

Moscow Lifehack: Drinking the Right Way in Russia: Bottles Be Gone

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Why are empty bottles put on the floor?

TMT: Ah superstition, one of Russia's most charming and yet baffling mistresses. Although most Russians wouldn't be able to tell you why, it's seen as bad luck to leave empty bottles, specifically alcohol bottles, on the table. This is the case for bars, restaurants and even when entertaining at home. Some fear an empty bottle on the table is an omen of less prosperous times to come, others see it as a darker indicator of grief or suffering in the future.

Russians cite many origins to this superstition. Some say that pagans believed evil spirits could take up residence in any empty container for food or drink. Others say the habit originated in the early 19th century when the Cossacks drove Napoleon back to France. When dining in Parisian restaurants, the Cossack soldiers were charged according to how many empty bottles appeared on their table. Cossacks cunningly hid their empty bottles under the table as soon as they were finished — a practice which continued when they returned to Russia.

Why this has become such a steadfast practice in Russia is one of those mysteries of the Russian soul. But maybe it's really simple: a not-so-subtle hint to the host or waiter that it's time to crack open another bottle. In any case, when in Russia — take those empty bottles off the table.

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