

# TRADITIONAL UKRAINIAN RECIPES

*Tanya Shpygunova*

ServeNow  

## **Traditional Ukrainian Recipes**

By Tanya Shpygunova

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## Introduction

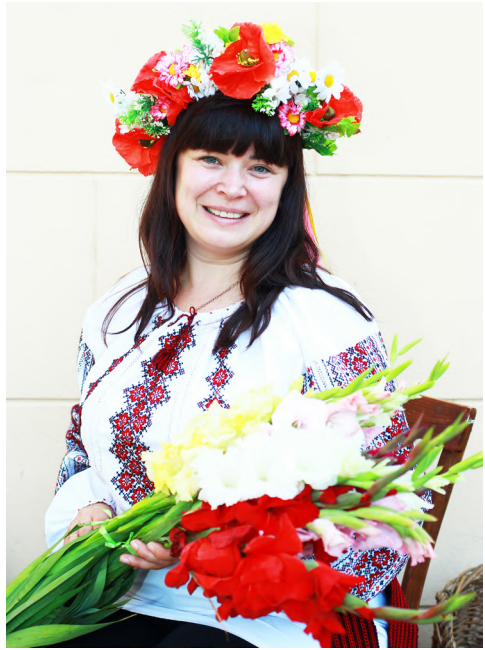
This small cook book came into existence after Kim Rinker from Idaho visited us in Ukraine and spent time at the Bakery school we operate in Uzhhorod, Ukraine.

Young ladies, who have grown up in orphanages, Roma villages, or in other difficult circumstances, are often approached by traffickers. However, the ladies have now entered the bakery school. For six months they learn a trade, values, and how to work together. This book contains some of their stories, as well as some recipes from the bakery.

It also includes other food recipes which have been contributed by some of my friends in the Ukraine, as well as from Marina Dunberg and my family.

A special thanks to Kim Rinker, who was the inspiration behind this book, as well as Lars and Paul Dunberg who worked on collating and producing the book, and to *ServeNow*, the organization we all work with and love.

Irpin, Ukraine





# Cheese Buns

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Time: 3 hours 30 minutes

Servings: 6 Buns

## Ingredients

2 cups flour

2 ¼ tsp dry yeast

¼ tsp salt

1 tsp sugar

1 tbsp olive oil

½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese divided

½ cup grated mild Provolone cheese, (medium Cheddar is a good substitute)

¾ cup warm water (not hot)

1 egg beaten

## Preparation:

- In a medium bowl whisk together flour, yeast, salt, sugar, 1 tbsp olive oil, 3 tbsps Parmesan cheese, then add the warm water a little at a time. Mix with a fork to combine.
- Add beaten egg, remaining Parmesan cheese and Provolone.
- Mix with a fork just until the dough starts to come together.
- Place 1 tbsp of flour on a flat surface, with the dough. Begin kneading, adding 2 more tbsps of flour, one at a time while continuing to knead.
- Knead until smooth and elastic. Form into a ball and place in a lightly oiled medium-sized bowl. With a knife, score the top of the dough 2-3 times. Cover well and let rise in a draft free area for 2-3 hours.
- Remove dough from bowl and on a lightly floured flat surface knead the dough about 2 minutes, shape into 6-7 buns, score with a knife and place on a lightly oiled parchment paper lined cookie sheet, cover and let rise for 1 hour.
- Pre-heat oven to 400° F (200° C).

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## Inna

I like to go to the Bakery classes as I have learnt so much that I never knew before. I really like to try to bake something new because I understand it will help me with future employment. I am very glad that I could be a part of a Christian family now. Thank you for what you have done for me and for all of us.

My parents refused me at birth, and I grew up in several orphanages. While I was studying there for 10 years, I hoped to have an acceptable profession, and dreamed how I would be able to succeed.

I always had some interest to cook or bake, but after school I was not able to fulfill my dream. At our school I was unable to receive a proper certificate such as is customary in regular schools, so my dream remained only a dream. After moving to Uzhhorod, I heard about the bakery project where young women are taught to bake, and realized that my dream could come true. I was accepted to study there and I really enjoy it. I am immensely grateful to everyone who helped me carry out my dream. Thank you to everyone who helps orphans to give them happiness. God's blessings on them.





