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Sanctions, Khachapuri, Burgers — Moscow's Year in Food

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Despite the various sanctions, counter-sanctions, inflation and other economic and gastronomic woes, 2015 was a pretty good year for food lovers in Moscow.

With all those economic problems, it's no wonder that cheap but good fast food emerged as the main trend of the year. Georgian cuisine, previously associated with old-school restaurants — white tablecloths, live music that sounds more like karaoke, a bit of taxidermy — made another step towards monopolizing Muscovites' stomachs. After the march of chain after chain of similar sounding cafes — Khinkalnaya, Khachapuri, Saperavi — Georgian cuisine forayed into fast-food territory.

The ACDC in Tbilisi kiosk in Gorky Park started serving burgers with suluguni cheese and tkemali plum sauce. Then a couple of Vai Me cafes opened, which serve proper Georgian traditional dishes in small portions and use a buzzer system similar to Shake Shack.

But that's not all. In 2015 the capital got a new batch of relatively inexpensive Asian self-

service places specializing in noodle and rice dishes, like Kitai-Chi, Lucky Noodles, and Wok House. The other fast-food trend was burger joints, like Ferma, which moved from a location near Belorussky Station to Patriarch's Ponds, an area famous mostly for high-end restaurants. B&B Burgers also opened several new places.

When the ruble collapsed, diners could no longer afford imported meat. But all was not lost for carnivorous Muscovites. New restaurants sprang up, serving Russian-produced meat. The best of them is Voronezh, named for the region where most of the restaurant's meat originates, with three floors of meat cooked to perfection.

This year Russians came home gastronomically to the new Russian cuisine — a creative approach to traditional Russian dishes. The Lavkalavka restaurant is so popular that it's practically impossible to get a table without a reservation. Dich (Game) was recently opened at Danilovsky Market by Sergey Yeroshenko, owner of another new Russian cuisine restaurant called Chestnaya Kukhnya (Honest Cuisine). The new cafe serves a seasonal menu that includes deer, goat, goose and even elk meat. Another new restaurant, Kutuzovsky 5, serves delicious food that seems too modern and too good, to be from old cookbooks — but it is.

What do you wash all this great food down with? Craft beer. In just a few years, the movement has taken over the city. Check out Glavpivmag, Varka, Craft and Draft, Cans and Beer or Kraftwerk Bar.

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