

# Circassian Cuisine

Edited by

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# Introduction

**H**OSPITALITY has always been one of the distinguishing traits of the Caucasian highlanders. If not through good will, then the binding prescriptions of the *Xabze* ensured the best deal for a guest or visitor to the North Caucasus. The Circassians were known to go to extremes to ensure that a guest or wayfarer was properly regaled, and diligently ensure that he was put up in comfort. According to the saying, 'Hesch'er zheschiysch yisme, binim ya schisch mex'wzh,' 'If the guest stays for three nights, he becomes part of the family.'

In the olden days, it was the custom to host one's guests for seven days and seven nights, a number that held special religious significance. Only after expiry of this period was the purpose of the visit inquired about. The episode, "The Story of How the Narts Ravished Lady Satanay," in which Wezirmes received his guests for a week, affords an example of good etiquette.

In the 1840s, Shora Nogmov indicated in his book *History of the Adigey People*, the special status that hospitality enjoyed among the Adiga.<sup>1</sup> Despite the wretchedness of those times, engendered by political upheavals and war, this custom had experienced no degradation in the least. All Circassians, rich and poor, were equal in holding this institution in the greatest esteem. The old saying, still current today, "The host is his guest's servant" (*bisimir hesh'em yi 'wexwthebzasch'esch*) is indicative of the reverence in which visitors were held. The host, *qweyraq* or *konak*, was not only responsible for the culinary needs of his guest, also called *konak*, but was also his protector and guide. Any injury or offense inflicted on the guest was considered as directed towards the host or one of his family members - to be avenged in the extreme according to the strict laws of blood-revenge. In addition, the host made sure that his guest reached his next destination safe and sound until he was delivered to the next *konak*. Only then was the host relieved of his onerous duties.

Undoubtedly, the difficult terrain and the hostile environment had something to do with the sanctity of this institution. Entrusting oneself to the care of a *konak* was one's surest method of getting about in Circassia. This strict adherence to the code of hospitality is reminiscent of the heroic times of ancient Greece, when the bonds of hospitality were considered sacred.<sup>2</sup>

Although the onus of responsibility lay on the host, the guest was also expected to follow the dictates of good taste. Human nature being what it is, this unquestioning generosity was open to abuse by unscrupulous parasites. In line with the saying, 'Ziy bisim zix'wezhim chits'ix'w xwawich', 'They slaughter a mere male-kid for him who changes his original host,' a guest was bound to knock at the door of the person who received him on his first visit. Seeking another host was considered a flagrant contravention of customary law. The new host was bound to receive the errant visitor, but he indicated his displeasure by slaughtering a mere male-kid for him. Although this meat is in no way inferior to other kinds of flesh, it is the symbolism that is important in this regard. There was a redemption price for such a 'misdemeanor' decided by a special village council.

It was incumbent upon the host to seat his visitor in the honorary seat in the guesthouse (*zchant'e*), which was located facing the entrance door. The other partakers were seated according to seniority of age. When the feast

was ready, the eldest person was seated first then the younger person to his right, and so on. Toasts were uttered, first by the eldest, and the toast cup was passed round the table. A young man *schhegherit* was assigned to wait on the table, being usually the youngest of the attendants. It was the custom to present him with a goblet and to pronounce a toast in his honour.

No one was allowed to leave the table before the eldest person partaking. It had always been a strict custom to serve the guest with various tasty dishes, which were prepared from the finest victuals in the house. Dishes were served in succession: when one is finished the next is presented, and so on until broth was offered. It has always been a strict custom that the guest be served with various tasty dishes, which were prepared from the best victuals in the house. One anecdote recounted by L. Y. Lyule, who visited the Circassians in 1827, tells how his Nartkhuaj host treated him to 120 dishes!<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, many Circassian dishes have got out of use and forgotten, not least due to the decimation resulting from the War and subsequent expulsion of the majority of Circassians from their homeland.

The way the table is laid and food served is described here and as the work is developed. Many pleasant smelling kinds of sauces were utilized. The basic ingredients are ground hot red pepper and grated (or pounded) garlic. These are very nourishing and may also be served separately.

Many condiments are used. Vegetables, onion, garlic, hot and sweet red peppers, black pepper, savory, parsley, coriander, thyme, and dill. These herbs are stored for winter. They are first dried in the shade, then they are ground and sifted (using a coarse-meshed sieve). Thyme is used widely in the preparation of meat and vegetable dishes.

One peculiarity of Circassian cuisine is that soup, or broth, is served after the main dish(es), excepting husked millet soup (*hentx'wps*, see 6.37), which is offered first.

### **Hospitality and the Circassian code of chivalry**

Hospitality was one prong of the trinity of Circassian chivalry, at the base of which was an elaborate code of honour, which was not very unlike those of the ancient Greeks, nor the Mediaeval European knights. It was the principal component of the Circassian Etiquette. This strict law controlled the life of the feudal knights and demarcated their rights and duties. The other two tenets of this law were respect for women and elders and blood-revenge.

As the case in Europe, the code of chivalry has left a deep impression on modern Circassian society inside and outside the Caucasus. Two canons, namely respect for the fair sex and elders and hospitality, have more or less been preserved.

### **1. Fresh Meat Dishes**

(*Lisch'em qixasch'ich' shxinighwexer*)

First, the way the slaughtered sheep is separated is shown. When the carcass is opened up, the entrails (liver, kidneys, lungs, heart, intestine, paunch), are immediately removed in a careful manner and laid out separately. These are washed thoroughly in cold water, then scalded with boiling water and completely freed of all mucous membranes using a scraping-knife, until they turn whitish. The rib cage is removed whole. The shoulder-blades and legs (*blathe*), and the loin are cut off. The spine (*txi*) is carefully chopped up into small pieces. The head and legs are fried after

being ritually cleaned. They are thoroughly cleaned first with hot water, then with cold, until the water running off becomes clean.

Many nourishing and tasty dishes are made from the entrails, like sheep sausage (*zherume*), liver sausage (*themsch'ighwnibe*), liver with sheep's tail fat, thick pancake with liver and eggs, liver in fat, fried entrails, etc. It is the custom to present those who have slaughtered and separated the sheep with the fried pieces of entrails as soon as these are ready. The vertebrae, sausages, and the head with legs, are cooked by boiling. However, they must be cooked in separate vessels, never together. Depending on the number of people, the shoulder blades with the legs, which are chopped into chunks, are placed with the pieces of spine in the cauldron.

### 1. Boiled Mutton (*Melil gheva*)



Boiled mutton (*melil gheva*) with  
*ships* and *p'aste*

It is best to use lamb for this dish. The fresh meat is cut to pieces and placed in a cauldron of salt water just before it comes to the boil. It is then boiled, with the frothy head being removed as it accumulates. Two chopped onions (it is better to use a bundle of fresh green onions, if available), a red pepper and a bunch of coriander is added to give spice to the meat. Just before the meat is ready, the greens are removed from the broth using a skimmer. The meat is served first with gravy (*ships*) and crushed-millet dumplings (*p'aste*).

*Ships* is prepared by adding pounded garlic to the broth, to sour milk, or to soured cream with sour milk. Red or black pepper may be added to taste. The *ships* must be made hot and salty because the *p'aste* has no salt added to it. Next, the broth is served. It has become the custom to take the broth with *p'aste* and not with bread. It may be also possible to add *lepsteipx'e* to the broth as seasoning (see section 6.11 for method of preparation of *lepsteipx'e*). These are small pieces of short pastry made from wheat dough and boiled in fat. They are either added to the broth or served separately.



*Lepsteipx'e* (small pieces of short pastry boiled in fat)

## **2. Lamb Boiled in Cream** (*Shateps-ch'e gheva schinel*)

Ingredients: 1 kg fresh and tender lamb meat cut into 20-30 g pieces, 1-1.5 kg fresh cream, 2-3 onions, salt and red pepper to taste.

The fresh cream is poured into a cauldron or a deep frying-pan and placed on the fire. As it comes to the boil, small onion straws are added. The mixture is stirred over the fire for 2-3 minutes. The meat pieces are then placed in a cooking vessel and boiled for 20-30 minutes on a gentle fire. Salt and red pepper are added to taste. The meat is kept over the fire until it is completely cooked (during this time, the water in the cream boils away slowly and the cream melts). The meat is served hot with crushed-millet dumplings (*p'aste*). The dish may be garnished with coriander, onions, and dill.

## **3. Circassian Goulash** (*Libzche*)

Ingredients: for every 500-600 g of fresh meat, 2-3 onions, 500-600 g peeled potatoes, 1-2 spoons of wheat flour, salt and red pepper to taste.

This may be prepared with or without potatoes. The meat is cut into small pieces and placed in a brazier or a casserole. Salt and red pepper are added, according to taste. The meat is either fried in its own fat, in butter, or in melted butter, until it is almost ready. Onion is added and fried. Sliced potatoes are then added. The whole mixture is inundated with water and covered. It is stewed until it is ready. The dish is served hot. The dish may be prepared without potatoes. In the meantime, wheat flour is added to the meat and onions and the whole mixture is stirred. After 2-3 minutes, broth or soured cream (or both) is poured in, and the mixture is stirred and boiled for 3-5 minutes. The broth need not be set. The dish is served hot.

## **4. Meat Goulash** (*Lits'ik'wlibzche*)

Ingredients: for every kg of fresh beef or lamb, 2.5-3 glasses of either soured cream, cream, or broth, 1 table-spoon of wheat flour, 150-200 g onions, salt and red pepper to taste.

There are three methods of preparing this dish.

- The boiled meat is cut into thin slices and then chopped. Onion straws are fried in a brazier in either butter or melted butter. Ground red pepper is added to taste. When the onions turn golden, the prepared meat is added, stirred and fried for 10-15 minutes. Soured cream, or cream, is poured and salt is added to taste. Broth may be used instead of soured cream. However, in this case a spoonful of wheat flour is added. The mixture is fried on a gentle fire, while being stirred. It is then inundated with broth. The gravy must acquire the consistency of thick soured cream. Before serving, ground red pepper or pounded garlic is added. The goulash is eaten with either crushed-millet dumplings (*p'aste*), unleavened maize-bread (*chirzhin, e mezhaje*), or bread (*sch'aq'we*).
- The fresh meat is chopped into very small pieces. Salt is added to taste. The meat is fried in fat until it nears readiness. Onion straws are added and fried with the meat. Ground red pepper is added to taste. Afterwards, either cream or broth is poured in.
- The third method only differs in the way the gravy (sauce) is prepared. Sweet red peppers are pounded well and steeped in either cream or broth. When the meat is ready, the red pepper sauce is poured onto it.

### **5. Shepherd's Lamb (*Melix'we li ghezchech'e*)**

(This dish is presently out of use)

The lamb is skinned very carefully starting from the hind shanks towards the head. Then it is turned over, with the wool on top. The meat and entrails are cut into pieces and salted. Chopped onions and red pepper are added in ample quantities. The meat and pieces of entrails are placed inside the skin. The holes in the skin are sealed firmly with a metal (iron) wire. A leather bag (*fenzhey*) is formed.

The meat is cooked in the following manner. A small hole is dug up in the ground. Small stones are piled to form a wall some distance off the wall of the hole. Dry pieces of wood are placed between the two walls and set on fire. More wood is added until the stones become burning hot. Then the leather bag (which contains the meat) is placed in the "stone-bin." The hole is covered with sheet iron. A fierce fire obtains. The meat is cooked for 4-5 hours, after which it is served hot.

### **6. Sheep Sausage (*Zherume*)**



The entrails are cleaned thoroughly in cold water and then dipped in fiercely boiling water for a few minutes. The thin mucous layers are scraped off until the entrails turn white. They are cut into 20x15 cm pieces. The intestines between the internal fat and small intestine are prepared and cut into pieces slightly longer than those of the entrails. The entrails are placed on the intestine pieces with the clean smooth surface on top. Sliced onions are added on top (30-40 g for each sausage). Salt, ground black pepper and savory are added to taste. The whole lot is rolled and tied with white thread or thin intestine. The sausages are cooked in salt water like meat. When it is ready, it is served with garlic sauce (*ships*) and crushed-millet dumplings (*p'aste*).

