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Russian Lawmaker Wants Quota on Foreign Food in Moscow Restaurants

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State Duma Deputy Vadim Solovyev of the Communist Party is writing a bill that would require all restaurants in Russia to make Russian dishes at least half of their menu, pro-government daily Izvestia reported Wednesday.

The proposal would apply to all restaurants that were not "nationality specific." Soloyev says that the initiative will promote Russian traditions and attract foreign tourists. He intends to submit the draft law in the fall State Duma session.

Solovyev noted that he has a hard time finding traditional Russian food near the State Duma building, which is located across the street from Red Square.

Restaurant critic Olga Suytkina supports the deputy's proposal, telling Izvestia that there is a need to develop Russian cuisine and that the state should play a role in the process. However, she noted, the appreciation of national dishes must come from a deeper sense of patriotism, rather than a "trend for Russian cuisine."

Earlier this year, Russian film directors Nikita Mikhalkov and Andrei Konchalovsky requested government support for their national fast-food project *Yedim kak Doma!* (Eat Like at Home!) The restaurant will serve Russian food made from local products. In April, newspaper Kommersant reported that in a letter to Putin, Konchalovsky and Mikhalkov requested an investment of 982 million rubles ($17 million) to create a fast-food chain that will "promote import substitution and create an alternative to Western fast-food chains."

According to Izvestia, Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovitch has ordered a number of ministries, including the Ministry of Economic Development, and state-owned banking giant Sberbank to present proposals to aid the project in the near future.

Russia is not alone in its drive to promote local cooking. Restaurants in Belarus must devote a page in their menus to local dishes and there is a drive to give tax breaks to outlets that serve Belarussian cuisine exclusively.

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