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Diane P. Koenker

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The Taste of Others

Soviet Adventures in Cosmopolitan Cuisines

DIANE P. KOENKER

The Sixth International Youth Festival, held in Moscow from 28 July to 11 August 1957, proved a watershed in opening the borders of the communist homeland. More than 34,000 young people from 131 countries converged on the Soviet capital, and for many commentators Soviet life was never the same again, with sex and rock 'n' roll high on the hit parade.¹ Soviet restaurants welcomed these foreign guests by preparing the visitors' own foods during their stay, and this opening to world cuisines gained reinforcement through the appearance in Moscow of restaurants specializing in various national cuisines and in the promotion in the periodical press of new flavors. In a 1958 guide to Moscow restaurants, the food critic and restaurant manager Petr Aksenov positively gushed with pride in the accomplishments of Moscow chefs in 1957. For their Indian guests they prepared rice and steamed vegetables, Chinese friends were treated to Peking duck and roast cuttlefish with bamboo shoots, and Italians, "true to their taste," could order macaroni with cheese.²

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¹ Kristen Roth-Ey, "'Loose Girls' on the Loose? Sex, Propaganda, and the 1957 Youth Festival," in *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, ed. Melanie Ilić, Susan E. Reid, and Lynne Attwood (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 75–95; Pia Koivunen, "The 1957 Moscow Youth Festival: Propagating a New, Peaceful Image of the Soviet Union," in *Soviet State and Society under Nikita Khrushchev*, ed. Ilić and Jeremy Smith (London: Routledge, 2009), 46–65; Margaret Peacock, "The Perils of Building Cold War Consensus at the 1957 Moscow World Festival of Youth and Students," *Cold War History* 12, 3 (2012): 515–35; Eleonory Gilburd, "The Revival of Soviet Internationalism in the Mid to Late 1950s," in *The Thaw: Soviet Society and Culture during the 1950s and 1960s*, ed. Denis Kozlov and Gilburd (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 362–401.

² P. F. Aksenov, *Restorany i kafe Moskvyy* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo torgovoi literatury, 1958), 5.

At the same time, from 1955 on Soviet citizens had begun to travel beyond their own borders in large numbers. The state licensed and encouraged this travel, sending trade and cultural delegations to exchange experience with their counterparts abroad. Soviet citizens eagerly embraced these new opportunities to explore unfamiliar cultures, compare experiences in other socialist countries with their own, and for the privileged few, to observe and sample life in the capitalist West.³ In welcoming international youth and in sending citizens abroad, the Soviet regime announced its arrival on the world stage, no longer playing catch-up but claiming a new position as the leader of a growing socialist and postcolonial world. This new role required a shift in Soviet mentality. If the Stalin-era yardstick of Soviet identity was internal and ideological, Soviet citizens in the post-Stalin Cold War years needed to be knowledgeable about the world beyond their borders if they hoped to exercise leadership in world affairs. Venturing into the broader world, as hosts and as guests, Soviets had to learn to engage, understand, appreciate, and appropriate the cultures, practices, and norms of a cosmopolitan world.

Among those border-crossing practices were encountering new cultures of food and acknowledging the role that tastes could play in determining national and individual modern identities. Anthropologists and historians of food have explored the ways in which eating and drinking in company help define group identities. Both the everyday practices of food consumption and the particular makeup of a group's culinary repertoire contribute to a shared identity that is visceral and material as well as symbolic.⁴ Arjun Appadurai has written about how the interplay of regional inflection and national standardization through cookbooks and restaurants produced a transcendence of ethnic differences in India, creating a national self in opposition to a culinary Other.⁵ Looking at Yugoslav cookbooks, by contrast, Wendy Bracewell argues that regional and ethnic distinctions persisted, and that a single "Yugoslav cuisine" existed only for an export market, defining "Yugoslavness" for foreigners but not for Yugoslavs themselves.⁶ Soviet culinary historians have

³ Anne E. Gorsuch, *All This Is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Diane P. Koenker, *Club Red: Vacation Travel and the Soviet Dream* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).

⁴ See, e.g., Peter Scholliers, "Meals, Food Narratives, and Sentiments of Belonging in Past and Present," in *Food, Drink, and Identity: Cooking and Eating in Europe since the Middle Ages*, ed. Scholliers (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 3–22.

⁵ Arjun Appadurai, "How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30, 1 (1998): 9.

⁶ Wendy Bracewell, "Eating Up Yugoslavia: Cookbooks and Consumption in Socialist Yugoslavia," in *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe*, ed. Paulina Bren and Mary Neuburger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 187.

likewise looked to the iconic Soviet cook book, *The Book of Tasty and Healthy Food* (first edition 1939; new edition in 1952 and almost annually thereafter) for evidence of both standardization and non-Russian contributions to the Soviet palate.⁷ Soviet culinary traditions offer great potential for analyzing the identities produced through the materiality of taste, but I argue that these identities are also mediated through the experience of travel and physical exchange.

Travel and gastronomic practices both represent aspects of a modern consumer culture that was one of the goals of the socialist project. While the satisfaction of consumer demand for useful material goods (from fabric to radios to refrigerators to automobiles) occupied an increasingly central place in Soviet economic planning, consumption of *services* and *experiences* was also acknowledged to be the right of socialist citizens.⁸ The right to rest (*otdykh*) had been written into the 1936 Soviet Constitution, and access to health spa and tourist opportunities that would enrich such rest had become accepted as an entitlement by the new Soviet middle class by the 1960s. A vacation on the Black Sea or a tour of fraternal socialist capitals enabled the consumption of a whole range of services from housing to transport to dining to remembrance (postcards and photographers) that added up to the tourist experience. As the anthropologist John Urry notes, such experience is heightened because the tourist gaze “is directed to features of landscape and townscape which separate them off from everyday and routine experiences, ... they are taken to be in some sense out-of-the-ordinary.” Adding to the sense of occasion and novelty was the *social* character of the travel

⁷ Irina Glushchenko, *Obshchepit: Mikoian i sovetskaia kukhnia*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Izdatel'skii dom Vysshei shkoly ekonomiki, 2015); Adrienne Kathleen Jacobs, “The Many Flavors of Socialism: Modernity and Tradition in Late Soviet Food Culture” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 2015); Edward Geist, “Cooking Bolshevik: Anastas Mikoian and the Making of the *Book about Delicious and Healthy Food*,” *Russian Review* 71, 2 (2012): 295–313; Jukka Gronow and Sergey Zhuravlev, “*The Book of Tasty and Healthy Food*: The Establishment of Soviet Haute Cuisine,” in *Educated Tastes: Food, Drink, and Connoisseur Culture*, ed. Jeremy Strong (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 24–57; Anton Masterovoy, “Eating Soviet: Food and Culture in the USSR, 1917–1991” (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2013), 139–47.

⁸ There is a burgeoning literature on Soviet consumption and consumerism, including Susan E. Reid, “Khrushchev Modern: Agency and Modernization in the Soviet Home,” *Cahiers du monde russe* 47, 2–3 (2006): 227–68; Reid, “This Is Tomorrow! Becoming a Consumer in the Soviet Sixties,” in *The Socialist Sixties: Crossing Borders in the Second World*, ed. Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 25–65; Jukka Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne: Common Luxury and the Ideals of the Good Life in Stalin's Russia* (Oxford: Berg, 2003); and Natalya Chernyshova, *Soviet Consumer Culture in the Brezhnev Era* (London: Routledge, 2013). On consuming the travel experience, see Gorsuch, *All This Is Your World*.

experience, especially in the USSR, enabling the traveler “to consume particular commodities in the company of others.”⁹ This collective consumption of experiences, landscapes, food, and attractions helped shape the sense of Soviet self and others.

Much writing on Soviet food has understandably emphasized shortage and hunger, the economic and political problems the regime failed to solve or deliberately engineered.¹⁰ In late socialism, the skilled Soviet shopper knew always to carry a string bag in order to accommodate the surprise purchasing opportunity she might encounter in her daily routine. Heroic tales of shopping became part of the discourse of perestroika.¹¹ This article seeks to redirect the conversation about food toward the possibility of choice, preference, taste, and personal growth. More specifically, this article links travel and food consumption, looking at the role of tourism, including the practice of the “exchange of professional experience” by groups from the catering industry. By traveling abroad, some tourists came to define a particular Soviet cuisine as “ours” in opposition to the fare offered in their foreign tourist destinations, encouraging a more self-conscious and explicit notion of “ours.” I focus on the “long 1960s” as the transitional moment when the USSR began to discover the world as well as the cosmos, when it took consumption seriously, and when citizens and officials alike engaged in asserting a Soviet self on the world stage. The article shows how tourism and travel helped break down borders by encouraging the consumption of alien foods, by propagandizing for their inclusion in Russian restaurants and cafés and on home tables, and by exposing Soviet citizens to the culinary habits of visitors from abroad. As Anne Gorsuch has shown, and like the reluctant bookkeeper in the classic 1969 film *Diamond Arm* who would have preferred to buy his wife a new fur coat rather than take a voyage to the land of Coca Cola and Sophia Loren, Soviet tourists were also ambivalent about their encounters with “abroad.”¹² They often expressed their wish for their familiar Moscow borshch to make

⁹ John Urry, *Consuming Places* (London: Routledge, 1995), 132, 131.

¹⁰ Mauricio Borrero, *Hungry Moscow: Scarcity and Urban Society in the Russian Civil War, 1917–1921* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003); Elena A. Osokina, *Za fasadom “stalinskogo izobilii”: Raspredelenie i rynek v snabzhenii naseleniia v gody industrializatsii, 1927–1941* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1998); Robert Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Donald Filtzer, *The Hazards of Urban Life in Late Socialist Russia: Health, Hygiene, and Living Standards, 1943–1953* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

¹¹ Elena Stiazhkina, “The ‘Petty-Bourgeois Woman’ and the ‘Soulless Philistine’: Gendered Aspects of the History of Soviet Everyday Life from the Mid-1960s to the Mid-1980s,” *Russian Studies in History* 51, 2 (2012): 63–97; Nancy Ries, *Russian Talk: Culture and Conversation during Perestroika* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

¹² Gorsuch, *All This Is Your World*, 89–93, 97–105.

them feel a little less far away from home. At the same time, however, they recognized that encountering alien cultures and strange foods could be invigorating and rewarding, a pathway to developing a more cosmopolitan Soviet self, one appropriate for aspiring leaders of the 20th-century world.