There are other methods of preparing *zherume*. They may be smoked and dried under the sun or in the wind. In this case, they keep for a long time. They may also be boiled for their soup, or fried with or without potatoes. Boiled or fried *zherume* are served hot with *p'aste*.

### 7. Thin Mutton Sausage (*Nek'wlh*)

Ingredients: 1 kg fresh meat, 300 g of fat, 2-3 onions, garlic bulb, and intestine.

At present, very few households prepare this food. Nevertheless, the method of preparation has not been forgotten.

Despite the name, It has become the custom to use beef for the sausage. Mutton is used rarely. The meat and fat are chopped up finely (the ratio of meat to fat is 3:1). They are mixed thoroughly with chopped onions, salt, pounded garlic and ground red pepper. The mixture is stuffed into the cleaned intestine pieces, and then the ends are sewn. The sausage is placed in boiling water for 10-15 minutes and then slightly smoke-cured. Then it is placed in a clean cloth, wrapped, and stored in a cool dry place. According to old custom, sausage is a winter food. It is either boiled or fried.

### 8. Liver Sausage (*Themsch'ighwnibe*)



Liver sausage  
(*Themsch'ighwnibe*)

Either beef or sheep liver may be used, the latter being preferred. The liver is pounded by a *belagh* (shovel-like wooden implement used for stirring when preparing some national dishes), or a mallet until it is as soft and pliant as dough. The liver must not be minced, as in this case it would be very tough and lose its special quality. Small rough fibers and thin skin are removed. Inner fat and onions are chopped finely and added to the liver. Pounded garlic, ground red pepper and salt are added to taste. All ingredients are mixed thoroughly. The mixture is used as stuffing for the meticulously cleaned large intestine. One end is sewn or fastened with a pointed matchstick, to prevent the stuffing from falling off. The intestine is stuffed so that its girth does not exceed double its original size. The stuffing must be uniform throughout the length of the intestine.

The sausage prepared in this way is placed in salt boiling water and cooked for 1-1.5 hours. As it boils, it is pierced by a sharp object (tip of a matchstick or prong of fork) in two to three places to prevent the steam from bursting the sausage. The dish is sliced into pieces and served hot with garlic sauce and *p'aste*.

**9. Liver with Sheep's Tail Fat** (*Themsch'ighwre ch'apere zesch'ighwu*)

The liver (*themsch'ighw*) and the sheep's tail fat (*ch'ape*) are boiled in salt water. Fresh green onions, a bundle of coriander, and a small red pepper are added. When it becomes ready, the liver and fat are removed. They are slightly cooled and then cut into thin pieces. The liver pieces should be 1.5-2 cm. thick, the fat no more than one.

The dish is served with the fat pieces lying on those of the liver. Garlic gravy (*ships*) and crushed-millet dumplings (*p'aste*) are served as side dishes. This dish may be either be had hot or cold.

**10. Thick Pancake with Liver and Eggs** (*Themschighwre jedich'ere zexelhu*)

Ingredients; for every kg of liver, 2-3 eggs, 1 cup soured cream, 2-3 onion bulbs, salt and red pepper to taste.

The liver is pounded with a *belagh* or a mallet, until the enveloping thin skin comes off and the small ligaments are removed. The liver mass must become homogeneous and free of any lumps. Whisked eggs, fried onions, and salt and ground hot red pepper to taste are added together and mixed. These are introduced by a spoon into heated-up melted fat in a brazier and fried, while being turned over. When ready, the flat cakes are placed in another deep brazier or a casserole. Small onion straws are fried in the first brazier in the remaining fat. A little red pepper is added. The flat cakes are replaced in the vessel with the onions and cooked on a gentle fire for 3-4



minutes. A little soured cream is poured in and the vessel is kept on fire for a few minutes more.

### **11. Liver in Fat** (*Themschighwr schem k'wets'ilhu*)

Fresh beef or sheep's liver may be used. The liver is sliced into pieces 3-5 cm in length, and 1.5-2 cm thick. Each piece is rubbed with salt and mixed with ground red pepper. The caul (omentum, epiploon, internal fat, fatty membrane enwrapping the intestines), is laid out on the table and cut into pieces that would amply wrap up the liver chunks. They are placed in a heated brazier on a gentle fire, and fried on a moderate fire, being turned over every now and then, so that both sides are cooked evenly. The dish is served hot. Boiled potatoes may be had with it.

This dish may also be cooked using slightly boiled liver. The method differs from the one described above by the way liver is prepared. Ground red pepper is rubbed on the chunks of liver, which are then dipped in a thick salt solution (*shighwships*), and immediately enwrapped by the fat. The sauce is made using the water in which the liver was boiled.

### **12. Sheep's Tail Fat Cracklings** (*Ch'ape libzchaxwe*)

The cut fat is placed in a cauldron or an aluminium casserole. Salt is added and then some water is poured in. The vessel is placed over a fire and is stirred every now and then. The fat is allowed to melt slowly until the pieces turn red. The vessel is taken off the fire, and the cracklings are removed using a skimmer and placed in a deep plate or a large bowl. The melted fat is poured in an earthenware pot or other crockery. The cracklings are served with crushed-millet dumplings (*p'aste*), warm unleavened maize-bread (*mezhaje*), or boiled potatoes. The melted fat is nourishing. It is most suitable to fry meat, potatoes, or dough in. Because of its nice smell, it is used in preparation of Circassian sweet (*heliwe*).

### **13. Fried Sheep's Tail Fat with Honey** (*Ch'ape ghezchare fore*)

The fat is sliced into 30-40 g pieces and boiled in a cauldron or aluminium casserole until it is reduced to about half its original size. The melted fat is poured out. The remaining fat is fried to redness and then removed from the fire. The fat and honey are mixed in equal amounts. The mixture is placed in an earthenware pot or other tight crockery. This food is prepared for winter. It may be had with *p'aste*, *miramisa*, hot unleavened maize-bread (*mezhaje*). Sour cream may be drunk with it.

### **14. Sheep's Tail Fat with Honey** (*Ch'ape daghefo*)

This is a variety of the preceding dish. Hot melted fat is poured into an earthenware pot or a casserole with a white inside, and then cooled to 30 °C. An equal amount of honey is added, and the whole thing is stirred and mixed thoroughly. It is placed in a cool place to allow it to congeal. This

food is prepared for winter. It is served with *p'aste*, *miramisa*, hot unleavened maize-bread (*mezhaje*).

## 2. Dried and Smoked Meat Dishes

(*Li gheghwamre gheghwpts'amre qixasch'ich' shxinighwexer*)

Mutton and beef may be either jerked (dry-cured) or smoked. First, the carcass is split by making incisions with a knife in such a way as to be able to corn (salt) the meat sufficiently in many parts. The meat is salted to taste (but enough must be used to prevent it from spoiling). It is left to stand for 3-4 hours to allow the salt to permeate properly. Then the meat is rolled, laid on a large plate, and placed in a cool place overnight to be corned to the full. The next morning, it is placed in the sun (in a windy place), and dried (it is recommended that the meat be enwrapped in gauze to keep off the flies).

The meat would become tastier and smell nicer, if before drying it is smoked on a gentle fire for a few hours. Smoke from the stalks of half-dried (stinging-)nettles bestows on the meat a very pleasant smell. The meat cured in this manner will keep for a very long time in a fresh place. In the olden days, the Circassians dry-cured meat to be consumed in autumn, winter and spring.

### 1. Meat Roasted on Skewers, Shashlik (*Li dzasech'e ghezchawe*)



Meat roasted on skewers  
(*Li dzasech'e ghezchawe*)

The meat is cut into 50-75 g pieces, which are pierced onto skewers. These are turned slowly over embers of gentle heat until they are ready. If the meat is fatty, it is placed on *p'aste* dumplings. The meat is served with *miramisa*, hot unleavened maize-bread (*mezhaje*), or boiled potatoes. Garlic sauce (*ships*) may be poured over the roasted meat.

## 2. Fried Meat (*Li teibech'e ghezchawe*)



Fried meat with *p'aste*  
(*Li teibech'e ghezchawe*)

The meat is cut to pieces and placed in a hot frying-pan or a brazier. The pan is covered. The meat pieces are turned so that both sides are roasted on a gentle fire. When it is ready, it is served hot with *p'aste* or boiled potatoes.

## 3. Fried Meat and Potatoes (*Lire ch'ert'ofre zesch'elhu ghezchawe*)

Fatty pieces of meat are fried in a pan, as in the preceding entry. When it is ready, it is placed in a vessel. The hot melted fat left in the pan is used to fry large slices of potato until they turn red, being turned frequently. Small amounts of salt and red pepper are added. The pieces of meat are placed on top of the cooked potatoes. The pan is covered, removed from the fire and allowed to stand for a while. The dish is served with either *p'aste*, unleavened maize-bread (*mezhaje*), or bread.

## 4. Fried Meat with Onions (*Lim bzchin sch'elhu*)

The meat is cut into small pieces and placed in a hot frying-pan or a brazier. If fatty meat is used, there is no need to add any fat for frying. If the meat is lean, some melted butter or sheep's tail fat (*ch'ape daghe*) may be used. When the meat is ready, large chunks of sliced onions are added with some red pepper. The meat and onions are fried on a gentle fire, being turned every so often. The dish is served hot with either *p'aste*, *miramisa*, bread, or unleavened maize-bread (*mezhaje*).

## 5. Meat and Beans Broth (*Lire jeshre xelhu leps*)

Carefully sorted out and washed haricot beans are placed in a vessel. Hot water is poured in. The vessel is covered and kept to stand overnight, during which the beans puff up. In the morning, the water is replaced by cold water and the vessel is placed on the fire. After one hour, the boiling water is poured out, replaced by cold. As the water comes again to the boil, the pieces of meat are introduced and the whole thing is boiled until it is

ready. Fresh green onions and chopped coriander are added. If these are not available, fried onions and red pepper may be used.

#### **6. Meat and Potato Broth** (*Lire ch'ert'ofre xelhu leps*)

The meat is cut into pieces and placed in a vessel of hot water just as it comes to the boil. A red pepper and a peeled onion cut in half are added. When the meat is cooked, large slices of potato are added and the whole thing is boiled to readiness. The dish is served hot with either bread or unleavened maize-bread (*mezhaje*).

#### **7. Smoked Meat Goulash** (*Lighwpts'a libzche*)

This is prepared as Circassian (fresh meat) goulash.

#### **8. Meat and Noodles** (*Li xelhu x'inch'el*)

Ingredients: 1 kg of dried or smoked meat, dough kneaded with an egg and 1.5 glasses of water, 6-8 cloves of garlic for the garlic sauce, salt to taste.

Meat of medium fat content is cut into pieces. These are placed in a vessel of hot salt water, and are boiled slowly. The noodle dough is prepared in the meantime. The dough is kneaded with water and eggs. The dough, which should not be very hard, is rolled thinly and is cut into 2x2 cm squares. The cooked meat is removed and placed in a white casserole or a large drinking vessel near a fire. The noodles are added to the boiling broth. When they are ready, they come up to the surface, from which they are removed by a skimmer and placed on a plate. The cooked meat is placed on top of the noodles, and garlic sauce (*bzchinixwps*) is poured all over the plate. Garlic sauce is prepared in the following way. The garlic is pounded with salt in a mortar. An appropriate amount of broth is added and the mixture is strained.

#### **9. Dried Sheep's Side** (*Dzazhe gheghwa*)



Dried sheep's side  
(*Dzazhe gheghwa*)

The side is salted. Cloves of garlic are placed in small holes, which are pierced in the meat at intervals. The side is left to stand for a few hours. It is then dried in the sun or in the hearth. The dried side can keep for months. When required, the desired amount is cut, fried in fat and served hot.

### **3. Poultry and Egg Dishes**

(*Jedqazimre jedich'emre qixasch'ich' shxinighwexer*)

#### **1. Chicken in Soured Cream Sauce, Jadlibja (*Jedlibzche*)**

Ingredients: for each 600-700 g young chicken (chick), 300 g soured cream, 3/4 cups water, 1 spoon wheat flour, 2-3 onion bulbs (not too large), red pepper, salt, savory (or thyme), to taste.



