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Vodka, Caviar and Aperol Spritz

Down under in Moscow with chef Sebbie Kenyon

By Andrei Muchnik

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For Sebbie Kenyon, food and drink are at the heart of his life in Moscow. **STEAK IT EASY**

Born into a family of restaurateurs in Australia, Sebbie Kenyon never wanted to be a chef. Instead, he believed rugby glory was in his future. But after a couple of unfortunate injuries ended his sports career, he fell in love with the culinary arts.

Following a stint in Paris at Gregory Marchand's acclaimed restaurant, Frenchie, Kenyon came to Moscow to help out fellow Australian chef Glen Ballis with the restaurant Lesartists. He soon started working for Alexander Rappaport, who was just opening his first Voronezh restaurant. Kenyon was the one who came up with the recipe for Voronezh's famous pastrami sandwich.

Today, Kenyon works at the 354 restaurant in the OKO skyscraper in Moskva-City, which has the highest terrace in Europe. But he has also taken on the role of chef at a new restaurant called Steak it Easy, at the Afimall shopping center. Soon to become a chain,

Steak it Easy serves affordable steaks and burgers and doubles as a wine bar.

But it's not easy to be in the restaurant business in Moscow, says Kenyon.

"Russian customers are difficult, they only give you one chance. If the food's not good, they don't come back," he says. "So I have to make sure everything's perfect all the time."

Thankfully, Kenyon loves Moscow — both as a chef and as a resident. For sourcing fresh produce, he says there's no better place than the Dorogomilovsky Market. He even takes all his visiting chef friends there.

"I like to buy with my eyes rather than just buy in bulk. [Dorogomilovsky] has got a huge range of fruit and veg," he says.

Even when Kenyon isn't working, food dominates his life. On his one day off each week, he likes to go out for Georgian food, watch cooking shows on TV, read about food and work on new dishes.

"I even dream about food!" he says. "Sometimes I try to cook what I dreamed about, but it doesn't always turn out so well."

Currently, Kenyon lives in central Moscow near the Kropotkinskaya metro station, and enjoys the area's location and the diversity of its sights — "there's Old Arbat, New Arbat, there's the Cathedral of Christ the Savior. You can go over the bridge to the Red October island and then it's just a short walk to Gorky Park. I'm not moving anywhere else!"

Kenyon also likes to spend his time around Patriarch's Ponds. "The old buildings there remind me of France!," he says. There are also great restaurants within walking distance: Uilliam's, Cutfish, Pinch, Saxon+Parole, and even Ugolek.

So where does this man of the kitchen go to relax? "I do love my chacha [Georgian grappa], I do love my vodka and I do love my caviar," he says. "I go to Dr. Zhivago for caviar and vodka, but it's usually at like 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning."

Kenyon loves Moscow's bar scene, especially cocktail bars like Delicatessen, Mendeleev and Motel. However, his favorite bartenders work at 15 Kitchen+Bar, where he loves their Old Fashioned with rum and says he's "super addicted to their Aperol Spritz."

"At 15 Kitchen, they've got my taste down perfectly," he says. "I've been drinking there for the past two years nearly every weekend."

He also can't get enough of the city's terraces — especially Bar Strelka in the summer.

"You can just sit there, watching the water go by with an Aperol Spritz in hand and beautiful Russian women all around," he says. "That's what I call an easy Sunday."

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