# Raisin Buns

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Time: 2 hours

Servings: 10-12 Servings

## Ingredients

2 cups brown sugar (plus extra for sprinkling)

3 tbsps active dry yeast

1½ cups warm water (115°F)

6 cups all purpose flour

1 tsp salt

1 tsp ground cinnamon

1 tsp grated nutmeg

3 oz vegetable shortening

1 oz unsalted butter

1 cup freshly grated coconut (optional)

1 heaped cup raisins

2 tsps vanilla extract

3 oz water

## Preparation:

- Add 2 tsps of sugar and ½ cup warm water to a large bowl and stir to dissolve. Sprinkle in yeast, stir, cover with plastic wrap and let proof in warm place for 10 minutes.
- Add 5½ cups of flour to a large bowl along with the salt, cinnamon and nutmeg. Mix thoroughly.
- Rub in shortening and butter.
- Stir in sugar, coconut (if using) and raisins.
- Make a well in the center of the flour mixture and pour in yeast and extract. Add the remaining water ½ cup at a time to form a slightly sticky dough. (You may need more or less water depending on your location and the moisture in the atmosphere). Once the flour comes together as a dough, sprinkle the remaining ½ cup flour onto a clean work surface, turn the dough onto the work surface and gently knead the flour into the dough (for about 5 minutes). You may need to add a little more flour for dusting.
- Brush butter on the dough and transfer to a large buttered bowl, cover and leave in a warm place for 1½ to 2 hours or until the dough has doubled in size.
- Flour a work surface and transfer the dough to the work surface. Knead for 1 minute, then cut dough into 12 equal pieces and form into balls. Place them on parchment-lined baking sheets with adequate space between each bun.
- Cover with plastic wrap or towel and let buns rise in a warm place for 45 minutes to 1 hour.
- Meanwhile preheat oven to 350° F (start preheating 25 minutes after the dough has been resting).
- Brush buns with water, sprinkle with sugar, score the buns (optional) just before placing in oven and bake for 20-25 minutes until nicely browned. Cool completely before serving.



# Jam Sandwich Cookies

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Time: 30-40 minutes

Servings: 20-25 Cookies

## Ingredients

3 large eggs

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar

1 cup butter

2 tps vanilla extract

4 cups all-purpose flour

1 tsp baking powder

1 jar tart jam (like rose hip, plum, raspberry or apricot)

Garnish: confectioners sugar



## Preparation:

- Heat oven to 375°F. In a large bowl, beat eggs and sugar until light and fluffy about 5 minutes. Melt the butter and cool to room temperature, add it slowly to the egg/sugar mixture plus the vanilla, mixing constantly.
- Whisk together flour and baking powder, and slowly add it to the egg mixture to create a firm dough. Roll out dough to 1/8-inch thick, and cut with a round cookie cutter and place on parchment-lined baking trays. Cut out a hole in the center of half of the rounds. Remove scraps. Bake about 8 minutes. Remove from oven and cool completely. Re-roll scraps and repeat.
- Sprinkle cookies that have the holes in, with confectioners sugar. Spread cookies without holes with jam of choice. Press together jam-filled cookie with holed-cookies to form a sandwich. Store in an airtight container. If freezing, don't dust with confectioners sugar until ready to serve.

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**Angela** was born in a small village. From an early age she lived in an orphanage. The only thing she remembers about her family is that they were very poor. At age 17, after the orphanage, she had nowhere to go and nowhere to live, so she was taken in by a Christian family-type orphanage. Angela is not trained in any profession neither does she have any work. She married two years ago, and now they continue to live in the orphanage and help with the housework. This young lady really wants to have a profession and wants to work. She gratefully accepted the opportunity to learn how to bake and is already making plans for the future.