Chicken in soured cream sauce  
(*Jedlibzche*)

The chick is cleaned and washed thoroughly, and then dismembered to pieces (but not chopped up). Chopped onion is placed in either a deep brazier or a cauldron and fried gently in butter or melted butter. Ground red pepper is added to taste. The chicken pieces are placed in the brazier (or cauldron), salt is added, and the contents stirred well. The vessel is covered and placed on a gentle fire. The chicken is cooked to readiness, while being turned over to prevent the food from burning onto the vessel. Soured cream is then poured in and the contents are cooked for 7-10 minutes with the cover removed.

In the meantime, a spoonful of wheat flour is put in water, together with savory (or thyme), and salt (if there is not enough of it in the sauce). The mixture is then added to the chicken sauce, which is cooked for a few minutes more, and then removed from the fire. If rich sauce (*ships*) is to be made, there is no need to prepare the flour water (*hezhigheps*). In this case, before soured cream is poured in, wheat flour is added and fried a little, while being stirred. Then the soured cream is added. The sauce is cooked for a little bit more and then removed from the fire. The dish is served hot with either pasta, unleavened maize bread (*mezhaje*), or *miramisa*. Pounded garlic is also served either separately or added to the *ships*.

If a bigger chicken is used, the method differs somewhat. The chicken is placed in a casserole and a little water is poured in. Salt is added to taste. The vessel is covered tightly and placed to boil on a gentle fire until the chicken is ready. In the meantime, the chicken fat melts and is completely cooked down in the water. Onion is finely chopped and added to the chicken, together with ground red pepper. The whole lot are fried, while being stirred, until the onions turn slightly red. *Ships* is then prepared in the three mentioned methods.

## 2. Stuffed Chicken Baked in Dough (*Thevim k'wets'ighezchihawe jed*)

Ingredients: 1 young chicken (chick), 1 cup rice, 1/2 cup raisins, 5-6 walnuts.

A young chicken must be used for this dish (an old one would be too hard to cook properly). The poult is washed and cleaned thoroughly, but is not cut to pieces. Salt is daubed over the whole chicken, which is allowed to stand for a while. Rice is sorted and washed. It is then inundated with warm salt water and left to stand for 1-1.5 hours. Walnuts are pounded. Raisins are

thoroughly washed and put aside to dry for a while. Then they are fried for 1-2 minutes in melted butter, and removed. The rice, walnuts and raisins are kneaded together and then stuffed inside the chicken. Very thick dough is kneaded in water and then rolled out to a thickness of 1-1.5 cm. The chicken is wrapped in the dough and placed in the oven to bake until it is cooked. The baked dough is removed before the chicken is served hot. Turkey, goose and duck may also be prepared in this manner.

### 3. Broasted Chicken (*Jedla*)



Broasted chicken (*Jedla*)

A chicken is cleaned and washed thoroughly, and then dismembered into pieces. These are added into boiling salted water and cooked. When they are ready, they are removed by a skimmer, and allowed to dry for a while. In the meantime, *khudir*, which is made from wheat flour with eggs, is prepared. Melted butter is put in a cauldron or a deep brazier, and heated to seething. The chicken pieces are introduced, one by one. They are fried, while being turned over, till they become thoroughly heated. They are then removed and placed on a plate. Each piece is dipped in the *khudir*, and then in the heated butter, and so on, till the wheaten crust attains a thickness of 1-1.5 cm (the pieces are dipped 2-4 times in the *khudir*). The pieces are placed on a flat plate and served. The dish may be garnished with various vegetables and greens.

Method of preparing *khudir*: a little salt and a spoonful of soured cream are added to 4-5 eggs, which are then thoroughly whisked. Wheat flour is then poured in such that the *khudir* acquires the same consistency as thick soured cream.

### 4. Fried Chicken with Onion (*Jed ghezcha bzchin sch'elhu*)

Ingredients: 500-600 g onions for each chicken, 150-200 g butter.

The chicken is dismembered, and the pieces are washed thoroughly and placed in a deep brazier. Salt and ground red pepper are added. The cooking vessel is covered and placed on a gentle fire till the chicken is cooked (all

the water must evaporate). If the chicken is not fatty, either butter or melted butter is added. Chopped onions are introduced, stirred and fried with the chicken. The onions and chicken must be fried on both sides evenly. This requires that they must be stirred periodically. The dish is served hot.

### **5. Boiled Chicken with Garlic** (*Jed gheva bzchinixw yi ghwsew*)



Boiled Chicken with Garlic  
(*Jed gheva bzchinixw yi ghwsew*)

The chicken is either cooked as it is or dismembered at the joints. It is placed in boiling salt water and cooked. A peeled onion and a small red pepper are added to the soup. When it is ready, the chicken is taken out. Each piece is dipped in garlic water. The sauce is made as follows. 5-6 cloves of garlic are pounded with half a spoon of salt. 1.5 cups of soup are added, and the whole lot are mixed well and strained. The sauce is now ready. The chicken pieces are placed in a vessel, which is covered and left to stand for a short time. It is possible to make garlic sauce separately. Pounded garlic, salt, red pepper and either soured cream, sour milk, or soup, are mixed together. The dish is served with *p'aste*. The soup is served afterwards. The soup is also used to make millet soup (*hentx'wps*) (see 6.37).

### **6. Chicken and Noodles** (*Jedir x'inch'elim xelhu*)

Dough Ingredients: 2 eggs, 1.5-2 cups water, flour, salt.

It is best to use a fatty chicken for this dish. The dismembered pieces of chicken are cooked in water and then removed and put aside. Dough is kneaded to firmness and then cut into small thin pieces of 2x2 cm. These are placed in the boiling soup and cooked. When they come up to the surface (a sign of readiness), they are removed with a skimmer and placed on a plate. The pieces of chicken are put on top of them. Garlic sauce is prepared by mixing 1.5 cups of chicken soup taken from the cooking vessel and garlic (5-6 cloves) pounded with salt (to taste). The sauce is poured onto the chicken and noodles. The dish is served hot.

### **7. Chicken with New Potatoes** (*Jedisch'ere ch'ert'ofisch'ere zesch'elhu*)

Ingredients: 1 chick, 8-10 new potatoes (not very large), 250-300 soured cream, 30 g butter.



The dismembered pieces of a young chicken (chick) are placed in a deep brazier. New potatoes are washed, peeled and sliced into round pieces or lobules. They are placed on top of the chicken. Salt, ground red pepper, savory, small pieces of chopped onion, butter, and 3/4 cups of water are added. The cooking vessel is covered and placed on a gentle fire until the chicken is cooked. Soured cream is poured in and the contents are boiled for a while, then removed from the fire. Chopped fresh green onions and coriander are added. The dish is served hot.

#### **8. Chicken in Pepper Sauce** (*Jedlibzche shibzhiy ships sch'etu*)

The chicken is prepared in the same method as jadlibja (see 3.1). Onions and ground hot red pepper are added. The sauce is prepared in the following way. Husked millet seeds (30-50 g) are carefully washed and cleaned and placed in warm water for 15-20 minutes. The water is poured out, and the millet is pounded thoroughly with sweet red pepper (150-200 g) in a mortar. Water or chicken soup (200-250 g) is poured in, mixed with millet and strained. This is poured onto the chicken. The cooking vessel is placed on a gentle fire for 7-10 minutes, while being stirred continuously. The dish is served hot with pasta or bread.

#### **9. Chicken Fried in a Brazier** (*Jed teibech'e ghezchawe*)

The split chicken is washed and cleaned and either kept whole or cut into two. Salt and red pepper are added to taste. The chicken is daubed with soured cream. The chicken is then laid on a flat plate and left to stand for 1-2 hours, with a heavy object placed on top. Then the chicken is placed in a brazier with melted fat, and fried on a gentle fire, being turned over to allow both sides to cook evenly. The dish may be served with a piquant sauce, mainly garlic sauce.

#### **10. Chicken in Walnut Sauce** (*Jed de ships sch'etu*)

(This dish has fallen into disuse)

The chicken is cleaned and dismembered. The pieces are placed in slightly-salted water just before it comes to the boil, cooked and then removed. As soon as the soup trickles down, the chicken pieces are daubed with garlic pounded with salt (the garlic should be twice the amount of salt).

The sauce is prepared in the following way. Wheat flour is fried in a little butter (until goldish in colour), and then poured onto a plate. Well-pounded walnuts are added and mixed with the fried flour. Chicken soup to the required amount is poured into a casserole or a deep brazier and placed on the fire. When it comes to the boil, the intensity of the fire is reduced. The walnut and flour mixture is added. The cooking vessel is kept over the fire until the soup mix, which is stirred well all the time, acquires the consistency of soured cream. Salt is added to taste.

Onions are fried in butter separately. When they are ready, they are wrung out and removed from the frying-pan. Ground hot red pepper is added to the remaining fat. The fat is poured over the sauce before it is served. The chicken is either served in the sauce or separately. *Pasta* or bread are served with this dish.

## 11. Boiled Turkey (*Gwegwsh gheva*)



Boiled turkey  
(*Gwegwsh gheva*)

Ingredients: 4-5 kg turkey, 1-1.5 kg onion (considering the amount of ships to be made), 2 garlic bulbs, 1/2 liter sour milk, or kefir for every 1/2 pounded garlic heads. Salt and red pepper to taste.

The turkey is cleaned and then carefully dismembered (but not chopped up) to pieces. These are washed and placed in hot salted water, before it reaches the boil. The turkey is cooked to readiness, the froth being removed as it accumulates. A peeled onion bulb and half a red pepper may be added. When the pieces are ready, they are placed on a plate and daubed with a solution of garlic and salt.

The solution is prepared in the following way. Garlic is pounded with salt (1 portion salt to 4-5 of garlic). The garlic is added to 2-3 cups of soup, which is stirred until the salt dissolves, and then strained. Each turkey piece is immersed in the solution for a short time (1-2 minutes), and then removed. When the solution flows down, it is placed in deep vessel (preferably an enamelled casserole).

When all the pieces have been treated thus, the casserole is placed in a cool place and left to stand for 1/2 hour. Then a large quantity of onion is chopped up, and placed in a deep brazier or in a casserole (of 1-1.5 liter capacity). The soup fat (from the boiled turkey) is collected and poured over the onion. When the fat floods the onion to about two heights, the brazier is placed on a gentle fire, and the onion is fried to readiness. Ground red pepper is added to taste.

Liver is cooked by boiling, removed, and then pounded thoroughly in a mortar and added to the onion. More soup fat is obtained and poured onto the onion and liver. The brazier is replaced on a gentle fire and cooked for a few minutes, while being stirred. It is taken off the fire, and pounded garlic and salt are added to taste. The sauce is now ready. The turkey may be

served either hot or cold, but the sauce must always be served hot. This dish must be had with pasta. Soup is served last. *Lepsteipx'e* may also be served (see section 6.11 for method of preparation of *lepsteipx'e*). Rice or husked millet may be added to the soup. Some prefer to pour in soured cream or milk.

Note: The turkey is first boiled whole, and then dismembered to pieces. Sauce may also be prepared by adding pounded garlic to soured cream or sour milk. Salt is added to taste. If liver is not available, the following alternative may be used instead. An ample quantity of husked millet (20-30 g) is washed and placed in warm water for 30-40 minutes. The water is then poured out and the millet pounded in a mortar. The millet is then added to the fried onion (in place of the liver). Then the sauce is prepared in the same way as liver sauce, which must be made to the same consistency as soured cream.

### **12. Stuffed Turkey** (*Gwegwsh ghezcha*)

This is prepared in the same manner as Stuffed chicken baked in dough (see 3.2).

### **13. Boiled Goose (Duck)** (*Qaz, e babisch, gheva*)

Ingredients: 1 goose (duck), 1 egg, dough kneaded with one egg and 1.5-2 cups water (1 for duck), garlic and salt to taste.

