An important focus for what is often termed ‘Soviet nostalgia’ is food. As a woman in her twenties who has lived outside Russia since she was a child of primary-school age put it, ‘I miss some things. I miss the food. Khleb...’ (the process of immersion in the past is marked by a switch to Russian, a language in which she is for some purposes less fluent than English). In this particular case, spatial dislocation contributes to temporal dislocation. But one does not have to be an émigré to be capable of eulogies for the edibles of times past. For instance, the writer Evgeny Popov recently lyrically recalled the food you could get back in Soviet times on cafés down Nevsky prospekt, such as the ‘Sosisochnaya’ (sausage shop), ‘where the mirrors on the walls used to fog up at dinner time from the steam rising off the tasty chanakhi, solyanka, kharcho’ [Popov 2003: 182].

1 This article is a slightly edited auto-translation of my own Russian text published in Antropologicheskii forum: ‘Leningradskaya kuhnya / La cuisine leningradaise: protivorechie v terminakh?’ I am grateful to the AHRC for financial support (under the project ‘National Identity in Russia: Traditions and Deterritorialisation’, <www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/russian/nationalism>), and to my colleagues on the project, particularly Albert Baiburin, Marina Samsonova, Svetlana Amosova and Irina Nazarova, and also Nikolai Vakhtin, Alexander Genis, Konstantin Bogdanov and the audience of the conference ‘Soviet Traditions’ at the European University, St Petersburg, 18–19 March 2011, for their comments and suggestions.

2 Author’s field diary, 2010.

3 Thick soups of different kinds, chanakhi and kharcho being adaptations of Georgian dishes, while solyanka is a Russian dish. For a recent publication in this vein, see [Von Bremzen 2013].
‘Trips to the past’ of this kind are variations on the broader theme, ‘Russian food and Russian hospitality are like nothing else.’ Compare the writer Tatiana Tolstaya’s review of Elena Molokhovets’s famous cookbook *A Gift to Young Housewives* in a translation by Joyce Toomre, which alludes to the Russian ‘skill of creating culinary wonders from a restricted range’ of ingredients [Tolstaya 1992].

Certainly, the place of food in Soviet life can sometimes provoke a more alienated reaction. In his recollections of post-war Leningrad life, the art critic Mikhail German ironically suggested that the abundant hospitality of the Soviet period had primarily an instrumental function:

> The myth of national hospitality was grossly inflated by the fact that it was essential to ‘put on a good show for’ so-called *nuzhniki* [necessary people] — those on whom one depended for things, an objective that shaped many things in life. ‘We must **put on a good show for** him’¹ was a phrase that you could hear, believe me, in circles that were quite elevated. [...] People would ‘put on a good show for’ those who were useful to them, with a shamefaced air, they would butter up people working in retail. And as for the kind of show people put on for foreigners! [...] You’d get hold of (blowing all the *blat* you’d saved up in one go) foodstuffs that were hard to get hold of; caviar, if you could. [...] And the foreigners themselves, who were used to meals of two or three courses of simple and well-prepared food, would feel floored by the table spread with its endless plates of chopped salads, caviar, salami, pies big and small (‘oooh, borscht!’), bliny (‘oooh, bleenies!’), different types of vodka and cognac served along with the champagne to go with the caviar and pickled herring — and sometimes home-made liqueur as well [German 2000: 422–3].

Whether positively or negatively perceived, the conviction that Soviet citizens were particularly concerned to feed their guests generously is a persistent element in post-Soviet Russians’ sense of identity. As one of Anna Kushkova’s informants put it when interviewed for a study of the role of *salat Olivier* (Russian salad) in Soviet culture, ‘In Russia, it was customary to feed your guests. Unlike in other countries’ [Kushkova 2005].

The last quotation also indicates that there are few subjects on which so much nonsense is spoken and written in post-Soviet culture as food and eating.² But if ‘there’s no arguing about taste’, then disputes

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¹ Emphasis original.

² Cf. ‘Our Russian “fast-food” is much better and healthier than imported’ (post by a blogger born in 1949, November 2010, <http://community.livejournal.com/soviet_life/1016252.html>). As for German’s cynical portrait of Soviet hospitality, that is equally exaggerated, suggesting as it does that no-one invited guests round for reasons other than self-interest.
about subjective memories of food are still more futile.¹ My purpose here is not to debunk commonly-held perceptions of national traditions — it is entirely reasonable to regard practices as ‘traditional’ if they are so perceived in a certain culture.² Equally, I do not propose to trace in detail the comparative context of such sentiments about the healthiness, tastiness etc. of local (as opposed to alien) food, though I should remark in passing that adverse comment about ‘fancy foreign messes’ versus plain, simple, hearty, and healthy local dishes has been just as common in, say, England.³

What does not make sense is to confuse such selective assessments with real history: it is clear that all the most ancient dishes in the Eurasian diet have analogies in a range of different cultures (as with Russian kutya and English frumenty, for instance), and that the transition from ‘slow’ or home-prepared / artisanally prepared food to industrial or ‘fast food’ has also been international if not global.

My focus here is different. I intend to examine the quite concrete question of how ideas about what ‘Soviet man’ should eat evolved, and the extent to which Soviet food preparation could be described as a ‘cuisine’ in the evaluative sense — that is, a culinary or gastronomic system with its own specific rules and canons.⁴ A secondary and equally important concern is the extent to which it is possible to speak about ‘local’ traditions in the context of the Soviet kitchen. In particular, did such a thing as a specific ‘Leningrad’ style of cooking exist that might in any sense have been distinct from the cooking of other cities in Soviet Russia. The third question that I address — the most complicated and elusive, but probably most interesting, one — is what may have been specifically ‘Soviet’ about the food prepared in Russia during the Soviet period (by comparison, in particular, with the culinary practices that obtained before 1917).

¹ Speaking personally, I share my informant’s nostalgia for Soviet bread (I agree that the average bakery produced better goods before the preparation of pre-frozen dough in small electric ovens became so widespread), but the very thought of Soviet snack-bars of the Sosischnaya type makes me lose my appetite. I would be reluctant to base an intellectual schema on these reactions, though.

² Here I am more inclined to follow the inclusive approach of modern anthropologists such as Michael Herzfeld [1997; 2004] than the rather condescending historical purism of Hobsbawm and Ranger [1983].

³ A famous example is The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy by Hannah Glasse (1708–1770), which harshly criticises the contemporary fashion for refined French food: ‘So much is the blind folly of this Age, that they would rather be imposed on by a French Booby, than give encouragement to a good English cook’ [Glasse 1774]. For a good historical discussion of this type of argument in Russia, see [Smith 2008].

⁴ In French, the term cuisine in the sense of food preparation (‘préparation des aliments’, ‘art de les apprêter’) appears to have emerged (or been recorded) earlier than the term cuisine in the sense ‘a place for the preparation of food’ (1155 vs. c. 1170). (Centre National des Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales, <http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/cuisine>). In other languages, however, things are the other way round: for instance the English word ‘kitchen’ is first recorded around 1000, and then in the sense of a premises; only from 1400 are there records in the sense ‘Culinary art; cooking’. Even then the term is described as ‘Obs. rare’ (Oxford English Dictionary Online). From the late eighteenth century, the word ‘cuisine’ starts to be regularly used: the first example cited by the OED Online comes from a didactic poem by Hannah Moore, Florio: A Tale for Fine Gentlemen and Fine Ladies (1786), an ironic sketch of the sybaritic life of the English beau-monde.
The Soviet kitchen: ‘socialism on one table’

Like all other areas of cultural life, food and cooking underwent, during the Soviet period, significant processes of transformation and ideologisation. This process worked both directly — through the creation of new ideals and rules, as set out by normative literature (e.g. cookbooks) and inculcated by social institutions such as restaurants and cafés) — and in a mediated way, through the effects of the politics of ‘democratic centralism’ in general, and the planned economy in particular.

The standardisation of the canons of the Soviet diet in normative literature began at quite an early stage, during the period of the so-called ‘struggle for a new daily life’ (1928–1932). At this period, ‘advice to housewives’ was generally kept very simple. Cases in point were the many brochures authored by Marina Mikhailovna Zarina, one of the most active authors of advice on cooking at this period. Her many books included *House Management: Food, Home, Clothes* (1928), *Learn to Cobble Nice Food Together!* (1928),¹ *Organise Your Home* (1929) and *Nutritious and Affordable Cooking* (1928). Her articles also appeared regularly in the women’s magazine *Rabotnitsa* [The Woman Worker] between 1925 and the early 1930s.

The title *Nutritious and Affordable Cooking* is particularly revealing. Zarina’s books and articles addressed topics such as how to make use of the standard kitchen aids to be found in the communal flats of the era, the primus and the thermos.² Zarina’s recipes were straightforward: soups, kashas, different types of fried meat, kissels, fried fish, egg and vegetable dishes. The menus that she recommended for home use were little different from those common at the time in Soviet public catering of the day, as is clear if one compares her tracts for housewives with her brochure for Soviet canteens, *At the Common Table* (1930). The women’s magazines, not surprisingly, also provided guidance in this simple style — soups, various types of ‘bake’ (*zapekanka*), salted and pickled vegetables, dishes made of food supplements such as soya and yeast.³

Throughout the 1930s, books in this style continued to be published by Soviet presses. For instance, the baldly named *A Cookbook: 200 Dishes for the Home Table* published by Nikolai Pavlovich Tsyplenkov in 1939, was a cheaply-produced small-format brochure evidently aimed at a reader who expected to eat several meals a day in canteens.

¹ *Stryapat* is an informal lexeme for cooking that suggests speed and lack of fuss, rather than refinement and skill.
² At this period, modern ranges were rare, and traditional solid-fuel ‘Russian stoves’ too tricky and time-consuming to be used more than occasionally. The thermos and the primus also allowed individual food preparation, as expected by the tenants of ‘communal flats’, despite their enforced communality.
³ See e.g. [Mendelson 1939]; and cf. [Rothstein H., Rothstein R. 1997: 189–190].
(many of the recipes consisted of lunches) [Tsyplenkov 1939].

Comparable advice was produced in many Soviet sources later on as well — for example, the recipes supplied in women’s magazines and in the many domestic compendia under the titles House Management or Handy Hints and so on.

But in the Stalin era, another tendency started to develop in Soviet food writing. The breakthrough text was the famous Book of Tasty and Nutritious Food (BNTF), first published in 1939, reprinted in 1945, and from 1946 to 1990 regularly reissued in vast print-runs rising to a million copies at a time. This presented an unrecognisably wide spectrum of dishes to the Soviet reader. Alongside the standard kashas, pancakes and compotes, there were recipes for stuffed carp in smetana, roast veal, ice cream, a whole range of butter-based sauces. No wonder that the first edition carried the motto, ‘To plenty!’ Not just the ingredients, but the techniques became more complicated: the Soviet housewife was now expected not just to boil and fry, but to roast, bake, and braise as well [BNTF 1939]. The new culinary panoramas had their due impact. Anastas Mikoyan, the patron of the BNTF, had, in the hungry period 1930–1932 become the anti-hero of a malicious joke about getting rid of the letter M from the Russian alphabet, since meat, milk, butter, flour, and soap [myaso, maslo, muka, moloko, mylo] had completely disappeared, and Mikoyan was good for nothing. By the late 1930s, he was known as ‘the beloved people’s commissar’.

