

TRADITIONAL AND CLASSIC RECIPES

TASTE OF GEORGIA

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Traditional and Classic Recipes

First edition, 2018

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JOURNEY INTO THE SEVEN KINGDOMS OF TASTE

INTRODUCTION

Some people choose to travel by plane, some prefer to hitchhike. There are some, however, who travel through taste. Exploring different tastes is a way of learning about the history and culture of a country. Thus, we offer a book of the past, a book of modern times, a book of myths and legends. Taste offers all the secrets and all the treasures of a country. Readers are free to explore and enjoy.

In this journey, borders are not as strictly delineated as in an atlas; it is not necessary for everything to have an exact location or an exact name; key elements are the ingredients. It is through a dish that we learn about the mystery of its origin, about the people, their living habits and conditions. An observant eye will discern a trace of the Silk Road - the road that Marco Polo and many other travelers took to this magical country of spices. If you want to learn about Georgia, you should first understand the mystery of its taste.

A MAP OF THE SEVEN KINGDOMS



THE COASTLINE

Abkhazia, Samegrelo, Adjara



THE LESSER CAUCASUS

Meskheta-Javakheti



THE CENTER OF WESTERN GEORGIA

Imereti, Guria



THE WESTERN CAUCASUS

Svaneti, Racha, Lechkhumi



THE EASTERN CAUCASUS

Pshav-Khevsureti, Tusheti, Mtiuleti-Gudamakari, Tianeti



THE CENTER OF EASTERN GEORGIA

Kartli, Tbilisi



THE FARTHEST EAST OF GEORGIA

Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli



THE COASTLINE

Abkhazia, Samegrelo, Adjara

THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN FLEECE AND THE GEORGIAN COASTLINE

We start our journey from the Black Sea. The story goes back to the Argonauts from the ancient Greek myth, who sailed to the shores of Pontus in their quest for the Golden Fleece. And Medea – an enchantress who used her magic powers in mixing spices and ointments. It is precisely from these mythical times that the knowledge of cuisine stems.

As a starting point, we take Abkhazia and Samegrelo. These regions of Georgia preserve the most ancient gastronomic history. Local museums display numerous artifacts: kitchen utensils of Colchian culture, a variety of pottery, clay wine vessels, devices for draining cheese, spoons, and more. They also preserve the names of dishes and products.

Archaeological excavations prove the gastronomic characteristics and diversity of the coastal regions – seasoning the dishes with walnuts, various ways of cooking beef or poultry in clay pots, the art of making dairy products. Beekeeping was a very important agricultural activity from times immemorial here. These are the regions where grains and pulses were grown and most importantly, where vineyards were cultivated.

There is a great variety of tastes, perhaps the most colorful and diverse in the whole of Georgia. The local taste – be it spicy, pungent, hot – may express sorrow as well as joy. Expressing both these feelings through culinary means implies a great deal of responsibility; that is why the dishes prepared for a festive feast like a wedding or a somber feast like a funeral repast are different and interesting in this part of the country.

According to one theory, the local dishes here are bitter because residents consumed hot peppers to cope with coastal humidity and malaria; according to another theory, however, bitter food was economical as it could only be eaten in small amounts – indeed, Italian missionaries and French travelers described the poverty of the lower classes. Nevertheless, the lack of possibilities feeds the culinary imagination. For example, the preparation of a simple dish such as **Ghomi**, over time, evolved into a very important activity, almost a ritualistic act, while the preparation of **Elarji** became the symbol of a shepherding lifestyle. Meat byproducts were cooked in numerous ways. One can hardly taste such delicious **Kuchmachi** or **Kupati** anywhere else but here. Nor Qvarabia which is also a ritualistic dish, Abkhazian **Atskhamgali**, Mingrelian **Gebzhalia**, a variety of **Chashushuli** or **Kharcho**... To cut a long story short, the “gold” is mined in dishes and flavors here.

Our culinary journey continues southwards, towards the Adjara coastline – a region that is no less interesting or diverse than the above.

Cuisine preserves everything: the influences of other countries, cultural and military expansions, peoples’ migrations, lasting traces of all developments on this land... Cuisine unites those divided by political borders. When trying the dishes from Adjara, Lazeti or Shavshet-Imerkhevi or Tao-Klarjeti, one can easily notice the similarity. The influences of Turkish and Greek cultures are obvious too.