The goose, or duck, is cleaned and washed thoroughly. It may either be cooked whole or cut into pieces. It is placed in salt water near boiling point and cooked. When ready, it is removed and left to dry for a while. It is then daubed with garlic pounded with salt (1 portion of salt for every 2-3 of garlic). 3-4 spoons of soup fat are poured off for every person. Salt and pounded garlic are added to the soup fat, which is then strained. It is served as sauce with the cooked goose. Pickle is served with the meat as a piquant relish. Bread, or pasta, is also served. Soup flavoured with noodles is served afterwards.

Dismembered pieces of poultry are cleaned and washed and cooked as usual. When ready, they are removed and placed in a deep vessel, which is then covered. The prepared dough is rolled out thin and cut into 2x2 cm pieces. These are placed in the soup and cooked till they are ready. They are scooped out as they come up to the surface and placed on a shallow plate. Garlic sauce is poured on. The dish is served hot.

### **14. Goose (Duck) with Noodles** (*Qaz, e babisch, x'inch'elim xelhu*)

Ingredients: 1 goose (duck), dough kneaded with 1-2 eggs and 1.5-2 cups water (1 for duck), garlic and salt to taste.

Dismembered pieces of poultry are cleaned and washed and cooked to readiness. When ready, they are removed and placed in a deep vessel, which

is then covered. The prepared dough is rolled out thin and cut into 2x2 cm pieces. These are placed in the boiling soup and cooked till they are ready. They are scooped out as they come up to the surface and placed on a flat plate. The pieces of poultry are arranged on top, then garlic sauce is poured on. The dish is served hot.

### **15. Baked Goose (Duck) Stuffed with Rice** (*Qaz, e babisch, ghezcha prunzh k'wets'ilhu*)

Ingredients: 1 goose (duck), 2-2.5 cups rice (1-1.5 for duck), salt and red pepper to taste.

The goose is cleaned and washed thoroughly, but is not cut to pieces. The whole poult is rubbed with a mixture of salt and ground red pepper. The goose is left to stand for about one hour in order to allow the mixture to be properly absorbed. Rice is sorted and cleaned thoroughly. Then it is poured into warm salt water (1 spoon salt in 1 liter water). The rice is left to stand for one hour, after which the water is poured out. The rice is stuffed inside the goose, which is sewn up and placed in the oven. The dripping fat is periodically poured onto the goose as it is cooked. It is also possible to cook the goose by first wrapping it up in dough (see 3.2, 3.12).

### **16. Pastry Straws, twiglets** (*Jedich'eripsch*)

Ingredients: 10 egg yolks, 120 g soured cream, 4-5 spoons sugar, knife-tipful of salt, flour.

The yolks are whisked well with the sugar. The flour is mixed with the beaten yolks and soured cream, and kneaded well. Salt is added in the process. The dough is cut into 40-50 g pieces, which are rolled into thin round cakes. These are cut in two. The tips of these semi-circles are stuck together by nipping. They are placed in a cauldron of seething fat (sunflower oil, sheep's tail fat, or melted butter may be used), and fried.

### **17. Eggs Fried in Soured Cream** (*Jedich'eneqiyzh*)

Ingredients: one egg for every 50-75 g soured cream, 400 g soured cream, 1 spoon maize flour or cereal, salt to taste.

The soured cream is poured into a deep brazier. Maize flour or cereal is added with some salt. The cream is stirred well. The brazier is placed on a gentle fire, and the contents are cooked for 3-5 minutes, while being stirred all the time. The desired number of eggs are broken into the cream with the yolks intact. The vessel is covered, and the eggs are cooked till the white turns white, as it were. The dish is served hot.

### **18. Sweet Omelette** (*Jedich'ezchapx'e 'ef'*)

Ingredients: 10 eggs, 3/4 cup sugar, 1 spoon flour, 2-3 spoons melted butter, a little salt.

This is one of the most popular dishes. Sugar to taste is poured on a few eggs, which are then vigorously whisked until thick froth is formed. Butter is heated in a brazier, in which the eggs are poured. The cooking vessel is covered and placed in the oven to bake. It may also be placed on a stove and cooked on a gentle fire. Usually, Circassians have this dish at supper. It is served hot. This dish may also be prepared without sugar, instead of which salt is added to taste.

#### **19. Jadichevinsh** (*Jedich'evinsh, Schheqwih*)

Ingredients: 2-3 eggs, 1/2 cup milk, 1-2 spoons flour.

The eggs are whisked until thick froth is formed, milk is poured in, and salt is added to taste. The mixture is placed in a heated brazier and fried in butter.

*Jadichevinsh* also refers to an omelette made from eggs, soured cream and cottage cheese.

## **4. Fish Dishes**

(*Bdzezchey shxinighwexer*)

Despite the abundance of fresh-water fish in the North Caucasus, Circassian cuisine is not well-known for its fish dishes. Here, two dishes are described.

### **1. Fried Fish** (*Bdzezchey ghezcha*)

The fish is scaled, cleaned and salted. It is dragged through wheat flour. Melted butter or sunflower oil is heated in a frying-pan or a brazier. The fish is fried, being turned over, until both sides turn red. The dish is served hot.

### **2. Fried Fish in Soured Cream** (*Bdzezchey shatech'e ghezchawe*)

The fried fish is placed in another brazier, and soured cream is poured in with some salt. The brazier is placed on a gentle fire for a few minutes and then removed. It is also possible to stew the fish straight with the soured cream without frying it first. The fish is served hot.

## **5. Dairy Product Dishes**

### **1. Cheese** (*Q'wey*)

Two kinds of home cheese are prepared. Rennet juice is used to sour the milk more quickly. The method of preparation of rennet juice is now described. The rennet bag is cut out of the slaughtered cattle. It is cleaned thoroughly in running water. A handful of salt is then introduced into the

bag. Also, some salt is daubed on the outside. The bag is then dried in the sun or in the hearth. When it is dried, it is placed in a vessel of whey, either wholly or partially. It is kept until it is well tempered. It is best to use a ceramic vessel with not too wide a neck.



Red cheese and *kurt*  
(*q'wey plhizchre qwrtre*)

- First Method: Fresh milk is heated to about 40 degrees. Rennet juice is added (1 tablespoon for every liter of milk). It is stirred, covered and put for a few minutes in a warm place. When whey begins to form and the curdle starts to separate, it is carefully gathered by hand into one lump and softly rung out so as not to squash the mass. When it firms up, it is placed on a small board, rung out again until all the whey is removed. The cheese is either formed into a square or ball, as desired. Salt is poured on, and it is allowed to stand for 8-10 hours. It is then cut into 300-350 g pieces. These are placed in a large earthenware pot or in a vat. Whey is boiled, cooled down, salted and then poured into the pot or vat. The top of the cheese is covered with clean linen. A heavy object is placed on top. Sometimes, peeled garlic slices are added to the whey. Cheese is usually prepared in summer or in the autumn. It becomes ready in winter, by which time it acquires a pleasant piquancy.
- Second Method: Whole milk is brought near the boil. Rennet juice is slowly introduced by a ladle from the edges. Then the juice is added every now and then until such a time when a white head stops surfacing. The thickened white mass is removed with a skimmer, placed in a sieve and left to dry. It is then placed in a deep vessel. Whey is heated up, salted, and then poured into the vessel. This is covered up and allowed to stand for a whole day. The cheese is removed and dried in the hearth. To make cottage cheese, sour milk or very sour whey is poured into seething milk. Vinegar may also be used. The resulting thick white mass is removed with a skimmer.

Associated sayings:

- *Dzighwiybghw zedei'eme, q'wey ch'adaschhe trach:* (If nine mice pull together, they can uncover the cheese vat) Many hands make light work.

- *Dzighwiyische zedeizheme, q'wey ch'adaschhe trach*: Many hands make light work.
- *Q'weymre mivemre xwedew zeschhsch*: (As like as cheese and stones) As like as chalk and cheese.

## 2. Soured Cream Sauce with Cheese (*Q'wey zachapx'e*)

Ingredients: 1 kg soured cream, 150-200 g cheese, an egg, 2 tablespoons maize flour or cereal, salt to taste.

Fresh new cheese is cut into small pieces or crumbled with the hands. These are placed in a cauldron or a deep brazier. A whisked egg is added and mixed by stirring. Soured cream is poured in and the vessel is placed on a gentle fire. The mixture is continuously stirred to prevent the cheese from burning onto the cooking vessel. This goes on until the cheese dissolves and only thin threads remain (with no sediment). At this stage, the soured cream becomes thin. To make it thicker, maize flour or cereal is strewn in. The mixture is kept on a gentle fire for 5-6 minutes, stirred continuously, and then removed from the fire. Salt is only added as it nears readiness. The cooking vessel is covered and is left standing for a few minutes. If a large quantity of butter is formed, it is removed as it forms. This butter has a nice smell and tastes great. The dish is served hot with *p'aste*.

## 3. Hominy or Polenta (*Zhemikwe*)

Ingredients: 1 kg soured cream, 150-200 g cheese, an egg, maize flour or cereal, salt to taste.

This is made like the preceding dish, but a greater amount of maize flour or cereal is used, so that the thickness of the mixture becomes like that of *miramisa*. This dish may be served hot or cold. When hot, it is placed in a plate using a trowel, and served with sour cream. If it is served cold, it is placed on a plate, then cut to pieces as it cools down and sets. It is also served with sour milk.

## 4. Fried Cheese (*Q'wey ghezcha*)

This food is not as frequently prepared as before. There are several methods of making this dish:

- Onions are chopped to small pieces. These are fried in butter or melted butter in a cooking vessel (e.g.: brazier). Red pepper is strewn onto the onions to taste. Fresh cheese is crumbled into small lumps by hand and then placed in the brazier. The mixture is cooked for 5-10 minutes, while being stirred continuously. The dish is served hot.
- Fresh cheese is cut into thin slices, which are placed in a brazier and fried on both sides in butter or melted butter, while being turned over. The white of egg is whisked well and poured into the vessel. The mixture is cooked, while being turned over. It is served hot with soured cream or sour milk.



- Fresh cheese is crumbled by hand into small lumps, which are fried in butter, or melted butter, for a few minutes. The white of egg is whisked well and is added to the cheese as it is being cooked. When the cheese is cooked, soured cream is poured in. The dish is served hot.

### 5. Sour Milk (*Shxw*)

Milk is boiled in a cauldron and then allowed to cool to 40-45 °C. One spoon of sour milk is added for every two liters of milk, and the mixture is carefully stirred. The vessel is wrapped up in order to keep it warm and then allowed to stand in a warmish place for 1-2 hours. As soon as the milk ferments, it is placed in a fresh place to cool down, but not to get very cold. It is best had with unleavened maize bread (*chirzhin*), *miramisa*, or warm *lakum*.

Associated sayings:

- *Shxwm xwedew qeghepts'en*: 1. To turn somebody round one's finger; 2. To catch with chaff.

### 6. Baked Milk (*She sch'eghepschtha*)

Milk is boiled in the evening (it is best to use buffalo milk). After it comes to the boil, it is kept on a gentle fire for 30-40 minutes. The milk is left to stand in a cool place. By the next morning, a thick layer of milk skin is formed. This is very nice to have with unleavened maize bread (*chirzhin*, or *mezhaje*), or with warm bread. It is served with Kalmyk tea.

Baked milk is prepared for children in the following way. The thick layer is wound round special small sticks with forked tips and dried a little. The wound baked milk is then carefully cut off and served.

### 7. Shkuz (*Shxwz*)

(This kind of milk preserve has got completely out of use. It used to be prepared for winter)

Fresh sour milk is poured out into a clean sieve lined with linen, or with several layers of gauze. It is left to stand for a whole day, allowing for the whey to be completely strained. The sour milk curds are placed in a ceramic vessel with a perforated bottom, and a little salt is strewn in. Fresh soured cream is poured onto the curd layer, another layer of sour milk curds is placed on top, and so on until the vessel is full. The ratio of curds to soured cream is 3:1. Melted internal fat or beeswax is poured over, and the vessel is put in a cool place. The *shkuz* is cut with a knife. It is had with *lakum*, or warm unleavened bread (*chirzhin*). It may also be spread on bread, or added to *hantkhups* (millet soup) (see 6.37), for flavour. *Shkuz* is a high-calorie food, and is rich in essential proteins.

