

Russian

About the Culture

- Russia is the world's largest country stretching over most of eastern Europe and northern Asia.¹
- Most of the population lives in the European portion of the country, specifically the fertile area around the capital of Moscow.¹
- About 75% of the population are ethnic Russians, but >120 other ethnic groups reside in Russia speaking unique languages and practicing individual religious and cultural traditions.¹
- More than half of the population practices Russian Orthodox religion, with 25% of Russians identifying as "non-religious".¹
- Russian is the 3rd most spoken language in Washington state and among WA SNAP participants.²
- The long winters and accompanying cold, dark climate has shaped what can be cultivated agriculturally.³



Eating Customs and Traditions

- Russian diets are focused around home-cooked meals with little reliance on prepared meals or fast food.⁴
- Typically, 3 meals are eaten throughout the day:⁴
 - ▶ **First Meal (zavtrak)**—Usually high in whole grains and protein with dishes such as buckwheat porridge (kasha), open-faced sandwiches with eggs/meat (butterbrots), or tvorog (dairy, similar to cottage cheese).
 - ▶ **Main Meal (obed)**—Typically the largest meal of the day consumed between 1pm–3pm consisting of 3 courses: soup, meat with a carbohydrate (i.e. potatoes or porridge) and a non-alcoholic drink such as tea or coffee.
 - ▶ **Third Meal (uzhin)**—Eaten between 7pm–8pm, this is the second largest meal of the day consisting of appetizers (zakuski), a main course, and a dessert course with tea.
- Third meal (uzhin) is an important meal in Russian culture and is typically eaten together as a family providing time for connection and socialization.⁴

Cultural Ingredients

- Due to the harsh winter climate, commonly consumed foods are cold weather crops and ingredients dense in carbohydrates and fat, including whole fat dairy.³
- Hot, black tea is common and consumed throughout the day until late in the evening.⁴
- Bread is consumed with every meal and is a staple on the Russian dining table, typically in rye form.⁴
- Borscht is a popular dish, a hearty beet stew made of winter vegetables, containing another Russian staple: potatoes.¹

SNAP-Ed Cultural Awareness Toolkit—Russian

Adapting SNAP-Ed Curriculum to Reflect Dietary Patterns

- Emphasize low-fat or non-fat dairy items.
- Promote introduction of a diverse array of whole grains similar to commonly consumed items.
- Support continued cooking at home and social meals with family as ways to introduce new food items, if warranted.

RECIPE RESOURCES

Live Well:

<https://wasnap-ed.org/live-well/recipes/>

North Dakota Food and Culture: A Taste of World Cuisine:

<https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/publications/food-nutrition/north-dakota-food-and-culture-a-taste-of-world-cuisine>

POPULAR FOODS	DESCRIPTION, SEASON, AND STORAGE	COMMONLY AVAILABLE FORMS AND SUBSTITUTIONS
Buckwheat	<p>Nutrient dense, gluten-free seed with a nutty flavor and chewy texture.</p> <p>Available all year.</p> <p>Store in an airtight container away from light and heat for up to 2 months.</p>	<p>Whole grain (in bulk)</p> <p>Ground in flour</p> <p>Oats (steel cut), quinoa, brown rice</p>
Cabbage	<p>Robust leafy green vegetable that can withstand multiple cooking methods (roasting, boiling, sauteing) and can be eaten raw.</p> <p>Available all year, best during early spring and late fall.</p> <p>Look for heads that are tightly packed with bright green external leaves.</p> <p>Can be stored whole in a crisper drawer for up to 2 months. Once cut, wrap tightly with plastic and use within 2 to 3 days.</p>	<p>Varieties of cabbage: red, napa, Chinese, and savoy (most similar to green cabbage)</p> <p>Fermented (sauerkraut)</p> <p>Pre-chopped or sliced (bagged)</p> <p>Shredded (bagged)</p> <p>Frozen (in pieces)</p>
Potatoes	<p>A versatile starchy vegetable that can withstand multiple cooking methods (boiling, mashing, baking, or roasting).</p> <p>Available all year, best during fall and winter.</p> <p>Potatoes vary based on the amount of starch they contain.</p> <p>Store whole in a cool, dark place for up to 2 months. If cut, store in water in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 2 days.</p>	<p>A breakdown of type of potato and accompanying cooking method:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Baking: Russet, long white, Peruvian• Boiled: New potatoes, round red, white• Fried: Russets and white• Roasted: New potatoes, russets, Peruvian, long whites• Mashed: Russets, long white, yellow <p>Whole canned (in water)</p>

References

1. Riasanovsky, NV. *Russia*. Encyclopædia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Russia>. Published February 19, 2022. Accessed February 22, 2022.
2. Pavelle B, et al. Basic Food Client Characteristics: Working-Age Adults Receiving Food Assistance in Washington State. *DSHS Research and Data Analysis Division*. 2019(June). <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/rda>
3. Kerns, M. *Food & Diet in Russia*. LIVESTRONG.COM. <https://www.livestrong.com/article/374239-food-diet-in-russia/>. Accessed February 22, 2022.
4. MasterRussian.com. *Meals of the day in Russia*. Master Russian. <http://masterrussian.com/russianculture/meals.htm>. Accessed February 22, 2022.