The most popular dish of the Adjarian cuisine is **Adjarian Khachapuri**, a boat-shaped bread with an egg in the middle, which, perhaps reproduces the sun seen from the seashore, beaming its rays down onto the deck... but, this is lyrical; in reality, any dish in gastronomy serves a more practical purpose – the warm, soft, sunny-side up egg makes this filling and tasty dish even more delicious.

There is one strange mystery that unites people living along the length of the coastline: their indifference to the sea, seafaring and seafood. There may be a reason for this, but one thing is clear – Georgians have always preferred river fish over sea fish. Nonetheless, one can still try several tasty sea fish dishes in Adjara and Lazistan.

Georgian cuisine, especially Adjarian cuisine, is rich in vegetarian dishes and this recipe is a prime example of how to easily cook herbs and vegetables.

Adjarian Pkhali



Serves
5-6



Type
Vegetable



Cooking time
00:25



Difficulty level
Average

INGREDIENTS

400 g Kezhera Pkhali (turnip cabbage leaves)

90 g long-grain rice

70 g onions

15 g garlic

10 g parsley

2 g ground coriander

5 g butter

3 l water

2 g salt

1 g ground black pepper

METHOD

1. Separate turnip cabbage roots from stems, discard the roots. Wash stems thoroughly, chop them and boil. Once cooked, drain, add fresh water and washed rice. Leave to boil until the rice has cooked through.

2. In a separate saucepan, sauté chopped onions and garlic in butter, add coriander. Once onions turn soft and translucent, mix in turnip leaves and rice.

3. Season with salt, pepper and chopped parsley.



Gógos Pápa (Girl's Porridge) is a festive dish traditionally cooked in the Adjarian villages of Georgia and Turkey. It is traditionally prepared upon the birth of a girl, to be shared with the guests to celebrate the joy of birth.

Gogos Papa



Serves
5-6



Type
Grains



Cooking time
00:40



Difficulty level
Easy

INGREDIENTS

25 wheat flour
30 g butter (melted)
3 g sugar
2 g salt
500 ml water

METHOD

1. Mix flour with water in a saucepan and boil, stir every other minute. Don't let the thickened mass stick and burn.

2. Boil water in a separate saucepan. Slowly add boiled water to the flour, stirring continuously. Once the water is added, continue boiling and stirring until the porridge thickens. Transfer the porridge onto a plate. With a wet spoon, make a small crater in the middle of the mass, pour in the butter and serve. Serving with a light sugar dusting is also common.



Sinori is a popular Adjarian dish which was an integral part of weddings in mountainous Adjara. The dish is cooked in Georgia as well as Adjarian villages on the territory of Turkey. The word “sinori” means “border” in the Adjarian dialect, as well as in the Laz language.

Sinori



Serves
5



Type
Pastry



Cooking time
00:15



Difficulty level
Easy



INGREDIENTS

Ready-made Sinori sheets or Armenian Lavash (soft flatbread)

500 g **Nadughi** (soft cottage cheese)

30 g garlic

50 g **Erbo** (clarified butter) or butter

50 ml water

Salt to taste

METHOD

1. Shred the Armenian Lavash into 5 cm strips, roll up into spirals and lay tightly on a baking sheet. Lavash may be substituted by ready-made Sinori sheets.

2. Heat **Erbo** in a pan, add crushed or finely chopped garlic. Sauté thoroughly, add **Nadughi** and a little water. Bring to the boil and cook until the mass becomes uniform. Add salt to taste.

3. Pour the paste over the rolls placed on the baking sheet so that it soaks through the rolls to the bottom of the sheet. Place in the oven and bake at 180°C for 3-4 minutes. Once the rolls turn golden, remove from the oven.

Recipe: Erekle Ghonghadze



Borano is made from Adjarian plaited cheese and butter. This dish is especially popular in the Adjarian villages of Georgia and Turkey.

Borano



Serves
3-4



Type
Cheese



Cooking time
00:15



Difficulty level
Easy

INGREDIENTS

200 g Adjarian plaited cheese
90 g butter
3 g salt

METHOD

1. Cut cheese into small pieces, heat in a saucepan and add hot water to soften. Drain softened cheese and transfer to a bowl.

2. Cook salted butter in a pre-heated saucepan until brown. Add to the drained cheese and mix thoroughly. Serve.



According to Italian missionaries, Mingrelians used to make milk sauce, mature it in a clay pot and season it with various spices. It is believed that **Gebzhalia** is a variation of that very sauce. The sauce for this dish is made from the liquid left after making **Sulguni**, sometimes from fresh milk or **Matsoni**. Spiced **Sulguni** is then placed in the sauce.