### 8. Bajina (*Bejine*)

Slightly soured whey is strained and placed in a casserole on a fire. A small amount of salt is added. When it starts to boil, it is stirred as maize flour or cereal is slowly poured in. It is cooked well just like *miramisa* (see 6.23), while being continuously stirred. The dish is served hot with butter.

### 9. Kurt (*Qwrt*)

Salt is added to whey, which is boiled on a gentle fire for 1-1.5 hours. It is strained by using a gauze sieve. The remains are formed into balls. These are dried in the sun or in a hearth. *Kurt*, like cheese, is had with hot pasta, unleavened maize-bread (*chirzhin*, or *mezhaje*), or boiled potatoes.

Associate sayings:

- *Yi zche qwrt zchedelh xwede*: (As if his mouth is stuffed with *kurt*)  
(As) Dumb as an oyster, or a fish.

## 6. Flour, Cereals, and Haricot Beans Dishes

The most common methods of preparing dough are first described.

a- The dough described in this section is very nutritious and of high quality. It is tasty and many dishes may be prepared from it: *khirshin* (*x'irshin*), pies, *lakum*, etc.

Ingredients: 350-400 g milk, 100-125 g butter or margarine, 3 eggs, 3-4 spoons of sugar, some salt, 100 g fresh leaven.

Butter or margarine is added to warm milk. The milk is mixed with fresh leaven. Eggs, sugar and some salt are whisked well. The whole lot are brought together, and wheat flour is poured in. The mixture is kneaded with a wooden spoon or a *belagh* (shovel-like wooden instrument used for stirring). The dough is kneaded till it stops sticking to the walls of the crockery and trowel. The kneaded dough is placed in an enamelled casserole and loosely covered with a towel and placed in a cool place (it may be put in the refrigerator). The dough must rise well. In hot weather, and in the absence of a fridge, the dough may be loosely covered in a cellophane package and immersed in cold water. The dough is allowed to rise for 40-60 minutes. Flour is spread on the table or board, and the dough is placed on the flour and kneaded to a soft pulp. It is now ready to be used.

b- This is a quick and handy way of preparing dough. Eggs, with added sugar and salt, are whisked well. The mixture is poured into sour milk or kefir. Baking soda is added to vinegar or lemon juice, and the mixture is poured into the sour milk mix. Flour is then added, and the dough kneaded. The dough must be kneaded well till it is firm (the test for readiness is porosity). The dough is used to make *lakum*, *haliva*, etc.

There are other ways of making dough. These will be shown as the relevant dishes are discussed.

### **1. Lakum (*Lequm*)**

This may be made from any kind of dough. The dough is rolled to a thickness of no greater than 5 mm, and then cut into pieces of any size. They are placed in a cauldron of hot fat and fried to readiness, being turned every now and then.

The next six entries are all *haliva* (pasty) dishes. This should not be confused with halva (paste of nuts, sugar and oil).

### **2. Haliva Stuffed with Entrails (*Helive zchenfen delhu*)**

Ingredients: sheep entrails, 150-200 g fat, 3-4 onions, salt and red pepper to taste.

The entrails are placed whole in seething water and boiled for 10-15 minutes. They are removed, chopped fat and onions are added, and the whole mixture is minced. Salt and pepper are added to taste. The stuffing is then fried in a brazier. The dough is cut into lumps. Each is rolled to the desired thickness. The minced entrails are placed on top, and the dough is sealed in a triangular shape. The prepared *haliva* are fried in a cauldron of hot fat. They may also be cooked in the oven. Some soured cream is poured on the cooked *haliva*, which is served hot.

### **3. Haliva Stuffed with Cottage Cheese (*Helive q'wey lhalhe delhu*)**

Cottage cheese is well crumpled. The cheese must become crumbly. Onion chopped to small pieces is mixed with the cheese, and salt and savory are added to taste. Any kind of dough may be used. However, the one mentioned here can be made with ease, and is quite dainty. For this, you must have 150 g of milk, some baking soda, and salt to taste. Soured cream and eggs are added to the milk, which is whisked vigorously. The dough is then kneaded with the milk. The *haliva* are prepared as is shown in preceding entry. They are fried in a cauldron of hot fat.

### **4. Haliva Stuffed with Potato (*Helive ch'ert'of delhu*)**

Any kind of dough may be used, except sweetened ones. Boiled potatoes are vigorously pounded. Onions fried in butter are added to the potatoes in large amounts. Hot red pepper is also added. The prepared *haliva* are fried in a brazier of hot butter. They may also be cooked in the oven. However, before being placed in the oven, the *haliva* are smeared with the white of egg.

## **5. Haliva stuffed with Potato and Cheese** (*Helive ch'ert'ofre q'weyre delhu*)

Ingredients for the stuffing: 150-200 g cheese (best salted), 1-2 eggs, 50 g butter.

Pounded boiled potatoes, crumbled cottage cheese, eggs and butter are thoroughly mixed to make the stuffing. The *haliva* are prepared as shown above. They may either be fried in a cauldron of hot fat, or in the oven.

## **6. Haliva stuffed with Haricot Beans** (*Heliva jesh delhu*)

Ingredients for the stuffing: 1 kg haricot beans, half a cup of sunflower oil, 5-6 medium-size onions, hot red pepper, salt to taste.

The haricot beans are cooked, and then ground. They also may be mashed. The onions are fried in sunflower oil. The beans and onions are mixed, and salt and red pepper are added to taste. The stuffing is now ready. The *haliva* are prepared as shown above. They may either be fried in hot fat, or placed to be cooked in the oven.

## **7. Haliva Stuffed with Pears** (*Helive q'wzch delhu*)

Dough is prepared, with or without leaven. However, it must be sweetened by adding sugar. The stuffing is prepared by mixing the flour of dried pears (*q'wzch gheghwa*) with honey (refer to the section on sweets and desserts below for details on how to prepare the stuffing). The stuffing must be firmly sealed. The *haliva* are fried in a cauldron in hot fat. They may be served hot or cold.

Associated sayings:

- *Shighw helive*: 1. Pasty with salt fried specially for divination; 2. (As) Salt as brine. {*yiqwch'e shuwighe*}

## **8. Potato and Cheese Pie** (*Delen ch'ert'ofre q'weyre delhu*)

Dough is prepared, with or without leaven. The potatoes are boiled and then mashed together with some butter. Soured cream is added to make the stuffing viscid. Finely chopped onions, finely sliced new fresh cheese (or soaked salted cheese), savory, and salt to taste are added. The dough, which is rolled to the size of the baking pan, must be 1-1.5 cm thick. It is placed at the bottom of the pan such that it reaches the rim. The stuffing is added to a thickness of 2-2.5 cm. The top is covered with dough more thickly rolled. The edge is carefully tweaked by hand. The top of the pie is cut at some places with a knife. The pie is baked in the oven. The cooked pie is placed

on a large plate and its head is daubed with butter. It is now ready to be served.

### **9. Cottage Cheese Pie** (*Delen q'wey lhalhe delhu*)

Ingredients for the stuffing: 1/2 kg cottage cheese, 2-3 onions, 2 eggs, savory and salt to taste.

Leavened dough is prepared. The cheese is crumpled well by hand. Eggs and finely chopped onions are mixed with the cheese. Savory and salt are added to taste. The pie is prepared and cooked as in the preceding entry. It is served hot.

### **10. Cottage Cheese and Green Onions Pie** (*Delen bzchin ts'inere q'wey lhalhere delhu*)

Ingredients for the stuffing: 1/2 kg cottage cheese, 1-2 eggs, 40-50 g butter, salt to taste.

Any kind of unsweetened dough may be used. Cottage cheese and sliced fresh green onions are mixed. Eggs, melted butter, and salt to taste are added. The pie is prepared and cooked as shown above. The dish is served hot.

### **11. Lapstaipkha** (*Lepsteipx'e*)

These are small pieces of short pastry made from wheat dough and boiled in fat. They are either added to broth or served separately.

Ingredients: 1 egg for every 4-5 pieces, 1/2 glass of water, a little salt, flour.

The dough is well kneaded with the eggs and water. It is rolled slightly thicker than the dough of *khinkal* (see). The dough is cut lengthwise into 1-cm strips, which are then sliced into small pieces. The pieces are fried in fat like *lakum* (see), and then removed when ready with a skimmer. *Lapstaipkha* are either served in broth or on their own.

### **12. Flaky Bread** (*Sch'aq'we zeteiwp'esch'ich'*)



Flaky bread  
(*Sch'aq'we zeteiwp'esch'ich'*)

Many methods are used to prepare flaky bread. Here, two methods are outlined.

a- Egg yolk and the white of egg are whisked separately. They are then put back together and poured onto the flour. Soured cream, milk and salt are added. The dough is kneaded well (but it need not become tough). The dough is separated into 3 pieces, which are rolled thin. Butter or melted butter is daubed on one of the rolled pieces, which is subsequently covered by another. This also is smeared with butter and covered with the third. All three are rolled together and placed spirally in a pan. To fit properly into the pan, a rolling-pin is applied to the top of the dough. The bread is baked in a stove or oven. If baked in an oven, the top of the dough is first daubed with the white of egg.

Ingredients: 5 eggs, 1/2 cup soured cream, 1/2 cup milk, some salt, flour. It is best to add 50 g of fresh leaven to the dough.

b- In this method, the dough is kneaded with half a liter of milk or water and one egg. Salt is added to taste.

N.B. If desired, the flaky bread can be sweetened by adding finely ground sugar on top of the daubed butter.

### **13. Shalama** (*Shelame*)

Millet flour is kneaded with boiling milk. It is cooled down. Milk leaven, wheat flour (1/6 the amount of millet flour), and sugar to taste are added. The dough is kneaded, covered up and stored in a warm place. When its height increases by a third, it is ready to be cooked. The dough is slowly pinched off with wet hands into small lumps and these are flattened out into 1-cm thick layers. They are placed in a cauldron of boiling fat and fried, being turned over on both sides, until their crust becomes pink. It is served with honey, cheese, tea, milk, and soured cream.

### **14. Tkhurimbey** (*Tx'wrimbey*)

One portion of sugar is mixed with four portions of butter. Fresh millet flour or wheat flour is poured in, and the dough is kneaded well. The dough is formed into small balls (40-50 g each) and fried in a pan until the crust acquires a pinky hue. It keeps up to a month.

### **15. Unleavened Maize Bread** (*Nartixw chirzhin*)

Ingredients: 1 kg maize flour, 100-150 g wheat flour, water, salt to taste.

The maize flour is sifted and poured into a large plate. Water is boiled, and salt is added to taste. The boiling salt water is poured onto the flour. The

mixture is stirred with a *belagh* until it becomes dough. It is slightly stretched on a pan and cooled down. Then it is mixed and rolled in wheat flour to add flavour. The dough is left to stand for a couple of hours, but it must not be allowed to turn sour. The dough is shaped by hand into round or oval flat cakes, or into long stripes of 1.5-2 cm width. The prepared dough is placed in a heated pan daubed with fat. The pan is covered and placed on a stove of gentle fire. The bread is cooked on both sides. *Chirzhin* may be served either hot or cold. It is eaten with salted cheese, soured cream, sour milk, milk, Kalmyk tea (see).

Note: When the dough pieces are placed in the pan, the hand should be dipped in water to prevent the dough from sticking to it.

#### **16. Leavened Maize Bread** (*Chirzhin gheteja*)

Maize dough is prepared as in the previous entry. When it cools down, it is kneaded with an equal amount of wheat flour. Yeast diluted in hot water is added, and the dough is kneaded. The dough is placed in a warm place. When it rises, it is prepared as indicated in the preceding entry.

#### **17. Maize Lakum** (*Nartixw leqwm*)

Dough is prepared in either of the two preceding methods. The dough is pinched off and rolled into cakes of any desired size. They are placed in a cauldron of hot fat and fried to readiness, being turned every now and then. It is served either hot or cold. It goes well with dairy products.

