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Russian Recipe Redux at Kutuzovskiy 5

By Sarah Crowther

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The interior of Kutuzovskiy 5 is delightfully bright and modern, although dishes come on wooden boards in deference to the rustic culinary past the food evokes.

Once known primarily for mayonnaise-laden *olivier* salads and cold jellied meat *khododets*, in recent years Russian cuisine has been gaining in popularity — and prestige. So much so, in fact, that what use could the city have for another Russian restaurant?

But Kutuzovskiy 5, located along one of Moscow's poshest streets, has taken a different approach to the restaurants that focus on "new Russian" cuisine, to instead return to traditional Russian recipes. The restaurant has hired as consultants the food historians Pavel and Olga Syutkin, who have just released an English book on Russian cuisine. That means that every dish features the original recipe name in traditional script and the date it first appeared, as well as a food biography on the last pages of the menu.

The interior as well is a pleasant surprise for a restaurant based on the idea of traditional Russian feasts; the decor takes much more from Danish modern that it does from Russian imperial opulence, with clean lines, vaulted ceilings with subtle lighting, blonde wood tables

and pressed white tablecloths, and large windows that let in the northern light.

The menu, too, is a wonderful surprise: The signature Russian Cocktail (550 rubles) with gin, viburnum berry and honeysuckle syrup, is refreshing and original. And for the winter season, the real winner is the Posset (550 rubles), a rich, warm drink made up of a heady mix of ale, milk, angelica honey, ginger beer and spices. It is comforting and sweet without being cloying, and tastes similar to Christmas eggnog.



Vladimir Filonov / MT

The starters and mains are equally impressive, perhaps because the menu was designed in part by brand chef Vladimir Mukhin, who also oversees the much-praised White Rabbit restaurant, and the head chef is Artyom Losev, from St. Petersburg's celebrated Konkord catering company. For instance: Kutuzovskiy 5 has managed to create a beautiful bread basket (150 rubles): golden butter served on a slab of polished stone and topped with pink peppercorns, and five different kinds of fresh bread, including dense brioche-style white bread, walnut loaf and traditional Russian black bread.

Served next are wild mushroom *khrustadi* on fresh wholegrain bread, with parsley sprigs and fresh cheese (90 rubles), and pumpkin cream soup with tvorog dumplings (490 rubles), all served on wooden boards in keeping with the rustic, natural feeling. Then comes an amuse-bouche of radishes with smooth goat cheese and fresh pepper.

The grilled ribeye steak (2,500 rubles) is the most expensive item on the menu, but it is tender, lean and expertly prepared. Served with whipped mashed potatoes and caramelized onions (250 rubles), it makes for the perfect addition to a Sunday dinner.

The hope is that Kutuzovskiy 5 will remain a lovely place to unwind in pleasant surrounding with delicious food. It's rare that a simple dining experience can feel wholly satisfying on all

levels, but this place has done it.

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