

Beluga Opens at the National

Caviar and vodka on the Kremlin's doorstep

By [Andrei Muchnik](#)

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Beluga offers caviar for every pocketbook, exquisite reimagined Russian cuisine in a glam setting overlooking Manege Square and the Kremlin. **BELUGA / FACEBOOK**

Alexander Rappoport, lawyer turned restaurateur, added another restaurant to his ever-growing empire. It's called Beluga (a type of sturgeon), and it's located at the Hotel National, where one of his most successful restaurants, Doctor Zhivago, has been open since 2014.

Beluga is on the second floor of the National, and its large windows face the Kremlin, commanding breathtaking views. While dining, you can check out the Kremlin towers or the Arsenal building peeking from behind the walls. Or you can watch crowds milling about Manege Square.

The interior design is an updated version of 2000s glamour: large chandeliers, sturgeon caviar cans, and portraits of women in kokoshniks.

Billed as a restaurant of “Russian delicacies” as well as a “caviar brasserie,” Beluga offers almost twenty varieties of caviar. You can try salmon or other red fish caviar (from 260 rubles) or splurge on black caviar, including classic sturgeon caviar (just 700 rubles) or the most expensive varieties — Iranian beluga (4,550 rubles) and albino sturgeon (4,850 rubles). The prices quoted are for a tasting-size portion — 25 grams, served with a shot of cold Beluga vodka. You can also get a tasting set for two with three types of black caviar (sturgeon, beluga and sterlet) for 8,600 rubles.

The “delicacies” are prepared by Yevgeny Meshcheryakov, winner of the Bocuse d’Or Battle in 2014 who had worked in Rappoport’s first restaurant in St Petersburg, Blok, named after the famous poet Alexander Blok.

The “non-caviar” section of Beluga’s menu focuses on traditional Russian and Soviet cuisine, but some of the recipes have been reimaged. So the Soviet staple Olivier salad is made with slow-cooked beluga (660 rubles), while sugudai, Siberian sushi, is served with potatoes and onion spread.

From the main dishes, try Eskimo, which is more commonly a treat of chocolate-covered ice-cream on a wooden stick, immensely popular during the Soviet era. Meshcheryakov gave the name to his version of Chicken Kiev: a pounded chicken filet covered in breadcrumbs with hot butter inside (480 rubles). Pair it with a garnish of fried potatoes with porcini mushrooms (300 rubles). Duck with morels and gratin is also great (880 rubles).

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