#### **18. Unleavened Maize Bread** (*Nartixw mezhaje*)

This is very similar to *chirzhin* (see 6.15). The maize flour is sifted and poured into a large plate. Water is boiled, and salt is added to taste. The salt water is poured onto the flour. The mixture is stirred with a *belagh* until it becomes dough. It is slightly stretched on a pan and cooled down. Then it is mixed and rolled in wheat flour to add flavour. The dough is left to stand for a couple of hours, but it must not be allowed to turn sour. The dough is shaped by hand into round or oval flat cakes, or into long stripes of 1.5-2 cm width. The prepared dough is placed properly in a hot pan daubed with fat. The pan is covered and placed in the oven. It is baked for 40-60 minutes, depending on the depth of the pan.

Associated sayings:

- Disch mezhaje 'ef'sch*: (Home-made *mezhaje* is tasty) Home-cooked food is best.

#### **19. Maize Rolls** (*Hetiq*)

The maize flour is sifted and poured into a large plate. Water is boiled, and salt is added to taste. The salt water is poured onto the flour. The mixture is stirred with a *belagh* until it becomes dough. It is slightly

stretched on a pan and cooled down. Then it is mixed and rolled in wheat flour to add flavour. The dough is left to stand for a couple of hours, but it must not be allowed to turn sour. It is then shaped into round cakes, which are placed in a hot pan daubed with fat. The rolls are baked in the oven for 40-60 minutes.

## **20. Maize Rolls with Fat** (*Sche zixelh hetiq*)

Ingredients: 1 kg of maize dough, 100 g or more fat, according to taste.

The maize flour is sifted and poured into a large plate. Water is boiled, and salt is added to taste. The salt water is poured onto the flour. The mixture is stirred with a *belagh* until it becomes dough. It is slightly stretched on a pan and cooled down. Then it is mixed and rolled in wheat flour to add flavour. The dough is left to stand for a couple of hours, but it must not be allowed to turn sour. It is kneaded with sheep's (internal) fat, or with sheep's tail fat cracklings (*ch'ape libzchaxwe*) (see 1.8). It is then shaped into round cakes, which are placed in a hot pan daubed with fat. The rolls are baked in oven for 40-60 minutes.

## **21. Unleavened Millet Bread** (*Xw chirzhin*)

Ingredients: 700-800 g millet flour, 100 g wheat flour, milk.

Millet flour with some wheat flour and warm milk are kneaded. The dough is left to stand for 2-3 hours in a warm place. The prepared dough is placed in a heated pan daubed with fat. The pan is covered and placed on a stove of gentle fire. The bread is cooked on both sides. *Chirzhin* may be served either hot or cold. It is served with salted cheese, soured cream, sour milk, milk, or Kalmyk tea (see).

## **22. Unleavened Millet Bread** (*Xw mezhaje*)

The millet flour is sifted and poured into a large plate. Water is boiled, and salt is added to taste. The salt water is poured onto the flour. The mixture is stirred with a *belagh* until it becomes dough. It is slightly stretched on a pan and cooled down. Then it is mixed and rolled in wheat flour to add flavour. The dough is left to stand for a couple of hours, but it must not be allowed to turn sour. The dough is shaped by hand into round or oval flat cakes, or into long stripes of 1.5-2 cm width. The prepared dough is placed properly in a hot pan daubed with fat. The pan is covered and placed in the oven. It is baked for 40-60 minutes, depending on the depth of the pan.

## **23. Miramisa** (*Miramise*)

Salted water is boiled to seething in a cauldron or aluminium casserole. Without removing the casserole from the fire, sifted maize flour is poured in and mixed and stirred with a *belagh* (traditional cooking trowel). The mixture is well kneaded and is cooked for 8-10 minutes. The cooking vessel is then removed from the fire, and the cooked food is placed on a plate using



the *belagh*. It is now ready to be served. Warm *Miramisa* is had with butter, honey, cheese, soured cream, sour milk, milk, and meat dishes. *Miramisa* is best served warm. It is similar to hominy or polenta.

#### **24. Hakurt, hakut** (*Heqwrt, heqwt*)

Dried ripe maize seeds are placed in a pan and roasted well (till they brown), and then allowed to cool down. They are winnowed and ground. The flour has a nice smell. It keeps in a dry, well aired place for a long time. It is had with milk and honey. In a deep plate or a drinking vessel, 4-5 spoons of *heqwrt* are placed, then milk is poured in and the mixture stirred. With honey, It must be first kneaded well and then cut into pieces and served with tea.

Associated sayings:

- *Yi zche heqwt zchedelh xwedesch (nex'ey)*: (As if his mouth is crammed with *hakurt*) 1. (As) Dumb as an oyster, or a fish; 2. (As) Straight as a poker.

#### **25. Boiled Corn-cobs** (*Nartixwsch'e gheva*)

Fresh and softish corn-cobs (whose milk is still not dry) are peeled and placed in a casserole. Cold water is added and maize peel is put on top to make the cobs tastier. The vessel is covered, and the cobs are cooked to readiness. Salt is strewn on the cobs to taste.

#### **26. Roasted Corn-cobs** (*Nartixwsch'e ghezcha*)

Fresh and softish corn-cobs (whose milk is still not dry) are peeled and roasted on live coal. They are served hot.

#### **27. Corn Flakes** (*Nartixw ghep'ench'a*)

Wheat bran or millet husks are placed in a cauldron and roasted well while being stirred. Some hard-dried red maize seeds (these are best), are poured in and roasted, while continuously being stirred, until they all pop. The popped seeds come to rest on the millet husks, so they are easily removed. More maize seeds are added to the vessel and cooked in the same way. If the cauldron is not large, no more than one cup of maize seeds is poured at one time.

#### **28. Maize Halama** (*Nartixw hel'ame*)

The maize flour is sifted and poured into a large plate. Water is boiled, and salt is added to taste. The boiling salt water is poured onto the flour. The mixture is stirred with a *belagh* until it becomes dough. It is slightly stretched on a pan and cooled down. Then it is mixed and rolled in wheat flour to add flavour. The dough is left to stand for 1-2 hours in a warm

place. The dough is shaped by hand into round or oval flat cakes, or into long stripes of 1.5-2 cm width. These are placed in a cauldron of seething salt water and cooked. When they are ready, they come up to the surface, whence they are removed with a skimmer. They are put straight in cold water and rinsed. *Halama* may be had with dairy products or meat dishes. *Halama* soup may be added to either milk or soured cream and had with *halama*.

Associated sayings:

- *Hel'ame qak'weme, ch'efiy nek'wen(u)sch*: 1. (You) Roll my log and I'll roll yours; 2. (You) Scratch my back and I'll scratch yours; 3. Claw me and I will claw thee; 4. Ka me, ka thee; 5. Nothing for nothing.
- *Hel'ame ch'ededze*: Chip in broth. {*Mihene ziyimi'e zigwer*}
- *Hel'amer yi 'ihew qenen*: To be left in the basket. {To be left with empty hands}
- *Hel'ame gheva wosch'e we*: You know nothing.

### 29. Millet Halama (*Xw hel'ame*)

Millet flour is kneaded with a small quantity of wheat flour and warm milk. The dough is allowed to stand for 1-2 hours. The dough is shaped by hand into round or oval flat cakes, or into long strips of 1.5-2 cm width. These are placed in a cauldron of seething salt water and cooked. When they are ready, they come up to the surface, whence they are removed with a skimmer. They are put straight in cold water and rinsed. *Halama* may be had with dairy products or meat dishes. *Halama* soup may be added to either milk or soured cream and had with *halama*.

For associated sayings see preceding entry.

### 30. Kilish (*Qilish*)

Maize flour is kneaded well with unsalted water. The dough is shaped into thin round cakes, which are cooked on live coal of gentle heat, being turned on both sides. They may also be roasted in a pan.

### 31. Pasta (*P'aste*)

In the old days, *pasta* was the staple food of the Circassians. Many foods, desserts and beverages used to be made from it. It was used as a bread. As in the past, *pasta* made from husked millet is the most widespread kind. It is always served with dairy products and meat dishes instead of bread. *Pasta* is easy to prepare.

Water is brought to the boil in a cauldron or an aluminium casserole. Husked millet is thoroughly cleaned in warm water. The millet is poured into the water as it starts to boil. It is stirred once, then the intensity of the fire is reduced. When the millet is cooked, it is kneaded with a *belagh* without removing it from the fire. When the pasta stops sticking to the vessel and the, it is deemed ready to eat. It is placed on a plate and patted to

shape. It is necessary that the *belagh* be moistened every now and then. The pasta is cut into pieces and served. It may be had either hot or cold. If served cold, the crust must first be cut off.

Millet is added to water in the ratio 1:3. However, if the millet is old and stale, it may not absorb all the water. In this case, a small quantity of maize flour or cereal is added to ensure that the *pasta* attains the required consistency.

*Hantkhups*, or millet soup, may be prepared when pasta is made. This is the only soup in Circassian cuisine that may be served as the first dish (usually soup and broth are had last).

Associated sayings and expressions:

- P'aste mighwe*: Bitter bread.
- P'aste mighwe yireigheshx*: 1. He is annoying him; 2. He is not allowing him breathing space.

### **32. Crumbly Pasta (*P'aste lhalhe*)**

Water is brought to the boil in a cauldron or an aluminium casserole. Husked millet are thoroughly cleaned in warm water. The millet is poured into the water as it starts to boil. It is stirred once, then the intensity of the fire is reduced. The vessel is covered and the millet is cooked. As the cereal begins to become loose, the lid is removed and the upper layers of the millet are dried on a gentle fire without stirring. The dried millet is removed with a skimmer and place on a flat plate. It is allowed to dry for 10-15 minutes. It is served hot. It is poured in fresh milk, sour milk, or soured cream.

### **33. Maize Pasta (*Nartixw p'aste*)**

Maize seeds are winnowed, washed thoroughly in running water, and then poured in boiling water. While being cooked on a gentle fire, they are kneaded with a *belagh*. If the need arises, a small quantity of maize flour or cereal are poured in. When the maize is ready, it is placed on a plate and patted to shape. It is served with dairy products and meat dishes. The ratio of maize to water is slightly greater than 1:3. Maize *hantkhups* may be prepared in the same way as millet soup (see 6.37). In this case, the relative amount of water is increased.

### **34. Sok (*Sok*)**

Millet is fried in a brazier or a small cauldron, being stirred continuously. It is cooled down and then pounded in a wooden mortar until the husks are removed. The crushed millet is poured into fresh or boiled milk, and is allowed to stand for 1-2 hours. This food is eaten cold. Instead of millet, well-fried husked millet may be used. In this case, milk is poured into the husked millet, which is cooked on a gentle fire.

### **35. Shopransy** (*Shopransiy*)

Husked millet is thoroughly washed, poured into boiling water and cooked on a gentle fire. When the seeds become puffy, the millet is removed with a skimmer and placed in a sieve. It is dried for a while and then poured into boiling milk. It is cooked to readiness. Either sugar or salt may be added to taste. The dish is served hot. It is most wholesome for breast-feeding mothers.

### **36. Khubala** (*Xwbela*)

Husked millet is thoroughly washed, poured into boiling water and cooked for a few minutes till the seeds become puffy. These are removed and placed on a table or a board to cool down. A small quantity of wheat flour is added to the millet, which is thoroughly mixed by both hands until the flour covers all the seeds. The millet is then placed in seething milk and cooked to readiness, at which time the consistency will be neither thick nor thin. Salt is added to taste. This is a dainty food.

### **37. Hantkhups, Millet Soup** (*Hentx'wps*)

The Circassians call all cereal soups *hantkhups*. However, the fastest prepared is husked millet soup. Water is brought to the boil in a cauldron or an aluminium casserole. Husked millet are thoroughly cleaned in warm water. The millet is poured into the water as it starts to boil. In this case, the water to millet ratio is 4:1. As the millet begins to boil, the soup is removed from the top of the vessel with a small bowl, leaving enough liquid to cook the pasta. The soup is placed on a gentle fire. When it is ready, salt is added to taste. Before it is served, sour milk, soured cream, or both are added. It may also be had with fresh cheese. In this case, the cheese is sliced into small pieces and placed in the seething soup after it is removed from the fire. *Hantkhups* is served hot. It is not had with bread. It may be taken with garden or black radishes. *Pasta* may be also prepared using this method.