Food Culture in the USSR

Soviet ideology had a problem with pleasure. In its focus on economic rationality and on the production of *things* as the measure of communist success, Soviet ideologues and planners had little patience for everyday emotions like fun. As David Crowley and Susan E. Reid write, “In the name of achieving the greatest happiness for the greatest number in the radiant future, the official value system generally emphasized asceticism and self-denial in the present, along with industrial production, international security, and the rule of rationality and planning. Joy was, in this context, a kind of abstracted, disembodied higher goal.”¹³

True to this ideology, Soviet vacations, for example, were distinguished by a high degree of purposefulness. The point of a spa vacation was not to provide individual satisfaction but to allow the vacationers to recover their health and energy and thereby to return to production stronger than before. Socialist *tourism* involved serious work, including the physical labor of trekking or other forms of locomotion, plus carrying out good deeds and activities designed to promote self-improvement. Yet, the pursuit of pleasurable experiences was also embedded in Soviet vacation practices. Vacation travel created emotions of anticipation and excitement. Breathtaking vistas, modern cityscapes, abundant food, sea bathing in warmth and sunlight, exhilarating drives through mountain passes or motorboat rides along the shore, nightly dances and cinema, and even the chance for sexual adventure offered a pleasurable sharp break from the everyday.¹⁴

Soviet food culture reflected a similar duality between food as fuel, meant solely to provide the rational nutrition to stoke the human engine, and food as an aesthetic and social experience, food as taste. As with consumption in general, the acts of cooking and eating convey both use value and sign value. Food possesses indubitable utility: the human organism cannot survive without it. But the practice of food consumption also permits individuals to evoke the symbolic value of food choices. As the philosopher Deane Curtin writes, “Food consumption habits are not simply tied to biological needs but serve to mark boundaries between social classes, geographical regions, nations,

¹³ David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, “Introduction: Pleasures in Socialism?,” in *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc*, ed. Crowley and Reid (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 4.

¹⁴ These themes are developed in Koenker, *Club Red*.

cultures, genders, life-cycle stages, religions, and occupations, to distinguish rituals, traditions, festivals, seasons, and times of day.”¹⁵ Consumers, even socialist consumers, choose what and where to eat in order to convey a sense of status and identity. The goal of the Soviet food industry as early as the 1920s had been to provide sufficient abundance to permit choices and self-definition. By the 1960s, rising standards of living made the expression of taste even more possible.

In some austere visions of pure communism, food consumption would be only nutritious, economical, and efficient. The 1920s food futurist S. A. Ezerskii had proposed nutritional substitutes and amino acids in lieu of food; the goal of a communist diet was calories, not flavor, note the food historians Halina and Robert Rothstein.¹⁶ Nor was this technological utopianism limited to the Soviet Union. Warren Belasco writes, “at the turn of this century many feminist utopians embraced almost any idea that would get food out of the home and thus free women: the meal in a pill, foods synthesized from coal, centralized kitchens, and ‘self-service’ electric appliances and convenience foods.”¹⁷ One can see the persistence of this rational nutrition approach in the 1960s pages of the monthly journal of the food services industry, *Obshchestvennoe pitanie*, where food consumption possessed no meaning other than nutritional value-added. Elaborating on the 1961 Communist Party program, one food industry economist insisted that “diet is the most important factor in protecting the health of a person, which will raise his fitness to work.”¹⁸ Science would aid the food worker in developing norms for physiologically optimal dishes and meals. Stolovaia cooks should always consider the nutrient value of the dishes they prepared, and the food industry

¹⁵ Deane W. Curtin, “Food/Body/Person,” in *Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food*, ed. Curtin and Lisa M. Heldke (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 3–22, quotation 4, as given in Katharina Vester, *A Taste of Power: Food and American Identities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 1.

¹⁶ Halina Rothstein and Robert Rothstein, “The Beginnings of Soviet Culinary Arts,” in *Food in Russian History and Culture*, ed. Musya Glants and Joyce Toomre (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 186.

¹⁷ Warren Belasco, “Food Matters: Perspectives on an Emerging Field,” in *Food Nations: Selling Taste in Consumer Societies*, ed. Belasco and Philip Scranton (New York: Routledge, 2002), 8. Katharina Vester locates an American ascetic approach to food as early as the first half of the 19th century (*Taste of Power*, chap. 1). Laura Shapiro examines the American scientific cooking movement in *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1986).

¹⁸ Ia. Orlov, “Do polnogo udovletvoreniia potrebnostei naseleniia,” *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* (hereafter *OP*), no. 11 (1961): 3.

itself continued to develop tools to assist these cooks in the measurement of the nutritional content of ingredients they used.¹⁹

The home cook was also meant to employ science and rationality in her food preparation, as Susan Reid has observed in her study of Khrushchev-era consumption. Writers compared the domestic kitchen to a scientific laboratory, and the popular weekly *Ogonek* averred, "You see, cookery loves exactness, just as mathematics and physics do." Efficiency in work and in ingredients would permit the housewife to feed her family nutritiously with the least expenditure of time, effort, and rubles spent on foodstuffs.²⁰

Efficiency *also* meant taking meal preparation out of the home and into the factory. Planners aimed to serve 80 percent of the population's meals in public catering establishments by 1980, liberating women from an hour a day of housework that could be better used for self-improvement and rest.²¹ Rational organization of public catering could fuel this population ever more efficiently. In Murmansk, a city official boasted that its best stolovaia could feed 300 people within 10–15 minutes. Elsewhere, a stolovaia reduced the feeding time from an hour during the peak period to 15–20 minutes.²² Mass-produced semiprepared foods would be the pathway to the provision of nutritious and economical diets for the Soviet laboring population. Technology would optimize the supply of peeled potatoes and perfectly formed *kotlety* for the masses, and it would free up labor to perform productive tasks rather than to provide services. The "success" of this technological transformation of the food industry was wryly noted by the journalist Maurice Hindus, describing an early 1960s visit to the USSR: "But, oh, the cooking—how tasteless! It is bad enough in Moscow's Intourist hotels except the National and the Metropole. But in the *stolovayas*, which only an adventurous foreigner might visit, the fare is so unsavory that only poorer Russians eat there. Cooking schools do not attract ambitious young people for the simple reason that cooking is not regarded as a respectable profession."²³

¹⁹ G. Korovkin, "Dlia blaga sovetsskikh liudei," *OP*, no. 10 (1961): 6; [no author], "Normy zakladki trebuet utochneniia," *OP*, no. 11 (1961): 23; *OP*, no. 1 (1962): 27–28; [no author], "Nuzhnye fiziko-khimicheskie pokazateli na kulinarnye izdeliia," *OP*, no. 6 (1962): 33–34; *OP*, no. 7 (1965): 34–35; *OP*, no. 6 (1968): 43–44.

²⁰ Susan E. Reid, "The Khrushchev Kitchen: Domesticating the Scientific-Technological Revolution," *Journal of Contemporary History* 40, 2 (2005): 302.

²¹ Korovkin, "Dlia blaga sovetsskikh liudei"; V. Roizman, "Vazhnaia gosudarstvennaia zadacha," *OP*, no. 2 (1961): 13.

²² "Vserossiiskoe soveshchanie rabotnikov obshchestvennogo pitaniia," *OP*, no. 8 (1963): 13; I. Varlashkin, "Restorany sibirskoi oblasti," *OP*, no. 1 (1962): 29.

²³ Maurice Hindus, *The Kremlin's Human Dilemma: Russia after Half a Century of Revolution* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 97.

The foreign correspondent Aline Mosby echoed the opinion that Soviet cooks cared little for taste.

A typical dish in an average restaurant is a small steak or piece of thin roast chicken, hunks of potatoes drenched in grease, and peas and carrots. The latter vegetables look as if they have been boiled, beaten, hammered, and flogged until they are without vitamins as well as taste. The result is coated with a white sauce and served in heavy little pastry shells.

There is a "Chef's School" in Moscow that teaches its students to prepare food that way.²⁴

Susan Reid suggests that Soviet housewives resisted the effort to outsource the family meal and opposed the "withering away" of the family kitchen, from both concerns about quality and the resilience of traditional concepts of housekeeping.²⁵ The regime responded with new services to ease domestic meal preparation, with the industrial production of semiprepared foods, neighborhood kitchens that dispensed carry-out dishes and meals, and even home delivery of complete meals.²⁶ Of these three innovations, only the provision of semiprepared foods survived the early 1960s. (Shaped and breaded meat patties were a staple in 1989 when I lived in Moscow, a barely tolerable protein source for a family meal after a long day at the archive. And you can still buy them today at any Moscow gastronom.)

Yet alongside this prominent emphasis on efficiency and rationality, the pages of *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* (as well as women's magazines like *Rabotnitsa*) also offered ample evidence that meals and food were meant to be savored, that the Soviet consumer valued flavor and variety, an appreciation for the cultural meanings of dining in and dining out, and pleas for young people to consider making the culinary profession their career. Monthly recipe columns provided advice for the professional chef and the cook at home to utilize the products of the Soviet food industry, emphasizing seasonality and encouraging experimentation. (These recipes also offered strategies for coping with the unacknowledged meat shortages—with many recipes offering creative ways

²⁴ Aline Mosby, *The View from No. 13 People's Street* (New York: Random House, 1962), 224.

²⁵ Reid, "Khrushchev Kitchen," 294.

