

Excerpt from
Baba's Kitchen: Ukrainian Soul Food

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Ivana Kupala (Summer Solstice)

Baba really know how to get party started. She especial like to make *Cherry Charlotte*, *Almond Crescent Horn*, *Poppy Seed Cake* and *Kozak Honey Mousse* for excellent holiday call *Kupala*, which mean "she bathing."

Kupala/Kupalo is also proper noun, god and goddess of Love and Harvest. She/he represent Sun Queen and King. In case you not already guess, this is pair of sexy twin. They represent science of astrology as Gemini. Christian get it all mix up with story about John Baptist. They mix up holiday and make boring. Baba love Jesus, but he was not boring. He big bicep man running around overturning Wall Street table. He was first in *Occupy Movement*.

Ukrainian celebrate Kupala for several thousand year. On summer solstice, whole village bathe together. This is because sun reflect in water for longest time on this day. We bathe together to get super charge for rest of year. Is first official kind of solar power.

On Eve of Kupala, men and women make many bonfire near stream or pond. We light these fire with flint or rubbing our body together, because fire have to be new. Sometime Kupala/Kupalo jump right in there and light fire with twin drill. They grin lots. We jump over these fire and make wish, while flame burn away what we don't need no more. This include guilty conscience, expired herb medication and stained crap Canadian would dump on charity store.

We build straw figure who represent waning Sun Twin, dress them up and make good fun of them all night. This represent sun going slowly to sleep like *baba* or *didukh* (grandma or grandpa). Some people burn him, some people drown him or tear him apart and scatter in field for next year fertility. You think this barbaric? Other culture make human sacrifice at this time. In North America, is no dignity involved in deposing worn out Queen or King. You just throw egg at losing candidate. Dignity is important thing in life.

Ukrainian have lots fun at Kupala Love Harvest funeral. We dance and sing song about best part of life. Man song have lyric like:

Oh pretty girl, put your hand on my big sweaty horse, and I want you to polish my sword, chickie babe. Woman answer with, *Your horse can have a drink in my well/Uh oh, horse better not slobber and Is that sharp sword in your scabbard, or you just happy horny kozak?*

Then there is old chestnut about man giving woman re-re-re-respect. You think Aretha Franklin first one to sing this? Uh uh. This was word for good time in Ukraina for many century. We have old song about woman who respect husband but love all the other.

We play *Blindfold Kissing Game* and *Pass Apple Around With Anything But Your Hand Game*. Ukrainian have real good balance.

Women wear all kind flower and herb on body and garland in hair. This attract man who is dying to pick flower. Is nothing subtle about Ukrainian romance. Maybe you already guess. Is very beautiful, though. Later, women throw garland on water to read their fortune for next year. If no flower left, she pretty well guess how it gonna be.

Village wise woman hang out nearby. Woman who don't want to wear eyeglass ask her for wreath made from mugwort. They wear this and stare into bonfire to strengthen their good eye. When this *vorozhka* is not healing burn from fire or rug, she tell your fortune by tarot card, candle wax and if you sleep with village idiot.

After all this, we walk through dark wood. Is not easy, because on this night, all tree move and talk. We hunt for *tsvit paporoti*, fire fern flower. This one night it glow in dark and make all your deepest wish come true. When you find, you have to make magic circle around flower and fight *nychyste syla*, dirty demon who try to chew off your face. Mind you, by this time we is pretty well buzz on mushroom and magic herb we put in our varenyky and horilka. After one person find fire fern flower, we all go in couple to celebrate life. If we go in threesome, this call *Having three well on your property*. Ukrainian civil servant exam not like any other, Baba guarantee.

Most traditional thing to eat on Kupala is egg and varenyky. Egg is for fertility and varenyky is one kind symbol of crescent moon. Young people also feed each other *Poppyseed Cake, Chapter Twenty Four*. Poppy seed is thing that scatter everywhere, so is good example if you want to do this yourself.

Here is Baba favorite Kupala recipe. Easy to make and very sexy. Baba can hear some people whining, "But Baba, is not strictly of Ukrainian origin!" Baba say politely, "Maybe you need more time with kozak and his horse, dorahenka."

Next come three recipe perfect for Ivana Kupala:

Vyshnia (Cherry) Charlotte

Make someone else **pit fresh sweet vyshnia. Put these in bowl with vanilla sugar and big splash cherry liqueur or kirsch.** One time Baba want to tell that Chicken Colonel, "Who you telling to have finger licking day?" but she kind of feel kindred spirit. She know you already licking finger and moaning.

You need three dozen lady finger pastry, total. Put enough just to cover bottom of springform pan. No, put them on top and hope they hover like hummingbird. Baba give you permission to actual buy these for Kupala. Probably from story you understand you need to weave flower garland and get bikini wax. When you having bath with all your neighbor is not time to be making fussy pastry, okay? Sheesh.

Springform pan is kind with buckle on side, like that chastity belt you pretending you going to wear on holiday. Ha!

