.

1 yellow onion  
6 porcini mushrooms, diced (dried or fresh)  
salt  
bay leaf  
pepper or peppercorns  
bunch of dill, stems separated and leaves diced  
bunch of parsley, stems separated and leaves diced  
6 red beets, small to medium size  
½ head of green cabbage  
4 russet potatoes  
2 medium carrots  
2 T white vinegar

- 1 can red kidney beans
- sour cream (optional)
- 6 cloves fresh garlic, thinly sliced
- 2 lbs. ham or beef stock bones (optional)

To make the stock, boil the ham or beef bones with an entire peeled onion, mushrooms, bay leaf, pepper or peppercorns, salt, plus dill and parsley stems tied in a bundle or wrapped in cheesecloth. Let boil for at least 15 minutes. Before adding anything else, take out all those stems. While the broth is broiling, wash your beets, and then set them to steam with skins on. The fastest way to steam beets is to put them in a microwavable container with an inch of water on the bottom, but a conventional stovetop steam will also work. Steam until beets are soft enough to poke through the skin with a fork, but not too mushy. Once they have cooled, the beet skins will slide off, no peeling necessary. Keep your beets cooling while you prepare the rest of the soup.

Add cabbage, potatoes, and carrots, chopped as fine as you like. Let everything boil gently until cooked—usually 5 minutes of boiling will do, and then just keep it hot. Add a little vinegar. When the soup has stopped boiling, shred your peeled beets into the pot. Do not allow your beautiful beet red borsch to boil again or it will turn orange. You may add kidney beans at this stage as well. *Borsch* is always best after the first day. Serve hot with fresh chopped dill and parsley and a dollop of sour cream. Serve with bread and thinly sliced fresh garlic, which should be dipped in salt, eaten raw, and chased with soup (and, if desired, *horilka*).

### BANOSH Z HRYBAMY I BRYNZOJU (CREAMY POLENTA WITH WILD MUSHROOMS AND FETA CHEESE)

- 1½ c. dry stone-ground polenta (or corn grits)
- 3 c. water
- 1–2 c. sour cream
- butter, optional
- 1 c. porcini or other mushrooms
- 1 onion, diced
- 3 T oil, preferably sunflower
- salt and pepper to taste
- thick-cut pork cracklings (optional)
- ½ c. goat or sheep's cheese (preferably sharp, like a feta)

To begin this quintessential Hutsul dish, combine polenta, water, and salt to taste. Bring the mixture to a boil, stirring frequently to prevent the corn from sticking to the pan or bubbling over. Once it has boiled, turn the heat down to a simmer, stirring occasionally, until the polenta is soft. Add the sour cream (quantity depending on how thick you want the mixture to be) and allow to cook for a few minutes. Turn off the stove and add butter, if you desire. Note: *banosh* will thicken as it cools.

On a separate pan, fry mushrooms and onions in sunflower oil until soft. Salt and pepper to taste. As a delicious nonvegetarian option, fry pork cracklings (which Hutsuls call *shkvarsky*) in a separate pan. Serve *banosh* hot, topped with mushrooms, cheese (the Hutsuls make a sharp sheep's or goat's cheese called *brynza*), and *shkvarky* or cracklings. Also delicious when paired with pickled vegetables such as tomatoes, cucumbers, or garlic.

---

 SALATA Z KAPUSTOJU (*CABBAGE SALAD*)
 

---

½ head of green cabbage  
 ½ c. thinly diced parsley  
 ½ c. thinly diced dill  
 ¼ c. sunflower oil  
 ¼ c. white vinegar  
 salt and pepper to taste

Shred or dice cabbage thinly and combine in a bowl with diced parsley and dill. In a separate small bowl, combine sunflower oil, white vinegar, salt, and pepper. Stir to make a basic dressing that suits your taste. Add dressing to the bowl with cabbage and toss well. Cover and let sit in a cool place.

---



---

 HORILKA Z MEDOM I PERTSEM (*VODKA INFUSED WITH HONEY AND PEPPER*)
 

---

Buy a bottle of potato or grain-based vodka. Add approximately 2 T of any variety of peppercorns or hot chilies to the bottle (depending on your desired degree of heat) and honey (anywhere from ⅓ c. to ⅔ c., depending on your desired degree of sweetness). Seal tightly. Allow it to steep for 3 to 14 days (or longer!), stirring the bottle occasionally.