²⁶ Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv goroda Moskvy (TsGA Moskvy) f. R-2 (Moscow City Committee of the Trade Union of Workers in Trade and Cooperatives), op. 2, d. 626 (Opening Address to a Meeting of Moscow City Waiters, 15 March 1961), l. 8. Every official meeting in the trade and public catering industry in the 1960s would repeat the pledge to increase the availability of carry-out foods. In the capital of Ukraine, trade officials took this pledge even farther, creating Kiev-Service, which took telephone orders for home delivery of raw and prepared foods, flowers, and gifts; see Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF) f. 5452 (Trade Union of Workers in Trade and Cooperatives), op. 37, d. 892 (Stenogram of the Trade Union's Sixth Congress, 12–13 December 1967), ll. 259–60.

to use root vegetables. In the early 1960s they promoted the many uses of the new miracle vegetable, corn, such as green borshch with corn kernels and spinach with corn flakes.)²⁷

Promoting a Pan-Soviet Cuisine

We assume that the consumption of foods different from the familiar tastes of our childhood represents a choice to widen our boundaries and to add a cosmopolitan persona to our primary sense of origin and place. The food philosopher Lisa Heldke emphasizes the high stakes of encounters with alien food: "It feels much more risky to taste the food of an unfamiliar culture than to listen to its music, look at its art, or read its literature, and indeed it is more risky.... New flavors threaten—or promise—to challenge our very boundaries as we either admit them onto our grocery lists, or refuse them access."²⁸ The anthropologist Allison James likewise emphasizes the primary identity produced by food: "Shared patterns of consumption mark our differences from others." But she also argues that these patterns are rarely fixed, that "trade, travel, transport, and technology have all played their part in facilitating a considerable exchange of consumption practices."²⁹ These authors draw on the experience of capitalist economies, and one might wonder whether Soviet consumers, given the prevailing economy of shortages, would have the luxury to experiment with global tastes and therefore cosmopolitan selves. The shortages were very real, and as we will see, hampered efforts to expand the Soviet palate at home. Yet Soviet access to the world increased dramatically beginning in 1955, with the exchange of official delegations, cultural exchanges, and bilateral tourism agreements, and this growing encounter with world cultures brought Soviet citizens into expanded contact with foods of other peoples and places.³⁰ Did they welcome these encounters or did they prefer to limit their consumption of foreign tastes to books, art, fashion, and rock and roll? How did they encounter the tastes of others?

²⁷ Special cookbooks for preparing corn dishes also appeared. See P. G. Dotsenko, *Bliuda i kulinarnye izdeliia s kukuruzoi* (Odessa: Odesskoe oblastnoe izdatel'stvo, 1958), 19, 42 (the secret ingredient for the spinach dish appears to be "Sauce no. 129"); and V. I. Dubenskaia-Lagrene, *Kukuruza na stole* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo torgovoi literatury, 1962). Two hundred years earlier, corn was promoted as the quintessential American foodstuff (Vester, *Taste of Power*, chap. 1).

²⁸ Lisa Heldke, "But Is It Authentic? Culinary Travel and the Search for the 'Genuine Article,'" in *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink*, ed. Carolyn Korsmeyer (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 385–93 (quotation 387).

²⁹ Allison James, "Identity and the Global Stew," in *Taste Culture Reader*, 372–84 (quotations 374).

³⁰ Gorsuch, *All This Is Your World*, 12–13.

One approach to these questions is to consider whether there existed anything like a *Soviet* cuisine that provided a cultural boundary that could be breached or defended. The Soviet Union celebrated its multinational form, and among its national traditions were the food cultures of more than 100 different ethnic groups. If we take the 1939 and 1952 editions of the *Book of Tasty and Healthy Food* as the codex of “Soviet cuisine,” as Jukka Gronow and Sergey Zhuravlev argue, then this tasty and healthy food reflected a pan-European, or at least East European culinary tradition, with the addition of recipes from the Russian and Ukrainian peasant kitchens.³¹

At first, only the exotic and spicy dishes of Georgia challenged the primacy of Slavs and Europeans on the Soviet table. The historian Erik Scott has documented how Georgian food had acquired a reputation as a cuisine appreciated by the Soviet middle class of the 1930s, and given a developed supply chain and the mobility of its chefs (who worked the dining cars of railroads as well as on cruise ships), Georgian dishes had become standard luxury fare by the 1950s.³² The Moscow Georgian restaurant Aragvi, opened in 1940 and specially supplied by direct deliveries from the Georgian Republic, was Moscow’s first “national-themed” restaurant. With the patronage of the leading Georgian Iosif Stalin, it became the place to see and be seen by an emerging Soviet power elite. “When it opened,” writes Scott, “there were only a handful of restaurants operating in the capital, and the Aragvi was one of the few places the arriviste elite could enjoy the fruits of their labor for the party while articulating their new social position through the cultivation of appropriately sophisticated tastes.”³³ The academic Aleksandr Levintov remembered, “If you hadn’t eaten chicken tabaka at the restaurant Aragvi in the interval between the Twenty-First and Twenty-Second Communist Party congresses, then you considered yourself as not yet born, with your whole life ahead of you.”³⁴

The diffusion of those tastes shows up in the accounts of Soviet domestic travel. Discerning Sochi vacationers demanded variety in their kurort meals that would include the spicy flavors of Georgian cuisine. “They don’t fulfill our requests,” complained one vacationer from Kiev in 1952. “You order

³¹ Gronow and Zhuravlev, “*Book of Tasty and Healthy Food*,” 49.

³² Erik R. Scott, “Edible Ethnicity: How Georgian Cuisine Conquered the Soviet Table,” *Kritika* 13, 4 (2012): 833, 852, 857.

³³ Erik R. Scott, *Familiar Strangers: The Georgian Diaspora and the Evolution of Soviet Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 101.

³⁴ Aleksandr Levintov, *Vypivka i p'ianka* (Moscow: Iauza/Eksmo, 2005), 119, quoted in Nataliia Lebina, “Plius destalinizatsiia vsei edy... (Vkusovye priorityty khrushchevskikh reform: Opyt istoriko-antropologicheskogo analiza),” *Teoriia mody: Odezhda, telo, kul'tura*, no. 21 (2011): 213–43, quotation 232.

vegetables Georgian-style, and they give you an omelet.” Another vacationer echoed the lament: there were many different names on the menu in the dining room, but the dishes were all the same, and “Nobody here serves that spicy sauce that we are used to seeing in Georgian ethnic [*natsional'nye*] dishes.”³⁵

According to health spa chefs who gathered at a 1950 conference, the monotony in the vacationers' diets was due to the lack of available supplies and vacationers' own limited tastes, rather than the inability of the kitchen staff to imagine expanded menus. Of course, the lack of fresh vegetables and spices prevented many kitchens from providing what diners preferred. But a couple of chefs from Azerbaijan pointed to the conservatism of Russian diners, their unwillingness to sample “eastern” dishes like plov and shashlyk. “We get Russians here who've never eaten ethnic foods, and they're afraid to order them. We have to cajole them into trying them, to show them that they aren't so bad.” Once vacationers tried these dishes, insisted another, they grow to like shashlyk and plov. “I'm saying that we should include eastern dishes in all of our rest homes, because they'll be a success.”³⁶ (Conversely, for Santha Rama Rau, an Indian writer traveling in the USSR in 1957 with her young American-born son Jai, plov and shashlyk quickly became Jai's “favorite Russian dishes.”)³⁷ These professionals were imagining themselves as the proselytizers for cosmopolitan eating even before the death of Stalin.

A proposal from several restaurant directors to the USSR minister of trade in 1957 insisted that the “time is ripe to build a whole series of ethnic restaurants in the capital.” They envisioned a few large restaurants with a single kitchen and separate dining rooms for each related republic: thus the Transcaucasus Restaurant would serve diners in the Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijan rooms; the Central Asia Restaurant would feature dining rooms serving food from and decorated in the styles of the Uzbek, Turkmen, and Tajik republics. Russia would have its own restaurant dedicated to Russian cuisine.³⁸

³⁵ Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv goroda Sochi (GAGS) f. 24, op. 1, d. 412, l. 16 (*Krasnaia znamia*, Sochi, 15 February 1952).

³⁶ GARF f. 9493 (All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, Department of Health Resorts), op. 3, d. 99, ll. 20, 95, 113.

³⁷ Santha Rama Rau, *My Russian Journey* (New York: Harper, 1959), 129.

³⁸ TsGA Moskvyy f. 224 (Moscow Restaurant Trust), op. 1, d. 163 (Materials on Developing and Improving Public Catering, 1960), l. 23. This plan was not realized. By 1973, Soviet republics were represented in Moscow with the Aragvi, Uzbekistan, and Baku in freestanding restaurants, along with the Ararat in the Hotel Armenia and the Minsk and Ukraina restaurants in hotels of the same names. See Lynn Fisher and Wesley Fisher, *The Moscow Gourmet: Dining Out in the Capital of the USSR* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1974).

Beyond the capital, tourist and vacation travel had also begun to break down diners' resistance. A sea captain from Sakhalin Island traveled to Kiev for his rest cure and so appreciated the new flavors he encountered that he kept up a two-year correspondence with the sanatorium's chef.³⁹ Vicarious travel helped too, with cookbooks serving as supplemental travel guides. The historian Adrienne Jacobs has analyzed the expansion of national cuisines, noting the appearance of an Armenian cookbook in 1960 and a collection of the recipes of the "peoples of the North Caucasus" in 1963. The output of cookbooks continued to grow in the later 1960s, although the cuisines of the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Ukraine received the most attention, evidently due to active proselytizing by their regional partisans.⁴⁰ In 1978, the eminent Soviet food writer V. V. Pokhlebkin published the first edition of his encyclopedic *Natsional'nye kukhni nashikh narodov*, with sections for each of the titular republics, beginning with Russia, and even including sections for the foods of "small peoples" of the North Caucasus, Mongolia, and Jews.⁴¹ The appearance of this cookbook marked a culmination of the trend that had begun already in the late 1950s.

By the 1960s, the pages of *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* regularly offered instructions on preparing dishes from the USSR's ethnic regions for its audience of professional cooks and catering employees in their own kitchens. In January 1961, readers could learn to make *besb-barmak* Bashkir-style (a dish of beef, lamb, onion, potato, and flour), or a Tatar stuffed chicken. In March 1963, it was Turkmenia's turn, with recipes for *etli-bukterme*—dumplings with meat, onion, and cabbage—and for *kheigenikli-kebab* (the already familiar liulia kebab baked in an omelet). With the arrival of inexpensive passenger jet travel, shoppers in Moscow and other large cities could increasingly encounter ingredients from far-flung regions of the Soviet South: raisins from Uzbekistan, dried apricots from Armenia, and oranges from Georgia, where a single orange tree could gross an entrepreneurial farmer \$750 at Moscow's Central Market.⁴² "Many Muscovites eat apples and tangerines flown up from relatives in the South," wrote the foreign correspondent Aline Mosby about the 1960s.⁴³ To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the October 1917 revolution, *Obshchestvennoe pitanie's* recommendations to professional chefs in November 1967 offered a classic dish from each of the 15 union republics,

³⁹ GARF f. 9493, op. 3, d. 99, l. 95.

