

Baba's Holubtsi (Cabbage Rolls)

[From Baba's Kitchen: Ukrainian Soul Food](#)
[By Raisa Stone](#)

Meatless

My book contain entire chapter of Holubtsi recipes! This include kasha (buckwheat), cheese, mushroom, meat and with smetana (sour cream).

Holubtsi mean dear little pigeon. You probably call cabbage roll. This sound not too romantic. When I make holubtsi, men line up on village street. They say, "Oh Baba, can I be little pigeon in your hand, too?"

I send them chop wood. They come back and give me foot massage with big rough hand. Then I make sound like pigeon. *Croo, croo, croo*. Maybe then I feed them. Ha!

I show you how to make holubtsi like real Ukrainian. First, get neighbor to come over and help. This long job. Also, taking core from cabbage is boring. This first kind have no meat. Stalin steal our cow and pig, and for long time I only make without.

This not make me vegetarian. So don't be telling all your hippie-shmippie friend, "Go see Baba." I live in BC with grandchildren. I drink horilka and stick nail in tire of Volkswagen van for big kick. Then I put pedal to metal in my Rocket 88. I help my grandson take engine from boring Oldsmobile and fit in my red '68 Caddy for real ride. They call me *Cadillac Kozachka*.

This recipe make twenty or thirty pigeon.

Baba going to show you two method for peeling cabbage:

- 1. Take core from big head cabbage.** Use very sharp knife. Make small "v" beside core on two side, then cut down and make wiggle wiggle wiggle until core come out. Also is patent tool for doing this, if you can find. Not sure if invented by Ukrainian. Probably. We invent helicopter, xray, immunology, pants and horse tack. So why not paring tool?

Put head cabbage in biggest pot and steam or boil on low until outside leaf look soft. Watch careful. If cabbage get mushy, you have to go back to store. No exception. If you really smart, you buy two head cabbage in first place.

2. Clean out your freezer so have room for head cabbage. This way might look easier, but Baba not so sure. Look inside freezer first. Put whole head cabbage in plastic bag. Stick inside freezer and leave alone for at least forty eight hour. OR, if is middle of winter, lock it in trunk of that junky car in front your trailer. Don't forget where you leave it, or in spring your relative will have to move out of car because of smell. This mean you have to plan ahead. So again, not easy.

Take cabbage out from freezer and bag night before. Put in colander thing and let thaw without disturbing. If you make disturbance, cabbage might believe it better off without you.

Next day, take out core like Baba tell you. Cabbage leaf will almost fall off by themself. Have clean towel waiting, because leaf will be wet.

Peel and chop three medium or two large onion. Here is trick so you not cry: when daughter not home, go steal swimming google. Kind make her look like bug eye insect. Only not tell her she look like this. Wear before starting to peel onion. Also, can peel onion under cold running tap water. Then wash hand with soap, rinse, and rub hand along metal tap until smell all gone. This trick on tap also work for garlic smell.

Fry onion in butter until they looking clear and whole kitchen smelling.

Wash google and put back. I warn you: when daughter find out, she scream and cry. What you care? Is in interest of science.

Cook long grain white rice or brown rice with just enough water to cover. If you usually use four cup water, use just two. Watch rice. You want to be only cook enough to soak up water, but still a little hard. Brown rice have more B vitamin and very good for woman hormone.

Mix rice with onion. Put salt and crack black pepper. Do not use crazy ground pepper from dollar store. This tasteless. Holubtsi very cheap to make. Spend little bit money on good pepper. Even better, you buy whole pepper and make good looking man grind for you.

Baba law for compromise: Put half of rice and onion mix in another bowl. Mix in chop fresh dill for real Ukrainian taste. Some people have twisty kind taste bud, not like dill so much. Tell them, "Eat other kind," then don't invite over again.