While this side of the BNTF has been energetically discussed in the historiography [see e.g. Dobrenko 2009; Piretti 2009], less familiar are some other aspects of the book. For instance, the advice given was in its overall direction just as standardised as was the advice in 1920s manuals. One of the book’s central aims was to advertise and make popular the new types of convenience food that were beginning to be produced by Soviet industry: bottled peas and sweetcorn,
among others.¹ To this end, the book set out an integrated and harmonised understanding of Soviet culinary practices, in which regional variations did not figure. (Equally, all dishes were set out in a series of European-style courses, rather than placed simultaneously on the table, as would have been customary in peasant households across the Soviet Union.) The vast majority of dishes cited had plain, descriptive names: ‘Crab salad’; ‘Horseradish in vinegar’. Occasionally, more poetic heights were attempted: ‘Spring Salad’, ‘Health Salad’. But the ‘local’ dishes included (and there were strikingly few of these) were almost all non-Russian: kharcho, bozbash, Ukrainian borshch, solyanka in the Georgian style [sic!]² The signal exception was ‘pelmeni in the Siberian style’ [BTFN 1964].³ Such ‘socialism on one table’ was characteristic of the Soviet culinary tradition, in which the only geographical denomination with a reliably positive resonance was stolichnoe [‘from the capital’].

All of this essentially vitiates the search for ‘local’ traits in the Soviet kitchen, at any rate, as it was understood in normative sources. In ideal Soviet homes such as were envisaged there, menus were standardised, exactly as they were in canteens and restaurants. A typical BTFN menu (for a main meal to be served on a Tuesday) read as follows:

- Salad with ham
- Chicken broth with shredded omelette
- Potato bake with meat
- Kissel of dried apples⁴

Just such a menu and just such dishes were ubiquitous across Soviet Russia (and indeed beyond). In her article on Soviet fish dishes, ¹ [Dobrenko 2009] emphasises this point, but to my mind goes too far in seeing BTFN as only about the representation of a kind of Soviet alternative reality; people did, after all, cook from it (and still do).

² For kharcho see [BTFN 1939], for the other dishes [BTFN 1964]. Such ‘macaronic’ dishes are typical of the post-Soviet kitchen also: see e.g. ‘Chanakhi in the Ukrainian style’ <http://www.povarenok.ru/recipes/show/20963/>. In the menus of French nineteenth-century restaurants, as Rebecca Spang has argued, the toponyms used mainly gave the dishes to which they were attached a flavour of exoticism [Spang 2000: 190]: “A la Marengo” is almost certainly not the way the Piedmontese eat their pullets, but for the non-gastronomically literate, for the many diners who had never heard the fable of the dish’s origin, chicken Marengo put the village firmly “on the map”. (It did not necessarily specify the village’s whereabouts, but it identified as a place — a place of tomatoes, truffles, mushrooms, and crayfish).’ This process of pseudo-regionalisation in the context of metropolitan homogenisation is germane to the Soviet case. The fact that ‘Georgian’ etc. dishes as served in (Russian) Soviet restaurants were often only ‘Georgian’ in the loosest sense is a point to which a recent interesting article on the hegemony of Georgian food during the Stalin era [Scott 2012] perhaps gives insufficient attention.

³ This kind of standardisation is characteristic of many post-Soviet blogs on food too: see e.g. <http://tanyant.livejournal.com/tag/еда>.

⁴ [BTFN 1939; BTFN 1952; BTFN 1964], etc. Similar menus could also be found in some nineteenth-century cookbooks for a readership of modest means: see e.g. [Sobchenko 1898]: menu of three dishes (p. 37): chicken soup, roast beef, and lemon jelly, or (p. 40) borshch, golubtsy [stuffed cabbage leaves], Sandkuchen; 4-dish menu (pp. 43–4): soup Parmentier, pies, meat stew, ice cream; but salads were not included as a zakuska (on which see further below). On the standardisation of Soviet menus, see also [Glushenko 2010: 80–84].
based on extensive first-hand experience of Soviet life, the literary historian Pamela Davidson recalls a visit to a restaurant in Estonia when she was doing research for the article:

When I asked a chef in Tallinn what her best and most typically Estonian recipes were, she immediately produced a mammoth tome put out in the 1950s by the Ministry of Trade for all the catering establishments in the country (complete with tables of quantities for 100 people) and started enumerating the standard fish dishes to be found in every Soviet restaurant, such as the inevitable Rýba Po-Polski (fish, Polish style), a sad combination of fish with hard-boiled egg on top [Davidson 1986: 341].

In the restaurants of Leningrad, tasting dishes of this kind was a possible, indeed likely, event. The main ‘gesture of independence’ was linguistic. For instance, in one of the city’s leading restaurants, choux buns filled with sweetened whipped cream were known as ‘Metropole buns’. ‘Fish in the Leningrad style’ was the name for ‘fish baked with spuds in a sour-cream sauce’. Standardisation for its own sake was not the only rationale of setting rigid norms in culinary manuals (this was also supposed to inculcate meticulous preparation and observation of hygiene norms, and to act as a disincentive to adulteration and theft).

But, as with the contents of Soviet libraries, the curricula of educational establishments, domestic design, or the repertoire of theatres, rigidity of norms was an important feature of culinary culture, and one that was purposively inculcated in the texts and practices of the society.

That said, ‘Leningrad cooking’ in the sense of what was actually prepared in the city did not of course embrace only the recipes in Soviet recipe books. Even in public catering, as one chef remembered recently, you relied not just on books: ‘there were notes written down, there were the people who had worked before you.’ In the famous ‘Café Nord’ (known from the xenophobic 1940s as the ‘Sever’, the Russian word for North), it was not just standard patisseries such as ‘cream horns’, ‘Prague tortes’, and the like that were served, but more

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5 Cf. Oxf/AHRC SPb-11 PF18 MS (interview with a professional chef, b. c. 1960, by Marina Samsonova): ‘Want to or not, you were supposed to make bouillon in one particular way, a standard way: I was supposed to take these particular ingredients, put this and that in and in the end achieve one particular result. It was a norm for everyone. And then you could use that bouillon to do various other things.’

6 Oxf/AHRC SPb-11 PF18 MS.

7 It is doubtful whether these objectives were realised 100 per cent; certainly theft by shop assistants is widely reported in oral history, and no doubt (as in every other restaurant culture in the world), food also ‘walked’ out of professional kitchens. As for hygiene, food poisoning appears to have been recorded only when extremely serious (e.g. when Young Pioneers at summer camps were hospitalised), but low-level outbreaks surely took place as well.

8 Oxf/AHRC SPb-11 PF18 MS. When I presented this text at the seminar ‘Soviet Traditions’, members of the audience also emphasised the role of manuscript cookbooks. In an unpublished talk, Maria Gumerova and Maria Pirogovskaya at the European University, St Petersburg, have underlined the lasting importance of this form of dissemination, based on manuscript materials collected from informants. My thanks to both of them for a discussion of this topic.
esoteric dishes such as ‘pancake gateaux’, ‘little tarts made of rolled-up pancakes’ [German 2000: 71]. But the main association of ‘Leningrad cuisine’ was a certain refinement in the manner of preparation.¹ For instance, pastries and sweets were regularly acknowledged even by Muscovites to be particularly elegant.² Given the tricky conditions in home kitchens (unreliable ovens, very limited space for preparation), preparing the more demanding types of restaurant and patisserie food was seldom attempted, but people aimed to be meticulous in putting their dishes together, as Tatyana Derviz has recently remembered with reference to the method used in her household for making a vinegret [potato and vegetable salad]:

So, the main thing is vegetables that are boiled in the right way. You must boil the potatoes in their jackets, or else the taste will be washed away, and only salt the pan when it’s come to the boil, or else the potatoes will collapse. Boil the carrots separately and peel them after boiling them. And the beetroot is to be boiled separately. And the turnips. [...] And boil the beans separately too — white haricots are best, from the point of view of the colour range, but red beans will also do.

When it’s all cooled down, chop it, but make sure you do it in the right way. It should be in little dice, not, under any circumstances, grated. [...] But the pièce de résistance were small dice, the same size as everything else, of salt herring — carefully boned and washed, it goes without saying [Derviz 2011: 7].³

¹ As our professional chef informant recalled: ‘I’ve never seen anyone in Petersburg put buckwheat kasha into borsch instead of bread. I have in Novgorod, though’ (Oxf/AHRC SPb-11 PF18 MS). Of course, what is in process here is auto-stereotyping, but exactly this process is extremely important for cultural production. That said, it is fairly characteristic for opinions of this kind to be inflected by ‘presentism’, given that, by the early twenty-first century, there was far more interest in local traditions. Take, for instance, the remarks of Aleksandr Belkovich: ‘Petersburg cuisine, that’s closer to northern traditions — Archangel, Finnish. Although we haven’t yet learned to assert our own dishes, to create the sort of Northern colouring the Finns do, but Petersburg is already on the way there. And so you can taste dishes made of smelt [koryushka] here, liqueurs and compotes made of cloudberry and other typically Northern delicacies. And in Piter, people take more interest in the seasons, when you eat white truffles and when black, which berries you order when… In Moscow, it’s more to do with fashion’ (‘Pyshki po-piterski’, 7 February 2011, <http://www.snob.ru/selected/entry/31023>, accessed 13 February 2011).

² On confectionary and pastries, see e.g. [Peterburg — istoriya torgovli 2002–2003 II: 191–245]. In his interesting recollections of 1892, the civil servant S. V. Svetlov [1998] paid much attention to ‘chocolate and sweet shops’ (p. 54), which he evidently saw as particularly characteristic of the city. The journalist Alexander Werth [Werth 1944: 18], who grew up in Petersburg, on ulitsa Gogolya (Malaya Morskaya), recalled a resplendent French or Swiss chocolates shop, Berin, with luxurious piles of candied fruits and sweets as well as chocolates. Among specifically ‘Leningrad’ types of baking, informants recalled ‘Leningrad khlebtsy’ (flatbreads made of rye) and ‘buttercream’, which was sometimes used to make ‘Leningrad sandwiches’ when spread on bread (my thanks to Kirill Maslinsky for this recollection). In Café Nord (Sever) one could buy small buttercream sponge cakes called ‘Leningrad’ or ‘Sever’ pastries.

³ She also recalls (p. 8) that ‘when you wanted food that was out of the ordinary, you went to a restaurant; you didn’t try “bodging” at home.’ The fact that food was far too precious to be wasted by experiments that might turn out badly was of course a factor in all this.
By and large, ‘Leningrad cuisine’ signified dishes from the standard Soviet repertoire prepared with particular elegance. It is possible that this process of standardisation was accelerated by extreme food shortages during the Blockade, a period when the main ‘local recipes’ were, say, drinks made out of pine and fir needles. But given the abundant local folklore about how Leningrad became ‘another city’ after the War, the absence of an oral history of ‘vanished dishes’ is striking.