⁴⁰ Jacobs, "Many Flavors of Socialism," chap. 3.

⁴¹ V. V. Pokhlebkin, *Natsional'nye kukhni nashikh narodov: Osnovnye kulinarnye napravleniia, ikh istoriia i osobennosti. Retseptura* (Moscow: Pishchevaia promyshlennost', 1978).

⁴² Howard Norton, *Only in Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand, 1961), 150; Hindus, *Kremlin's Human Dilemma*, 35.

⁴³ Mosby, *View from No. 13 People's Street*, 60.

from beef stewed in a clay pot, Russian-style, to Estonian sweet beer soup.⁴⁴ Expanding tourist travel from European Russia to Central Asia would also enlarge culinary horizons. Arriving in Tashkent, Santha Rau's son decided to play things safe and order his familiar plov and shashlyk (the eastern equivalent of Europe's spaghetti Bolognese, available everywhere). "Even that turned out to be far more spicy and interesting than the Moscow variety and was sprinkled with shreds of carrot-colored vegetable that tasted of turnips."⁴⁵

To what extent was this promotion of a pan-Soviet cuisine an example of "culinary colonialism," the appropriation (even orientalization) of the recipes of the subaltern and transforming them to fit an imperial taste? To what extent was this what archaeologist Michael Dietler calls "creative indigenization"? After all, as Nancy Ries reminds us, the potato had once been a foreign import.⁴⁶ The food historian Anton Masterovoy suggests that the 1930s celebration of Soviet ethnic cuisines was an imperialist effort to project an image of abundance, but that the revival of interest in pan-Soviet flavors in the early 1950s was meant to deflect culinary interest away from Western cultural influences. A renewed attention to the cornucopia of Soviet flavors could compensate for the closing down of borders. Yet as Adrienne Jacobs has shown, the variety of national foods promoted in cookbooks only multiplied after 1955, when the borders had reopened. Erik Scott explicitly argues for a *reverse* colonialism in the popularization of Georgian cuisine, insisting that the periphery conquered the center.⁴⁷

Yet even as Soviet citizens began actual travel abroad from the mid-1950s onward, many remained fearful or disdainful of unfamiliar foods. Georgian cuisine may have been widely popularized by the 1950s, but Georgia also represented danger in the minds of vacationers, and this became linked to an aversion for Georgian foods. A tourist base director in Mtskheta reported that he had recruited a group of five young Georgians to prevent locals from crashing the tourist dances, but when one of the five flashed a knife at a young

⁴⁴ *OP*, no. 11 (1967): 59–60.

⁴⁵ Rau, *Russian Journey*, 268.

⁴⁶ Lisa Heldke, "‘Let Them Eat Chinese!’: Reflections on Cultural Food Colonialism," *Gastronomica* 1, 2 (2001): 76–79; Stephen Mennell, "Identity and Culinary Culture: England, France, and Tomorrow the World," in *Food in European Literature*, ed. John Wilkins (Exeter, UK: Intellect Books, 1996), 15; Iris-Aya Laemmerhirt, *Embracing Differences: Transnational Cultural Flows between Japan and the United States* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013); Michael Dietler, "Culinary Encounters: Food, Identity, and Colonialism," in *The Archaeology of Food and Identity*, ed. Katheryn C. Twiss, Center for Archaeological Investigations, Occasional Paper no. 34 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 2006), 218–42, quotation 234; Nancy Ries, "Potato Ontology: Surviving Postsocialism in Russia," *Cultural Anthropology* 24, 2 (2009): 181–212.

⁴⁷ Masterovoy, "Eating Soviet"; Jacobs, "Many Flavors of Socialism"; Scott, *Familiar Strangers*.

woman from Leningrad, she couldn't sleep that night, fearing the Georgians were going to kill everyone. In the same report, this official asked for more supplies of beef, because "tourists from Russia don't like lamb," a staple of Georgian cooking.⁴⁸

Nonetheless, normative Soviet culinary production now married Russian cuisine and its centuries-old traditions with the spiciness and exoticism of foods from the other 14 Soviet republics. Influenced by a growing array of multinational cookbooks and by their dining-out experience, Soviet diners would be equally at home preparing the traditional fish in aspic for the New Year's celebration, Georgian shashlyk on their cookouts, or offering Uzbek plov and the sweet Kazakh honey and walnut chak-chak to their families and guests.⁴⁹ Once they had incorporated the diverse flavors of an expanded "home" into their culinary repertory, they could be more confident in confronting the even more exotic flavors of "abroad."

Going Cosmopolitan at Home and Abroad

Along with hosting the 1957 International Youth Festival, Moscow's restaurant officials built on the success of the Aragvi by opening a string of international restaurants in Moscow. Venturing into the promotion of the cuisines of fraternal socialist countries, the Praga reopened in 1955, and the Peking began serving Muscovites in 1959.⁵⁰ The Bulgarian restaurant Sofia had its debut in 1957, decorated with Bulgarian folk motifs and featuring a specially imported half-ton grill to prepare such specialties as kebabs, shashlyk, and chicken. Spicy, but "not as spicy as Caucasian food," the dishes served here included unusual soups and stews as well as grilled meats, along with tasty Bulgarian wine. And the assortment! "Bulgarian restaurants change their menus every day, to meet the demand of their patrons."⁵¹ These were soon joined by the Hungarian Budapesht Restaurant, fitted out like the others in the "national style," including handcrafted tablecloths, napkins, and tableware imported from Hungary.⁵² By the early 1970s, Muscovites could also theoretically sample the cuisines of Germany at the Berlin, Romania at the

⁴⁸ GARF f. 9520 (Central Council for Tourism of the All-Union Central Trade Union Council), op. 1, d. 352, ll. 40–43.

⁴⁹ Full disclosure: recipes for all these items appear in my sources, but I have also eaten them in Moscow homes in the years since the 1970s.

⁵⁰ "Istoriia gostinitsy: Restoran 'Pekin,'" <http://hotelpeking.ru/istoriya-gostinitsyi/1450787381195-dc80ec57-940b>.

⁵¹ "Restoran Sofia," *OP*, no. 1 (1958): 34–35.

⁵² P. F. Aksekov, "V piati zalov 'Budapeshta,'" *OP*, no. 7 (1963): 43–45.

Bucharest, Cuba at the Havana, and Poland at the Varshava.⁵³ Such restaurants could become “traveling spaces,” arenas for the exploration of the “culinary other,” in the words of the food scholar Sylvia Ferrero.⁵⁴

Many of these restaurants were operated mainly for foreign tourists through the Intourist agency, and as tourist travel to the USSR expanded, Soviet chefs were encouraged to learn how to prepare meals that would make these tourists feel more at home. A 1961 issue of *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* described the varying breakfast habits of foreign visitors, and a lengthy series in 1963 explained the “peculiarities” of foreign cuisines in some detail. Koreans and Chinese do not much like dairy products, and the Chinese prefer fruit juices to mineral water. The Germans like chopped meat; the Romanians do not. The English do not eat sausage or frankfurters. South Americans like their meat very rare, and coffee is their national drink.⁵⁵ These lessons in international cuisine were also applied to cooking at ordinary restaurants and cafés, and the pages of *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* included a stream of recipes from foreign countries. Russian cooks could sample Bulgarian cuisine in their own kitchens using recipes for “tasty dishes from Bulgarian peppers” provided to *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* by the Bulgarian produce export firm.⁵⁶ While perhaps not identified as such, these Bulgarian meals—such as the Turkish-inspired soup *chorba*—reflected pan-Balkan culinary pathways, bringing to Soviet diners tastes from Greece, Turkey, and the Mediterranean beyond.⁵⁷ Recipes for Scandinavian dishes such as a Danish crab “pyramid” and butterbrot with eggs and sardines appeared in a 1965 issue of the journal.⁵⁸ In 1966, readers could learn how to make some of the national dishes of Korea, such

⁵³ Fisher and Fisher, *Moscow Gourmet*; see also Jacobs, “Many Flavors of Socialism,” chap. 3. The first Italian restaurant, a café converted to a pizzeria, opened only in the early 1980s (Jacobs, “Many Flavors of Socialism,” 114).

⁵⁴ Sylvia Ferrero, “*Comida sin par*: Consumption of Mexican Food in Los Angeles. ‘Foodscapes’ in a Transnational Consumer Society,” in *Food Nations*, 194–219, quotation 194.

⁵⁵ V. Blagorazumov, “Zavtraki dlia inostrannykh turistov,” *OP*, no. 7 (1961): 44; G. Stankovich, “Osobennosti pitaniia turistov razlichnykh stran,” *OP*, no. 5 (1963): 36–38, no. 7 (1963): 43–45, and no. 8 (1963): 28–30. By 1966, the journal recognized the growing sophistication of these visitors by acknowledging, for example, that the Japanese also loved Chinese, French, Russian, and Korean foods (“Chto nado znat’, obsluzhivaia inostrannykh turistov,” *OP*, no. 8 [1966]: 52–55). But the director of the Astoria Restaurant still insisted in 1972 that English tourists did not like *sosiski* and advised chefs to prepare for them dishes borrowed from a Bulgarian cookbook of international recipes. See S. Lyba, “Pitanie turistov,” *OP*, no. 8 (1972): 59–60.

⁵⁶ “Vkusnye bliuda iz bolgarskikh pertsov,” *OP*, no. 1 (1967): 24.

⁵⁷ Thanks to Maria Todorova for her comments on the Bulgarian dishes cited by Soviet journalists and tourists.

