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Pierogi Delight

Natasha's Pierogi offers soul-warming fare everyone will love

Continuing Tradition

One local's take on St. Lucia's Day



Plus:
Interfaith
Outreach



Natasha's Pierogi can be found at farmers markets on Sunday mornings. Opposite page: Natasha Obuhov and daughter Nicole.



Stick-to-your Ribs Russian

NATASHA'S PIEROGI OFFERS SOUL-WARMING FARE.

BY MARGIE
NEWMAN

PHOTOS
BY RACHEL
NADEAU

Golden brown on the outside with just the right amount of crunch, leading to a pillow of filling—potato-cheese, spinach mozzarella, or just about anything

your heart might desire, Natasha's Pierogi hits the spot for everyone from adventurous gourmets to picky eaters. Pierogi are an Eastern-European dumpling, similar to Italian ravioli and Japanese gyoza.

Natasha Obuhov sells hot pierogis at farmers markets. On a Sunday morning at the market, Obuhov staffed the table while her husband, Vladimir, was on duty in the

pierogi wagon, frying the pierogi to perfection for the line of people waiting to enjoy them, and serving them with sour cream and crispy pickles on the side.

Obuhov arrived in the U.S. in 2003 to join Vladimir in Plymouth. She is from Voronezh, a city in central Russia. Natasha's Pierogi is a true family business, with the all the Obuhovs taking part—Natasha, Vladimir and their daughter Nicole.

Obuhov has always loved cooking, but it wasn't until she arrived in the U.S. that she went professional. Her food is quintessential Eastern European. People with

"Everything is done by hand—cutting the dough, scooping in the filling, sealing them."

NATASHA OBUHOV

Russian, Ukrainian, Polish or any Eastern European background will find it to be the food your mom made, or your babushka, or babcia or bubbe, and if no one ever made it for you, it's okay, because thanks to Obuhov, you can make up for lost time and enjoy it all now.

"I started making pierogi for family, friends, and neighbors. So many people said, 'These so are so good, you should sell them!' Everyone loved them," says Obuhov, "especially kids. So I decided to go into business."

Obuhov makes so many varieties of pierogi that you can never get bored, if you're the type of person who thinks it's possible to get bored of potatoes. Non-meat options include potato-cheese, potato mushroom, potato with smoked salmon, potato-onion, spinach-mozzarella sauerkraut-mushroom. If it's meat you want, choices include potato-bacon, pulled pork and American bison. The dough is simple, made from flour, water, oil and salt. There are no eggs in the dough, which makes the meat-free versions suitable for vegans.

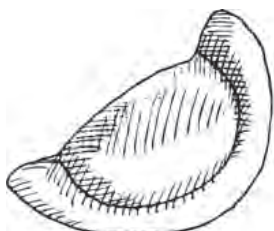
On bone-chilling December days, do you ever yearn for cabbage rolls, but your craving goes unsatisfied because of how labor-intensive they are to make? It's a challenging enterprise—pulling the leaves off and boiling them, only to have them rip when you start rolling them with the filling. Obuhov has got you covered, saving you the work and frustration. She makes the traditional meat variety stuffed with beef and pork as well as a chicken version, and happily for vegetarians and vegans, rolls stuffed with brown rice, button mushrooms, onions and carrots and topped with marinara sauce.

"Everything is done by hand—cutting the dough, scooping in the filling, sealing them," says Obuhov, and you can tell by the taste. It's the slight variation, along with the fresh ingredients, that give them the

FOOD NOTES

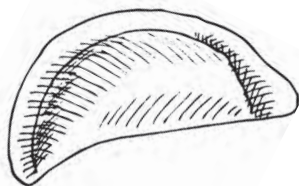
Pierogi Lore

What other food can claim its own patron saint?



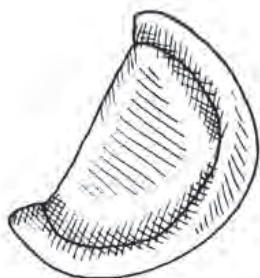
PIEROGI ON A PEDESTAL

Pierogis are so beloved in Eastern European cuisine that they have their own patron saint—St. Hyacinth of Poland, a monk from Kiev (1185-1257.)



DELICIOUS DEBUT

Pierogi are believed to have first appeared in the Polish territories in the 13th-century.



IT'S WHAT'S INSIDE THAT COUNTS

A recipe for pierogi first appeared in a cookbook, *Compendium Ferculorum*, published in Poland, in 1682. The filling? chopped kidneys, veal fat, greens and nutmeg.






home-made quality, bringing them from good to great.

Other products include red and white borscht, cream of mushroom soup and different varieties of sauerkraut. "I can make anything," Obuhov says. "Just say what you want and I can cook it for you."

Obuhov also makes and sells bottled sauces, including ginger-garlic, sage-mushroom, and my own favorite—plum-ginger. Additionally, she sells a probiotic liquid that builds up "good" gut bacteria, found to be important for health. It has a bracing, but not unpleasant, taste.

In addition to farmers markets, Obuhov's products are available at all three Lakewinds Coops, Nelson's Market in St. Louis Park and Sentyrz Market in Northeast Minneapolis. Obuhov is working on adding other stores to carry her products, and she hopes to obtain a booth at the State Fair to offer pierogi on a stick.

Everything is made in Obuhov's commercial kitchen in New Hope. Delivery is offered for \$5 within the delivery area and is available to a larger area for orders over \$50. (Check the website for specifics.) Or, pick up your orders at the kitchen at no charge.

The growing ranks of pierogi-lovers keep Obuhov busy. "It's a full-time job!" she says. Much of life is uncontrollable, but you can assure yourself of healthy, satisfying food through the winter and beyond by stocking up with help from Obuhov. 

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