# Ukrainian Sugar Cookies

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Time: 2 hours

Servings: 20-25 Cookies

## Ingredients

2 cups flour

1 cup butter - unsalted

8 oz container sour cream

2-4 beaten egg whites

Sugar for coating

## Preparation:

- Cut the butter into the flour until it resembles small breadcrumbs (or use a food processor). Add the sour cream and mix it all with a wooden spoon and then with the hands. Let it stand for 60-90 minutes or overnight in the refrigerator.
  - Take dough from fridge and proceed to roll out onto a floured surface. Roll out thin (but not so thin that it falls apart or that you can see through it) and start cutting out various shapes with cookie cutters. Dip each cookie into beaten egg whites and then into sugar (regular sugar). Transfer cookies to baking sheet and bake for 12-15 minutes in a 350° F oven. Depending on your oven, check the cookies after 12 minutes. Cookies should be golden on top but barely on the sides and not brown!! Take out of oven and allow to cool and proceed with the other batch of dough. Repeat procedure until all dough is used.
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## Izabella

I do not remember my parents. I was left at the children's hospital when I was quite small. I grew up in an orphanage, studied at another until 8th grade, and then moved to a third orphanage, where I began to have the desire to bake.

But it was only a desire as we all graduated diagnosed as “mentally retarded,” which becomes a stigma that prevents future education and does not make us feel a part of society.

But after graduation I moved to Uzhhorod and heard that there is a bakery project at a local church. I immediately went and asked them to give me the opportunity to learn. My wish was fulfilled and I am very happy. Thank you all for not being indifferent to my fate. Thank you to everyone who in some way has been involved in this project.



# Borscht

Time: 3½ hours  
Servings: 6 People



## Ingredients

For the stock:

1½ lbs meat, (boneless or bone-in), chicken, beef or pork  
1 medium onion, peeled and sliced  
1 medium carrot, peeled and sliced  
Bay leaf, coriander seeds, thyme, black peppercorns and salt to taste  
4 qts cold water

For the borscht:

1 lb potatoes, peeled and diced  
1 medium beet, peeled and grated  
1 large carrot, peeled and grated  
¾ lb cabbage, finely sliced  
1 bell pepper, deseeded and finely chopped  
1½ cups canned tomatoes diced  
1 chili pepper, deseeded and finely chopped (optional)  
⅓ cup fresh parsley, coriander and dill, finally chopped  
2 finely chopped garlic cloves  
Salt and ground black pepper to taste

## Preparation:

- First cook the meat stock. Rinse meat, put in a large pan with cold water. Add onion, carrot, bay leaf and spices. Cover with lid and place the pan on a high heat. Bring stock to the boil, reduce the heat. Use a large metal spoon to scoop away the scum from surface. Try to keep stock to a low simmer on the lowest heat uncovered. Cooking time depends on what type of meat: for chicken – 1 to 2 hours, for pork less than 2½ hours, for beef 2½ to 3 hours. While stock is cooking prepare all vegetables. When stock is ready remove from the heat. Take out onion, carrot and meat and strain the stock. Pour stock back in the pan and add hot boiled water.
- Time to cook the borscht! Bring stock to the boil and add salt to taste. Add potato in the pot, bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low and cook 10-15 minutes. Add cabbage and bell pepper and cook 10 minutes. Add onion, carrot, beet and diced tomatoes and bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low and cook about 15 minutes. Taste borscht. Add chili pepper, herbs, garlic, ground black pepper and salt to taste. In 5 minutes remove from the heat, cover with a lid and let the borscht rest for 15-20 minutes.
- Serve borscht with sour cream, black bread, butter, garlic or garlic croutons. You can cut meat from the stock in large pieces and add to the plates with borscht before serving.

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## Laura

Laura's mother died many years ago, and her father was absent from her life. She graduated from the orphanage for mentally retarded children with very low scores. In addition, she was sick with an inflammation in the inner ear, and now has difficulty hearing. She loves animals and spends a lot of time with them, and caring for them. But, unfortunately, she had no profession.

Laura explains, *Lessons in the bakery gave me confidence. I get to make a soft dough. I especially like to make croissants and biscuits with a smile. I will definitely continue helping in the bakery as much as possible.*





# Vareniky (Pierogi)

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Time: 4 hours

Servings: 6 people

This recipe has complete instructions for making Ukrainian potato and cheese pierogies from scratch and by hand. Simple and delicious this recipe is handed down for generations!