‘Stalad’: the saladisation of the Russian nation

All the same, the concepts of ‘tasty and nutritious food’ disseminated in normative literature did have a tangible effect on practices of eating and preparing food, as is demonstrated, for instance, by the history of salad on the Soviet table. Before the Revolution, dishes of boiled and stewed vegetables had a place in the traditional Lenten diet, but Russian peasants and workers did not eat ‘salads’ as such. Those belonging to what was known as the ‘middle state’ and above ate salads as a complement to roast meats. It would appear that the repertoire was relatively restricted: for instance, Alphonse Petit’s 1860 cookbook, *La Gastronomie en Russie*, includes lettuce with a sour cream dressing and chopped apples with cress. Among the ‘entrées’ is ‘Vinaigrette de poisson à la russe’, along with ‘Vinaigrette de légumes’ [Petit 1860: 149–150, 172]. There is nothing to suggest

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1 See e.g. [Werth 1944: 163]. Food during the Siege is a subject that needs study in its own right; some information about food production is given in [Peterburg: istoriay torgovli 2002–2003]. [Goldstein 2005] is an introduction to practices in private households, mainly based on printed memoirs.

2 It should be said that in peasant and working-class households, salads and other types of dish made with raw vegetables were not very characteristic in the Soviet period either. Cf. these reminiscences by one of our informants (female, b. 1965, parents from the provinces, moved to Leningrad in the late 1940s) (Oxf/AHRC SPb. 10 PF9 MS, interviewed by Marina Samsonova): ‘Our cooking was very, very simple. Gran thought everything should be nutritious, but whether it was tasty or not really didn’t matter. It was really monotonous: meatballs, stewed meat… like in a canteen. **Int.** Like in a canteen. **Inf.** Exactly. With potatoes or macaroni. And that was it. No salads at all, none of that was at all welcome. No pickles either, no *zakuski* of any kind. It was only later, when I got married, in my husband’s family they had all that.’ Generally, vegetables were not eaten raw, with the exception, perhaps, of *okroshka* (a soup of chopped radishes, cucumber, etc., in kvas). And in fact, one of Marina Zarina’s recipes (Rabotnitsa. 1927. No. 20. P. 18) is for ‘vegetable *okroshka*’ made with boiled vegetables. Avdeeva’s *Tasty and Economical Table* [Avdeeva 1877: 9] included a recipe for *okroshka* that did make use of raw vegetables (chopped spring onion, dill, cucumbers) as well as chopped hard-boiled eggs, left-over roast meat, and ‘crayfish tails, if you happen to have them’, but the recipe was placed in the section of Russian food for masters, as opposed to servants. In my own recollection, the mainly working-class Russian students in the hostel where I spent a year as a student in Voronezh (1980-1981) almost never ate vegetables, with the exception of spring onions or sprouting garlic, served as a relish along with *salo* (heavily smoked pork belly, like the German Speck) to go with vodka.

3 It is interesting to note that the use of cress (*Lepidium sativum*) was another instance of culinary hybridity; in Russian peasant culture, this plant was known as ‘bugweed’ (*klopovnik*) and not eaten, so that it could only appeal to refined tastes once the Russian common name was replaced by the neutral-sounding transliteration from the French, *kress*. *Vinegret* was by this point a fixture in the Russian kitchen: see e.g. Ekaterina Avdeeva’s classic cook-book of the 1840s, much reprinted [Avdeeva 1842: 51], where *vinegret* is classified with the ‘common table’ (rather than the ‘Russian’), and the following
that salads of this kind were customarily included with zakuski (dishes served with vodka at the beginning of a meal). In well-off households, zakuski were generally served in a special room off the main dining-room, and eaten standing, which determined the type of food served: as Petit recalled, ‘radis, beurre, anchois, caviare, saucissons en tranche et quelques petits hors-d’oeuvres chauds de cuisine’ [radishes, butter, anchovies, caviar, sliced salami, and various cooked hors-d’œuvres, served warm], along with ‘harengs, canapés, croûtes’ [herrings, canapés, and pastry dishes]. I. M. Radetsky (a professional chef and the author of the 1852 Almanac for Gastro-nomes recommended, for instance, ‘game paté’ and ‘fresh caviar’; in his book, salads were presented only as an accompaniment to the roast, with champagne served as accompaniment [Radetsky 1852: 6, 2]. Elena Molokhovets’s A Gift for Young Housewives included in the zakuska course a whole variety of types of dish ranging widely in terms of ingredients and techniques (roulade of pork, salt herring with garnish, marinated beluga).\(^1\)

It was not until the late nineteenth century that salads, and vegetables generally, acquired a more prominent role in the meal, with this development moving simultaneously in two directions. One important factor was the rise of the vegetarian movement. Olga Zelenkova’s I Don’t Eat Anyone! [Zelenkova 1909] included an entire ‘vegetable calendar’ that recommended seasonal purchases through the year. The dishes included in the book included not only substitutes for recognised meat dishes (for instance, “Brawn” [zalivnoe]\(^2\) of carrotelle and sugar peas with sauce Provençale’), but a variety of salads.

commentary is given: ‘It may be made of game, poultry of any kind, veal, lamb, beef, or whatever comes to hand; sometimes one has the remains of various different roasts in the kitchen, and rather than presenting all of them on a single plate, warmed up, it is better to make a vinagret. Strip the meat from the bones, place them on a dish in pieces, or having chopped them; take boiled potatoes and beetroot, fresh cucumbers or salt ones, cut them in small rings; the potatoes and beetroot may also be diced [isshinkovat’]; then lay it all out together on a plate on top of the meat, or in pieces round about this. Sometimes people put into a vinagret pickled apples, cherries, or plums, capers, olives, poached wood mushrooms, salted gruzdzi and ryzhiki [types of wood mushroom from the Lactarius family]. Having put all the ingredients on to the plate, as above, sprinkle with chopped eggs, or lay the garnish around; then take vinegar, mustard, Provence [olive] oil, mix all this together and pour over the dish.’ (Compare also the revised reprint of her Handbook published 15 years later [Avdeeva 1857: 151–2], where the recipe is reprinted in identical form.). In sum, vinagret was defined not so much by its ingredients as by the manner of preparation (chopping) and the dressing (oil and vinegar, the French vinaigrette). In the early cookbooks published in Russia, there is even less evidence of a salad culture: see e.g. [Ósipov 1816], which deals exclusively with the topic of how to preserve vegetables (e.g. beetroot); see also [Albert 1825], where just one salad recipe (green salad, dressed with vinegar — part 1, p. 2000 — is included; the general assumption was that lettuce would be cooked in the same way as spinach.

\(^1\) [Molokhovets 1861] etc. (see e.g. the 1901 edition of the book). Even in humbler cookbooks, where it was assumed that zakuski would be served at the same table as the dinner, salads were not served as part of this course. For instance, [Rogalsky 1865: 47–66], includes zakuski made of eggs (stuffed, in the form of omelettes etc.), sliced salami and sausage, and salt herring (for the illustration of an exemplary dinner table with small plates set out for zakuski, see ibid., p. 13).

\(^2\) Zalivnoe (also known as studen and kholodets) is a dish of cooked meat, such as tongue, in jelly, still very popular as an hors-d’oeuvre.
For instance, Breakfast Menu no. 3 included *vinegret* of chopped vegetables with cress, dressed with a sauce ‘in the Swiss style’ (i.e. with ‘Provence oil’ [olive oil], lemon, and eggs) [Zelenkov 1909: 28–30, 31, 40]. In the second edition of Natalya Nordman-Severova’s *A Cook-Book for the Starving* were several recipes for salads, including ‘vegetarian salt herring’, ‘cabbage salad’ and ‘angelica salad’ (‘In the spring, when the angelicas are juicy and in full leaf, we gather them in the garden, chop them, dress them, and eat them as a salad’ [Nordman-Severova 1913: 79–80]).

But not all supporters of vegetarianism were advocates of salad. For instance, in the preface to her 1914 manual, *The Practical Foundations of Vegetarianism*, Pelageya Aleksandrovna-Ignatyeva spoke of ‘raw food eating’ [*syroyadenie*] with some asperity:

> Perhaps in the future model vegetable gardens will indeed be able to produce types of vegetable that can be used in the raw state for food in the way that fruit now is, without adverse consequences for the organism, but at the present moment the vegetables that are on the markets from vegetable gardens at the fringes of the city and from sewage farms [polya orosheniya] are not completely free of risk in health terms even if one eats them after a thorough washing, since they are often the source of various types of infectious disease [Aleksandrova-Ignatyeva 1914: VI].

Whether Aleksandrova-Ignatyeva’s suspicions were well-founded is hard to say; it is possible that various types of organic fertiliser, such as manure or human nightsoil, could indeed have caused food poisoning, in conditions where hygiene in the kitchen was less than impeccable.\(^1\) Whichever way, the few salads that she did recommend were made of boiled or at the very least scalded vegetables — for instance, in the case of a ‘Salad of Red and White Cabbage’ [Aleksandrova-Ignatyeva 1914: 423] she recommended pouring boiling water over the vegetables ‘to remove the bitter taste that is characteristic of cabbage’.

Aleksandrova-Ignatyeva’s other works gave no space to vegetarian principles and represented the other tendency in culinary history of the day — increasing complication of both the restaurant and the home menu, with a proliferation of heavy and elaborate dishes. A section under the title ‘Cold *zakuski*’ in her *The Practical Foundations of the Culinary Art*, first published in 1899 included, for instance, a ‘chaud-froid of hazel grouse’ (in aspic, with mayonnaise), a game paté, a galantine of turkey and a ‘mayonnaise of hazel grouse’, a salad of ruff [ersh], and a ‘Salat Olivier’ of hazel grouse, potatoes, lettuce, and cucumbers with cornichons, crayfish tails, aspic and truffles

\(^1\) As argued by Zarina in the passage quoted below.
At this period, then, salads were beginning to have an established place in the zakuska repertoire. The early Soviet period, with its frequent acute food shortages, saw vegetarianism go on the ascendant. As the anonymous author of a 1924 brochure of recipes put it:

Vegetarianism has made significant conquests with us in Russia during the recent past — the army of vegetarians is growing day by day. Its extraordinarily rapid success is explained by the fact that in 1919, 1920, and 1921, we all had to be vegetarians, whether we liked it or not, and had the opportunity of observing the nutritional benefits of this directly. How many tenacious cases of catarrh of the stomach were suddenly cured, along with liver and kidney afflictions, how much our capacity to endure was increased! [M. M. 1924: 3]

The vegetable-eating of the Soviet period, then, was in its origins more a practical than an ideological phenomenon. But conversely, it was not just economic deficit, but the ‘food hygiene’ as promulgated in normative sources of the day that fostered its development. At the end of the 1920s, the new scientific doctrine of the indispensability to human and animal health of ‘vitamins’ began to permeate Soviet writing about nutrition. The word itself goes back to the studies of the Polish scientist Kazimierz Funk (1884–1967), who while working at the Lister Institute in London in 1911 had discovered thiamine (Vitamin B1). His 1913 book *Vitamins* was rapidly to become internationally famous, and was translated into Russian in 1922 [Funk 1922; Funk 1928]. Among notable popular discussions of

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1 For the ‘Salat Olivier’ recipe, see [Aleksandrova-Ignatyeva 1899: 532]: ‘3 hazel grouse; 5 potatoes; 5 cucumbers; 2 heads lettuce; sauce Provençale made with half a bottle of oil; 15 crayfish tails; 1 glass aspic; 1/8 pound in total capers, olives, cornichons; 3 truffles. Cut the prime meat off good-quality hazel grouse, roasted, as for a blanquette and mix them with boiled waxy potatoes sliced in the same way (it is better to chop the potatoes after boiling into slices the width of a five-rouble coin). Add slices of fresh cucumbers, capers and olives, and pour over a good quantity of sauce Provençale, with soya sauce [soya-kabul] added. Allow to cool and then set out in a crystal bowl and decorate with crayfish tails, lettuce leaves, slices of truffle and chopped aspic. Serve very cold. The fresh cucumbers may be replaced, if desired, with large cornichons. Veal, partridge, or chicken may be used instead of hazel grouse, but it is only with the last that a true salat Olivier is made.’ In its origins, salat Olivier would appear to have been a game dish comparable with the ‘salmi’ of France and England (on which see [Grigson 1992: 218–219]). A comparable term, salmagundi, was used from the early nineteenth century in England for dishes resembling the Russian vinegret, and served as a kind of ‘middle’ dish (between the starter and the main course) [Grigson 1992: 190].