⁵⁸ *OP*, no. 5 (1965): 21.

as *dziiau* (roast pork) and *pou-za* (“similar to Siberian pelmeni”).⁵⁹ A year later, three rice dishes from India were featured, incorporating vegetables, lamb, and an array of uncommon spices including cloves, ginger, cinnamon, caraway, and cardamom.⁶⁰

What explains this proliferation of new and unusual recipes? The Soviet consumer’s entitlement to assortment and choice had been a mantra of economic planners and producers since the 1930s, as the sociologist Jukka Gronow has pointed out. In developing products of mass consumption, from candy to perfume, “variety was king.” A modern socialist consumer was expected to express her or his individuality through purchasing choices, and this required the provision of an adequate assortment of goods to buy.⁶¹ This drive for variety also dominated planning for restaurants and *stolovaia*s in the post-Stalin years: the more items on the menu, the more prestigious the eating establishment. Russian Federation Minister of Trade D. V. Pavlov acknowledged in 1964 that this desire had permeated the practices of Soviet cooks, who insisted on serving 15 or 20 different dishes every day. One Dmitrieva, a *stolovaia* cook from the Urals industrial town of Berezniki, explained how her collective strove for variety in order to meet the tastes of its patrons, construction workers who came to Berezniki from all over the country. They relied on *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* to provide them with the recipes they needed to produce the assortment expected of them.⁶²

Moreover, the culture of dining had become yet another element in the Soviet project of producing cultured individuals. Along with collective outings to the theater or museums, group visits to restaurants qualified as cultural work. In 1960, the Moscow public catering authority ordered its city restaurants to organize Sunday afternoon tastings of “national” dishes.⁶³ Workers at the Hammer and Sickle plant had a close relationship with the Ukraina Restaurant, coming en masse with their families on their Sundays off. In addition to offering the novelties of Ukrainian cuisine, the restaurant provided an orchestra and space to dance. According to the factory newspaper, “the setting was so pleasant that many remained after dinner and enjoyed themselves in the restaurant right up to the evening.”⁶⁴ The Budapesht Restaurant also catered to factory groups, offering printed recipes to accompany their

⁵⁹ *OP*, no. 9 (1966): 31.

⁶⁰ *OP*, no. 3 (1967): 27.

⁶¹ Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne*, 43, 50 (quotation), 101.

⁶² GARF f. 5452, op. 37, d. 651 (Stenogram of Third Plenum of Trade Union of Sales and Public Catering Workers, 9–10 September 1964), ll. 34–35, 123–25.

⁶³ TsGA Moskv f. 224, op. 1, d. 164 (Materials on Introducing New Forms of Service, 1960), l. 139.

⁶⁴ TsGA Moskv f. 224, op. 1, d. 272 (Report on Work of the Trust, 1964), ll. 21–22.

tasting menu along with an orchestra and concert soloists.⁶⁵ All of this served to aid the Soviet cosmopolitan project of learning to be at home in the world, as befitting a world leader. "It's well known," averred the chairman of the Trade Union of Sales and Catering Workers in 1958, "that the economic competition of two world systems—capitalism and socialism—takes place in all spheres ... [this] requires relentless improvement of socialist trade, the creation of more advanced organizational forms and methods of trade in comparison with the modern forms in capitalist countries."⁶⁶

During these same years, the increasing flow of Soviet tourists abroad also contributed to new sensitivities to foreign cuisine, and their accounts provide unique access to actual eating experience. If cookbooks and the catering industry told Soviet people what they *ought* to eat, travel abroad enabled—and required—Soviet citizens to ingest new flavors and to reflect on the experience. Budgetary and political limitations meant most tourists ventured to countries of the communist bloc. Tourism to capitalist countries required an exhausting and humiliating vetting process as well as the expenditure of scarce foreign currency.⁶⁷ Bulgaria proved to be a particularly popular halfway house to foreign flavors. Tour groups in 1965 praised the "tasty and varied" meals, which featured fresh fruits and vegetables, along with a daily packet of cigarettes for smokers and chocolates for the others.⁶⁸ Bulgarian cuisine can satisfy even Russians, reported one group leader in 1969 (although they would have liked to have the occasional "pleasant surprise" of Russian shchi or Ukrainian borshch). The extent to which the Bulgarians modified their offerings to appeal to Russians became clear in the report of one visiting Soviet delegation. "Our group of architects consisted predominantly of Georgians, that is above all else, lovers of strong, heavily peppered dishes. For a long time we endured and politely ate the varied and appetizing Bulgarian foods. They were tasty but lacked peppers; they were completely without peppers, absolutely without peppers. It was horrible." Finally one group member, who had hardly said a word up to that point, blurted out "Peppers!" and then again. To the travelers' relief, a string of hot peppers appeared from the kitchen, and their Bulgarian guide apologized. At every stop she had warned the chefs: "These architects are from Russia. Please prepare their dinners without

⁶⁵ TsGA Moskvyy f. 224, op. 1, d. 286 (Stenogram of 2 February 1968 Meeting of Trust Leaders, on Results for 1967), ll. 21–22.

⁶⁶ GARF f. 5452, op. 37, d. 28 (First Union Congress, 19–21 May 1958), l. 38.

⁶⁷ Gorsuch, *All This Is Your World*. For one encounter with the vetting process, see Mikhail German, *Slozhnoe proshedshee* (St. Petersburg: Iskustvo-SPb, 2000),

⁶⁸ GARF f. 9520, op. 1, d. 865, l. 22; d. 866, ll. 1, 6, 17, 26, 43, 52, 94.

peppers.” Only then did she realize that Georgians loved spiciness even more than the Bulgarians.⁶⁹

Hungary’s distinctive cuisine also attracted Soviet praise. The restaurant director Petr Aksenov visited there in 1958 and regaled his public catering audience with his descriptions of Budapest restaurants, extolling Hungarian hospitality, the folk designs of its historic restaurants, and its piquant foods. He provided detailed descriptions and instructions for preparing some of the classic Hungarian dishes such as goulash and Carpathian-style sterlet.⁷⁰ Delegates to an international conference of food industry workers in the German Democratic Republic raved about the newly opened Budapest Restaurant in Berlin, with its Hungarian chefs and musicians: “You can totally believe you’re in Hungary.”⁷¹ Ordinary tourists also praised Hungarian food during their visits, noting the characteristic predominance of meat, especially pork.⁷² The numerous trip reports filed by tourist groups abroad indicate that many Soviet travelers had come to expect and appreciate variety and cosmopolitanism in the tourism dining experiences (and many found the diets in Soviet vacation establishments to be boring and monotonous). “The food everywhere was plentiful and varied,” reported a 1963 Krasnodar group on its tour of Poland.⁷³ Although the most memorable part of a New Year’s visit to a Hungarian restaurant in 1965 was the warmth of the people who sang Russian songs, a group from Odessa also acknowledged that the food on their tour was “better than expected,” ample and flavorful.⁷⁴

Travel accounts by food professionals published in *Obshchestvennoe pitanie*, not surprisingly, paid more attention to food than the hundreds of tourist reports filed away in the archive of the Soviet trade union tourism agency. Trips to Western Europe in the late 1950s provoked particular expressions of wonder. Traveling with his group to Athens, Naples, and Paris, A. Stanovov reported in full on the menu served in a modest restaurant near Athens, especially praising the “moussokas,” ground meat and squash baked with cheese. Commenting on their stay in Naples, he wrote, “As for macaroni, we ate it with great relish. The Italians brilliantly prepare it,” although they eventually

⁶⁹ N. Mgalovlishvili, “Po Bolgarii i Rumynii,” *OP*, no. 2 (1965): 59–62.

⁷⁰ P. F. Aksenov, “Restorany Budapeshta,” *OP*, no. 5 (1958): 49–51. Aksenov had become the director of Moscow’s Budapesht Restaurant by 1960, but his managerial ability was not as sound as his food sense, according to a discussion of a botched birthday party at the restaurant under his direction (TsGA Moskv f. 2, op. 2, d. 626, l. 23). By the end of 1961, he had been replaced as director by one V. D. Parshin (TsGA Moskv f. 224, op. 1, d. 246, l. 19).

⁷¹ M. Dement’eva, “Berlin, Leipzig, Drezden,” *OP*, no. 1 (1961): 53.

⁷² GARF f. 9520, op. 1, d. 488, l. 3; d. 878, l. 1, 111; d. 1115, l. 38.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, d. 597, l. 47.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, d. 878, l. 42.

tired of eating it day after day.⁷⁵ Soviet food specialists fortunate enough to visit the World's Exhibition in Brussels in 1958 also commented on Belgium's distinctive coffee, its many varieties of beer, and its special way of frying potatoes—twice.⁷⁶ A member of a 1958 trade delegation to China applauded the huge variety of dishes available, listing and describing many of them by name. He even dared to sample a snake dish at a specialized Canton restaurant, pronouncing it “a real delicacy; it reminded me of chicken.”⁷⁷ Sharing their own experiences abroad, such correspondents helped broaden the horizons of professional food preparers across the USSR.

To be sure, travel did not automatically create a taste for the unfamiliar flavors of other countries. The Bulgarian chefs who dialed down the peppers in the meals they served to Russians knew from experience that most travelers preferred the comforting tastes of home to experimenting with foreign foods. Some tourists to Hungary explicitly rejected spicy Magyar food, complaining the peppers upset their stomachs.⁷⁸ They did not like the sweet Hungarian salads or the heavy proportion of meat to vegetables there, whatever the connoisseurs may have averred. Soviet tourists repeatedly noted the absence of bread on their hotel tables, and they found it hard to get used to the meager continental breakfasts and modest lunches, forcing them to spend their scarce cash reserves on supplementary snacks. The big meal of the day should properly be served at noon, they insisted.⁷⁹ In dozens of reports, tourists expressed their unhappiness with German and Polish and Czech and Hungarian cuisine as “not ours.”⁸⁰ On a Mediterranean cruise in the early 1970s, a Soviet official returning from assignment in Italy was thrilled when the ship entered “our beloved Black Sea,” as the ship loudspeaker announced in a voice hoarse with emotion. Irina was excited to get back to Russian food: “‘My food,’ she continued, indicating, with her fork, the Russian meatballs. ‘I just can’t get used to that awful pasta. It sticks in my throat.’”⁸¹ A trade delegation to Japan found much to praise about the organization and efficiency of Japanese restaurants and snack bars, but their comments on the cuisine

⁷⁵ A. Stanovov, “Glazami turista,” *OP*, no. 1 (1958): 59–63, quotation 61.

⁷⁶ V. Nikolaev, “Restorany v Bel’gii,” *OP*, no. 2 (1958): 58.

⁷⁷ A. Smirnov, “Kitaiskie vpechatleniia,” *OP*, no. 8 (1958): 49–54.