## Ingredients

2 lbs potatoes, peeled and quartered

½ pound medium cheddar cheese, cut into 1 inch cubes

1 tsp salt

4 cups flour, plus more if needed

1 egg

½ tsp salt

1 cup potato water at room temperature

Diced bacon

## Preparation:

- To make the filling, boil the potatoes until tender. Drain water into a bowl. Set aside for later. Place cubed cheese on top of the cooked potatoes and cover with a lid. Let rest for about 5 minutes so that the cheese will melt. Sprinkle with 1 tsp salt and mash the potatoes and cheese with a potato masher. Let cool to room temperature.
- To make the dough, add the flour, egg and ½ tsp salt to a large bowl. Mix and slowly pour in the potato water until the dough forms a ball.
- Place the dough on a floured surface. Knead with floured hands. The dough should have the feel of pizza dough, elastic but not wet. Work in a little extra flour if the dough is too moist.
- Use a biscuit cutter or glass. Dredge the rim of a 3 to 3½ inch glass in flour, then press the glass into the rolled out dough to cut a circle of dough. Place the dough round in your hand and spoon about a heaping tablespoon of potato and cheese filling into the middle of the dough. Pull the dough over the filling and pinch the edges. If the dough is dry, moisten a finger in water to help seal the edge.
- Place the pierogi on a towel sprinkled with flour. Cover with another towel so the pierogi does not dry out. Continue to make the remaining pierogies.
- To cook the pierogies, place them in boiling water for about 8-10 minutes. The pierogies should rise to the surface of the water when they are finished cooking.
- While the pierogies are boiling, fry the bacon until browned and crisp.
- Take the cooked pierogies from the water and put in a bowl. Pour the bacon and bacon grease over the pierogies.
- Serve with sour cream.



## Tender Shashlik (Beef, Lamb, Pork or Chicken)

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Prepare: 4-6 hours    Cooking: 30-40 minutes

Servings: 15 Pieces

### Ingredients

Ingredients for Kabobs:

2 lbs quality meat (can be top sirloin for beef), cut into 1½ inch pieces

2 bell peppers, any color, sliced into 1½ inch wide pieces

1 large red onion, sliced into 1½ inch wide pieces

15 medium bamboo or wood skewers

Ingredients for Marinade:

1 cup mild olive oil

½ cup fresh lemon juice (from 2 medium lemons)

1 tsp salt (can be sea salt)

1 tsp freshly ground black pepper

4 garlic cloves, pressed

3 tbsps fresh or frozen dill, chopped or 1 tbsp dry dill weed

2 dry bay leaves



## Preparation:

- Mix all the marinade ingredients in a large glass or plastic bowl (do not use aluminum) and stir to combine. Slice meat and transfer it into the marinade bowl, stirring well to coat. Marinate meat in the refrigerator 4 to 6 hours, stirring a few times while marinating to make sure meat is evenly marinated. Note: Sometimes after long periods of refrigeration, the oil in the marinade may thicken; it will liquify again if you let the marinated meat sit at room temperature minutes before skewering.
- Soak bamboo or wooden skewers in water for at least 30 min. After the meat is done marinating, slice veggies and skewer them with meat onto Bamboo skewers. Brush/pour remaining marinade over skewers.
- Grill over med/high heat for about 8-10 minutes or until you've reached the desired doneness, rotating every 2-3 minutes for even grilling. Remove kabobs from grill and let them rest at least 5 minutes before eating. If you cut into them immediately, the meat becomes dry. Serve with your favorite steak sauce.

Tips for great BBQ kabobs:

1. Using bamboo or wood skewers are best. The heat from a metal skewer can start cooking your meat from the inside, ruining that juicy pinkness that you might desire.
2. Soak your wooden skewers in water at least 30 minutes so they don't scorch or burn completely on the grill.
3. Don't crowd your skewers. You want a little space between your meat and veggies so your food grills on all sides.

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**Andrey Shpygunov** is married to Tatiana (Tanya) and they have two sons, Alosha and Ilusha. Together they are the leaders for *ServeNow* in Ukraine and the authors of the books *From Lenin to the Cross* and *The Basic Things You Need to Know About Compassion*.