### **38. Haguliva, Boiled Barley** (*Hegwlive*)

Barley is pounded, thoroughly washed and cooked in either water or milk. After being cooked in water either milk, soured cream, or sour milk is poured into the barley. Salt is added to taste.

### **39. Ashira** (*'eshiri', 'eshire', 'eshri', 'eshre'*)

Maize is pounded in a mortar, and winnowed till the husks are completely removed. It is washed thoroughly, and then heated with some haricot beans. As it nears cooking, a small quantity of rice is added. Other ingredients may be added according to taste (meat, husked millet, onion, etc.). However, maize must remain the prevalent ingredient. Before it is served, milk or soured cream is poured, and salt added to taste. *Ashira* is served either hot or cold.

The word '*eshiri*' is associated with the day of the murder of Imam Hussein, son of Imam Ali. It is one of the very few influences of Shiism on Circassian culture. It is used figuratively to denote a heterogeneous mixture.

Associated sayings:

- '*eshri'er zighevam yirireifzh*: 1. You make your bed, now lie in it; 2. Who breaks, pays; 3. As you brew, so must you drink.

#### **40. Khudir** (*X'wdir*)

Maize flour is poured onto boiling salted water until it acquires the consistency of soured cream. It is cooked for 8-10 minutes, being stirred continuously. It is served hot with butter.

Associated sayings:

- *Gwghw weihinume, x'wdirim dzer 'weisch'ich'*: An unfortunate man would be drowned in a teacup.
- *Nasip ziyimi'em yi dzer x'wdirim 'weisch'ich'*: An unfortunate man would be drowned in a teacup.

#### **41. Khudirbalatsa** (*X'wdirbelatse*)

The required quantity of sifted wheat flour is strewn on the table. The flour is sprinkled with cold water and mixed a little (but not kneaded). It is poured into boiling salted water and cooked for 10 minutes, being stirred continuously. It must acquire the consistency of soured cream when it is ready. The dish is served hot with butter. Unfortunately, *khudir* and *khudirbalatsa* are no longer prepared.

#### **42. Sweet Rice Pilaw** (*Prunzh 'ef'*)

Ingredients: 500 g rice, 150 g melted butter, sugar and raisins to taste.

Rice is sorted and washed thoroughly. It is placed in salted water for 1/2-1 hours. It is removed, poured into boiling water, cooked for 5-7 minutes, and then removed again.

Butter is melted in a casserole. Sugar and raisins are added together with the rice. Half a cup of water is sprinkled onto the mixture. The vessel is covered tightly, and placed on a gentle fire for 25-30 minutes. When it is ready, the pilaw is served with soured milk.

#### **43. Psihaliva, Dumplings** (*Psiheliva*)

The literal meaning of *psihaliva* is water pasties (*psi* water, *helive* pasties; see 6.2-7). There are many kinds of fillings used: minced meat, cottage cheese, potatoes, fruits, strawberries, raspberries, cherries, etc.

#### **44. Meat Dumplings** (*Psihelive melil delhu*)

Ingredients: 500 g mutton, 200-300 g onion, and butter, salt, red pepper, and coriander to taste.

Mutton is sliced into very small pieces and fried with an ample quantity of onion. Salt and ground hot red pepper are added to taste. The dumplings are not made very small. These are placed in boiling salted water and cooked to readiness. They are removed and put on a plate. Sliced onions are fried in butter on a gentle fire. When it is ready, red pepper is added. The fried onions are placed on the dumplings. The dish is ready to be served. Fresh green onions are also served. Coriander may be added to taste.

#### **45. Chicken Dumplings** (*Psihelive jedil delhu*)

Chicken meat is chopped into small pieces and fried in butter or melted butter with straw onions and ground hot red pepper. Salt is added to taste. Dumpling dough is prepared and rolled out. It is cut out into small round pieces using a glass (liqueur-glass). The chicken meat is placed on the cut pieces and the edges are sealed. The stuffed pieces are placed in boiling milk and cooked. When the dumplings come to the surface, they are removed with a skimmer and placed on a plate. The dish is served hot with garlic sauce. The sauce is prepared by mixing two equal amounts of soured cream and sour milk and then adding pounded garlic and salt to taste.

The milk in which the dumplings were cooked is used to make soup. Cleaned husked millet is placed in boiling water and cooked for 7-10 minutes. It is removed and cooled down. Wheat flour is poured on the millet and the two are thoroughly mixed until the flour covers all the millet seeds. The mixture is sifted, poured into the boiling milk and cooked until ready. Salt is added to taste. According to customs, the order of serving is as follows. The dumplings are first presented with the garlic sauce and then the soup is served.

#### **46. Haricot Bean Sauce** (*Jesh libzche*)

Haricot beans are cleaned and washed thoroughly. They are poured into boiling water and left to stand for 6-8 hours. The water is poured out, and new water is poured in and boiled. When the beans are ready, they are removed by a skimmer and mashed or ground. Ground hot red peppers are strewn on onions fried in butter, or melted butter, in a deep pan. The onions are added to the mashed beans, which are fried again for some time, while being stirred. Fresh cheese cut into small pieces is added to the sauce. Soured cream is poured in, and the sauce is replaced on a gentle fire, while being stirred all the time. It is kept on fire until all the cheese dissolves. Salt

and savory are added to taste. Also, pounded garlic may be added. The dish is served hot. It is had with either pasta, *chirzhin*, or bread. The sauce may also be prepared without cheese. In this case, soured cream is poured in instead, and the sauce placed on a gentle fire, while being stirred continuously.

#### **47. Haricot Bean Soup (*Jesh leps*)**

Haricot beans are thoroughly washed, placed in water and allowed to stand overnight. The next morning, they are cooked in a casseole for 1-1.5 hours, then the water is poured out. Cold water is poured in and the cooking vessel is placed on fire. Onions are fried with red pepper, and then added into the casserole, which is kept on fire for another 5-10 minutes. Fresh green onions and coriander are added. Before being served, soured cream is poured into the soup.

#### **48. Haricot Bean Soup With Potato (*Jesh leps ch'ert'of xelhu*)**

Haricot beans are washed, placed in water and allowed to stand overnight. The next morning, it is cooked in a casseole for 1-1.5 hours, then the water is poured out. Cold water is poured in and the cooking vessel is placed on the fire. Sliced potatoes are fried with red pepper, and then added into the casserole, which is kept on the fire for another 5-10 minutes. This may also be used to make broth.

## **7. Potato and Gourd Dishes**

*(Ch'ert'of, qeb shxinighwexer)*

### **1. Fried Potatoes (*Ch'ert'of zcherikwey*)**

The potatoes are cleaned, peeled and sliced into small thin chips. Salt and red pepper are added to taste. Either sheep's tail fat, melted butter, or sunflower oil is boiled up in a deep brazier, and the chips are fried, being turned slowly. As it nears readiness, finely chopped onions are added to the brazier, which is covered and kept on the fire for 5-10 minutes. Then the chips are stirred well and fried till they are ready. Onion, coriander and savory are added.

### **2. New Potatoes Stewed in Soured Cream (*Ch'ert'ofisch'e shatech'e ghezchawe*)**

The potatoes are peeled, thoroughly cleaned, and sliced into thin pieces. The chips are placed in a brazier or casserole. Finely chopped onion, coriander, ground red pepper, savory, and salt to taste are added. Butter is then added, and some water is poured in. The vessel is covered and placed on a gentle fire until the chips are cooked. Then soured cream is poured in so that it immerses the chips, and is kept on the fire for 5-6 minutes. The dish is served hot with vegetables. Old potatoes can also be used.

### **3. Potato Paste** (*Ch'ert'of p'aste*)

The potatoes are peeled, thoroughly cleaned and placed in a casserole. They are cooked in water. The water is poured out, and the potatoes are kneaded while they are hot. The mash is removed from the cooking vessel, placed on a plate and patted into shape. It is served with fried or roasted meat. It may also be had with sour milk, soured cream, cracklings, or strong cheese.

### **4. Potato Stewed in Soured Cream or Broth** (*Ch'ert'ofim ships sch'etu*)

Finely chopped onion is fried in butter. Ground red pepper is added to taste. The potatoes are peeled, thoroughly cleaned, and sliced into thin chips. They are added to the pan and fried, being stirred all the time. Some broth or water is poured in. The pan is covered and kept on the fire until the contents are ready. Broth or cream is poured in until it immerses the potatoes. The food is cooked for a few minutes. Salt and red pepper are added to taste. After being removed from the fire, the dish may be spiced with pounded garlic.

### **5. Boiled Gourd** (*Qeb gheva*)

The gourd is sliced into approximately 10x10 cm pieces, and placed in a casserole with the rind turned upwards. If the skin is hard, the gourd may be chopped. Water is poured in to reach a third of the height of the vessel, which is covered and the gourd cooked. When it is ready, it is removed from the casserole, and then placed on a large plate with the pulpy side upwards. It is served either hot or cold. It may be had with milk, honey, or soured cream.

### **6. Baked Gourd** (*Qeb ghezcha*)

The gourd is sliced into pieces. They are placed in a pan with the skin turned downwards, and baked in the oven. When it is ready, it is placed on a large plate with the pulpy side turned upwards. It is served either hot or cold. It may be had with milk, honey, or soured cream.

### **7. Gourd Sauce** (*Qeb ships*)



It is better to use sweet gourd for this dish instead of round ones. The gourd is sliced into pieces and cooked in a casserole. When it is ready, the inside is removed. This is either mashed thoroughly or minced. The pulp is put in an enamelled casserole, which is covered, placed in a warm room and kept there overnight. By the next morning, the mash acquires a sourish smell. Milk is boiled. Some ground hot red pepper is added to the milk. The milk is then poured onto the gourd mash, which is stirred vigorously. The pulp is strained. It is poured into a glass vessel or an earthenware (ceramic) pot, which is placed in a cool place. Gourd sauce is pleasant and nutritious. It is served as a sauce.

## 8. Drinks and Beverages

(*Yirafxer*)

### 1. Kalmyk Tea (*Qalmiq shey*)

Water is poured into a casserole. For every liter of cold water, 15-20 grammes of brick-tea (compacted) are added. The water is boiled for 10-15 minutes. The vessel is removed and allowed to stand for a few hours, with the lid tightly applied. It is best if you boil it in the evening and allow it to brew until day-break. The tea is then sifted and placed over the fire. For every liter of tea 1.5 liters of milk are poured in, and the whole mixture is boiled. If cream is used instead of milk, then for every 3 liters of tea, one liter of cream is used. Salt and either red or black pepper are added to taste. The Kalmyk tea is now ready. It is best to have it at breakfast. It is served with either *lekum*, bread, or unleavened maize-bread (*chirzhin*), and Circassian cheese and butter. It is possible to use the following for the brew: wild marjoram (*Origanum vulgare*), dog-rose (*Rosa canina*), dried cherry twigs.

### 2. Makhsima (*Maxsime*)



## Makhsima (*Maxsime*)

This is the Circassian national beverage. It is also called *bakhsima* (*bax'sime*). It is similar to boza, bosa, or bouza. There are many ways of preparing it. The following method is the oldest.

Ingredients: 1 kg of maize or millet flour for each 100g of wheat flour, 10 g leaven, sugar as desired (on average 100g per liter of beverage).