Gebzhalia



Serves
6



Type
Cheese



Cooking time
1:00



Difficulty level
Hard

INGREDIENTS

1 kg soft **Sulguni**
1 l milk
1 l **Matsoni** (natural yougourt)
450 g **Nadughi**

150 g sour cream
50 g mint
15 g ground black pepper
8 g salt

METHOD

1. Pour the milk in a large saucepan and add the diced soft **Sulguni**. Heat the milk but do not boil. The cheese will soften and become stretchy.

2. When the substance takes on the texture of dough, transfer it to a flat board and roll out to 0,4 cm thick. Spread a mixture of finely chopped mint, **Nadughi**, salt, sour cream and ground pepper over the sheet.

3. Roll the cheese sheet as tightly as you can into a roulade and immerse it in whipped **Matsoni** to prevent from drying out. Serve cold.



Ghomi is an old Mingrelian dish which, before the introduction of maize to Georgia, used to be made from foxtail millet. Many historians and travelers recall a millet porridge, which was of the main dishes for the people of Mingrelia and Abkhazia.

Ghomi





Serves
4-5



Type
Grains



Cooking time
1:30



Difficulty level
Easy

INGREDIENTS

200 g corn flour
800 g corn meal (coarsely ground maize)

METHOD

1. Sieve the cornmeal, so that any finely ground residue is discarded and only coarse flakes remain. Wash the remaining cornmeal in the sieve and place it in a cast-iron pot. Add enough water, so it is 2 cm above the level of the cornmeal. Place over a low heat and simmer, stirring every 2 minutes. As soon as some water evaporates, add some more water to guarantee even cooking.

2. When the cornmeal has softened (after about 40 minutes), add the corn flour. Stir continuously, letting the mass cook for an additional 10-12 minutes.

3. Lower the heat and simmer for 5-7 minutes in a covered pan. Knead the mass and transfer onto a plate with a wet spoon.

Recipe: Luka Nachkebia



*The main secret of **Elarji** is fresh mild **Sulguni**. In the past, **Elarji** was cooked on an open fire. Professionally cooked **Elarji** should be very stretchy.*

Elarji



Serves
4-5



Type
Grains



Cooking time
1:40



Difficulty level
Average

INGREDIENTS

70 g corn flour
350 g cornmeal (coarsely ground maize)
550 g **Sulguni** (grated)
700 ml water

METHOD

1. Sieve the cornmeal so that any finely ground residue is discarded and only coarse flakes remain. Wash the remaining cornmeal in the sieve and place it into a cast-iron pan. Add enough water so it is 2 cm above the level of the maize. Place over a low heat and cook with the lid on. If it starts boiling over, raise the lid.
2. After cooking it for 35 minutes, check the texture; if has softened and feels cooked, stir the corn flour with a flat wooden spoon to get the homogeneous consistency of porridge, without any lumps.
3. When the corn flour is completely dissolved in the porridge, add grated **Sulguni** and stir continuously until the texture turns into a smooth, stretchy, uniform substance.



*Puchkholia combines the wealth of western Georgia – cornmeal, Ajika, **Nadughi**... This is a very popular dish of the Mingrelian cuisine.*

Puchkholia



Serves
2



Type
Cheese



Cooking time
00:20



Difficulty level
Easy

INGREDIENTS

150 g Imeretian cheese (low in salt)

80 g **Nadughi**

50 g mint

15 g green Ajika (spicy paste)

15 g salt

METHOD

1. Crumble the cheese with your hands, add **Nadughi**, ground or finely chopped mint, Ajika and salt. Mix thoroughly.
2. Serve with **Ghomi** (cornmeal porridge).



Kveri/Kvari is a name for various pastries in many dialects of the Kartvelian languages, which proves its ancient origin. The Mingrelian word “kvarabia” also derives from the same root and means “boiled flat bread with fresh mild cheese filling”.

Kvarabia



Makes
15



Type
Pastry



Cooking time
1:30



Difficulty level
Average

INGREDIENTS

500 g flour
250 ml water
13 g salt
300 g Imeretian cheese
250 g mild **Sulguni**
50 g sour cream
200 ml vegetable oil

METHOD

1. Combine flour, salt and water and make a firm dough. Cover the dough with a tea towel and let it stand for 25 minutes.