Andrey loves all kinds of food but this, above all, is his favorite recipe.

Andrey's favorite Bible verse is found in Isaiah 40:31, *But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.*





## Simple Ukrainian Breakfast

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Time: 20 minutes

Servings: 3 people

### Ingredients

6 slices of white bread

3 eggs

1 tbsp sour cream

A dash of salt

## Preparation:

- Whisk eggs , add sour cream and salt.
- Whisk together until well blended.
- Each slice of bread should be dipped in the mixture of the eggs and sour cream, and then individually fried on both sides in butter.
- You can add grated cheese or slices of sausage to the mixture of eggs and sour cream.
- You can also make it sweet toast, adding sugar instead of salt.

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**Olga Bepalova** has been on staff with *ServeNow* since the beginning of the work in Ukraine.

Olga works with children and young women, as well as participates in Christmas programs and summer camps. She lives in Kherson in the south of Ukraine.

Olga's favorite Bible verse is found in Proverbs 10:22, *The blessing of the LORD brings wealth without painful toil for it.*





# Pelmini (Dumplings)

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Time: 1 hour, 50 minutes

Servings: 6 people

## Ingredients

1 lb ground meat (½ pork and ½ beef)

1 medium sized onion

Black pepper and salt to taste

Approximately ½ cup water or milk

Optional Ingredient: sour cream. You can pour it on the dumplings, or just dip each dumpling in it.

For the dough:

10 oz flour

1 cup boiling water

1 tsp salt

Butter

## Preparation:

### Filling

- Slice the onions.
- Combine the meat, onion, salt and a good pinch of pepper.
- Cook ground beef and pork together with the onion.
- Add ½ cup water or milk. Mix well.

### Dough

- In a bowl, place 1 tsp salt, water and flour, knead the dough quickly.
- Put the dough on a floured surface, knead 2-4 minutes. Press down until it stops sticking to your hands. Roll out dough and separate it into 4 parts, then roll them into 1 foot long ropes.
- Cut 2 of the ropes into 12-15 pieces each. Flatten into a circle or disc shape. If needed, cover circles with a towel so they won't dry out.
- Place ½ tsp meat on 1 side of dough, fold the dumpling in half and completely seal edges. Pinch together the ends, lifting up both ends to form a tortellini shape.
- Boil 8 cups of water with salt, and place no more than 24-30 dumplings in the pot.
- Stir, so dumplings won't stick to the bottom.
- When the dumplings float, cook them another 4-5 minutes.
- Repeat with the next 2 ropes of dough.
- Put the dumplings on a plate. Place a dollop of butter over the dumplings and sprinkle with greens (herbs).

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**Tanya Shpygunova** is married to Andrey and they have two boys, Alosha and Ilusha. She and her husband are the leaders for *ServeNow* in Ukraine and the authors of the books *From Lenin to the Cross* and *The Basic Things You Need to Know About Compassion*.



Tanya loves Ukrainian food and this is one of her favorite recipes. But she also loves spiritual food found in the Word of God.

Her favorite Bible verse is found in Proverbs 3:27, *Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act.*



# Cheese Pancakes

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Time: 30 minutes

Servings: 4 people

## Ingredients

1 lb 2 oz dry cottage cheese

1 egg

2 tbsps sugar

1 tsp vanilla extract

3 tbsps flour (and some for dusting)

## Preparation:

- Mix the ingredients in a bowl using a wooden spatula (Do not over mix it).
- Place the mixture on a floured surface and form “a sausage” rolling the dough in the flour.



- Cut the sausage into 12 pieces.
- Using your hand and knife blade, roll them in the flour and press lightly.
- Fry in a pan in vegetable oil on a medium heat, 3-4 minutes on each side.
- Serve with sour cream, jam, honey or evaporated milk.

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**Galina (Gala) Sakhara** is a long time friend of the Shpygunovs.