2 This is also the case with the official ‘fish day’ introduced in 1932 (and once again in 1976). If the traditional Orthodox ritual fast (meatless) days were Wednesday and Friday (particularly the latter), the day selected for the Soviet fish day was Thursday, which had no religious associations. [Glushchenko 2010: 63] argues for the similarity of the Soviet kitchen to the kosher diet, but the former systematically propounded mixtures of meat and milk products such are forbidden under kashrut.

3 In 1928–1929, the latter publication went through three editions. The word ‘vitamin’ was derived from the Latin vita and amine; when it emerged that not all these substances could be placed in the category of amines, the original coinage, vitamine, was abbreviated to vitamin. Funk is not the only contender for the title of discoverer of vitamins, and in the USSR, much credit was given to the experiments done
vitamins was an article by Marina Zarina, ‘The Significance of Vegetables in the Diet’, which appeared in the December number of Rabotnitsa in 1922. As Zarina asserted:

Scientific studies of recent years have shown that the only food which fully answers the requirements of the human organism is that containing, as well as proteins, fats, carbohydrates, and salts, a sufficient quantity of newly discovered addition substances, or ‘vitamins’.

It has been proved that we draw our supply of vitamins abundantly from vegetables, root vegetables, and fruit, and for this reason, vegetables in a raw and cooked state should be included in the diet, especially of children from a young age [Zarina 1927a].

Like Aleksandrova-Ignatyeva, Zarina took a wary view of raw vegetables; while emphasising their importance, especially for children, she underlined that they could be risky from the point of view of hygiene:

Fresh vegetables, carrots, beets should be given to children raw, though not in large quantities, and without fail, only after washing in boiled water. It is even better to scald them with boiling water. This is because the manure that is used to fertilise vegetable gardens may contain tapeworm eggs and other microbes [sic!], which can provoke stomach upsets, from ordinary diarrhoea to bloody flux [Zarina 1927a].

The persistence of these anxieties was due not just to the unfamiliarity of raw vegetable dishes, but to the still unmodernised state of many Soviet households; in many urban areas, not to speak of rural ones, piped water and sewage were to appear only in the decades after the Second World War. The preference for dishes made of cooked vegetables, including chopped salads such as vinegret, is, in these conditions, not surprising.

If some of the foundation for the later popularity of salads in the USSR was laid in the 1920s, the first edition of BTNF, with its entire section under the title ‘Salads’, containing mainly dishes of raw vegetables, marked the onset of a new era. As well as the ‘Health Salad’ mentioned earlier, these included a lettuce salad with chopped
hard-boiled eggs dressed in sour cream; a salad of Romaine lettuce, chicory, and endives; a celeriac salad; a salad of chopped radishes in sour cream; a salad of chopped lettuce and radish; a salad of round lettuce and Romaine lettuce with fruit; fruit salads, both plain and with nuts; a salad of fresh cucumbers and tomatoes, and so on. Alongside these were various salads made from preserved vegetables (sauerkraut, pasteurised cucumbers), and mixed salads, such as *vinegret* or fish salad with green leaves. Various types of dressing were recommended, mainly vinegar and vegetable oil or sour cream with salt and lemon juice [*BTNF* 1939: 291–305].

The precise repertoire of salads recommended by *BTNF* 1939 did not establish itself in the Soviet kitchen. It is hard to say how easy it ever was to buy ‘Romaine lettuce, chicory, and endives’, for instance, in the land of potatoes and cabbage; the very names are unlikely to have been familiar to most Russians. Fragile and easily spoiled, green leaves of this kind would have been difficult to supply on a large scale, even if collective farms had had the resources for growing them in a country with severe weather conditions. At any rate, many of these recipes were quietly dropped from later editions of *BTNF*. In the 1945 edition of the book, which stated its purpose as ‘giving the Soviet housewife a practical guide to food preparation in the context of using a range of food products as economically as possible,’ only tomatoes, cucumbers, and beans were mentioned [*BTNF* 1945: 4, 134–141].

But if the salads presented in post-war editions of *BTNF* were more modest than before, their proportionate weight in the ideal Soviet meal had increased. In [*BTNF* 1948], the ‘Salads’ section was inserted not, as in 1939, after the main course, towards the end of the book, but right at the beginning. It was now assumed that the place of salad in the meal would be different; salads would be served as a *zakuska*, a major shift not just in Russian but in European terms.

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2. In the normative literature on Soviet mass catering, ‘lettuce’ is sometimes mentioned (see e.g. [*Kratkii sbornik* 1955: 70–74]), but the most standard vegetables for raw salads were tomatoes, cucumbers, cabbage, and carrots, and mixtures thereof. Onion and spring onion, radish, and capsicum were also sometimes found (as in ‘Vitamin Salad’, for instance).

3. The entire book was considerably reduced in scale and ambition in 1945, as befitted a publication when wartime rationing was still in place. These historical nuances are usually forgotten when the history of *BTNF* is discussed.

4. It would seem that salads were occasionally served in the summer as a separate dish (a cold main course), but the canonical start to the meal was soup. Whether the new dominance of salads in the Soviet kitchen is explained by American influence is an interesting question. Mikoyan’s fascination with US fast food (conveyor-belt cafés, ice-cream) has often been remarked. The salads in [*BTNF* 1939] were very much in the normal ‘European’ above all, French) mould (it is interesting to speculate on whether the first edition of the famous culinary encyclopaedia, *Larousse gastronomique*, published in 1938, influenced the showcase of Soviet gastronomy). But mixed salads with mayonnaise (for instance, Waldorf Salad, the 1893 invention of chopped celery, apples, and walnuts) were characteristic appetisers in the USA from the late
The first post-war edition that returned to the ‘glossy’ format of the 1939 original ([BTNF 1952]), enhanced the profile of salads still further: to underline their status as the heroic opening to the meal, rather than an afterthought, they were now emblazoned in full colour, among the central illustrations of the book.

A more detailed comparison of the two books is also illuminating. [BTNF 1939] had assigned a double identity of the salad. ‘Salads’ in the sense of compositions of raw vegetables were (following pre-1917 practices) ‘served with roast and boiled meat, poultry, and fish, while salads of the same raw and also of cooked vegetables […] with the addition of boiled or roast meat, veal, lamb, poultry, game, fish, hard-boiled eggs, crab, and crayfish […] are most often served as a zakuska at the beginning of dinner, supper, lunch, or breakfast’ [BTNF 1939: 289]. In [BNTF 1952], on the other hand, it was primarily the second type of salad that started to dominate. Alongside dishes in jelly such as zalivnoe, the salad became the linchpin of the zakuska table. A canonical Soviet lunch or dinner (the section on ‘breakfast’ vanished from [BTNF 1952]) now had to start with a salad.

There is also another interesting discrepancy between the 1939 edition of BTNF and the 1952 edition. Mayonnaise had, in 1939, been only one possible dressing for salad (and not even the main one). The fact that one could buy this substance rather than making it oneself was mentioned briefly in passing:

For dressing salads, vinegrety and other cold dishes, housewives usually make use of vegetable oil, vinegar, mustard, horseradish and other condiments. All such condiments may with considerable success be replaced by mayonnaise sauce, which is produced by margarine factories to recipes developed by the Institute of Nutrition of the Commissariat of Health of the USSR.

Mayonnaise sauce is characterised by high qualities of taste lacked by condiments produced in the home [BTNF 1939: 108–109].
By contrast with this relatively dry excursus, the 1952 edition launched into an entire poem in prose:

Many recipes in this book mention mayonnaise — an appetising, nutritious, tasty sauce, containing 40 % to 70 % fat, and also protein, carbohydrates, and minerals [...] The characteristic feature of this sauce is that it is not simply a high quality product, but also facilitates the digestion of the food that is consumed along with the sauce; this is why it is quite justly considered an irreplaceable condiment for salads, vinegretsy and many other dishes and zakuski, whether warm or cold [BTNF 1952: 68].

A sketch of mayonnaise’s nutritional contents followed: 68 % sunflower oil, 10 % fresh egg yolk, 6.7 % mustard, 2.3 % sugar, 11 % vinegar, 2 % seasonings.

Added to this, where the 1939 edition of BTNF had taken for granted that the ‘housewife’ could perfectly well make mayonnaise herself, in 1952, this strategy was essentially ruled out:

One warning should, however, be given (and any experienced housewife will confirm this): making good mayonnaise at home is a time-consuming and rather complicated business; it often ends in failure even when experienced cooks perform it [...] the sauce either does not succeed at all, or does not have the necessary taste.

No culinary skill on the part of the chef can measure up to the accuracy with which recipes can be followed, the meticulousness with which the quality of the ingredients can be assessed, the extreme care in the manufacture, and finally, the level of hygiene, that are guaranteed by industrial production under vigilant laboratorial and technological control [BTNF 1952: 68–69].

It is interesting that hygiene is mentioned here in the final place (in recent culinary advice, on the other hand, the main argument against making mayonnaise at home is that the use of fresh egg yolks carries a risk of salmonella poisoning). In BTNF 1952, on the other hand, the primary argument for the use of manufactured mayonnaise is aesthetic. The information about the complexity of the operation is simply inaccurate. Of all the classic French sauces, mayonnaise is by some way the easiest to make; it can successfully be produced in about ten minutes by an inexperienced cook, even a child. The point

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1 For this reason, it has become common over the last 20 years to use pasteurised egg-yolks to make mayonnaise in public catering.

2 I speak from personal experience here: I have been making mayonnaise at home since I was about 16 or 17 years of age, and it almost always turned out well with no trouble (and on the odd occasion when it has curdled, I have simply used the old dodge of beating up another egg yolk, then adding the curdled mixture to it spoon by spoon till it thickens as usual). It is far more tricky making sauce Hollandaise, which BTNF in all its editions assumed that ‘Soviet housewives’ would do without making any comment on the likely problems.
was that home manufacture was unsuitable for the canonical sauce of the Soviet kitchen: it amounted to *kustarnost* (cottage industry production), in a society where that was a denigratory term.\(^1\)

As in many other industrialised societies, a characteristic phenomenon of the Soviet era was the widespread use by the urban population of preserved foods, ready-prepared meals, and other kinds of industrially-manufactured food products (for example, vinegar in the form of ‘non-brewed condiment’, ‘crab sticks’, condensed milk), which fairly rapidly came to be accepted as ‘traditional’.\(^2\) Quite revealing in this respect is the article about *maionez* [mayonnaise] in the Russian version of Wikipedia: ‘Mayonnaise was produced from *traditional* ingredients: sunflower oil, water, powdered egg, dried milk, salt, sugar, mustard powder — and had a fat content of 67%.’ [emphasis added]. Of these ingredients, only salt was indispensable either in classic French recipes for mayonnaise, or in Russian recipes for ‘sauce Provençale’. But in the course of Soviet history, mayonnaise made to the new recipes became entirely traditional.