Throw about one third of cherry in blender with huger splash cherry liqueur.

Wait. Baba know this not all going into recipe. Throw in extra cherry and liqueur to tide yourself over.

After blend and drink, **use cherry/liqueur liquid to make ladyfinger moist.** Matka Bozha, Baba feel like she reliving Kupala right now.

Make bowl full real whip cream with more vanilla sugar. Do not use kind from spray can, or for sure you will not be one to find fire fern or get her flower pluck.

Put layer of cherry on ladyfinger. Cover with whip cream. Keep doing this until ingredient all gone or you pass out. Finish with layer of ladyfinger.

Put *Cherry Charlotte* in fridge for couple of hour. Unbuckle from pan. Before you take to party, put on more sweet whip cream.

This meant to be serve to special person with your bare hand.

If friend not serve you back same way, send him into wood to fight crazy demon by himself. Grab fire flower when he not looking. Run.

Vanilla sugar:

You can buy or you can make. **Get one vanilla bean for every two cup sugar.** This more subtle taste than liquid vanilla. Recipe already have plenty alcohol. Like you ever get enough. But still, Baba trying to make you sophisticate in every way.

Slice side of bean. Scrape seed into airtight jar with sugar and mix up. Then bury bean pod in sugar and leave alone for at least whole week. Occasional you will hear noise from container. They just having their own Kupala. Ignore.

Ingredient List:

- Pitted cherries, one and one half pounds
- Cherry liqueur or kirsch, one half cup. One quarter cup goes with cherries, one quarter cup in blender.
- Vanilla sugar, one half cup. One quarter cup goes with cherries, one quarter cup in whipped cream.
- Ladyfingers, three dozen
- Whipped cream, two cups
- Springform pan

Next Kupala recipe, non-alcoholic:

Rohalyky (Almond Crescents)

This dessert is full of heavy symbolism. Golden moon crescent is on head of Kupala/Kupalo for their royalty. Because they sexy royalty, is also symbolize animal horn and is full of creamy filling. You not going to find anything like this around palace of your Queen E, Baba telling you this.

This also just as easy to make as that doughboy stuff. With Baba pastry, you can be much more proud.

Leave butter on counter overnight. Put some kind heavy cover over top so cat won't have to put on big innocent act in morning.

Mix together unbleach flour with full yeast. Use bowl. Cut in soft butter with whisking thing until it all look like that crumbly cloud you ignore on your wedding day. Uh oh. Is running make up.

Beat up two egg yolk and add to cloudy thing. Put egg white in fridge. Throw in big splash smetana (sour cream).

Go wash your hand. Baba not going to say "again," because then we both be liar. **Mix dough into ball with hand**, but don't be kneady, or dough will get tough. Just give little massage. Baba get annoy when you get kneady. Ha! **Wrap this up in wax paper and chill for two hour.** If you done this last Kupala, you wouldn't have stretch mark now.

Filling:

Make oven 375 degree F.

Grind up toasted almond, but don't make into dust. This filling going to be surprise.

Creamy but crunchy. Just like when you stay up all night to make your own peanut butter. As if.

Mix up almond with brown sugar.

Beat up two egg white with pinch salt till they begging to be with almond and sugar. This is good practice.

Take dough from fridge, and divide into three smaller ball. They going to have to be smaller, or something wrong. You got yourself inside shrinking universe by mistake. Baba have no idea what you should do. Maybe call Stephen Hawking or something.

Take rolling pin out from bedroom and sprinkle flour both on it and on table. Roll these doughball out into three circle so thin like your stinking boss pretend is his wallet. About one eighth inch.

Cut each circle into eight wedgie. Here is little bit tricky. You going to look back and forth, dough to filling, dough to filling. Make executive decision and **spread one twenty-fourth of filling onto each piece dough.**

Baba warning: Do not mix this up with one quarter of filling, or you going to be calling yourself *durna diuchina*, stupid girl, all night. This is not conducive to making best fern-plucking. Whoever tell you stupid is sexy, just want all good man for herself. Remember object of recipe in this section!

Start rolling from wide end. Keep rolling to skinny end, then pull up dough into nice smile shape. Keep point on bottom, or else crescent will open in oven.

Put almond crescent on baking sheet you coat very light with soniashnyk, sunflower oil.

Bake half hour or maybe forty minute, until they all beautiful goldie color and have puffy face, like time you made disaster with collagen.

Name *rohalyky* is derive from rohy, two horn. Some idiot going to make joke about your horny pastry. This is not person to choose on Kupala. Baba advice about stupid and sex apply to all kind sex.

Your option:

See *Poppyseed Rohalyky, Twenty Four*, for alternate filling.