⁷⁸ GARF f. 9520, op. 1, d. 488, ll. 3–4; d. 878, l. 147.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, d. 491, l. 106; d. 699, l. 65; d. 598, l. 25; d. 865, l. 4; d. 1104, l. 27.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, d. 407, l. 17 (L’vov Group to Poland, 1961); d. 487, l. 25 (Kalinin Group to GDR, 1962); d. 699, l. 65 (Cheliabinsk Group to Hungary, 1964); d. 701, l. 123 (Azerbaijan Group to GDR, 1964), 137 (Stavropol’ Group to GDR, 1964); d. 878, l. 69 (Lugansk Group to Hungary, 1965), 147; d. 1115, l. 5 (Krasnodar Group to Hungary, 1967), 38 (Kemerovo Group to Hungary, 1967); d. 1342, l. 35 (Moscow Group to Romania, 1969).

⁸¹ Natacha Stewart, “Welcome Aboard the M/V Adjaria,” *New Yorker*, 30 September 1974 (part 2): 69, 66.

suggest they stuck firmly to the European side of Japanese menus, available “almost everywhere.”⁸²

Back home, in fact, there was also resistance to expanding the culinary horizons of Soviet consumers, both on the part of consumers and from professionals in the restaurant industry. Some Russians did not eat lamb, whether they were in Soviet Georgia or sunny Greece. The Moscow City Culinary Council met in 1961 to discuss published complaints about the monotony of Moscow restaurant offerings and the lack of genuine foreign foods in the city’s international and ethnic restaurants, arguing that Soviet citizens as well as foreign tourists deserved the right to consume cosmopolitan meals. After some hopeful beginnings, they acknowledged that restaurants were serving fewer and fewer “national” foods. The Ukraina Restaurant served no Ukrainian foods, and no Romanian dishes were to be had in the Bucharest Restaurant. These officials blamed problems in supply: no goose liver or red peppers for Hungarian dishes; even the Aragvi, with its direct line of supply from Georgia, could not count on the availability of walnuts, the basis of so many notable Georgian recipes.⁸³ Foreign correspondents blamed the lack of experts: no Chinese chefs in the Peking, and no Hungarians at the Budapesht. Wrote Aline Mosby:

The same Russification is evident at other “foreign” restaurants. When a new restaurant opened in the Budapest Hotel it was the biggest news for the press corps since Khrushchev came to power. Foreigners hurried over to eat while the Hungarians were in the kitchen. Dry Hungarian wine, Hungarian goulash, stuffed cabbage, pates, and salami, ah ...

Two months later the Hungarian cooks went back to Budapest. Now the Budapest serves the same food as all the other restaurants.⁸⁴

Soviet officials admitted the shortages and the need to train cadres, but they also acknowledged the need to build demand for these exotic cuisines, and thus they instructed the Peking, Ukraina, Budapesht, Varshava, and Sofia restaurants in 1961 to organize specially publicized tastings of their house specialties. Nonetheless, later in the year, when the city’s largest restaurants received their assignments for serving the arriving delegates for the 22nd Party Congress, the stipulated dishes were very Soviet and mostly Russian: the Budapesht would prepare the Caucasian dish *basturma* and roast lamb with buckwheat groats. The Bucharest would produce sturgeon (*osetrina*) Russian-

⁸² A. Ershov, “Iaponskie vpechatleniia,” *OP*, no. 3 (1969): 58–61, and no. 4 (1969): 59–62.

⁸³ TsGA Moskv f. 224, op. 1, d. 199 (Protocol and Decisions of the Culinary Council, 1961), ll. 20–25.

⁸⁴ Mosby, *View from No. 13 People’s Street*, 226.

style; and the Peking (from which the original Chinese chefs had already departed) was assigned eggplant caviar, duck with plums, lamb plov with and without tomatoes, and roast rabbit with sour cream and potatoes.⁸⁵ The glories of the Chinese table extolled by Petr Aksenov just a few years before had vanished from the capital's foodscape.

Even this limited opening to foreign cuisines had already produced a backlash from defenders of Russian national cuisine. Writing in the popular weekly *Ogonek*, the entertainer Mikhail Garkavi lamented the disappearance of traditional Russian foods and local specialties. It was all well and good to sample the cuisines of different peoples at places like the Peking and the Aragvi, but when foreigners came to Moscow, they looked for "real Russian food." Why did the restaurant Moskva serve nothing from traditional Moscow cooking? Why did you get the same loaf of white bread at every restaurant or café? He admonished Moscow chefs to restore the old Russian traditions of coulebiac with mushrooms, fish, and vesiga (sturgeon marrow), and all manner of varieties of kasha and honey. Instead, the house specialty at the restaurant Praga—cutlet Praga—was nothing other than a variation of the French cutlet *maréchal*.⁸⁶ A feuilleton in the weekly *Ekonomicheskaiia gazeta* echoed this nostalgia for Russian recipes. Moscow used to be celebrated for the variety of its pies—stuffed with meat, cabbage, mushrooms, fish, berries, onions, or eggs—wrote Dmitrii Beliaev. Where were the hot bubliki of yore? And if any Uzbek in Moscow could be sure to find Uzbek shashlyk, why couldn't a Siberian find genuine Siberian pelmeni in the nation's capital? In the familiar linkage of Soviet scientific modernity and consumer utopia, he insisted that the people that had conquered the cosmos, built hydrostations, and forced the virgin soils of Kazakhstan to produce deserved more than a standard loaf of bread: give them pies!⁸⁷

Adrianne Jacobs has linked this Russian culinary nostalgia to a "historical turn" in Soviet culture. In fact, as she argues, the cosmopolitan turn and the historical turn would mutually contribute to the Soviet table in the coming years.⁸⁸ An emphasis on Russian cuisine need not represent a reaction to cosmopolitanism but could be a refinement of it, a celebration of one of the culinary traditions that made up Soviet identity. Soviet diners could consume

⁸⁵ TsGA Moskvyy f. 224, op. 1, d. 199, ll. 20, 22, 25, 26, 53, 54; d. 286, ll. 20–22. One Hungarian food tasting was reported in A. Galaktionov, "Vengerskaia kukhnia v Moskovskom restorane," *OP*, no. 12 (1962): 16. As late as 1967, the manager of the Bucharest Restaurant pleaded with officials to send its cooks and waiters to Romania so they could master the cuisine (TsGA Moskvyy f. 224, op. 1, d. 277, l. 33).

⁸⁶ Mikhail Garkavi, "O kulebiakakh i kotletakh 'marishal,'" *Ogonek*, no. 10 (1961): 30–31.

⁸⁷ Dm. Beliaev, "Okh, uzh eto mne 'no,'" *Ekonomicheskaiia gazeta*, 22 January 1961, 3.

⁸⁸ Jacobs, "Many Flavors of Socialism," chap. 3.

a multinational menu, conscious of the constituent parts of their culinary repertoire, and confidently stake their claim to knowledge of their world, at ease within the culinary boundaries of the USSR. Conversely, Soviet cooks who catered to an international market became increasingly confident of their own place in world cuisine, recognizing that foreign tourists visited the USSR not only to admire architectural wonders and attend world-class ballet performances but to experience Soviet culture with all their senses, dining on Siberian pelmeni and Uzbek plov.⁸⁹ In 1967, the popular women's monthly *Rabotnitsa* would offer its readers recipes from all the Soviet republics, from a Russian coulebiac to Armenian specialties; in 1970, its readers could acquire nine new Hungarian recipes.⁹⁰

Such anecdotal evidence testifies to the presence of world cuisines on the Soviet table. To test a hypothesis of an ever-expanding saturation of foreign dishes proposed for the Soviet diet, I constructed a data base of the recipes published in *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* from 1958 to 1973. Each monthly issue of the journal featured two regular columns of recipes, labeled "Advice to Cooks" and "For the Housewife" (later just "For the Home Table"). The number of recipes varied each month and each year, but there tended to be fewer over time, from 218 in 1958 to 46 in 1970.⁹¹ Most recipes carried no geographic or ethnic distinctions, and their names were overwhelmingly descriptive, such as "Potato Soup with Mushrooms" or "Salad of Fresh Cucumber." I charted the frequency of recipes marked as coming from non-Russian parts of the USSR, recipes from abroad, and recipes clearly marked as "Russian" (beef Stroganov being the most common of these). ("Stolichnyi salat," a domesticated label for "Salat Olivier," which Anna Kushkova claims was remembered in late Soviet popular memory as a foreign dish, was coded "unmarked."⁹² It appeared twice in the journal, in 1958 and 1959.)

There was considerable variation from year to year, but recipes from Soviet others often constituted between one-quarter and one-third of the total for a given year. Georgian recipes were indeed the most frequent, appearing 55

⁸⁹ "Chto nado znat', obsluzhivaia inostrannykh turistov." French and Japanese tourists were especially notable in their enthusiasm for Russian cuisine, a trait (or truism) reaffirmed in a 1972 article (Lyba, "Pitanie turistov," 59).

⁹⁰ *Rabotnitsa*, no. 9 (1967): 30–31; *Rabotnitsa*, no. 3 (1970): 30.

⁹¹ The data set is not complete. In some issues in the set held by the Russian State Library, these recipe pages had been torn out, itself a confirmation that they were valued and corresponded to popular desire. The missing pages were frequently but not always replaced with photocopies. By the 1970s, "advice to cooks" consisted as much of essays on a particular type of dish or ingredient, such as techniques for cooking beets or cabbage, as specific recipes.

⁹² Anna Kushkova, "At the Center of the Table: The Rise and Fall of the Olivier Salad," *Russian Studies in History* 50, 1 (2011): 44–96.

times in 16 years, followed by dishes from Ukraine and Belorussia, 39 from each. Recipes from abroad rarely exceeded 10 percent of the total and in some years there were none at all in these two regular features (although other articles occasionally offered recipes for foreign dishes). Poland topped the hit parade here, with 30 recipes, followed by Bulgaria with 26. Nonsocialist foods almost never appeared in these columns. Explicitly Russian recipes rarely exceeded 5 percent for most of the 1960s, although of course the default identity of foods like potato soup with mushrooms was “Russian.” If we combine Soviet and foreign recipes over this period, it appears that the attention paid to these foods grew in the first half of the 1960s, peaking in 1964, then declined. The drop was particularly notable after 1968: in 1969 issues of the journal, the share of *Russian* recipes was higher than either other Soviet or foreign recipes. Still, the variation is too high and the frequencies too low to make a definitive interpretation of trends.