Her favorite Bible verse is from Isaiah 61:1, *'The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.'*





# Vertuta Dessert

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Time: 70 minutes

Servings: 8 people

## Ingredients

1 pint of milk

2 eggs

1 lb flour

½ tsp salt

1 tsp vanilla sugar (Or Extract)

1 cup walnuts

½ cup poppy seeds (Optional)

½ cup vegetable oil

1 cup sugar



## Preparation:

- Mix milk, eggs, flour, salt, vanilla sugar and make a soft, elastic dough. Cover with a towel and leave it for 15-20 minutes.
- Divide dough into two unequal parts. Roll out the smaller part of the dough very thinly. Then roll out the other part of the dough the same way—very thinly. Sprinkle the larger dough with vegetable oil and sugar. Cover it with the smaller part of the dough, sprinkle this layer with oil and sugar also. (You may substitute some of the oil with butter).
- Now you have a double dough circle almost 20” in diameter.

## The filling:

- Mix poppy seeds, walnuts and sugar to make the filling.
- Cover half of the circle with the walnut-poppy seed mixture. Make a roll out of dough beginning from the side where the filling is. Then twist the roll lightly. Brush the baking tray with oil and put the roll in a spiral pattern so that the sides do not touch each other. Then brush the Vertuta with vegetable oil (or with butter) and bake it in the oven at 350°F (180°C) for about 40 minutes or until it becomes golden and crispy. During the baking use the basting syrup that seeps from the Vertuta to baste it constantly until the end of the baking process.

**Marina Dunberg** grew up in Ukraine and Crimea. She is married to Paul Dunberg, who works with *ServeNow*. They have a newborn son, Dmitriy. Marina volunteers at the Ukrainian camps in the summers. Her favorite Bible verse is, *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life* (John 3:16).



**Nina Stekhnovych** is Marina’s mother and lives in Kerch, Crimea. Nina’s favorite Bible verse is *Joshua 1:8, Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.*



# Blini (Ukrainian Crepes)

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This is a staple in Ukrainian homes and these pancakes will store well in the refrigerator for 2-3 days. In many homes preserves or jam is also served on these delicious pancakes.

Time: 1 hour

Servings: 7 people

## Ingredients

4 cups milk

5 eggs

$\frac{1}{3}$  tsp salt

2 tbsps white sugar

$\frac{1}{2}$  tsp baking soda

4 cups flour

3 tbsps vegetable oil

1 cup boiling water

$\frac{2}{3}$  cup butter, divided

## Preparation:

- Beat together the milk and the eggs. Stir in the salt and the sugar and mix well. Add the baking soda.
- Blend in the flour. Add the vegetable oil and pour in the boiling water, stirring constantly. The batter should be very thin, almost watery. Set the bowl aside and let it rest for 20 minutes.
- Melt a tablespoon of butter in a small frying pan over medium-high heat. Pick the pan up off the heat. Pour in a ladleful of batter while you rotate your wrist, tilting the pan so the batter makes a circle and coats the bottom. The blini should be very thin.
- Return the pan to the heat. Cook the blini for 90 seconds. Carefully lift up an edge of the blini to see if it's fully cooked: the edges will be golden and it should have brown spots on the surface. Flip the blini over and cook the other side for 1 minute.
- Transfer the blini to a plate lined with a clean paper towel.
- Continue cooking the blini, adding an additional tablespoon of butter to the pan after every fourth blini. Stack them on top of each other and cover with the paper towel to keep warm.
- Spread your favorite filling in the center of the blini, and fold three times to make a triangle shape. You can also fold up all 4 sides, like a small burrito.

## Cook's Notes

- Rub the pan with butter after frying every fourth blini. Don't worry if the first few don't turn out right; you'll get the hang of it.
- Other suggested fillings: cooked ground meat, mashed potatoes with onion, fruit, chocolate sauce, condensed milk, honey, cream cheese or sour cream.



## Draniki (Potato Pancakes)

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Time: 50 minutes

Servings: 4 people

### Ingredients

- 1 onion, grated
- 6 potatoes, peeled and grated
- 2 tbsps flour
- 2 eggs
- 2 tsps salt
- $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp black pepper
- 1 pint sour cream
- $\frac{1}{2}$  pint cream

### Preparation:

In a large bowl use a mixer to puree the ingredients except the sour cream and cream. You may do this in a food processor as well or a blender.