Combine the Imeretian cheese, **Sulguni** and sour cream to get a soft uniform mass.

2. Make 15 small balls of dough and let them stand for an additional 10 minutes. Flatten each ball, so that it is a bit thicker in the center and thinner towards the edges. Place a 40 g ball of cheese and sour cream in the center of the flattened dough, then fold up the edges to cover the filling and make a knot at the top to seal. Place with the knot down on a flat surface, cover with a tea towel and let it stand for 10 minutes.

3. Boil the water and add salt. Then flatten the dough with the cheese filling, making sure the filling is evenly distributed within the dough. Cook the flattened “dumplings” for 3-4 minutes and remove from the saucepan. Pat dry with paper towels to remove extra liquid and fry them on one side until golden in a preheated oiled frying pan.



Mingrelian Khachapuri



Makes
1



Type
Pastry



Cooking time
02:00



Difficulty level
Average

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE DOUGH:

200 g flour

5 g yeast

2 g sugar

5 g salt

20 ml vegetable oil

100 ml water or milk

10 g butter or **Erbo** (clarified butter)

FOR THE FILLING:

300 g Imeretian cheese

FOR THE TOPPING:

30 g **Sulguni** cheese

1 egg

1 tbsp milk

METHOD

1. Dissolve yeast and sugar in milk (or water). In a separate bowl, combine the flour, salt, egg and dissolved yeast; knead a soft dough. Grease hands with oil and knead the dough again. Place it in a deep bowl, cover with a dry tea towel and set aside for 30 minutes. Again knead the dough, cover it and let it rise.

2. For the filling, grate Imeretian cheese or mince it in a meat grinder.

For the topping, grate **Sulguni** cheese separately, add 1 tablespoon of milk and 1 egg yolk and combine.

3. After the dough has proofed, take a 300 g ball and flatten it slightly. Place the filling in the center. Fold up and stretch the edges to wrap the filling. Roll it out to a 1 cm thick disk, leaving the edges a little thicker. On top of it add the mixture of grated **Sulguni** and egg yolk. Bake in the oven at 220-250° C.

Once the crust is golden, remove from the oven and brush with butter or **Erbo**.



*Georgians are not the only people who have noticed the resemblance of the **Adjarian Khachapuri** to a boat; this delicious Adjarian dish is sometimes called Cheese Boat in English.*

Adjarian Khachapuri



Makes
1



Type
Pastry



Cooking time
02:00



Difficulty level
Average

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE DOUGH:

200 g flour
90 ml milk or water 5 g yeast
2 g sugar
5 g salt
1 egg

FOR THE FILLING:

200 g Imeretian cheese
50 g **Sulguni**
10 ml milk
1 egg
20 g butter

METHOD

1. Dissolve the yeast and sugar in warm milk (or water). Sift flour in a separate bowl. Add salt, egg yolk, dissolved yeast and knead the dough.

Grease hands with oil and knead the dough again. Place into a large bowl, cover with a dry tea towel and set aside for 30 minutes. Again knead the dough, cover it and let it rise.

2. Separately prepare the filling: grate the **Sulguni** and Imeretian cheese, add 1 tablespoon of milk and mix.

Once the dough has proofed, take a 250-300 g ball, evenly flatten to a thickness of 2-3 cm and give it an oblong shape. Spread the cheese over it, leaving a 3 cm wide margin all around the dough uncovered. Fold the edges and pinch. The dough must be boat-shaped with the cheese filling in the middle.

3. Place the **Khachapuri** in the oven and bake at 230°C until it turns golden. Remove from the oven, crack an egg yolk in the center and return it to the oven for an additional 2-3 minutes. Before serving, drop a slice of butter in the center.



*This delicious dish of thin dough sheets and cheese is one of the most filling foods in the Adjarian cuisine. It should be noted that the authentic Adjarian recipe does not include Mingrelian cheese, however, it is especially tasty when baked with **Sulguni**. A variation of Achma is also popular in Abkhazia.*

Achma



Makes
8



Type
Pastry



Cooking time
02:00



Difficulty level
Hard

INGREDIENTS

1 kg all-purpose flour
750 g Imeretian cheese
750 g **Sulguni** cheese
6 eggs

350 ml **Matsoni**
430 g sour cream
25 g salt
350 g butter

METHOD

1. In a large bowl whip 5 eggs, add flour, **Matsoni**, and salt. Knead the dough. The dough must be soft and stretchy. Make five sheets from the dough, each 2-4 mm thick and roll out to the size of a baking sheet.