All in all, Soviet cooking was a notable case of the successful integration of official norms into everyday practices. Normative literature reflected perceptions in the structures of the planned economy of what should be on sale: for instance, when a substance called ‘Ocean Paste’ supposedly made of shrimps, but actually from various marine micro-organisms, began being sold in the 1970s, quantities of recipes explaining how to use it began to be published) [Davidson 1986: 341].\(^3\) On the other hand, though, the range of foods that was generally on sale in Soviet shops or available in the form of ‘food orders’ (supplied through factories and other workplaces to their staffs) was related to the nutritional norms that were set out in cookbooks and advice on diet.\(^4\) One way or the other, what one

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1 See e.g. [Ushakov 1935–1940], where the secondary meaning of *kustarnyi* (the primary being ‘produced at home’) is ‘primitive, unsophisticated, unsystematic’.

2 One might compare the recipe cited by Sergei Sokolovskiy [2011: 59–60]: ‘I can’t resist citing one such recipe (a showpiece of ‘Karaite cuisine’): “CHOCOLATE TRUFFLES. Ingredients: 1 cup sugar, 2.5 cups “Malysh” [Infant] milk formula with rice, 75 g butter, 2–3 tbsp cocoa powder, 25 ml vodka, cognac or dry wine, 25 ml water, 1 cup shelled nuts, 1 packet wafers. Remove the cream filling from the wafers, dry them out a little and finely grate. […] Pour the milk formula into an enamelled bowl, add the butter, water and cognac and mix. Sprinkle with cocoa powder and sugar.’ The recipe finishes: ‘Put in the fridge.’ Even well-educated Russian intellectuals from Moscow and Leningrad were attached to cooking of this kind: cf. Tatyana Tolstaya’s complaint that ‘Modern snobbery demands that we say “Yuk” to crabsticks, mayonnaise, and all kinds of other tasty things’ — accompanied by a recipe for crabsticks <http://tanyant.livejournal.com/tag/eqa>. In another blog <http://mr-shmellbass.livejournal.com/80322.html>, crabsticks are described as ‘real Petersburg food’ (or ‘Leningrad’, as the comments put it). On the developing use of ‘non-traditional’ products, e.g. soya, in the Soviet kitchen, see [Rothstein H., Rothstein R. 1997: 187]. In an influential cookbook by two Soviet émigrés [Vail, Genis 2002: Chapter 23], salads with mayonnaise are seen as the epitome of traditional Russian cooking.

3 See also A. P. Gritsuk, ‘Mery po prodvizheniyu krevotochnoi pasty “Okean”’ <http://cuvyqyfyggyf. livejournal.com/52275.htmlm> (accessed 19 May 2010), which describes the organisation of tasting sessions in leading restaurants, etc.

4 Cf. [Kushkova 2012].
‘could get’ (dostat) was fundamental to the question of what one could cook.

‘The triumph of the stalad’ acts as a useful illustration of how official norms and everyday practices fused. Even in conditions of regular food shortages, making salads was generally possible. As Tatyana Tolstaya has put it wittily, if not completely accurately, ‘potatoes and carrots, however rotten and blackened, were always on sale in the Sov.’1 From a technical point of view, making salads was not sale either. In a society, where domestic labour was ‘the second shift’, rather than the primary occupation for many women (as had been the case in financially secure homes before 1917), this was a valuable feature. Cooked zakuski were inconvenient to make in Soviet kitchens, given the space constraints, and a woman working full-time could not spend days on nothing but food preparation. Salads, zalivnye, and other cold meals could easily be prepared in advance, and — as was no less important — work to make them could be shared with other adults and even with children. A chopped salad dressed with home-made mayonnaise would take double the time of one with bottled mayonnaise; still more to the point, such mayonnaise could be stock-piled in advance and would not go off if stored for months. Food preparation at this level was also within the grasp of the untrained village women who were the only available domestic labour even to most of the Soviet women who could afford to employ a servant at all.2 All this made the identification of zakuski with salads (above all, salads dressed with mayonnaise) nearly-inevitable not just in official norms, but in everyday practices.3

All in all, the amount of space left for fantasy was very limited, not just at home, but in public catering also. Even in leading restaurants, menus were straightforward; in any case, the main point of visiting

1 <http://tanyant.livejournal.com/tag/еда>. Tolstaya uses the disparaging term sovok for the Soviet Union. As a matter of fact, the supply even of basic vegetables was not 100 per cent reliable: on 26 April 1976, for example, Leningradskaya pravda reported a shortage of onions and potatoes; but at any rate, they generally were on sale (to use the customary Soviet verb of the time, byvali).

2 The usual source of domestic help was the so-called domrobotnitsa, normally a young woman fresh from the country, and certainly not a trained cook.

3 On the best-known case — Salat Olivier — see [Kushkova 2005]. While this dish is usually reported to have been created by the chef in the Hermitage Restaurant, Moscow, in the 1860s (his name was Lucien Olivier) (see e.g. the Russian Wikipedia), such mixtures of meat and vegetables were in fact by then well-established — take, for instance, Avdeeva’s recipe for vinegret above. As for Salat Olivier, no recipe as such is given in [BTNF 1939] or in [BTNF 1952], but there is a ‘game salad’ that is very similar, including ‘hazel grouse or partridge, potatoes, cucumbers or cornichons, hard-boiled egg, peeled and cored apple, one half-glass mayonnaise, ½ tsp. “Southern” sauce [a Soviet bottled condiment], 1 tbsp. vinegar, ½ tsp. sugar’, as well as a recipe for vinegret (including potatoes, apples, cucumbers, carrots, sauerkraut, mustard, salt, pepper, sugar, vinegar, and vegetable oil) [BTNF 1952: 47, 50]. The success of the Soviet ‘new tradition’ of the salad is obvious also from the multitude of analogous salad recipes that are still in circulation today — for example, online (see e.g. <http://www.eda-server.ru/cook-book/salat/index.html>).
was often to celebrate, rather than savour the food.\(^1\) Cafés, on the other hand, were for having a quick meal in, followed by an even more rapid departure.\(^2\) Whether at home or out for the evening, Leningraders seldom indulged in the expansive and self-conscious gourmandising that is one possible referent of the term ‘cuisine’. The main unusual characteristic of the city was that the usual ‘basket of goods’ (butter, cheese, eggs, meat, salami etc.) was, by and large, accessible to most shoppers; some of the goods in it might disappear temporarily, but not for months or years at a time, as happened in many Soviet provincial towns.\(^3\)

### ‘All kinds of preserved vegetables, English and Westphalian hams’: the hybridity of Petersburg cooking

Although it would be hard to identify a specifically ‘Leningrad’ flavour in the kitchen of the Soviet period, there is a sense in which the homogeneous, nationwide traditions of Soviet cooking did have a kind of ‘Petersburg’ flavour, at least at the hidden level. The importance of this relationship should not be exaggerated: the strongest roots of Soviet food preparation were in the activities of the Russian Society for the Protection of Popular Health, with its School of Culinary Art.\(^4\) The link was underwritten by the work of activists in the Soviet period who had experience of participating in the pre-revolutionary ‘rational diet’ movement. Marina Zarina, for instance, had published several cook-books before the Revolution, while several of Pelageya Aleksandrova-Ignatyeva’s works were reprinted in the Soviet period.\(^5\)

In any case, it would be hard to argue that Petersburg had strongly ‘local’ traditions of food preparation in the late Imperial period. Most large capitals, especially of multi-cultural empires, have an

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1. Cf. the description of the ‘Rooftop’ restaurant at the Evropeiskaya hotel in [Rein1997] or [Popov 2003: 172]. The restaurant culture of the time is discussed from this point of view in [Kelly 2014: Chapter 7].
2. Cf. Oxf/AHRC SPb 10 PF7 MS (interview by Marina Samsonova with a male informant, b. 1969): ‘Yes, if you went to a café — you’d turn up and there’d be some huge queue, so you’d get your food down quickly and then go, so someone else could have the table, yes. […] So the smell of Piter, that’s the smell of those stand-up cafés, those pie shops, like “Saigon”, for instance.’ Of course, people might linger in cafés (as they often did in Saigon), but for drinking, rather than eating: a ‘little double’ (the equivalent of a double espresso), or a glass of wine or cognac, say.
3. See e.g. [Peterburg — istoriya torgovli 2002–2003 II: 134]: ‘As a centre of the defence industry, above all ship-building, Leningrad had above-average norms of supply.’
4. See Entsiklopedicheskii slovar Brokgauza i Efrona, article on ‘Povarennoe iskusstvo’ (unsigned); [Lotova 1962].
5. Zarina had taught home economy in the Aleksandro-Mariinsky, Ekaterininsky, Usachevo-Chernyavsky, and Nikolaevsky Professional Institutes [Zarina 1910]. Her Culinary Manual for Students [Uchebnik kulinarii], published in 1918 (it was first published in 1910) still carried the imprimatur of the Tsarist Ministry of Popular Education, abolished not long before the book appeared [Zarina 1910; Zarina 1918]. Aleksandrova-Ignatyeva’s 1899 cookbook reached its 11th edn. in 1916, and this version was reprinted in 1927 and 1932.
insatiable ‘appetite’ for foodstuffs produced in their provinces and further territories, not to speak of those imported from abroad. Thus, Alphonse Petit, who acted as chef in the 1850s to the Russian Minister of Justice, Viktor Nikolaevich Panin, noted that the best poultry was considered to come from Vologda and Rostov. But Petersburg could boast many other kinds of delicacy in its shops and markets also:

Toute espèce de conserves de légumes et fruits, homards, huîtres, pâtés de foie gras, divers fromages, jambons anglais et de Westphalie, truffes, vins et liqueurs, sauces anglais, etc. etc., se trouvent en générale chez tous les épiciers de la capitale, mais particulièrement et de première qualité aux magasins des Miloutines, perspective de Newski et chez les marchands Eliseiff, Smouroff, Wiouschine et Babikoff [Petit 1860: 10].

[All kinds of preserved vegetables and fruits, lobsters, oysters, goose liver patés, different types of cheese, English and Westphalian hams, truffles, wines and liqueurs, custards, etc., etc., might be found in all the groceries in the capital, but ones of the first quality particularly in the Milyutins’ shop on Nevsky and at Eliseev, Zhmurov, Vyushchin and Babikov.]

