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Orthodox cuisine differs from any national cuisine in that it is tied to some kind of feast (Easter, Christmas) or fasting period in the life of a Christian.

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The project “Food & the City: Food of the Big City” is not only a place where you can learn about restaurants, read stories related to cuisine, and find useful information.

It is also a place where you can meet interesting people.

For example, the wives of the clergy. We all understand that the “second half” of people who have devoted themselves to religion are quite “public people”, and their life is connected with the community and is interesting to many.

What are they like in the family, how do they manage the household, and how do they please their loved ones? This part of their life is not well-known to most people.

Meet Vera Bubnova, author of *VELVET*, mother, wife of Protodeacon Pavel Bubnov, minister of the Three Saints Church of the Minsk Theological Seminary (d. Zhiroviichi).



If you had to describe your culinary experience in a few sentences, what would you say about your culinary style?

- Fast, sweet and beautiful for yourself; original and nutritious for the family.

What is your family's favorite cuisine?

- We have no preference for any of the world's cuisines. In our kitchen, we prepare what our soul requires at the moment and the country of origin of the dish is not at all important. This is Italian pasta, pizza and lasagna, and Lithuanian zeppelins and crackers with cheese, and Greek lean food, and German hodgepodge, and American cheesecake and cupcakes.

Please tell us about the features of your food related to religion. How difficult is it, or, conversely, easy to adhere to religious prohibitions and restrictions in Belarus?

- We have an Orthodox family, and we try to fulfill all the fasts. There are 4 fasts in the year, 2 of them are strict fasts - Lent (before Easter) and Assumption fast (before the Assumption of the Mother of God). It is forbidden to eat meat, dairy products, and eggs. In a strict fast it is forbidden to eat fish. In Orthodoxy there are fasting days in addition to the fasts - they are Wednesday and Friday. There are weeks when fasting days are canceled (for example, the week after Easter, Christmas).

Keeping a fast in terms of nutrition is not as difficult as it might seem at first glance. After all, a fasting table is a variety of vegetables and fruits, fish and seafood, soy products (meat, milk, yoghurts, cheese), mushrooms and various pickles. Perhaps the most difficult thing is in Lent, when there are practically no fresh vegetables and fruits, but everything is preserved.

Unfortunately, we do not have access to quality vegetables and fruits all year round, as in the southern countries. And right now not everyone can afford fish and seafood, either. However, if one wishes, one can always make "stone soup."

**Where and how you can learn to cook dishes of Orthodox cuisine? Does the term "Orthodox cuisine" actually exist, and how does it differ from Russian or Belarusian cuisine in this case?**

- When we talk about "Orthodox cuisine", we usually mean fasting cuisine, i.e. fasting dishes. However, the term "Orthodox cuisine" is a little broader than that. If you look at any book with dishes of the Orthodox cuisine, you will find, besides recipes for fasting dishes, Easter food recipes (Easter cakes, pashka, egg coloring options), blini recipes that are baked on Cheesefare week and more. But nevertheless, in Orthodox cuisine, fasting cuisine prevails, because fasting days account for most of the year.

Orthodox cuisine differs from any national cuisine in that it is tied to some kind of feast (Easter, Christmas) or fasting period in the life of a Christian.

I have never found courses on Orthodox cuisine. As a rule, we learn to cook either from the experience of mothers and grandmothers, or from books (there are now a huge number of them) and recipes from the Internet. Right now there is no lack of information in this area.



Do you have any favorite cookbooks or favorite chefs? Do you go to Minsk restaurants? If yes, do you ask them to change the recipe or to remove one or more ingredients from the dish during fasting periods?

- I am a beginner culinary specialist, so I choose recipes spontaneously. My main search assistant is the Internet, so I don't have any favorite cookbooks or chefs.

Our family is not a regular in Minsk restaurants, so I can't single out any of them. Like almost any girl, I have a big sweet tooth. Therefore, it is not surprising that at any opportunity (which is rare enough) I like to visit the Meringue cafe.

For us, more accessible and meaningful is another member of the "Food of the Big City" project: Grodno. Our favorite restaurant in this city is "Limousine". It has an unusual romantic atmosphere, excellent service and fine cuisine. During a fast in Grodno you can have a good meal at the Retro pizzeria. There is a fairly large selection of fish and seafood dishes.

Could you talk about the fundamental differences or commonality of Russian Orthodox cuisine around the world?

- It is difficult to give a complete answer to this question, because I have not studied this topic. After all, if we talk about fasting cooking, then you can't eat certain foods in the fast. And what is possible to cook with depends on the country in which the person lives. Someone will eat porridge with mushrooms the whole fast, and another will eat mussels, bananas and other fruits and vegetables. It depends on the climatic conditions of the country of residence.

Are there historical and cultural features of the formation of Orthodox cuisine in our country?

- I have not studied this question, but I think not.

Can you recommend books or authors who not only talk about Orthodox cooking, but also give good, and most importantly, affordable recipes?

- I really like the book "Fasting like the Greeks: Lenten dishes of the Greek monastery tradition." The book contains recipes for simple, nutritious and original fasting dishes. When you cook from this book, you understand that fasting can be a joy even for the stomach.



Do you have a collection of recipes? Can you share some interesting ones with readers of velvet portal. by?

- I, like any novice hostess, have a book in which I write down the recipes I like, and also a folder on my computer with interesting recipes and links to culinary sites.

Recently, I like to buy books with national cuisine in the original language. Cooking from such books is a pleasure.

With Velvet readers, I constantly share my recipes, as well as talk about my discoveries and experiments in cooking.

Here, for example, is an **'express potato' recipe**.

Cut the peeled and washed potatoes into thin circles.

Cut the onion into thin half rings.

Fry the onion in sunflower oil until golden brown.

Salt the prepared onion, add paprika and mix thoroughly.

Put the potatoes in the pan, put the fried onions on top.

Pour hot boiling water over everything.

Cook until tender.

Or a recipe for **beans in a pot**.



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You will need:

1 cup of beans;
1.5 liters of water;
500 g of onion;
1 tablespoon of basil;
1/3 teaspoon red pepper;
1/3 teaspoon of ginger;
Salt

Soak the beans overnight in cold water. Before cooking, wash them, pour cold water over them and cook until soft. We throw the finished beans into a colander and pour the liquid into a separate bowl.

Peel the onion and cut it into thin half rings. Fry the onions until golden in warmed-up sunflower oil, then add basil, red pepper, ginger and salt.

Lubricate the pots with sunflower oil. Spread the boiled beans and fried onions in layers, starting and ending with a layer of beans. Pour the liquid from the beans over it. Put it in the oven and cook at a temperature of 180 degrees for 25 minutes.





Natalya (Tasha) Lopatenko is a blogger, journalist and member of the Association of Restaurant and Gastronomic Observers of Russia (ARGO).

She worked as an editor of a culinary portal, the author of a popular project related to the history of culinary and restaurant business in Belarus.

“Home is a place where your heart feels good,” says Tasha and divides her life between Belarus and America, combining her career as a journalist, cooking art, and the profession of mother and wife.

Hobbies: photography, travel, old books, antiques, British and American television series of the 60-90s of the last century, culinary history of the USA.

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