

《A taste of Russia in Beijing》

Among the 20 major economies, we pick 5 colorful and tasty cuisines that can be enjoyed in China's increasingly cosmopolitan capital city. Food is something that unites these very diverse nations despite their political differences. Russia is the country with the world's largest land mass but its food doesn't exactly top the popularity charts among food lovers around the globe. Which is a shame, really, because this huge country has lots to offer besides vodka and caviar.

The area around Ritan Park in central Beijing looks a bit like a "Little Russia". There are dozens of Russian eateries around. We pick one, to see what's cooking in their kitchen.

Several thousand Russians live in the Chinese capital, most of them are traders or shop owners.

Here, they don't have to worry too much about adapting to another food culture as dining feels almost like home.

We head straight into the kitchen to learn how to prepare an appetizer, this one is a Russian traditional beetroot salad.

Apart from being a piece of art, it is also appealing to the taste buds.

"Russia geographically where they are based in the world, they use a lot of pickles. Things like cabbage, cucumber, beetroot plays a big role in their cuisine, as well as potato," Michelle Tang, culinary expert with The Hutong said.

Russian food is a collection of different cooking traditions, and is divided into traditional and Soviet cuisine.

Historically, it was the peasant food of the rural population living in a harsh climate with long winters, with a mix of fish, pork, poultry, caviar, and berries, and crops such as rye, wheat, and barley.

Contemporary Russian gastronomy features mushrooms, sour cream, potatoes, and also boasts influences from other parts of Europe.

Soups and stews have traditionally used seasonal or storable produce, such as fish and meats. And they remain the staple for the vast majority of Russians to this day - at home and abroad.

I'm interested to know which dish is the bestseller on the menu.

"Borscht, the soup. The most famous soup in Russia. We have a few kinds of very popular salads. We call it "stoly" salad, beetroot salad, hering potato. It's actually a lot, it's hard to say," Marlen ifraimov, MD of Dacha Restaurant, said.

China is Russia's neighbour, and therefore, many of the Chinese guests have a personal, and sometimes melancholic, history with the country and its food.

"When I was a kid, my mum and dad already took me to eat Russian food, because they have all been to Russia, or they like Russia very much," Restaurant guest Jin Lu said.

High in calories, heavy and a bit fatty - classic Russian cuisine might not be your top choice if you're planning to embark on a diet.

"One of my favorite dishes is actually chicken Kiev. That has a lot of butter and chicken, of course it's deep-fried and that's why it tastes so good. Of course, in combination with a little vodka, and that's like a quintessential Russian dish for me," Tang said.

Alcohol consumption in Russia remains among the highest in the world.

Data shows that in 2015, Lithuania reported the highest consumption of alcohol at around 14 liters per capita, while Russians drank around 11 liters.

As the Russian saying goes: "Vodka spoils everything, but the glasses."