Maize or millet dough is vigorously kneaded in unsalted water. If maize dough is used, then boiling water is added for kneading. For millet dough, hot water is used. It is then baked like unleavened maize-bread (*chirzhin*). It is crumbled as it gets cool, and then placed in a large casserole. Water (2-3 times as much) is then poured in. Wheat flour is then added, and the mixture is stirred on a gentle fire so as not to get burnt on the vessel, until it becomes thick (wort). The casserole is removed and cooled down to 40 °C. Leaven is added, and the concoction is left to stand for a few hours to be allowed to be imbued and tempered, and to ferment. Boiling water (3-4 times as large as the wort mixture) is cooled down and then poured in. The whole thing is then passed through a sieve, and the lees are squeezed out. Slightly roasted sugar is then added to the sifted *makhsima*. The liquid is then poured into a large bottle or an earthenware pot, and allowed to stand for a few days. At the time, Its strength reaches between 6-8%. However, its strength increases with time. Sugar is added every now and then.

### 3. Maramazey (*Meremezchey*)

This is a kind of *makhsima* (see preceding entry). It is made from millet dough. As it becomes ready, wax honey is added. The barrel or pot is sealed off, and the concoction is fermented for six months to one year.

## 9. Sweets and Desserts (*'Efich'exer*)



Sweets and desserts (*'efich'exer*)

### 1. Haliwa (*Heliwe*) [Sweet, dessert in Arabic]

Ingredients: 1/2 kg melted butter, millet (or wheat) flour, 1/2 kg sugar, 1 glass of water.

Melted butter is placed in a small cauldron, or a casserole, and melted. As it begins to seethe, millet flour is poured in and cooked for 10-15 minutes, while being continuously stirred (traditionally with a *belagh*, a shovel-like wooden instrument used for stirring). The cauldron is removed, the contents stirred, and sugar-water is slowly poured and thoroughly mixed with the flour. The cauldron is replaced on a gentle fire, stirred and cooked for a few minutes. When the *haliwa* is ready, it is placed on a large flat plate, or a special board, its thickness not greater than 4-5 cm. When it cools, it is sliced into 4x4 cm, or larger, squares. *Haliwe* can keep up to a month.

### 2. Marazey (*Merezey*)

Plums, cherry-plums, or apples are used to make this dessert. The fruits are assiduously cleaned and peeled, and then placed in a cauldron. A cup of water for each kg of fruit is added, and the fruit is boiled for 1-1.5 hours. The contents are filtered, and the drained liquid is placed over the fire. It is stirred continuously, as it is boiled for 40-60 minutes. As it starts to set, it is poured thinly on a plank or plywood and placed under the sun. The plank and plywood should be daubed with wax or fat oil to prevent sticking. After

it is fully dried, the *marazey* is removed, rolled, placed either in white paper or cloth, and then stored in a dry place. *Marazey* is acid. It may be added to tea. It is also soaked, sweetened with sugar, and used to make pastry (*helive*).

### 3. Nuts with Honey (*Dere fore zexelhu*)

Walnuts are roasted and then cooled down. They are pounded in a mortar, but not too finely. They are placed in a vessel, and honey is poured in until it inundates the pounded nuts. The whole mixture is stirred. This is a dainty and nutritious dish. It keeps for a long time.

### 4. Water-melon Honey (*X'arbiz fo*)

The middle of a ripe water-melon is taken out and vigorously squeezed by the hands. It is then run through a sieve and the liquid is placed on the fire. When it comes to the boil, the intensity of the fire is reduced, and it is simmered until it becomes thick, brown and viscous, similar to the consistency of fresh honey. This food keeps for a long time. It may be had in the same way as honey. To make the dish more savoury, 2 spoonfuls of cream or fresh soured cream are added for every 100 g.

### 5. Dried Pears (*Q'wzch gheghwa*)

Sweet, but not overripe, pears are selected for this dainty dish. Each pear is sliced into 2-4 pieces, depending on the size, and the pips are removed. They are immersed in salty water for 2-3 minutes, scooped out, rinsed, and left to be dried on a plank. They are then ground. The flour is mixed with honey and is used as stuffing for pastry (*helive*). Also, small honeyed dumplings may be made and served.

### 6. Zacharis (*Zech'eris*)



Zacharis (*Zech'eris*)

One spoon of vodka, two of sugar, salt, baking soda and 3-4 eggs are whisked. The flour is poured into a deep plate, and a small hole is made in the middle. The whisked eggs are poured in and the dough is kneaded (it must be made softer than *khinkal* dough). The dough is divided into three lumps. These are cut lengthwise with the width not exceeding 1/2 cm. Two

equal amounts of melted butter and sunflower oil (1/2 kg each) are poured into a cauldron and boiled fiercely. The dough pieces are fried until they become slightly red, and then removed with a skimmer. They are placed on a large flat plate, sugared honey-water is poured on, and the whole lot is stirred carefully. The mass is then shaped by the wet hand into any desired form and thickness. When it cools down, it is cut into pieces and served.

How to prepare the sugared honey-water: Half a cup of sugar is added to 200-250 g of honey, and mixed thoroughly with it. The mixture is placed on a gentle fire until it is ready. To know if it is ready, cold drops of water are dripped into the honey. If they do not dissolve and get stuck to the fingers, and if they form into globules, the honey-water is ready.

## 10. Vegetables (*Xadexech'xer*)



Vegetables (*Xadexech'xer*)

Other dishes not included above

- Fowripsch*: honey-pie, honey-tart.
- Hebive*: dish made of barley and raisins.
- Helu*: unleavened bread shaped like a large flat-cake, baked in the Caucasus.
- Shighwships*: strong solution of salt.

## General Sayings and Expressions Associated with Food Stuffs and Eating (Not included in text above)

- Dekwm xwedew qeghepts'en*: 1. To turn somebody round one's finger; 2. To catch with chaff.

- *Hesch'ap'e k'wewe qiynezham xwedew*: The best fish smell when they are three days old.
- *Hesch'ap'eriner yemik'wsch*: It is unseemly to overstay one's welcome.
- *Hesch'e ley schi'eqim*: No guest should be regarded as a burden. All guests are welcome.
- *Hesch'e sch'ale schi'eqim*: All guests must be respected, no matter how young.
- *Jedich'e shk'wmp' yi waseqim*: (Not worth a rotten egg) Not worth a bean (or button, curse, damn).
- *Sch'aq'we 'ihe qwdey qizisch'ech'in qemilezchin*: Not to earn salt for one's porridge. {ziry qemilezchin zhixwiy'esch}
- *Shaschher teizishxich'a xwedew (ziywschexasch)*: To look like the cat who swallowed the canary.
- *Shaschher teixin*: Cat the ginger (amer.).
- *Shemiy seys, shxwmiy seys*: 1. To have mixed feelings; 2. Between the upper and nether millstone; 3. Between Scylla and Charybdis.
- *Shem yisar shxwm yopsche*: (He who was burnt by the milk blows on the yoghourt) 1. Once bit(ten), twice shy; 2. The scalded cat (or dog) fears cold water; 3. A burnt child dreads the fire; 4. Burnt bairns dread the fire (Scottish).
- *Shibzhiy xwiwden*: (To pound hot red pepper for somebody) To cast salt on somebody's tail.
- *Shighwp'aste*: Bread-and-salt
- *Shighw six'wa se sitk'wnu*: 1. I am not made of salt; 2. I am neither sugar nor salt.
- *Shxen sch'ebdzeme, shxinir pschok'we*: Eating and scratching wants just a beginning (Scottish).
- *Wiy sch'aq'we 'iher psch'enshew mishxin*: To earn one's salt.

## Glossary

Collected by Amjad Jaimoukha

- **Ashira**: Pounded maize cooked with haricot beans, rice, and other ingredients. It is mainly prepared for a *Shi'i* religious feast.
- **Bakhsima**: See *makhsima*.
- **Bajina**: A dish of cooked Whey and maize flour.
- **Belagh**: Traditional shovel-like wooden instrument for stirring; wooden trowel.
- **Boza, Bosa**: A drink made of millet-seed fermented and certain astringents. Also called *boosa, booza, bouza*.
- **Chirzhin**: Unleavened maize (or millet) bread.

- Chischmisch:** Raisins.
- Haguliva:** Pounded Barley boiled in water or milk.
- Hakurt:** Flour made by grinding roasted maize seeds.
- Hakut:** See preceding entry.
- Halama:** Flat maize cakes boiled in water.
- Haliva:** Fried triangular pasties with mainly cottage cheese or potato filling.
- Hantkhups:** Millet soup.
- Jadlibja:** Chicken in Soured Cream Sauce.
- Khinkal:** Circassian noodles.
- Khubala:** Husked millet seeds covered with wheat flour and cooked in milk.
- Khudir:** Boiled maize flour.
- Khudirbalatsa:** Boiled wheat flour.
- Kurt:** A dairy product similar to cheese.
- Lakum:** Puffs, buns.
- Lepsteipx'e:** These are small pieces of short pastry made from wheat dough and boiled in fat.
- Li:** Meat.
- Makhsima:** National Circassian beverage. It is similar to *boza*. Also called *bakhsima*.
- Mamalyga:** Russian word for hominy or polenta; *miramisa*.
- Mezhaje:** Unleavened maize (or millet) bread.
- Miramisa:** Circassian hominy or polenta.
- Pasta:** See next item.
- P'aste:** *Pasta*, ground-millet dumplings.
- Shkuz:** Milk preserve.
- Ships:** 1. Sauce; 2. National sauce.
- Shopransy:** Husked millet boiled in milk.
- Sok:** Fried Millet and milk.
- Whey:** The serum or watery part of milk which remains after the separation of the curd by coagulation, especially in the manufacture of cheese.

## Adigean Cuisine

Adigean cuisine is mainly prepared with butter. Only desserts are made using vegetable oil. Dishes are usually served with "garlic salt" (salt grated with garlic) and coriander. Soft, home-made Adigean cheese is absolutely essential in the local cuisine. Adigean and Kabardian cuisines are very closely related.

### Koyazh

Ingredients for one serving: 200 g unsmoked Circassian cheese, 30 g butter, 70 g onion, salt and spices to taste.

Fry onion and ground red pepper in butter until they are golden. Add the cheese and fry for a further 5 minutes. Serve separately or with *mamalyga*.

## Mamalyga

Ingredients: 3 litres water, 500 g maize cereal, 100 g margarine, and salt to taste.

Pour the maize into salted water and boil until slightly thick, but before sticking to the spoon. Cut into pieces and serve with meat and dairy dishes.



Koyazh and mamalyga

## Meat Broth (*Lileps*)



Meat broth

Ingredients for one serving: 100 g beef, 5 g garlic, 5 g butter, 40 g onion, a carrot, 1 g spices.

Slice onions, grate a carrot, and place everything in a frying-pan with boiling fat. Fry to a rosy colour. Cut boiled meat into small cubes and place into boiling broth. Add fried vegetables and cook for 10 minutes. When it is ready, sprinkle garlic, salt, and spices to taste.

## Palkao



Ingredients: 1 litre milk, 10 eggs, 10 g soda, 1 teaspoon vinegar, 250 g vegetable oil, and a syrup of 1.5 l water and 3 kg sugar.



Palkao

Knead heavy dough (soak soda in vinegar), divide into two or three equal parts, roll out and cut into stripes 10 cm wide. Grease the end of the rolling-pin with vegetable oil, spiral one stripe on it and then slip it off. Drop the stripe into boiling vegetable oil. Fry it to redness, turning it from side to side. Scoop it out, dip it in sugar syrup, and place onto an oven pan to cool.

### Notes

1. *Istoriya adigeiskogo naroda*, Shora B. Nogmov, republished: Nalchik, 1947. [Nogmov's seminal work was rendered into Circassian: *Adige narodim yi txide*. Sh. B. Negwme. Nalchik, 1958. There are also German and Arabic versions by A. Bergé and S. Al-Mufti, respectively]
2. Iliade, chant no. IX, p. 165.
3. L. Y. Lyule, 'Natukhaevtsy, shapsugi i abadzekhi', in *Zapiski Kavkazskogo otdela IRGO*, vol. 4, 1857. [Nartkhuaj, Shapsugh, and Abzakh. Three of the Circassian tribes]

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- Hani, Satanay, *Al-ma'kulat al-sharkassiyya* [Circassian Dishes], Amman: Al-Jeel al-Jadeed Club, 1989. [Arabic translation of Azamatova's work, 1979]