The demand for cosmopolitan variety, for the tastes of others, was surely stimulated by the continual expansion of Soviet tourism abroad. They traveled, they saw, ... and they dined. If roughly 500,000 Soviet citizens traveled abroad between 1955 and 1964, in 1970 alone, 1.8 million tourists traveled to other countries, 800,000 of them to the capitalist West. In 1976, a total of 2.6 million Soviet citizens traveled abroad.⁹³ So why did interest in foreign recipes appear to flag after the middle of the 1960s, even though foreign travel continued to expand? Perhaps other sources—cookbooks and other journals—satisfied tourists’ desire to prepare at home the food they experienced abroad. The decrease in the number of specific recipes and the rise of essays on techniques might speak to a parallel growth in cookbook publishing or the growing sophistication of Soviet professional cooks. Perhaps the novelty of foreign tastes wore off. It is also true that the early years of the 1960s coincided with a massive gap between promises of abundance and real shortages in food supply. Khrushchev’s 1962 attempt to raise food prices in order to suppress demand produced a violent backlash in Novocherkassk, resulting in demonstrations, casualties, and executions.⁹⁴ Perhaps the proliferation of proposed international foods in *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* was a smokescreen to obscure these serious deficits, although the dozens of everyday vegetable dishes that were published were a clear enough acknowledgment of the prevailing shortages of meat. We might also wonder whether the cohort of mass Soviet tourists was less adventurous about foreign foodways than the pioneers

⁹³ Koenker, *Club Red*, 242; on estimated tourists in the Khrushchev period, see Gorsuch, *All This Is Your World*, 18–19.

⁹⁴ Vladimir A. Kozlov, *Mass Uprisings in the USSR: Protest and Rebellion in the Post-Stalin Years*, trans. and ed. Elaine McClarnand MacKinnon (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2002).

of the late 1950s and early 1960s. To the extent that the last explanation holds true, then we might conclude that for some travelers, foreign journeys reaffirmed borders rather than opened them. Russian meatballs would always taste better than Italian pasta, but it was significant and cosmopolitan to be able to make that comparison.

Dining Out beyond the Border

In any event, it was not only cuisine that travelers experienced abroad. As much or even more, Soviet tourists and official travelers admired the organization of the foreign dining experience. Capitalist knowhow had become a valued and respected import even under Stalin. Soviet Minister of Trade Anastas Mikoian famously toured the United States in 1936, returning with technology to produce ice cream and hamburgers.⁹⁵ The monthly journal *Torgovlia za rubezhom* (Trade Abroad) began to publish in 1956, its columns focusing on technology (labor-saving devices, refrigeration, and packaging), organization of trade and catering services, advertising, and assessing consumer demand. "Exchange of experience"—or in other words, learning from abroad—constituted an important goal of Soviet foreign (and domestic) travel after 1955.⁹⁶ Travelers in the 1960s also admired and coveted the technology they encountered abroad, but even more they enthused about the simplicity, variety, accessibility, pleasure, and service everywhere they went.

Restaurant professionals readily acknowledged the low level of service that prevailed in Soviet restaurants and stolovaias. Reports of waiters who refused to wait on tables, dressed in a slovenly fashion, drank on the job, and short-changed their customers were endemic.⁹⁷ Although disgruntled patrons were entitled to record their criticisms in the obligatory complaint book, these volumes were frequently locked up in the director's office, and waiters resisted furnishing them when asked: the consequences for even one negative report could be quite serious. One comment that managed to be recorded at the restaurant Praga nicely summarizes the Soviet dining experience of the 1960s. The group had an hour and a half to kill before going to the cinema, so they decided to stop by the Praga to sample some Czech food. "(Of course, there were no Czech dishes at this restaurant, the menu notwithstanding.)" They ordered from a sullen waiter, but after an hour and 20 minutes, he had

⁹⁵ Glushchenko, *Obshechepit*, 87; Geist, "Cooking Bolshevik," 299.

⁹⁶ The Soviet Ministry of Trade developed a regular schedule of exchange visits within the USSR to enable local trade officials to observe innovative projects in other republics (Georgian National Archive f. 2006, d. 2407, l. 86).

⁹⁷ See, e.g., a stenogram of a 1961 meeting of Moscow waiters (TsGA Moskvyy f. 2, op. 2, d. 626).

managed to serve them only mineral water and bouillon, even though the dining room was almost empty. Their attempts to summon a waiter or maître d'hôtel "came up against a wall of indifference and apathy." A group of waiters standing by a mirror smiled politely at them but didn't budge, and the diners also failed to locate their waiter in the kitchen area. Needing to leave for the cinema, they asked a senior waiter for the bill, and only now did they receive the shashlyk and chicken tabaka (not Czech of course, but Georgian) they had ordered, for which they paid nine rubles but had no time to consume. "Our good mood was ruined." This, unfortunately, was a common experience, acknowledged restaurant officials.⁹⁸ Thus their amazement when travel abroad exposed them to a radically different style of service.

Virtually every report of travel to Eastern or Western Europe that appeared in *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* marveled at the sidewalk cafés they encountered: tables "right on the sidewalk" in Athens, Paris, and Brussels, but also in Prague, Budapest, and Ljubljana. "To sit at a little table on the sidewalk," wrote a traveler to Yugoslavia in 1966, "sometimes surrounded by greenery, was convenient and comfortable."⁹⁹ There were so many places to stop in and grab a bite, read the newspaper, and drink a cup of coffee, without fuss. Many places were so informal, commented writers, they did not even have a separate coat check room; patrons hung their coats on hooks right next to their tables. Whereas in the USSR the term "restaurant" was reserved for the largest, most formal, and most expensive dining establishments, in Belgium any little café called itself a restaurant. Writers praised these small spaces for their welcoming atmosphere, their populist feel, and their ubiquity. Czech beer bars were places where people came "as families, to meet up with friends and acquaintances, to chat over a mug of beer, to sing folk songs, and to dance."¹⁰⁰ In Hungary, a network of "espresso bars" drew praise for their accessibility, convenience, and price. Music was an important component of the informality and attraction of these informal spots, as at Prague's Café Barbara, where for four crowns one could listen to jazz in a tiny club.¹⁰¹ Writers also

⁹⁸ TsGA Moskvyy f. 224, op. 1, d. 272, ll. 27–29.

⁹⁹ M. Pol'skii, "Iz iugoslavskikh vpechatlenii," *OP*, no. 12 (1966): 57; A. Stanovov, "Glazami turistov," *OP*, no. 1 (1958): 54–63; Nikolaev, "Restorany v Bel'gii," 58; Aksenov, "Restorany Budapeshta," 50; A. Smirnov, "Chekhoslovatskie vpechatleniia," *OP*, no. 9 (1959): 57. Mikhail German's recollections of visits to Paris say little about flavors but fondly remember coffee, *thé-citron*, and *pression* at sidewalk cafés along the grand boulevards (*Slozhnoe proshedshee*, 435, 440, 519–20, 522).

¹⁰⁰ M. Dement'eva, "Berlin, Leipzig, Drezden," *OP*, no. 1 (1961): 53; Smirnov, "Chekhoslovatskie vpechatleniia," 57; E. Mezenova, "Mnogo interesnogo v Vengrii!" *OP*, no. 5 (1968): 57; Ershov, "Iaponskie vpechatleniia," *OP*, no. 4 (1969): 60.

¹⁰¹ N. Zav'ialov, "Opyt vengerskikh kolleg," *OP*, no. 8 (1965): 60; G. Klimkovich, "Mesiats puti: Zapiski turista," *OP*, no. 11 (1960): 51–54.

commented frequently on the simplicity of foreign table settings. Unlike Soviet restaurants, in which every table was loaded with china, “five to seven types of crystal,” and ornate utensils, restaurants abroad were typically set only with a table cloth, an ash tray, and salt and pepper. Everything else was brought once the patron had been seated; many places used plastic dishes and simple glassware, and the entire effect lent an air of spontaneity and vivacity often missing in Soviet establishments.¹⁰²

Soviet commentators also remarked repeatedly on the unique and distinctive identities of cafés and restaurants abroad, and they recommended that this feature be emulated by Soviet eating establishments. These visitors were impressed by the use of national motifs, paintings, embroidered tablecloths, and hand-painted pottery in restaurants in Hungary, Bulgaria, and Japan.¹⁰³ The food writer Lisa Heldke has suggested that the “vessel of authenticity” is the dish, the cuisine itself, but these Soviet commentators also found authenticity in the pedigrees of the historic restaurants of Central Europe.¹⁰⁴ Auerbach’s Keller in Leipzig dated to the 18th century, and the *Faust*-themed frescoes in one of its small dining rooms evoked the scene in Goethe’s play set in that very spot. The 100-year-old Mateosh Pintse in Budapest had a dining room dedicated to fish, with the day’s offerings swimming live in an aquarium. The Prague tavern U Fleku also boasted historic frescoes and an artistic clientele.¹⁰⁵ Such unique, individually designed places sharply contrasted with the mass-produced Soviet stolovaiias with their standard layouts, cuisine, and accessories.

Tradition could also be invented. Another Leipzig restaurant, Falstaff, fashioned itself as Windsor Castle, with decorations consisting of scenes from the Shakespeare play. The subterranean bar Casanova in Budapest evoked seduction with its indirect lighting and soft chairs for seating.¹⁰⁶ Tourists to Bulgaria’s Black Sea resorts raved about the Indian Village Café, the restaurant Robinzon, where the waiters were costumed like their castaway namesake Crusoe, and the Frigate Bar at the Sunny Shores Resort. “Here the

¹⁰² “V restoranakh Budapeshta,” *OP*, no. 4 (1959): 60 (“Budapest has long ago forgotten [and rightly so] the so-called table setting of five to seven pieces of crystal”); Zav’ialov, “Opyt vengerskikh kolleg,” 59; Mgalovlishvili, “Po Bolgarii i Rumynii,” 59; Mezenova, “Mnogo interesnogo v Vengrii!,” 59.

¹⁰³ Aksenov, “Restorany Budapeshta,” 49; Zav’ialov, “Opyt vengerskikh kolleg,” 59; Mezenova, “Mnogo interesnogo v Vengrii!,” 59; Ershov, “Iaponskie vpechatleniia,” *OP*, no. 3 (1969): 58.

