

I'm Proud That We Published the Syutkins' Columns

The Moscow Times' publisher explains how a leading ambassador for Russian cuisine became an enemy of the Russian state.

By [Alexander Gubsky](#)

September 16, 2026



Pavel Syutkin in court. **Vasily Kuzmichenok / Moskva News Agency**

Pavel Syutkin, a longtime Moscow Times columnist and historian of Russian cuisine, was sentenced in Moscow yesterday to six years in prison. His “crime” is all too common in Putin’s Russia: spreading what the authorities call “fake news” about the Russian military.

For years, Pavel and his wife, Olga, had written a weekly [column](#) that highlighted the richness of Russian cuisine for The Moscow Times. They continued to write it even after we were forced into exile in the Netherlands in 2022.

I must confess that after our move to Amsterdam, I regularly suggested to our editor-in-chief

that we stop publishing the Syutkins' columns. As a Russian, I assumed that after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, no one would want to read about Russian cuisine, much less cook it. But our American editor showed me the readership figures, which proved that these columns remained very popular. Fortunately, The Moscow Times is a serious publication, so the final decision about editorial content rests with the editor, not the publisher. Today, I am proud that we published the Syutkins' columns. And I'm sending them both my support.

Syutkin, one of the leading advocates of Russian cuisine both at home and abroad, never hid his opposition to the war or to Putin. He was arrested in October 2025. He was also added to the state financial monitoring agency Rosfinmonitoring's list of "terrorists and extremists," which effectively amounts to a civil execution. Inclusion on the list freezes a person's bank accounts and severely restricts access to money, effectively depriving them of all legal means to support themselves. It is impossible to challenge this designation in court.

Related article: [‘My Case Is Unquestionably Political’: Culinary Historian Pavel Syutkin on His Prosecution](#)

If Russia were a normal country, Pavel Syutkin would receive state honors and recognition for promoting Russian culture around the world. At one time, Russia seemed to be that kind of country. In 2015, after the annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of war in eastern Ukraine, Syutkin represented Russia as an official ambassador at the World Expo in Milan. But 11 years later, he was sentenced to six years in prison, nearly as long as some sentences handed down to convicted killers in Russia.

Syutkin was imprisoned simply because he dared to express his opposition to the war — a freedom that is still guaranteed by the Russian Constitution. The Nobel Peace Prize-winning human rights organization Memorial has [designated](#) him as a political prisoner.

Syutkin is now the fourth journalist connected to publications where I have worked to be arrested. All of them are innocent.

Ivan Safronov, my former colleague at Vedomosti, was [sentenced](#) to 22 years for "treason."

Another former Vedomosti colleague, Sergei Mingazov, died as a result of the Putin regime's cruelty. Sergei, who had cancer, was also [accused](#) of spreading "fake news" about the military's actions in Ukraine. The judge refused to suspend or postpone his trial. Deprived of adequate medical treatment, he died before the court delivered its verdict.

Evan Gershkovich, a former Moscow Times journalist, was luckier. In 2024, he and 15 other prisoners held in Russia were [exchanged](#) for eight Russians imprisoned in several countries, including intelligence operatives and a convicted assassin.

This list is by no means exhaustive and will continue to grow. The Moscow Times made its choice long ago. We will continue to serve our readers by reporting the truth and exposing misinformation, even as the Putin regime seeks to intimidate us and obstruct our work.

The views expressed in opinion pieces do not necessarily reflect the position of The Moscow Times.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2026/09/16/im-proud-that-we-published-the-syutkins-columns-a937>

21