No wonder that the stereotypical denunciations of the wasteful and luxurious lives of court grandees to be found in many late eighteenth-century texts, such as Derzhavin’s poem Felitsa, should have focused on elaborate and expensive meals (here, a table groaning with sturgeon, pilaff, and pies as well as the same ‘Westphalian ham’). The metropolitan elite’s taste for French cuisine and French cooks was to outlast these sallies. In the late 1850s, those dining in the household of a well-off Petersburg gentleman such as Petr Pavlovich Durnovo could expect to eat, for example, ‘consommé with macaroni’ and ‘sotay [sauté] of hazel hen’, or ‘Guriev kasha’. The menus of the Durnovo household included many more such foreign or hybrid dishes than Russian dishes as such (‘boiled loach’, ‘apple-stuffed goose’) [Lotman, Pogosyan 1996]. Petit’s book would also suggest that ‘Russian’ dishes were often prepared with ingredients of

1 Among other speciality ‘Viennese’ dishes are Serbische Bohnensuppe (a spicy ‘Serbian’ bean soup) and Guljaschsuppe (based on the Hungarian gulyás); ‘London’ dishes include fish and chips, probably imported by Portuguese Jews (see [Roden 1997: 100]). And so on. The results are also hybrid and would be unlikely to be recognised by the originators as ‘theirs’: fish and chips, for example, has traditionally been made in London (and Britain generally) with beef dripping, not olive oil.

2 Cf. the lists of goods in [Radetsky 1852].

3 There is nothing specifically ‘Petersburgian’ in this, of course; A. F. Voeikov’s ‘To My Village Elder’ (1807) contrasted a serf greybeard’s sober, industrious life on his straw mattress and ordered day, with its diet of kasha and kvass, with the ‘French cuisine’ and ‘champagne’ gobbled by others, who cannot match the health and energy of the simple Russian addressee. See [Kelly 2001: Chapter 2] for a detailed discussion of this tradition.
foreign origin: he gives a recipe for ‘akroshka’ [sic.] made with pickled mushrooms, including cèpes, apples, potatoes, beetroot and green beans.¹ The vegetables should, he instructed, be mixed with a rémoulade² of English mustard and Provence (olive) oil, seasoned with fennel, onion, tarragon and chervil.³ The ingredients did include kvas (or pickled cabbage water, kislye shchi), but it is unlikely that many Russian peasants would have recognised the result as a familiar part of their diet [Petit 1860: 68].⁴

In rather humbler families, where the person doing the cooking was a Russian stryapukha, or ‘plain cook’, rather than a foreign chef, influences from abroad could be felt as well. Here the case of Katerina Avdeeva, the Slavophile author of A Handbook for the Experienced Russian Housewife, the most popular Petersburg cook-book of the mid nineteenth century, is instructive. Avdeeva’s preface emphasised:

> My book is intended precisely for the Russian household, and therefore I speak in it of the Russian national table, Russian foods, and Russian cooking. Without wishing to denigrate either the German or the French cuisine, I think that for us what is Russian and native to us, what we become accustomed and have grown used to, what is produced by the experience of centuries, and is handed down from fathers to children and justified by locality, climate, and way of life, is in all respects healthier and more nutritious for us [Avdeeva 1842: iii–iv].⁵

Yet only 32 pages in Avdeeva’s book were devoted to ‘Russian’ cuisine, and 50 to the ‘universal’ kitchen. In another of her books, the Complete Household Book of 1851, the list of essential foods included not just flour, butter, eggs, and sugar, but ‘English pepper’, cardamom, cinnamon, nutmeg, prunes, sweet and bitter almonds, three sorts of macaroni, and vermicelli [Avdeeva 1868: 4–6].⁶

In some European capitals, there are ‘local specialities’ of near-legendary status: Wiener Beuschl (braised calf’s lights), Dublin

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¹ Cf., on okroshka [Dumas 1873: 1215], ‘Soupe froide à la russe comme on la mangeait à Pêtersbourg et à Moscou’, which is seen as something particularly exotic and strange, made of kvas and meat chopped up à la tatare, but also including ‘echalotes hachées’ (chopped shallots) и ‘morceaux du maigre de jambon’ (pieces of lean ham).

² The word appears to be used here simply to mean ‘mixture’, rather than in its modern meaning of a flavoured mayonnaise.

³ In nineteenth-century cookbooks, kerwel’ (chervil) appears almost as frequently as dill. It has since completely vanished from the ordinary Russian diet.

⁴ Petit recommended preparing ox tongue à la Menshikov by braising it in a mirepoix (a mixture of chopped onion, carrot, and celery, fried in butter) to which two bottles of claret (vin de Graves) had been added [Petit 1860: 129].

⁵ Avdeeva (1789–1865, née Polevaya, the sister of the historian and editor Nikolai Polevoi and the journalist Ksenofont Polevoi) grew up in Irkustk, and later lived in Kursk, Moscow, and Odessa, but from 1841 to 1863 (the period at which her household manuals were written) lived in Petersburg.

⁶ ‘English pepper’ was probably allspice, also known as Jamaica pepper.
Coddle (a thick soup with potatoes, sausages, and bacon), or at the very least, dishes that have strong local associations (London examples would include jellied eels and eel pie — the same jellied eels, only with vinegar-flavoured mashed potato on top). Even if locals have in fact never tasted these dishes (having been brought up in London, I have never once had jellied eels), they know about their existence and have at least a vague idea of what they comprise. In pre-revolutionary Petersburg, on the other hand, there were no such symbolism-laden local dishes, with the possible exception of marinated lampreys. It was not in fact customary to evoke ‘Petersburg cuisine’ at all, even when invoking innovations not characteristic of the Russian kitchen. In modern Russia, the use of the word bulka for a loaf of white bread is often taken to be a characteristic ‘Petersburg’ feature. But comments about the term in the first edition of the Brockhaus-Efron Encyclopaedia, first published in the 1890s, do not refer to any Petersburg connections:

In Russia, bulki with very thin crusts are preferred (as in the case of saiki), in France people prefer as much crust as possible and mere traces of the soft inside. This is why our bread will never appeal to the French; but if you compare the bulki in terms of colour, the amazing whiteness of Russian bulki will make even French pains de luxe look grey.

In sum, it was not any specific dishes or culinary techniques, but the hybrid character of Petersburg cooking that made this specific.

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1 It is notable that Alexander Werth [Werth 1944: 25] specifically mentions ‘pickled minogi, a Lenin-grad speciality’ (leaving the term usually translated ‘lamprey’ in the Russian, as though to emphasise the specificity of the dish). In one of his cookbooks, the professional chef I. M. Radetsky [Radetsky 1862: 81], included ‘Sup Sant-Petersburgskii — Potazh de Sent-Peterburg’ [i.e. ‘Potage de Saint-Péterbourg, in Russian transliteration]. The ingredients were chicken consommé, potato flour, 4 tablespoons of tomato purée and a bottle of sauternes reduced with a bouquet garni. After mixing and passing through a sieve, it was served with ‘kneli [quenelles] stuffed with navaga and oysters. Those who like may add to the kneli sautéed fillets of navaga, the livers of burbot, and Cayenne pepper; soya sauce is handed round with the soup.’ (Navaga, or Eleginus navaga, is a fish related to the cod that is found in the waters of the Arctic and in river mouths abutting: <http://www.fishbase.org/summary/314>.) This ‘Petersburg soup’ has nothing identifiably ‘Petersburg’ about it. In much the same way, an Internet search for the term ‘à la Parisienne’ brings up, alongside a completely standard recipe that is to be found even in England for a type of sweet sponge tart or flan (‘flan à la Parisienne’), such outlandish delicacies as ‘gnocchi à la Parisienne’ and even ‘spaghetti à la Parisienne’. However, [Dumas 1873] does give some ‘Parisian’ dishes: chocolate with vanilla, chartreuse (an elegant salad of fresh vegetables with truffles etc.), and points out that it was customary to suppose that the water of the Seine lent a special aroma to dishes. The lack of ‘native’ dishes in St Petersburg was partly attributable to the limited resources in the city’s hinterland (where the chief produce comprised milk products and fish).

2 ‘Bulka’ in Enttsiklopedicheskii slovar’ Brockgauza i Efrona.

3 ‘The cooking of wealthy Leningrad reminds me of Nabokov: a French table with a Russian accent (violins instead of balalaikas, but cranberry rather than lemon, hare and not rabbit, pike-perch [sudak] and not turbot, etc.)’ (Alexander Genis, email to Catriona Kelly, 6 March 2011). As our professional chef informant put it, ‘Petersburg cuisine was always distinguished by its restraint. Since the presence of foreign gentlemen and ladies was very influential. If Russian cooking means huge pies, cakes, and so on, caviar, beluga, then Western culture taught us that chilly restraint.’ (Oxf/AHRC SPb-11 PF18 MS).
Both Russian traditions and those adopted from abroad underwent a process of adaptation as they were juggled and combined.¹

‘The return of the repressed’:
Elena Molokhovets as a ‘spectre at the Soviet feast’

The hybridity of Petersburg cuisine is evident also in the most famous cookbook of the late nineteenth century, Elena Molokhovets’s *A Gift for Young Housewives*, first published in 1861. Despite Molokhovets’s concern to foster economy and simplicity in the running of the household, and the fact that her book is entirely rational and practical in what it advises (even later editions include many down-to-earth recipes for, say, marinated and pickled vegetables, jams, compotes, pies, and so on), mention is very often made of imported foods, for instance, truffles, pistachios, ginger, Malaga wine, not to speak of roasted peacock.² There are nearly as many recipes for mousse (13) as for kissel (15). For educated Russians, renouncing Western foods was about as inviting as renouncing Western dress.³ Cabbage soup, kasha, and so on were, as the major constituents of one’s diet, the property exclusively of the peasantry and urban lower classes (and it was dishes such as these that comprised the menus in the special sections of ‘servants’ food’ in Molokhovets and Avdeeva’s books).

In the Soviet period, Molokhovets became a noted figure in the folklore of the Russian intelligentsia, (in)famous for the extraordinary luxury and complexity of the dishes she was supposed to have recommended. *A Gift for Young Housewives* was ironically summed up in a quotation said to come from the book: ‘If unexpected guests should arrive, descend to the larder and fetch from there a cold leg of veal…’ (in other versions of the story, it was a knuckle of pork, a leg of lamb, some cold roast turkey…)⁴ A well-known poem by Arseny Tarkovsky represented Molokhovets punished for the vulgar gluttony advocated in her book (advice on clarifying consommé with sturgeon scraps, etc.) by a horribly material afterlife in which she sat with her own skull in a sieve while an ‘insatiable worm’ gnawed at her hand.⁵

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¹ As in Russian cooking generally: see [Visson 1990].
² It would appear that Molokhovets, however, simply cribbed this recipe form another source: she simply observes that it should be roasted like pheasant. Dumas includes a closely similar recipe for peacock: ‘Paôn roti à la crème aigr’ (baked in sour cream) [Dumas 1873: 1110].
³ The two things, obviously, went together, as in Tolstoy’s Konstantin Levin, who, in *Anna Karenina*, expresses a preference for cabbage soup and kasha as he does for traditional dress.
⁴ The versions with ‘lamb’, ‘veal’, and ‘pork’ can be found on the Internet; I recall the ‘turkey’ version myself from stories in Leningrad of the mid-1980s.
⁵ Arseny Tarkovsky, ‘Elena Molokhovets’ (1957).
The transformation of Molokhovets into an anti-hero of Soviet culture (a kind of Medusa of over-eating) was allied to a sort of superficial ‘de-Peterburgisation’ of Soviet culinary traditions, and just as importantly, the way these were understood inside the culture. The main centre for the publication of cookbooks was Moscow, and in popular books on Russian food history (for instance, the widely-read works by V. V. Pokhlebkin and N. I. Kovalev), the gastronomy of the former capital was not considered as a separate topic. The unified understanding of ‘national food’ that emerged in the Soviet period was back-projected, generating a comparable understanding of ‘Russian food’. Tatyana Tolstaya’s reaction to the translation of Molokhovets into English is typical:

Why has meat okroshka been rejected, that classic cold soup made of kvas, which is eaten both in the Kremlin and in some godforsaken overgrown village? And cranberry kissel, which survived not just the tsars, but Lenin and Gorbachev as well? Why are only 11 out of 47 types of pie left, 2 out of 12 mousses, 5 out of 14 kissels, and 3 out of 15 compotes? [...] Why has the translator decided to include ‘French julienne soup’, ‘Italian soup with macaroni’, ‘baked potatoes à la lyonnaise’, ‘rice à la Milanese’, the german dish Baumkuchen, the Finnish drink ‘Limpopo’, which are totally uncharacteristic of the Russian table, instead of ‘Guriev bliny’, ‘Smolensk rezniki’ and other types of dish that don’t have flashy names, but are completely typical? [...] The foundations of the Russian table are fish, mushrooms, studen, pies, bliny, kasha, cabbage soup, kvas made of bread, that is, the fruits of the vegetable garden and the fields, and the produce of rivers, what you can catch and pick yourself [Tolstaya 1992].

