

Festival to Bring High Cuisine to The Masses

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It is no secret that Moscow is rapidly becoming an international culinary center. Though the city may not entirely have escaped its Soviet reputation for borshch and overcooked chicken kiev, the presence of entrepreneurs like Arkady Novikov and branches of internationally acclaimed restaurants like Nobu, shows that Moscow has moved far beyond its bland past.

However, with average monthly wages in Moscow stuck at about 57,000 rubles (\$1,800), few Muscovites can afford to eat at restaurants where a full meal with alcohol could easily set a couple back 5,000 rubles. Now, the Moscow Gastronomic Festival is aiming to change that, opening up top-tier restaurants to less wealthy consumers until Nov. 14.

The ninth annual
Moscow

Gastronomic
Festival has top-
flight restaurants
make special
budget menus.

This is the ninth year running that Moscow's gastronomic festival has organized Moscow's leading restaurants to create a month-long celebration of the city's food culture. This year, the organizers have convinced more than 50 of the city's leading restaurants to create special set menus for the festival that can cost no more than 1500 rubles, an affordable sum for many middle-class Muscovites.

With such a wide array of options, most people will not be able to try all of the restaurants that are opening their doors for the gastronomic festival. This begs the question: Which restaurants should one try? Naturally, this depends on personal tastes.

If you are looking for a glamorous spot to rub shoulders with celebrities, try one of the restaurants owned by the Novikov Group. These include the eponymous Novikov, a seafood-focused restaurant on the third floor of the Ritz-Carlton, as well as Tatler Club, a fusion restaurant with an expansive menu and an airy art deco-styled dining room with lofty ceilings.

For those interested in classic European cuisine, highlights might be Accenti, a relatively old, by Moscow standards, restaurant that has been taking part in the gastronomic festival since its inception. For their special festival tasting menu, Accenti is serving a carpaccio of squash and figs with octopus and mint pesto, Norwegian fjord trout cooked sous vide with gremolata and shiitake mushrooms, and a semifreddo of Movenpick vanilla ice cream with candied fruits and feijoa jam.

For meat lovers, a good option might be Entrecote, which is serving beef tartare, mandarin duck, and crayfish, though many of the other restaurants have impressive meat offerings as well.

The many Muscovites who enjoy Japanese food will have plenty to be thankful for: Sushi restaurants Megu and Misatu are both participating in the festival, though the Moscow branch of Nobu has remained expensively aloof.

A full listing of restaurants and offerings can be found at the Moscow Gastronomic Festival website, gastronomic.ru.

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