

Traditional Ukrainian Comforts

BY ERIKA RAVNSBORG



Courtesy Heritage Bakery & Deli

TO MANY OF US, JANUARY MARKS A new year. It is full of new beginnings and the closing of an old chapter to start a new one. In the Ukraine, they live and celebrate by a different agenda called the “Julian Calendar.” While many of us are celebrating a new year, the Ukrainians have traditionally celebrated their Christmas on January 7th. That was until they made the move to December 25 last year – chiefly to separate this holiday from the Russian Orthodox Church’s calendar. Traditions do take time to change, and no doubt many may still celebrate in January.

Just like any celebration, this Christmas has a feast to enjoy (usually after a fasting period). But this dinner doesn’t start until the first star appears in the sky. As soon as it does, people have a dinner composed of twelve dishes to symbolize the twelve apostles. This meal usually includes kutia (a sweet porridge made of wheat), mushrooms, sauerkraut, red borscht (beet soup), perogies, cabbage rolls (usually made without the meat), pyrizhky (cabbage buns), whitefish, and kolach (a special bread).

With a strong Ukrainian history and influence across the province, Ukrainian food is comfort food to many. So, if you

are looking for a good place to enjoy a Sviata Vecheria (Holy Supper) or just need some supplies for your own table, look no further than these local gems.

Baba's Bistro & Coffee House: Cute and charming, this little family-owned café is a perfect spot for breakfast and lunch. You can get a mouth-watering meal to go or stay a while and enjoy their praise-worthy perogies and cinnamon buns. Warm, welcoming, and inviting, with good old home made cooking, there’s a selection of quality arts and crafts too.

5215 50 St, Mundare
facebook.com/p/Babas-Bistro

Heritage Bakery & Deli: In Calgary’s SW, there is a quaint little spot where the perogies are plentiful and they boast the best borscht a person can get - a combination of both sweet and tangy - just the way a good borscht should be. The earthy flavours shine in this soup but it is the sweet and sour you will remember savouring the most. Stay and have one of their Hot Lunch Combos or take home some baked goods.

1912 37 Street SW, Calgary
heritagebakeryanddeli.ca

Hung Uke Ukrainian Kitchen: The motivation for Red Deer’s Hung Uke is to both serve the community and bring an experience like no other to their customers. These people want to celebrate cultural diversity with dishes such as poutine perogies. A unique twist on a Canadian classic, the hearty perogies are smothered with an oozy gravy and creamy cheese curds.
90 Thorburn Ave #3110, Red Deer
hunguke.com



Pilav Central

Pilav Central and My Beyond Meal:

Although their focus is on European dishes, their speciality, pilav, has an amazing story attached to it - be sure to ask the owners about the legend. One taste of this particular pilav will put a little pep in your step and be the talk of your table. The tenderness of the beef and lamb showcase the fluffiness of the rice. It is finished off with the aromatic flavours of the carrots, chickpeas, and spices.
8330 Macleod Trail SE, Calgary
pilavcentral.com



Courtesy Stawnichy's Mundare Sausage

Saskitoba: In this small hamlet, hidden gems are serving up some fantastic feasts. Saskitoba is such a place with their Ukrainian buffet that they showcase for lunch and dinner. A list of assorted dishes are all up for grabs, including desserts. Lots of options and good for anyone with kids. In case you don't know what you want you can never go wrong with the perogies, cabbage rolls, and pickles. But for a real adventure, you want to go for their nalysnyky, a special kind of crepe made with mild but soft cottage cheese and tangy dill.

1501 8 St #1, Nisku, facebook.com/saskitoba

Stawnichy's Mundare Sausage:

Craving genuine Ukrainian sausage? Why not go to the source? Now with

gluten-free options and cheese varieties, Stawnichy's has products in many grocers and restaurants all over the province. Since 1959, this company has been actively supporting local farmers, charities, and communities and their famous sausage rings are incredibly popular in the community known for their combination of smoky garlic flavours and sharp cheesy taste.

5212 50 Street, Mundare, stawnichys.com

Taste of Ukraine: Ukrainian hospitality often revolves around food, and this lively, richly decorated restaurant is bringing their love for food and people together. This family-run business is authentic in everything they do. Their signature dish is the rich and decadent

chicken Kyiv - breaded chicken that is flavoured with herb butter and a wild mushroom sauce on top.

516 St Albert Trail, St. Albert
tasteofukraine.com

Yo Baba Ukrainian Foods: For a place with all kinds of handmade goodies - just like a good mama's cooking, look to Edmonton's Yo Baba. Their famous baked pyrishky, a form of cheese bun that has a mixture of herbs, spices, cottage cheese, and potatoes, are light, tender, and will have you hooked like a fish to a worm. For over 50 years this place has been a part of the Edmonton scene.

8103 127 Ave NW #9, Edmonton
yobabafoods.com

Nothing quite makes a cold Alberta winter bearable than rich and flavourable food, and Ukrainian cuisine fits the bill with a long history in making Alberta what it is. Their country's conflict still needs to be on our minds and their community still needs our support. So, this January, snuggle up with a bowl of borscht and stay warm.

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Erika Ravnsborg is an Alberta freelance writer/ blogger/adventurer/explorer. Her blog, "This Magical World", (magicalstoriesoshare.com) features her enchanted tales of travel, food, shopping, and culture.

Culinaire

VINE & DINE SERIES

Vine & Dine at Vero Bistro

January 16, 24, and 28 Vero Bistro is one of our all-time popular Vine & Dine destinations, and we're coming back to feast on Chef Jenny's outstanding cuisine and her carefully created dishes.

One-off Vine & Dine at The Artist Lounge

January 19 All our evenings at The Artist Lounge sold out, so we're offering another opportunity to wander the gallery and enjoy 6 pairing courses of super delicious small plates.

Romantic Italy at Bonterra Trattoria

February 7 We're back again for Romantic Italy at Bonterra. This premium pairing dinner sells out very fast every year because the food and service at Bonterra are always so good!

Vine & Dine at La Brezza

February 11, 22, and 28 We're coming to La Brezza Ristorante for three Vine & Dine evenings - they're one of Calgary's long-time favourite Italian restaurants, and we're long overdue!

Vine & Dine at Queens

March 7, 14, and 21 Always super popular, it's our fourth year at Queens, and they're opening specially for us in March for three

evenings of always superb menus for our 6-course pairing dinners.

Luxury Wine & Culinary Tour of Northeast Spain, May 27-June 5, 2024

Our Wine & Culinary Tour to Northeast Spain last year sold out in 12 hours so we're repeating this fabulous, all-inclusive experience in Spring. This tour sold out too, but two places have now become available. Ask for details!

New events are added regularly so check vineanddine.ca as they can sell out quickly. Email linda@culinairemagazine.ca to reserve your places, and/or be included in our bi-monthly updates so you hear about events before the rest of the city. We try to cater for allergies.