But it might be replied that ‘julienne soup’ (which can be found in Aleksandrova-Ignatyeva’s books as well) and ‘Limpopo’ were just at home in Petersburg as ‘Guriev bliny’ (which itself is a dish of none too ancient origins). They were simply forgotten in the Soviet period.

Despite the demonstrative repudiation of Molokhovets and all she was supposed to stand for, ‘socialism on one table’ did retain some vestiges of Petersburg hybrid traditions. BTNF in its various editions included not just kisel and cabbage soup, but frikadelki (fricadelles), rulety (roulades), pudingi (puddings) and vinegrety. Besides, the recipes given in BTNF have, in places, notable echoes of those in Molokhovets’s book. It is entertaining to compare, for example, Molokhovets’s recipe for ‘A Mayonnaise of Fish with Lettuce and Green Sauce’ and ‘Mayonnaise of Pike-Perch, keta, or Trout’ from BTNF.

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1 See e.g. [Kovalev 1984].
2 Rezniki are a dish made from a yeast-raised dough enriched with sour cream and fried on a griddle, something like the English muffins.
Molokhovets advises her readers thus:

Take 3 pounds of large fish of some kind: tench, pike, salmon, large perch or whitefish, fillet, then cut into fingers; place on a baking dish 1/3 spoonfuls of melted butter, salt, sprinkle with 1 glass of wine and the juice of 1/3 lemon. As soon as the fillets go white on one side, turn them over on the other, making sure that the fish cooks through so that it is not raw, but it must not change colour. Then transfer the fish to a round dish and chill.

From the fish bones and scales, fish glue, or ruff, or roach, boil up a lanspik, seasoning with roots and spices and with vinegar; add to it 5–6 cultivated mushrooms; clarify the liquid obtained with 2–3 egg-whites or with caviar (see note below); reduce it to 3/4 glasses in volume; pass through a linen napkin, chill, add to it 1/3 glass Provence oil and begin to whisk the mixture, pouring into it little by little 2 spoonfuls of vinegar. Coat every piece of the cooked fish with the resulting mousse, and place on the dish in a ring [Molokhovets 1901: 476].

The dish is a variant of the classic French aspic (from which the Russian word lanspik is evidently derived). In the nineteenth century, Russian cookbooks often included similar dishes under the names studen, zalivnoe, and simply kholodnoe (‘a cold dish’). The recipe continues by describing the sauce of olives, anchovies, cornichons, cooked egg yolks and Provence oil which Molokhovets recommended pouring into the centre of the fish coated with aspic — that is, a variant of what was then known in Russia as ‘sauce Provençale’, or what would now be called ‘mayonnaise’.

In the general instructions for making the type of dish known as ‘mayonnaise’, Molokhovets recommended:

Garnish the fish, poultry, or game with little heaps of various kinds of vegetable, for instance pickled cornichons, sliced on the diagonal, capers, olives with the stones taken out, chopped hard-boiled eggs, pickled cauliflower or fresh cauliflower boiled in

1 The recipe continues by describing the sauce of olives, anchovies, cornichons, cooked egg yolks and Provence oil which Molokhovets recommended pouring into the centre of the fish coated with aspic.

2 Avdeeva includes studen, terming this a ‘Russian’ dish. Radetsky includes kholodnoe, but also lanspik, studen, and maionez. The only word that I have not come across in the nineteenth-century culinary literature that I have studied is kholodets. In Tatyana Tolstaya’s blog, the various commentators (including the author herself) treat studen as a Petersburg term and kholodets as a Moscow one, but this seems to be a case of ‘folk etymology’; it is possible that kholodets is a Soviet formation from kholodnoe, but equally possible that it circulated orally before 1917 too. If it were of Moscow origin in a distant sense, then one would expect to meet it in pre-1917 written sources.

3 Molokhovets’s sauce resembles less the classic French mayonnaise, made from raw egg yolks (see above) than the English salad sauce published by Eliza Acton in her Modern Cookery for Private Families (1845).

4 The original has ‘skin taken out’, but this is clearly a misprint.
salted water, asparagus, baked beetroot cut into rings, boiled carrots and steamed potatoes cut into even dice, lettuce that has been dressed in the usual way with Provence oil and vinegar, boiled green beans and white butter beans, fresh cucumbers etc., dividing up the little heaps with strips of the chopped aspic [Molokhovets 1901: 471].

In BTNF, the recipe is presented in a drier, more compressed, form, but the main ingredients and techniques used are reminiscent:

Cut fillet of pike-perch, *keta* [keta salmon], trout, and other fish into pieces (about 50–60g each.), lay them on a baking-tray or a shallow pan, greased with vegetable oil, salt, pour over a little water or fish stock so that the pieces of fish are covered to the half-way point with liquid, put a lid on the pan and cook. Then chill and lay out on a dish or plates; cover with mayonnaise sauce in the way indicated for mayonnaise of game.1 Decorate the surface of the mayonnaise with crayfish tails or pieces of crab, leaves of lettuce or other greens, capers, pieces of fresh cucumber. The fish mayonnaise is to be served in the same way as the game mayonnaise and with the same accompaniments. The sauce to be served is either a mustard and caper sauce or a mayonnaise [BTNF 1952: 56; cf. BTNF 1964: 52].

This particular case makes clear that the Soviet kitchen was directly indebted to pre-revolutionary Petersburg traditions. Molokhovets might be the butt of constant mockery, but her recipes were exploited when needed. The result was a kind of ‘x-ray’ of the pre-revolutionary original. The BTNF recipe superficially appears much simpler, but working with it would be nearly impossible for anyone who was not an experienced cook. Few exact quantities are given, and there are not even proportions (‘to every kilo of fillet take one glass of mayonnaise...’ etc.) No indication is given of how long the fish should be cooked, or even the extent to which it should be cooked (contrast Molokhovets’s extremely precise instructions — cooked through, but not coloured). The reader has to extrapolate the process of making fish jelly from the process of making game jelly (if bones are used in this case, then presumably the fish bones should be used). And if anything, the decoration is more elaborate than the one suggested by Molokhovets, who did not require the cooking and peeling of crayfish tails and crabmeat.2

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1 That is: ‘Prepare the sauce in the following manner: mix 2/3 glass mayonnaise with 1/3 glass jelly prepared from the bouillon in which the game has been cooked (the jelly is added to the sauce when cooled, but still liquid), add some strong vinegar and salt to taste, mix well, and chill until the sauce thickens and coats the fillets as it cools completely. To stop the sauce cooling completely when preparation is in progress, it should be stirred with a spoon or paddle’ [BTNF 1952: 61].

2 Tinned ‘Far Eastern Crab’ was one of the delicacies promoted by BTNF, but there were no ‘convenience’ crayfish.
It is fair to assume that the most resplendent dishes in *BTNF* did not have much practical significance for at least some of the book’s readers, but were more like what in vulgar English is known as ‘gastroporn’ — the stuff of fantasy.\(^1\) The want of useful guidance in culinary manuals, along with the fact that they (like those relating to needlework, woodwork, etc.) were singularly hard to get hold of, could only further increase the importance of direct contact and oral transmission in the circulation of knowledge about cooking. For instance, one of our informants described in considerable detail just how frustrating it could be when the only advice you had was from *BTNF*. She ended up by learning not from the book itself, but from her mother-in-law and the ‘trial and error’ method:

**Inf.:** Right up to the point when I got married — I’m ashamed to say — I’d never even peeled a potato, let alone made cabbage soup and... I could bake the odd thing, but doing anything serious, making anything you might actually eat for dinner — I’d literally never done that at all. That was the cross I had to bear. Because I was just terrified that I... And on top of that, we moved in with my husband’s family, we lived there for the first two years, and so... [...]

**Int.:** So how did you cope?

**Inf.:** I took this book with me. A cookbook... Quite a detailed one, or so I thought then... Two of them, even... One was this really well-known one... what’s the name, now... Damn, I’ve forgotten. Ah! One was called *Home Management* [*Domovodstvo*], and the other one was called...

**Int.:** *Tasty and Nutritious Food?*

**Inf.:** *Tasty and Nutritious Food!* Yes, yes! But the awful thing was — because back then if you bought chickens, then that was what you bought. They were actual chickens. Whole ones, even with the guts in, and heads on and feathers. And I was supposed to cook that chicken. And we ate separately [from the in-laws]. Right from the word go.

**Int.:** Count yourself lucky you didn’t have to kill that chicken. [Laughs]

**Inf.:** Well, I can’t say how grateful I am to our food industry that they didn’t actually sell live chickens. [Laughs] And so I bought that

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\(^1\) All the same, many recipes in the book were more accessible than the most elaborate ones for mayonnaise etc. As Alexander Genis points out, ‘people who used the book did take it as a guide. For instance, used always to check the holiday tables at home against the picture in the frontispiece’ (email to author, 6 March 2011). It is notable also that the first Soviet recipe for the extraordinarily popular ‘Salat Olivier’ came out in the post-war editions of *BTNF* (see e.g. the 1948 edn., pp. 26–7). Here the reader is recommended to use for one ‘hazel grouse’ (sic!) 4–5 potatoes, 2 fresh or salted cucumbers, 100g. lettuce leaves, 2 [hard-boiled] eggs, ½ glass of ‘mayonnaise sauce’, ½ spoonful of soya sauce, 1 spoonful of vinegar. ‘Instead of hazel grouse, one may use game of any kind, or farmyard poultry.’ The recipe, while still luxurious by Soviet standards, was vastly democratised by comparison with Aleksandrova-Ignatyeva’s recipe from 1899 (see above).
chicken, well, and as I said, we ate separately from my husband’s parents, there were two fridges and everything, so it wasn’t at all complicated, really. Because I’d decided that so as not to be dependent. Which was why I’d bought that chicken. Only I had no idea which way up the thing went. So I opened the cook-book, and saw the instruction, ‘Divide up the chicken,’ — but as for the anatomy of the chicken and all those other little details… The one thing I did know was that damaging the gall bladder was a very bad idea. Because then the whole dish would taste bitter. But wherever was the gall bladder? Really horrible memories, those are. Of course, in the end I did manage to cope.