Heat oil in a skillet and when hot drop, a large spoonful of the mixture into the skillet. Cook until browned on one side. Turn and repeat.

When done remove, drain, and place in a warm oven.

Mix the sour cream and cream together. Serve warm with a large dollop of the cream mixture!

# My Story

Quite often people ask me, Why are you doing what you are doing? Why are you involved in a ministry like *ServeNow*? Instead of simply answering those questions, let us share our testimonies:

I was born in the Soviet Union. My parents grew up in an orphanage. No one in my family was a Christian or had a Bible. My parents abused alcohol and it finally led to their divorce. I was twelve years old when my mother took my brother and I and moved to the Crimea peninsula, then part of Ukraine.

I didn't have any friends in this new place and I was also very stressed by my parents' divorce. My mother had a hard time finding a job. We were not accepted into school at first because we did not possess the right documents. We did not have a place to live so we slept on the beach. We would eat only two to three times a week and our food was very simple.

It was during this time that I met Jesus — not just Jesus from the Bible, not God somewhere up in heaven. It was the real Jesus, who I sensed looked into my eyes and said, *I am strong enough to take care of you! I am able to change the situation around you! I am a God who is able to take care of your finances, of your health, of your family relationships, and of your job. And you know what? If everyone on the earth would be holy and without sin except you, I would still come and die on the cross for you, because I love you.* Jesus became my best real friend and do you know what started to happen?

God took care of me and he always used ordinary people to do so. During the next few months a lady from a church brought me sandwiches every Sunday, another brought clothes. Other people in the church were always encouraging me and praying with me. Someone hired me so that I was able to pay for my own education. I remember how one family in need shared their food with us. This food was very simple but there was always so much joy in having a meal together. My best friend shared her winter shoes with me.

My pastor kept saying to me, *You are good and God is in control! None of these people were wealthy or well known. They were not extremely successful nor super clever, but all of them were being moved by God's compassion!*

God took care of me 365 days per year through all these years. There was no literal food from heaven. However, God always found an ordinary person who was willing to serve others in need! Simple people who do simple things, that mean the whole world to others. Many evenings I spent crying and gratefully asking God, *What I can do for you? Can you take my poor life and use it for good?*

Late one evening a few years later, I was sitting on the balcony with a teenage girl from the orphanage, and we had a very deep conversation. She told me, *Of course you can be happy and praise*



*God. You have a place to live, you received a nice education, you have many friends, you are married and your husband loves you, you have healthy children, and a good job which you love. But what about me? I do not have relatives or money for education, and who would hire me without skills?*

I thought to myself, I would do anything I could to see God make changes in her life and in others. I believe you would feel the same way. It is such a privilege and such a joy to see God working in the lives of others today. Do we continue to experience frustrations and things not always going smoothly? Of course! Are there misunderstandings or ingratitude?

My husband Andrey was born during the Soviet Union era. His family was one of a thousand typical families where the father abused alcohol. In order to help feed the three children his mother had to work hard for many hours. By the time Andrey became a teenager his parents didn't have any control over him. He was raised on the streets and joined a gang.

They started with small crimes like stealing money from people and then moved on to breaking into people's houses as well as stores. They were very successful. Alcohol and drugs became part of their daily life. They had many problems with the police and should have been in prison. One day Andrey used too many drugs and was very close to death. Inside he wanted to change and he

tried to live differently. But he couldn't, not until his friend shared the gospel with him and he met Jesus.

Why did his friend do it? Not because Andrey could pay him back, and not because he was a good person to be friends with, not at all. He did it because of God's love and he had compassion on Andrey. He simply took time to listen to his problems, his pain, and then he showed Andrey the way.

Nowadays when Andrey spends time with some of the needy boys at summer camps, he knows exactly how they feel. He understands how important it is for them to have someone to talk to. Why is he doing it? Not because they can pay him back, but because of God's love and Andrey's compassion within. It is such a privilege to be part of transforming lives.



Andrey, Tanya, Ilusha, Alosha



To support Tanya's work and the Bakery School for disadvantaged young ladies, please send your donation to:

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