Grease large roasting pan (size like you roast chicken) with *soniashnyk*, sunflower oil. We call flower this because she follow sun around all day with her face, so beautiful. Line roaster with largest cabbage leaf, make nest for little pigeon. So cute.

Big surprise this recipe: NO GARLIC.

Spread big clean sheet on kitchen table. Not same one you use for varenyky (perohi), or they be jealous each other. Beside, if you clumsy and splash tomato juice on sheet, then where your varenyky be? Put big greased roasting pan close by. Not on chair, or some stupid neighbor sit in it. People always screaming, "Lawsuit!" so be careful with this thing.

But maybe your dupa get stuck in pan, you be mad, too. I think they make too big deal, anyway. Last time this happen, I try explain grease make it easy to slide out. But she not listen. Next thing I know, shyster at door with some kind paper, saying, "People Court." And they say this some kind democracy. Worse thing, I have to start over greasing roaster for holubtsi.

Baba can't believe she saying this, but is better than yet nother stupid lawsuit: **Let rice, kasha and any other filling get Joe Cool before you put into cabbage leaf.** Hot filling is hot. You can burn yourself. Also, water is wet. Wet water will make you wet. Knife is sharp, butter is greasy and how high is moon.

And you can be sure, you ever sue Baba, she going to write about and talk about on national TV and in magazine. You like one these story be about you, *diurna* loser, go ahead.

You and neighbor take cool cabbage leaf, spread on sheet. With big spoon, put filling inside. Tuck end inside leaf and roll, roll, roll. If you already know how to make own cigar, you be finest kind holubtsi cook. I like small dessert cigar, soak in plum horilka call *slivovitz*.

Use eye like eagle, look this way and that to judge how much rice to put. I know you get upset, say, "Baba, I need measurement!" Look, poopchik, no such thing as government regulation cabbage leaf size. Use brain to measure, okay? If you put too much rice, it spill from end and baby pigeon be ugly thing. If you put too little, you have anorexic pigeon. There your measurement. Pah!

Make neighbor help you put holubtsi in bottom roaster, tight against each other. Put seam on bottom, so they not unroll. Pigeon cuddle lots in nest. Make layer.

Heat oven to 400 F. Put aluminum tray on rack, bigger than roaster to catch juice overflow. Kind you use when baking large turkey. Later, you thank me for this. Later, you thank me for everything.

When roaster is two-third full, pour big can of tomato juice on holubtsi. Same size can as when dog get spray by skunk, not size you always pouring in Bloody Mary. You can also try some this V-8 juice mix half-half with tomato. Just don't pour any in V-8 Cadillac, or you be sorry.

Baba warning: if holubtsi are all the way to top, you need bigger roaster! This time I let you transfer some to another roaster. Go buy real roaster for next time.

Make sure is room for juice to bubble, or you have mess in oven. Pigeon not duck. Can't swim! So use enough juice to cover about two-third of holubtsi. Cover with left over cabbage leaf. Snug like in bed.

Put lid on roaster. Cook for half-hour at 400 F, then turn down to 350 F for one and one half hour.

How many holubtsi will you make, you asking. If you was more intimate with cabbage, you would know it have about twenty leaf.

Your option:

*For extra tongue tingle, **use boiling soup or mushroom stock instead of water to cook rice.** This is Baba tip you can use almost anytime, except in coffee. Gross.

***Use scalded milk instead of water, and add 1/4 cup butter to rice.**

***Substitute jasmine** rice for sweeter taste. This is part of *Baba Nouveau Ukrainski Fusionski* menu.

Ingredient List:

- Clean bed sheet
- Huge greased roasting pan
- Two large cabbages. One is a spare
- Onions, two large or three medium
- Butter, three tablespoons
- Long grain brown or white rice, three cups dry
- Fresh dill, one bunch chopped fine
- Salt, half teaspoon
- Cracked black pepper, half teaspoon
- Tomato juice, 32 oz. can. Can mix with V-8 for variation