Int.: And then you managed to cope with the next one, and the next one… all thanks to your books…

Inf.: Well, it was really the experience… the experience that counted. Books — they don’t tell you how to boil a kettle, for instance, do they?

One impact of direct transmission of recipes was the proliferation of different versions of particularly popular dishes, for instance Salat Olivier and tort Napoleon (Napoleon Cake). For Molokhovets, tort Napoleon was the name for a type of almond cake. In the Soviet kitchen, it referred to a cake made of thin layers sandwiched by vanilla cream; sometimes puff pastry would be used for the layers, and sometimes an enriched dough raised with baking powder. In such cases (as with vinegret in the nineteenth century), it was often the basic technique that made a dish identifiable: chopped vegetables dressed in mayonnaise; thin layers and vanilla pastry-cream. This characteristic freedom of adaptation also illustrates how Soviet food culture had become part of a genuine culinary folklore (as with Victoria sponges in the UK, Gugelhopf in Germany, soda bread in Ireland, and salade niçoise in France).

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One could say that Soviet cooking was an inversion of the famous slogan about literary Socialist Realism: it was socialist in form, international in content. Along with traditional dishes from the Russian table as such (i.e. as served in peasant households), such as kasha and soup, it included a number of dishes that had played

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1 Woman b. 1965, interviewed by Marina Samsonova, Oxf/AHRC SPb. 10 PF9 MS.
2 See [Kushkova 2005].
3 [Molokhovets 1901: 630]. The cake was made out of bitter almonds, butter, flour, sour cream and sugar; after this had been mixed, it was to be rolled out, ‘cut into […] various shapes, painted with an egg wash, sprinkled with almonds and sugar, and baked in the oven’.
4 Victoria sponges, as the name indicates, are only around a century old, and a characteristic modern feature is the use of baking powder (and bread soda in the case of soda bread), an innovation of nineteenth-century industrial production.
a marginal role in the pre-revolutionary diet and had been more or less unknown outside educated households (the ‘triumph of the salad’ in the 1930s and 1940s is a striking illustration of this). In this structural sense, the Soviet kitchen continued the ‘hybrid’ traditions of the pre-revolutionary Petersburg table, and there were occasional echoes of specific dishes and techniques also (as with ‘mayonnaise’ in BTNF 1952). But the actual hybridity of Soviet cuisine and its capacity to absorb new ingredients (as with the industrially-produced sauces and preserves promoted by BTNF in its various editions) was accompanied by a tendentious insistence on the unity and homogeneity of ‘socialism on one table’. The existence of a dish called ‘solyanka in the Georgian style’ did not seem a manifestation of ‘multi-culturalism’. This was not ‘fusion food’ in the sense used in the 1990s and 2000s — the self-conscious mixing of products and techniques from very different origins. Rather, such dishes were a ‘melting pot’ of a literal kind — an expression of communitarianism and shared tastes and perceptions. If the differences between culinary traditions in different republics were muted, then it is hardly surprising that regional distinctions played a still lesser role. As a result, ‘Leningrad cooking’ (like the cooking of Kharkov, Irkutst, Minsk, and so on) did not, in a real sense, exist. This did not mean that everyone prepared food in the same way, but that different levels of variation — between the interpretations of a given dish in one family and another, for instance — counted for more than regional distinctions. It was quite common to find such family recipes, in turn, presented as local ones — as Alexander Genis remembers in the case of ‘Leningrad cabbage soup’ (served cold, with mushrooms in it), the speciality of a family he knew in the city.

1 It was above all ethnic, not local, traditions that inflected Soviet cooking in Leningrad. For example, Jewish families would usually have in their repertoire at least 2 or 3 classic dishes such as gefilte fish, Tatar families would prepare certain Tatar specialities, and so on. Cf. one of our informants’ comments in an interview with Marina Samsonova (woman, b. 1946) (Oxf/AHRC SPb. 10 PF11 MS): ‘All we had left of Caucasian traditions was a few recipes. Because my mother was a very good cook and so was my aunt. My grandmother didn’t cook at all and didn’t seem to think it was worth spending time on nonsense like that.’ Cf. the comments by a man b. 1969 (Oxf/AHRC SPb 10 PF7 MS) from a family with mixed Caucasian and Jewish roots: ‘We prepare all kinds of different things: Georgian, fo instance, chikhertma soup, or something, or, I don’t know, lobio [bean salad], satsivi [meat in a walnut sauce]’, and on the other hand, ‘We didn’t have any Jewish influence at all. We didn’t even cook anything Jewish’ — evidently, contrary to what would be the norm in such a household. There were other nuances also: in oppositional circles during the Brezhnev years, ‘Soviet’ food was regarded with irony, but Armenian food (definitely not Georgian, which had ‘Stalinist’ associations) was approved: people would go out of their way to buy lavash flatbreads, serve bunches of herbs instead of salad, and so on. This preference for ‘authentic’ food was characteristic of the Russian intelligentsia generally: cf. [Vail, Genis 2002]: ‘Our recipes are not taken from Larousse Gastronomique, of course, but they have one unassailable virtue: they are actually our recipes.’

2 Alexander Genis, email to Catriona Kelly, 6 May 2011. This may be a joking name for a dish created during a period when meat was short. In this vein, German Gurevich, ‘Vospominaniya’, <http://www.gergur.ru/work/220/>, remembers a dish called ‘Chebureki in the Leningrad Style’ — fried dough pouches filled with jam, rather than the traditional meat, dating from an era in which even public caterers could not easily get hold of meat.
A rare exception to the general absence of shared local ‘signature dishes’ may be a recipe such as marinated lampreys. In addition to this, the last two decades have seen much promotion, as a local speciality, of *koryushka* (smelt), accompanied by, say, ‘*Koryushka Day*’, founded in 2001. Indeed, alongside Pskov *snetki* (another form of smelt), salmon from Lake Ladoga, and eel, *koryushka* was found in local waters (and fish was one of the only food products readily available in an area of forest and bogland). Yet in pre-revolutionary sources, one does not find *koryushka* presented as a ‘Peterburg’ speciality. This is a case where local tradition — as opposed to normative practices — shaped the perception of a foodstuff in the decades after 1917. As Tatyana Derviz remembered, ‘At weekends people would specially go on trips outside the city to buy [fish], because it was supposed to be fresher than in the city markets, and in the spring, you could get *koryushka* and lampreys everywhere — people caught them within the city limits’ [Derviz 2011: 26]. For many, the ‘cucumber’ scent of *koryushka* was linked inextricably with the local spring.

But *koryushka* was unusual in its associations. For the most part, home food, like public catering, was of a standard kind. If the proponents of some ‘Soviet traditions’ of the 1960s and 1970s (for example, different types of seasonal festival) constantly expressed

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1 My thanks to Albert Baiburin for emphasising the role of fish after reading an earlier version of this article.

2 It is interesting that in her canonical *A Gift to Young Housewives*, Elena Molokhovets notes, with reference to *koryushka*, simply that ‘small *koryushka* come at 10 to the pound weight, bigger ones 8 to the pound, and so on, and that it is customarily boiled, fried, marinated, and smoked (see e.g. the 1901 edn., p. 394). She herself gives recipes only for frying and marinating (three in total). [Dumas 1873] makes similar recommendations for smelt (*eperlan*), and his recipes include one for *Eperlan à l’anglaise*.

3 So many informants have assured me.

4 Interview by Irina Nazarova (Oxf/AHRC-SPb-08 PF-51 IN). The informant is making a joke here, since ‘Sestroretsk *koryushka*’, as he explains at the start of the interview, was a customary slang term for an inhabitant of Sestroretsk, ‘because all you get there is *koryushka*, *koryushka*, and the whole place smells of fish’.

5 Among Petersburg family recipes, such general Russian / Soviet favourites as salted cucumber (*malosolnyi ogurets*), *bliny*, and pies along with Soviet set-pieces such as Mimosa Salad, chicken tabaka (butterfried chicken fried under a weight, with spices), not to speak of the inevitable Salat Oliver, were extremely popular. See e.g. Oxf/AHRC SPb-07 PF8-9 SA (pies, Salat Olivier, *studen*), Oxf/AHRC SPb-07 PF16 SA (Salat Olivier, *studen*), Oxf/AHRC SPb-07 PF10 SA (Salat Olivier, ‘*Mum’s firmennoe blyudo* — Greek salad with fish), Oxf/AHRC SPb-08 PF18 SA (Salat Olivier and Mimosa salad), Oxf/AHRC PF15 SA (*studen*, Salat Olivier, ‘herring in a fur coat’ (preserved herring with tomato and beetroot salad), fish in tomato, poached ox and calf tongue, home-made pelmeni). The lack of generational difference is striking, since the informants were born across a span of more than 30 years (from 1946 to 1977).
SOVIET TRADITIONS

anxiety that the innovations would not take hold, Soviet culinary traditions were a case of the very successful assimilation not just of new techniques and ingredients, but of new attitudes and perceptions, in Soviet everyday life.¹

References


¹ Another example, as Konstantin Bogdanov’s article in this number illustrates [Bogdanov 2013], is Soviet champagne.


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Radetsky I. M. Almanakh gastronomov, zaklyuchayushchii v sebe tret'yat polnykh obedov, oznachennykh zapiskami Russkimi i Frantsuzskimi, pravila dlya nakrytiya stola, sluzheniya za obedom, poriadok vin, t.e. kakoe imeno, za kotorymi kushanyem podaetsya i Prakticheskoe rukovodstvo dlya kuhni sostavnennyi I. M. Radetskim [An Almanac for Gastronomes, Including Thirty Complete Dinners, with Russian and French Annotations, the Rules for Dressing the Table and of Serving at Table, the Serving of Wines, That Is, Which to Serve with Which Food, With Which is Offered a Culinary Manual Composed by I. M. Radetsky]. SPb.: Tipografiiya Shtaba otdelnogo korpusa vnutrennei strazhi, 1852.


Rogalskaya S. Semeinyi stol: Povarennaya kniga, zaklyuchayushchaya raznye na opeye osnovanne ukazany, s oznacheniim nuzhnykh proportsii dlya prigotovleniya desheyevkh i prostykh 1000 blyud, kak skoromnykh, tak i postnykh, ravno pashtetov, pirozhnykh, morozhenogo, kremov, zhele i konservov. S prilozheniem podrobnogo opisaniya uborki stola, zagotovleniya vprok i pokupki provizii. S 40 risunkami v tekstse [The Family Table. A Cookbook Including Various Instructions Based on Experience, with Indications of the Necessary Proportions to Prepare 1000 Economical and Simple Dishes, both for Ordinary and for Fast Days, and Likewise Patés, Cakes, Ice-Creams, Creams, Jellies, and Preserves. Supplemented by Detailed Descriptions of How to Dress the Table, to Put Food By, and to Shop for Provisions. With 40 Line Drawings]. SPb.: M. O. Volf, 1865.


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