Ingredient List:

Pastry

- Unbleached flour, two cups
- Dry yeast, one tablespoon

- Butter, one cup
- Egg yolks, two
- Sour cream, one quarter cup
- Waxed paper

Filling

- Ground, toasted almonds, two cups
- Brown sugar, three quarter cup
- Egg whites, two
- Salt, pinch

Kozak Honey Mousse

This recipe remind Baba of Led Zeppelin song, *Black Dog*. Is how she feel inside most of time.

Is again something to feed each other with hand. Is real good thing you taking bath together right after.

Make separation of eight big fertilize egg if you want to get pregnant. Otherwise, use only from virgin chicken. How you tell? Is no way. You have to put chicken in house at night, keep eye on her every minute and have rifle handy. This work out with your family history real good, Baba know.

Beat eight egg yolk while dripping in liquid honey. If you already Ukrainian, use buckwheat honey. Very strong taste. Go slow with honey, just like with love. Baba like to invite young man to watch her make this. Or get him to beat yolk while you dripping honey. Sometime this recipe take whole day.

Cook egg honey mix on low heat. Keep stirring with wood spoon. Do not lick, spoon will be extremely hot. Burning tongue before Kupala is tragedy you won't forget. This is good time to remind you not to lick side of metal trough when you visit barn at Winter Solstice, too.

Take egg honey mix off stove and let cool till is room temperature.

Whip those eight egg white into frenzy. They should be stiff and begging for honey.

Fold them into egg honey mix. Put mousse in one big bowl or keep in several small bowl. Depends: how many well you want on your property?

Put in fridge for two three hour. They going to have goose bump. What you care? Is in interest of good romance.

Garnish with several slice of fresh fruit.

Ingredient list:

- Eggs, eight large
- Liquid honey, two and one half cups
- Fruit for garnish

Baba interrupt story on Kupala Eve because she can't wait for dessert. Now she is back.

Day of Kupala: Alternate name is *Day of Hangover and Sore Thigh*. This pretty wicked, too. Dew of Kupala very, very important. Guess what dew symbolize in Ukraina? Let's just say dying Sun twin leave behind fertility present. Sick people roll around in morning dew, farmer drive cattle through wet field, and woman run through field barefoot. If she really, really determine to get marry, she leave pretty bowl outside overnight and wash her face in this super-juice. Like Baba say, really really determine.

In Ukraina, we tease pregnant not marry woman by singing to her, "Shouldn't have run around in dew barefoot, dorahenka." Honest, this stuff is everywhere. Sometime Baba just shock by Nature.

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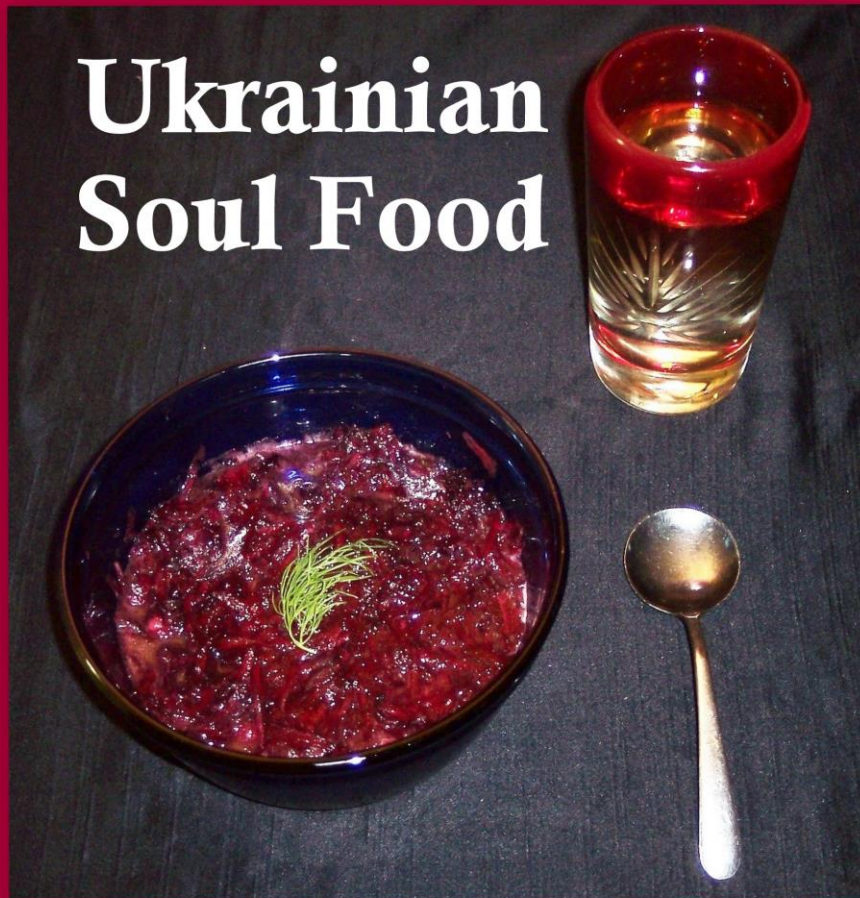
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