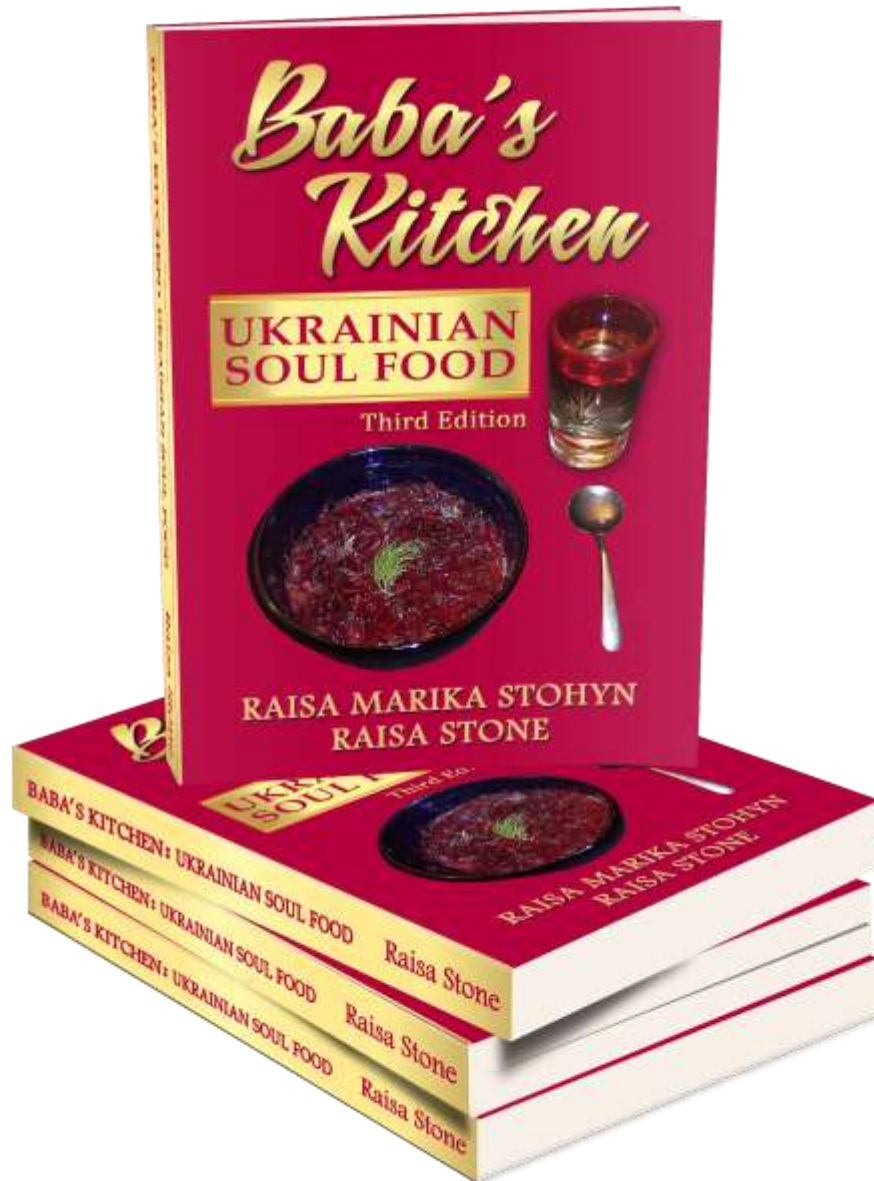
Smachnoho! Eat good food, Poopchik! My book contain entire chapter of *Holubtsi recipes!* This include *Kasha (buckwheat), cheese, mushroom, meat and with smetana (sour cream).*

Baba Raisa

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Baba's Kitchen: Ukrainian Soul Food is outrageous stories and 200 traditional recipes and folk medicines from Stalinist survivors. For more information and Baba's free newsletter visit:

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