Cook three dough sheets in boiling water for 2-3 minutes, remove and rinse in cold water to retain texture and shape. The two remaining non-boiled sheets will be used as the top and bottom layers of the pastry.

2. Mix finely grated **Sulguni** and Imeretian cheese and 250 g sour cream. Spread a non-boiled sheet of dough on the baking sheet, grease the raw layer of dough with melted butter, then spread a 1 cm layer of cheese and sour cream mixture and cover with a boiled dough sheet; Repeat until every cooked sheet is layered with the cheese spread, then cover it with the remaining non-boiled dough sheet.

3. Whisk the remaining egg with sour cream and spread it over the covering sheet.

Bake at 180° C for 25 minutes until golden.



This is a simple and filling breakfast dish. Although Georgian cuisine is not rich in breakfast dishes, the Adjarian cuisine is an exception.

Chirbuli



Serves
4



Type
Vegetable



Cooking time
00:18



Difficulty level
Easy

INGREDIENTS

500 g tomatoes
4 eggs
15 g Kvatsarakhi (reduced sour plum juice)
80 g onions
10 g garlic

10 g parsley
15 ml vegetable oil
80 ml water
Salt to taste

METHOD

1. Preheat oil in a saucepan, add finely chopped onions and sauté over a low heat until golden. Add crushed garlic.

2. Peel and chop tomatoes and add to the saucepan. Add sour plum juice, water and simmer for 7-8 minutes. Season with salt.

3. When the tomatoes are thoroughly sautéed, add the eggs. Cover and wait until the eggs are cooked.

Remove from the heat and garnish with chopped parsley before serving.



*Samegrelo, Guria and Imereti all claim to be the birthplace of **Satsivi**. In each region **Satsivi** is a traditional dish and is mostly prepared according to one common recipe. There are several versions of **Satsivi**. The dish is seasoned with eggs, pomegranate juice, ginger, cinnamon and cloves; lemon juice is a recent addition to the dish.*

Satsivi



Serves
5-6



Type
Meat



Cooking time
03:00



Difficulty level
Hard

INGREDIENTS

Turkey
800 g or 1 kg walnuts
100 g onions
1 tsp ground coriander
1 tsp blue fenugreek

½ tsp marigold
½ tsp ground cloves
½ tsp ground cinnamon
2-3 garlic cloves
Salt and ground black pepper to taste

METHOD

1. Boil the turkey, cut, add salt and fry.

Skim the fat from the stock, finely chop onions, combine and sauté together. For the walnut sauce, combine walnuts (finely minced in a meat grinder), coriander, blue fenugreek, marigold, finely chopped garlic, pepper, cloves, cinnamon, sautéed onions and dissolve the mixture in the broth to the consistency of thin sour cream.

2. Place the chunks of turkey into a saucepan, pour over the walnut sauce and boil for 5 minutes, stirring continuously. Set aside to cool. After the **Satsivi** has cooled, add vinegar to taste.

Garnish with walnut oil before serving. Serve cold.



According to the XVII dictionary of *Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani*, the word “*Kharcho*” denotes a hot dish with meat. The recipes for *Kharcho* vary - according to some, it is prepared with poultry or rabbit meat and seasoned with *Tklapi* (dried fruit), barberries or pomegranate juice.

Kharcho



Serves
4-5



Type
Meat



Cooking time
00:40



Difficulty level
Average

INGREDIENTS

400-500 g beef	1,5 tbsp ground coriander
300 g walnuts	20 g fresh coriander
150 g onion	70 ml vegetable oil
3-4 garlic cloves	1 tsp of concentrated cherry plum juice
400 g tomatoes	2 tbsp corn flour
1 tbsp marigold	250 ml water
1,5 tbsp ground blue fenugreek	Salt and black pepper to taste

METHOD

1. Boil diced beef. Drain and save the broth.
2. Heat the oil in a frying pan and fry finely chopped onions until golden. Add grated tomatoes and simmer until the liquid dries up. Add finely chopped garlic and cooked meat.
3. In a small bowl, combine the corn flour, 1 glass of water, minced walnuts, marigold, blue fenugreek, ground coriander, salt, pepper and concentrated cherry plum juice. Mix thoroughly and transfer to the saucepan with onions and meat. Bring to the boil and cook for 5-7 minutes, then add the broth and bring to the boil. Garnish with finely chopped fresh coriander before serving.

