

# POLISH BORSCHT

*Barszcz* in Polish means "borscht." *Barszcz* is sometimes made with a *kwas* or sour starter and is usually red (made with beets) or white (made with *white kielbasa* cooking water, potatoes and sour cream, or other ingredients).

The clear red *barszcz* or *barszcz czysty czerwony* gets a desired hint of sourness from lemon juice or vinegar and is great eaten hot with boiled potatoes or cold with rye bread. This meatless soup is often served with mushroom *uszka* for Polish Christmas Eve dinner known as *wigilia*.



## Ingredients

- 4 large or 6 small beets, peeled and halved
- 1 lb (455 g) meaty veal or beef bones
- 1 medium carrot, trimmed and peeled
- 1 medium parsnip, trimmed and peeled
- 1 large onion, peeled and halved
- 1 leek (white and green parts), trimmed, halved lengthwise, and rinsed
- 1/4 celery root, peeled, or 1 long celery stalk
- 3 to 4 dried mushrooms or porcini, if you've got them
- 8 garlic cloves, peeled but left whole, plus 2 extra just in case
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 large pinch of dried marjoram, plus more for seasoning
- 6 peppercorns (optional; throw them in if you like a spicier soup)
- About 12 cups (2.8 L) water (depending on the size of the pot)
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1/2 cup (120 ml) sour cream or plain Greek-style yogurt (optional)

## Directions

1. Combine the beets, bones, carrot, parsnip, onion, leek, celery root, mushrooms, 8 garlic cloves, the bay leaf, marjoram, peppercorns (if using), and water in a large stockpot and bring to a boil. (There should be enough water to cover the other ingredients.) Remove any foam that has risen to the top, cover, and turn down the heat. Simmer gently until the meat falls off the bones and the vegetables are very soft, about 2 hours.
2. Strain the soup through a colander, pressing the solids to extract all the liquids. Taste: If it is too watery, then boil down, uncovered, for an additional 30 minutes or so. If it seems too dense, add water. When the soup is ready, stir in the lemon juice. Season with salt and pepper and, if you like, some more dried marjoram.
3. You might also ask yourself at this point whether the soup needs even more garlic, in which case peel a couple more cloves, crush them with a garlic press or the flat side of a knife, toss them in, and simmer for a minute or two. Make sure they don't fall into anyone's bowl when you serve (unless, like Anne, the person happens to like boiled garlic cloves). The flavor should be slightly sour and garlicky, yet with that beety hint of sweetness.
4. Serve clear, very hot, in small bowls or even large teacups, which you can pick up and drink. If you prefer yours bright pink, then serve in large soup plates with a spoonful of the sour cream or plain yogurt dropped into each one.

# USZKA

Uszka means "little ears" in Polish and are small dumplings (a very small and twisted version of pierogi), usually filled with flavoursome wild forest mushrooms and/or cabbage (sauerkraut) and/or minced meat. They are usually served with barszcz, though they can be eaten simply with melted butter and herbs (usually chives) sprinkled over. When vegetarian (filled only with mushrooms or mushrooms with cabbage) they are a part of traditional Christmas Eve dish in Poland and are either added in the soup, or eaten as a side dish.



## Ingredients

### Filling

- 4 ounces mushrooms, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 4 tablespoons fresh breadcrumbs
- 2 tablespoons parsley, finely chopped
- 1 large egg, beaten
- salt and pepper

### Dough

- 1 egg
- 1/3 cup milk
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 egg, beaten with 1 tbl water for sealing



## Directions

### Filling:

1. Melt butter in a large skillet. Add the onion and saute until translucent, about 5 minutes.
2. Add the chopped mushrooms and cook an additional 10 minutes, stirring from time to time, or until the liquid from the mushrooms has evaporated and the mixture starts to sizzle.
3. Put the onion and mushroom mix in a large bowl. Add the breadcrumbs, parsley and the beaten egg. Season with salt and pepper, to taste.
4. Mix everything together to form a firm paste. Allow the paste to cool slightly before filling the dumplings. The filling can be made 24 hrs ahead of time.

### Dough:

1. Whisk together the egg, milk and salt.
2. Stir in half of the flour until it is incorporated, then add the other half and continue to stir.
3. After it comes together into a thick, sticky dough, place the dough on a floured surface and knead until it is smooth, supple and soft, but not sticky. Add additional flour, as necessary, to achieve this.
4. Form the dough into a ball, wrap it in plastic wrap or place in bowl and cover with plastic. Let rest 15 minutes.

### Dumplings:

1. Take half the dough and roll it out as thin as possible, about 1/8 in thick, Cut the dough into 1 1/2 or 2 inch squares. Place a small amount of filling into the middle of the square.
2. Brush a bit of the beaten egg along the edges and fold the dough over to form a triangle, Seal well. Place on the work surface with the top pointing away from you and fold the two side point together, pressing to seal.
3. Heat salted water in a large pot to a boil. Add the dumplings, let them rise and cook for 3 to 4 minutes longer. (Give them a stir if they are sticking to the bottom),.
4. Drain. Place a few pockets in each soup bowl and fill with hot borscht or broth.

# USZKA WITH MUSHROOMS AND SAUERKRAUT

## Ingredients in this recipe

- 1 kg of the sauerkraut
- 2-3 cups of dried mushrooms or much more raw white mushrooms
- 2 medium-sized onions
- oil or butter for frying onion
- some salt
- some black pepper
- 8-10 bay leaves
- spoonful of breadcrumbs (optional)

## Directions

1. Rinse dried mushrooms with cold water and throw into the pot with hot water. Leave for 15-20 minutes.
2. Put the pot on the cooker and cook mushrooms, until become soft.
3. Drain mushrooms off on the colander. Collect water in the second pot.
4. Throw the sauerkraut into water, in which mushrooms were cooked. Cook it, until become soft.
5. In the meantime cut mushrooms carefully into small stripes.
6. Drain the cabbage off on the sieve. You can pour water out. Carefully shred the cabbage into small stripes.
7. Peel two medium-sized onions and cut into small dices.
8. Melt some butter or oil on the frying pan.
9. Throw onion to hot butter / oil and fry about 5 minutes to achieve delicate browning.
10. Next throw the cabbage and mushrooms. Mix precisely.
11. Add the salt and grinded black pepper to the taste. Add 8-10 bay leafs. Some Poles add a tablespoon of breadcrumbs, but it is not obligatory.
12. Put a lid on the frying pan and stew about 10 minutes.
13. Put the filling to the bowl and let it cool off. The filling is ready to go when cooled but you will need to get rid of bay leafs before folding pierogi or uszka.