---



---

 KUTIA (*WHEAT BERRY, POPPYSEED, RAISIN, HONEY, AND WALNUT PUDDING*)
 

---

1½ c. wheat berries, soaked in warm water overnight and strained  
 6 c. water (or milk), approximately  
 ½ c. honey (add more to taste)  
 ¾ c. poppy seeds  
 1 c. walnuts  
 ¾ c. raisins  
 cinnamon to taste

After they have soaked overnight, bring wheat berries to a boil and then reduce heat. Let simmer covered for 3 hours, checking periodically that the kernels are under water. If needed, add water or milk. In a bowl, cover poppy seeds with boiling water and allow to steep for 30 minutes. Drain and grind (either with a mortar and pestle or in a food processor). In a pan, toast walnuts lightly. Dissolve honey in 1½ c. boiling water. Combine all the ingredients—including the raisins—in a bowl and stir. Add cinnamon and additional honey to taste. Traditionally served as the first or last course of the twelve-dish Christmas Eve dinner, *kutia* can be enjoyed at other times of the year as well, and will keep in the refrigerator for up to 10 days.

---

### **Koliada: Winter Cycles of Song, Food, and Dance**

Verkhovyna, a storied town set in a picturesque valley ringed by mountains in Western Ukraine, is miles from the Romanian border, and, in winter, a harrowing drive to the nearest train station. Yet annually, when snow blankets the landscape, tourists and adventurers descend upon Verkhovyna to witness and take part in the cycle of winter rituals that join together song, spirituality, and feast. I spent the winter of 2009 in Verkhovyna, living in a two-room wooden cottage where I adapted to a sleep schedule that my personal wood stove demanded, where I mastered the art of frying an egg on

my cast-iron skillet and making tea when guests came to visit. Though I never advanced beyond the most rudimentary, culinary wooden-stove feats, I benefited from the expertise of families throughout the Verkhovyna region, whose culinary delights I experienced as I trudged through mountain villages to attend gatherings and parties around the season of *Koliada*.

In Verkhovyna and its surrounding highland villages, January—the time of *Koliada*—is a time to gather at long tables laden with last summer's pickled vegetables and steaming hot plates of *banosh* (creamy polenta), sing a *Koliada*, and toast. *Koliada* is a pre-Christian winter ritual period that extends from January 6th through the 19th. Traditionally, as it is still practiced in some Hutsul towns and villages, the *Koliada* period was defined by the packs of male carolers—*koliadnyky*—who were charged with the task of visiting every household in a given village with song. These *koliadnyky* were meant to rely solely on the hospitality of the homes that they visited during the *Koliada* period. The head of the *koliadnyky*, known as the *Bereza*, was responsible for keeping long texts of winter songs in his head and also improvising toasts and blessings to the heads of households in the village, while the other men would join in on the refrain (often something like “*Oj, daj Bozhe*”). Songs of *koliadnyky* would be accompanied by a sole fiddler, while all of the other men would keep time by rhythmically gesturing with *bartky*, decorative axes.

Traditionally, *Koliada* marked the advent of the New Year. Later, it merged with Eastern-rite (Julian calendar) Christian liturgical holidays, including Christmas and Epiphany (as the date of the baptism of Jesus Christ by John the Baptist in the River Jordan; *Vodokhreshchia* or *Iordan* in Ukrainian).

In many parts of the Slavic world, Christmas Eve dinner (*Sviata vecheria*) features twelve traditional courses, served vegan. In many regions of Ukraine, courses include *borshch* (beet soup), *warenyky* (pierogies, often made with potato, sauerkraut, and buckwheat fillings), fish (considered vegan), *holubtsi* (cabbage rolls), and *kutia* (a sweet dish made of wheat berry, poppy seed, honey, raisin, and walnut). For many Hutsuls, who have retained pre-Christian elements in their modern-day Christian practices, Christmas Eve can also be a time to honor deceased ancestors, shoo unclean spirits from the house, or to divine the future spouses of the unmarried guests in attendance. Memorably, when I celebrated Christmas Eve with my host family in Verkhovyna, all of the guests were instructed to climb under the food-covered table and shake its legs to frighten away evil spirits. After the meal, I—unmarried at the time—was told to go out into the snowy night with my soup spoon in hand, and to bang the spoon against the house until a dog barked. The direction from which the dog barked was supposed to reveal the direction from which my future partner would come.