¹⁰⁴ Heldke, “But Is It Authentic?,” 389.

¹⁰⁵ Dement’eva, “Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden,” 54–55; Aksenov, “Restorany Budapeshta,” 49; Smirnov, “Chekhoslovatskie vpechatleniia,” 56–57.

¹⁰⁶ A. L., “Shefy kafe: Redaktsii gazet i zhurnalov,” *OP*, no. 2 (1963): 61–62; Mezenova, “Mnogo interesnogo v Vengrii!,” 59.

waiters dress up as pirates, and the customers are treated like captives on a pirate ship" (a little bit of *Peter Pan*—Disneyland-style—on the Black Sea).¹⁰⁷ Tourism officials in Sochi eventually appropriated the Bulgarian example of theme restaurants, opening the memorable Old Mill on the city's outskirts, where the miller invited his guests to dine, waited on by his "daughters" in period costume. Seated on benches at rustic oaken tables, illuminated by kerosene lanterns, patrons dined on country fare like cucumbers, tomatoes, and roast chicken. Alternatively, Sochi vacationers could take themselves to the restaurant Caucasian Village, with a menu offering shashlyk and Georgian wine served from a barrel, or the fish restaurant Gift of the Sea.¹⁰⁸

Soviet travelers thus found new sources of pleasure in their experiences in eating abroad. The level of service they encountered abroad drew particular praise. Waiters in Belgium, with their uniform black tuxedos, were "cultured, polite, and quick."¹⁰⁹ In all the restaurants of Budapest, wrote another traveler, "You're struck by the affability of the waiters, their attention and interest in their customers. When he comes to take your order, he always greets you first, and when he presents the bill, he wishes you well and invites you to come back again."¹¹⁰ They were also efficient and engaged. In one Yugoslav restaurant, you didn't see them hanging around a table or "propping up the wall"; they were few but they were always at your service.¹¹¹ Professionals in the Soviet food service sector especially admired the brigade system of waitering, in which the senior waiter took the order, and others on the team contributed to serving the meal according to their specialties.¹¹² A veteran maître d'hotel reported on his six-month assignment in the Soviet restaurant at the 1967 Montreal Expo: he had worked at the Hotel Moskva for 11 years, an establishment generally considered to be one of the top Moscow restaurants. But after his service in Canada, "the scales fell from my eyes." It was possible, he learned, for a maître d'hotel to greet and seat every guest, possible for a skilled waiter to clear 10–15 plates at a time.¹¹³ (Some travelers also commented on the economic incentives that produced this level of service, but that is a topic for another time.) Cosmopolitanism resided not only in foreign

¹⁰⁷ GARF f. 9520, op. 1, d. 1315, l. 14; V. Azar, "Turist pred"iavlialet spros," *OP*, no. 6 (1970): 57–58; *Skorokhodovskii rabochii* (factory newspaper), 23 August 1974.

¹⁰⁸ S. F. Medunov, "Gorod, kotoryi prinadlezhit vsem," *Ogonek*, no. 6 (1967): 16–18; *OP*, no. 6 (1970): 57–61; Stewart, "Welcome Aboard the M/V Adjaria," 80.

¹⁰⁹ Nikolaev, "Restorany v Bel'gii," 58.

¹¹⁰ "V restoranakh Budapeshta," 61.

¹¹¹ Pol'skii, "Iz Iugoslavskikh vpechatlenii," 57.

¹¹² Zav'ialov, "Opyt vengerskikh kolleg," 59–60; Ershov, "Iaponskie vpechatleniia," *OP*, no. 3 (1969): 61.

¹¹³ TsGA Moskv f. 224, op. 1, d. 286, l. 69.

flavors but in the entire performance of the meal, from setting to service to ambience.

The Internationalization of Soviet Taste

The legions of Soviet travelers abroad and domestically and the writings they sent back home contributed to the broadening of Soviet food preferences. A Soviet cuisine based primarily on the Russian peasant kitchen was now supplemented by new flavors from non-Russian republics and from abroad. By 1969, central tourism authorities acknowledged the importance of expanding the assortment of ethnic dishes in tourism dining establishments as well as the place of Georgian food at the center of a pan-Soviet cuisine. The head of the Lithuanian Tourism Board reported that year on the spread of cafés and restaurants in its tourist bases where travelers could sample Lithuanian dishes, and of course Caucasian shashlyk, now such a universal Soviet food item that its mention in this context provoked laughter in the hall.¹¹⁴ The tourism economist V. I. Azar appealed in 1970 for the utilization of ethnic cuisines as tourist attractions in their own right. Paris had 8,000 restaurants, he wrote, many of them offering cuisines other than French. Moscow had its Georgian Aragvi, the Baku and Uzbekistan restaurants, but he called for the development of additional cafés and restaurants that would serve Tatar, Estonian, Tajik, and Moldavian cuisines, complete with ethnic interiors, music, and dress of the servers.¹¹⁵ As we have seen, the Ministry of Trade also promoted an internationalization of Soviet taste by regularly publishing ethnic recipes in its monthly *Obshchestvennoe pitanie*. Georgian cuisine undoubtedly remained the classic exemplar of Soviet gastronomic exoticism.¹¹⁶ But the expansion of tourist itineraries was gradually accompanied by a broadening of Soviet culinary tastes.

In the 1963 film *Tri plus dva* (Three Plus Two), three male tourists pitch their camp on a Black Sea shoreline that is clearly demarked as Russian.¹¹⁷ They take fish from “their” sea and they eat kasha (“pishcha nasha”) in decorated wooden Russian bowls. In pursuing romance, however, one of the young men invites a neighboring female camper to a seaside café, where he appropriates an outdoor table marked “for foreigners” by feigning a command of English, and they snack romantically on fresh fruit and white wine served in tall champagne flutes. Cosmopolitanism helps the resolute Russian bachelor become a

¹¹⁴ GARF f. 9520, op. 1, d. 1272, ll. 34, 148.

¹¹⁵ Azar, “Turist pred”iavliaet spros,” 57–58.

¹¹⁶ Scott, “Edible Ethnicity”; this can also be observed in the dishes featured in A. A. Kaganova, *Kulinariia* (Moscow: Gostorgizdat, 1959), and throughout *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* from 1957 through the 1970s. See also Masterovoy, “Eating Soviet,” 108.

¹¹⁷ *Tri plus dva* (dir. Genrikh Oganisian, Kinostudiia imeni M. Gor’kogo and Rizhskaia kinostudiia, 1963).

suave lothario. Another 1960s film codifies the other contribution to Soviet foodways generated by international travel: the image of the restaurant as a destination for spontaneity and casual fun. El'dar Riazanov's romantic comedy *Daite zhalobnuiu knigu* (Give Me the Complaint Book [1965]) centers on the transformation of a pompous Soviet-style restaurant—with heavy plush curtains, potted palms, fake Greek columns, and rude service—into a modern youth café. In the beginning, the entertainment is provided by a bejeweled grande dame who sings heartfelt Russian ballads. The plot turns around efforts to remake the restaurant in response to a published letter of complaint, and the transformation is signaled not only by a physical makeover of the restaurant space but by the replacement of the old Russian ballads with a jazz combo featuring guitar, accordion, piano, and horns. The young, hip new clientele in fashionable sport coats, narrow ties, and shirtwaist dresses cannot crowd into the transformed space fast enough.¹¹⁸

The development of international itineraries after 1955 via cruise ships, East European cityscapes, Black Sea resorts, and Georgian hospitality worked to transform Soviet citizens. By the 1960s, they were cordially invited to become citizens of the world, and many accepted the offer. Whether real or vicarious travelers, Soviet citizens gained the opportunity to redefine themselves as modern cosmopolitans, and the spicy flavors of cosmopolitan cuisines reinforced the new permeability of these borders that encouraged experimentation and adventure. How then to explain a “historic” turn back to Russian foods, the decline of foreign and Soviet ethnic recipes in the pages of *Obshchestvennoe pitanie*, and the disappearance of national dishes from the kitchens of the Budapesht and Varshava? There were surely logistical reasons: the inability to secure the ingredients required for these foods has already been noted. Or perhaps the thrill of the new, so palpable with the opening of borders in the late 1950s, began to lapse, and Soviet diners returned to the familiar foods of their youth. Perhaps having established their cosmopolitan bona fides, Soviet cooks and diners could reassert their traditional preferences from a position of leadership, not inferiority. After all, as they emphasized, Japanese tourists did not come to Moscow for sushi; they wanted borshch. The most popular restaurant at the Brussels World's Fair of 1958, besting 70 other countries for a Grand Prix, was that of the Soviet pavilion.¹¹⁹ Travel had established Soviet cuisine as a world cuisine too.

In the end, based on the many prescriptions for cosmopolitan cooking and on some responses about eating abroad from travelers, we cannot be certain

¹¹⁸ *Daite zhalobnuiu knigu* (dir. El'dar Riazanov, Mosfil'm, 1965).

¹¹⁹ “Bol'shoi priz,” *OP*, no. 11 (1958): 27. The Brussels team was led by a Georgian, writes Scott (*Familiar Strangers*, 106).

that eating the food of others necessarily meant changing one's identity. We know that given the miserly budgets of Soviet tourists abroad, they were more likely to choose to purchase things than tastes, that a satisfying foreign experience could consist solely of sipping a coffee at a sidewalk café in view of the Church of the Madeleine in Paris. But we also know that Soviet tourists did not seek foreign travel just because the regime told them to become cosmopolitans. They were ready, and they had been prepared by their own aspirations as well as the regime's desires to encounter the world beyond Soviet borders.

Thus, in stretching their palates, Soviet travelers and those who stayed home may also have expanded their sense of self, learning to welcome the possibility and ability to slip back and forth across geopolitical as well as culinary borders. They became equally at home in an informal café or a plush restaurant, in Sochi's Old Mill or Leningrad's Kavkaz. They understood their right to service even if Soviet waiters did not. If they were what they ate, then whether by traveling or just by consuming the tastes of others, they became a little more aware of the world beyond Russia, beyond the USSR. That cosmopolitanism could make them more confident consumers at home as well as abroad.

School of Slavonic and East European Studies
University College London
16 Taverton St.
London WC1H 0BW, UK
d.koenker@ucl.ac.uk