On January 13, the Old New Year, or Malanka, is celebrated in a carnivalesque style: revelers costumed in all manner of outrageous garb parade through villages visiting households, singing winter carols, playing pranks, and partaking in the snacks and libations that local households offer. All of the holidays in the *Koliada* period offer opportunities for gatherings, where food, song, and dance become a repeated cycle: eat, drink, sing, take a spin around the (usually makeshift) dance floor, eat some more, and on through the night.

I remember one exceptional occasion—the last night of *Koliada*—when my friend Oksana, a local *Verkhovynka*, and I were invited to attend the party at a household on a mountainside a few hours hike from Verkhovyna. The hosts had designated a large wooden barn-like structure as the dance hall. Inside the unheated barn, we could see our breath in the dim light. But once the local instrumentalists—a hammered dulcimer player, fiddler, drummer, and saxophone—started to play the frenetic *Hutsulkas*, iconic of this region, the guests fell into the accompanying partner dances, and soon we were shedding layers. After some time, we were invited into the home, where tables laden with food awaited us. The *Bereza*, head of the local *Koliadnyky* who were the guests of honor at the gathering, proposed a toast, and we began the cycle of vodka, black bread, pickled vegetables, marinated pork fat (*salo*), and other delicacies. Eventually, the *koliadnyky* broke into song, an extended *Koliada* with a simple refrain that became hypnotic after some time. As the night wore on, we went

through another cycle of furious dancing, joyful toasting, eating, and eating. Finally, a few hours before dawn, I, the *Amerykanka*, requested a place to close my eyes for a few minutes.

Gas pipelines do not reach Verkhovyna or its surrounding villages, so many homes rely on large wood-fired stoves, which function as both the heart and hearth of Hutsul homes, especially during the subzero Carpathian winter. Like most elements of Hutsul traditional life, these stoves are often elaborately decorated, with hand-painted or colorful ceramic tiles. These stoves provide heat for entire homes as well as surfaces for cooking. Often, they include nooks for drying damp boots, compartments for bread baking, and sometimes, the top of the stove is designed as a warm platform for sleeping or napping. As it was, this particular household had such a warm stovetop sleeping platform, and for a few blissful minutes in the predawn, I closed my eyes. Too soon, I was roused by my friend Oksana, who did not want me to miss the final *Koliada* of the season. Bleary-eyed, I threw on my parka and stepped outside, microphone in hand. Circling around in the snow, the last standing *koliadnyky* sang, a *Koliada* in honor of the woman of the house, she stood by with a tray full of vodka shots. When the men completed their last *Koliada*, they drank one final toast—*Bud'mo! Hey!*—and chased it with some black bread.

That winter, I came to appreciate the deep social link that food, music, and dance share in the Hutsul world. Despite the short days and frozen nights, despite the barriers presented by snowed-in roads and snow-covered mountains, individuals came together nightly, insistently, to delight in the pleasures of communal food and song.

## RECOMMENDED LISTENING

Most Ukrainian releases are hard to find outside of Ukraine, but [www.umka.com](http://www.umka.com) is an excellent resource for all sounds Ukrainian that will ship internationally, and clips from most recordings can be previewed on the site. The Western Ukrainian and Hutsul-specific catalog on the website is expansive, and all of the following recordings can be found there:

The Carpathian Album. Compilation from the 2008 Sheshory LandArt summer music festival. *Taras Bulba Entertainment*, 2008. (A compilation that includes both traditional and contemporary interpretations of Hutsul music.)

Horry! Perkalaba. *Taras Bulba Entertainment*. 2004. (The debut record of the Western Ukrainian “Hutsul-punk” band notorious for their energetic performances.)

Melodiji Karpat (Carpathian melodies). The Tafiychuks Family Group. UKRmusic, UM-CD 090, 2007. (Recordings of a self-taught Hutsul family band from a highland village.)

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

The Pickle Project: <http://pickleproject.blogspot.com/>