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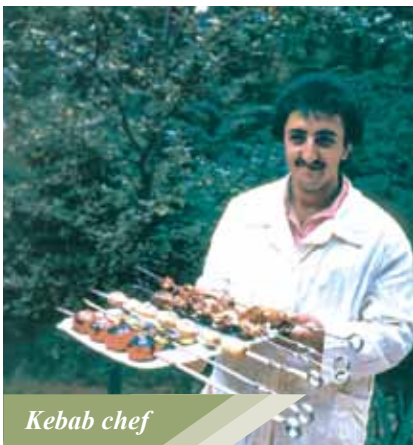
KARABAKH CUISINE

THE LITERATURE, CULTURE AND ARTS OF AZERBAIJAN ARE SO RICH THAT THE OTHER SIDE IS TRYING TO APPROPRIATE OUR NATIONAL HERITAGE. THIS IS TRUE NOT ONLY OF LITERATURE OR WORKS OF NIZAMI. OUR MUSIC IS BEING SHAMELESSLY STOLEN BY THE ARMENIANS. THEY APPROPRIATE THE WORKS OF THE GENIUS COMPOSER UZEYIR BEY. OUR CUISINE IS BEING STOLEN BY THE ARMENIANS AS WELL. THEY ARE TRYING DIFFERENT WAYS TO PRESENT IT AS ARMENIAN CUISINE, ALTHOUGH THE NAMES OF THEIR NATIONAL DISHES ARE AZERBAIJANI WORDS. IF YOU ASK AN ARMENIAN WHAT THE WORD DOLMA MEANS, HE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO FIND AN ANSWER. THIS IS THE CASE WITH THE WORD KARABAKH, FOR THEM IT IS JUST A WORD, AND THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND IT, BECAUSE IT IS NOT AN ARMENIAN WORD. THEREFORE, THIS BEHAVIOR IS VERY DEPRESSING FOR US, OF COURSE. WE NEED TO PROTECT OUR NATIONAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE.

ILHAM ALIYEV

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan

From a speech at the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan, April 26, 2011



Kebab chef

Karabakh cuisine is an integral part of traditional Azerbaijani national culinary culture. It has learned a lot from other regions, influencing them at the same time. The culinary traditions, terminology, folklore, dishes, utensils, cooking technology, festive rituals and ceremonial meals of Karabakh are all identical with the cuisines of other regions of Azerbaijan. At the same time, there are obvious local differ-

ences due to climatic, geographical and traditional conditions. Karabakh is far from the sea, so Karabakh cuisine does not use sea fish. Fish dishes are borrowed. Karabakh cuisine used only freshwater fish, mostly in boiled and fried forms. Karabakh people themselves consider fish dishes "self-indulgence" and not very serious food.

In some areas of Karabakh, near lakes and rivers, there are complex



Shusha, 1990, taken by the author

fish dishes, but there are very few of them. These include dishes from freshwater fish, “lavangi”, “gurgut” and “fish buglama” (stewed fish). In contrast to other regions, lentil and rice are added to the Karabakh “lavangi” (stuffed fish). In addition to these products, the stuffing includes tomatoes, peppers, celery, green onions and sour cherry plum lavashana. In contrast to other regions, the Karabakh lavangi is steamed.

For the “gurgut”, the fish is stuffed with minced akhta zogal (dried pitted Cornelian cherry), and fine-cut onions, lavashana, hot and sweet peppers are added. The stuffed fish is salted, a little water and butter is added, and then it is cooked on low heat for 30-40 minutes.

The fish buglama (stewed) is cooked in different ways. The fish is stewed with different fruits and vegetables. These fish dishes in various



Motal cheese



Tandir in Karabakh



Finished kata with greens

forms are made throughout Azerbaijan.

The fact that fish from the Kura River, which flows near Barda, was brought to Karabakh, particularly to Barda, was recorded by the 10th century Arab travelers, al-Muqaddasi (10th century) and al-Istahri (10th century). They mentioned fishes like "kasbuvin", "tirrikh", "surmakhi", "zarogan" and "ishubat".

Sheep-herding has been developed in Karabakh for centuries. Local agriculture was diversified, settled and cultured. A great place was occupied by grain-growing, melon and gourd growing and gardening.

Karabakh cuisine uses nearly all types of traditional Azerbaijani open and closed hearths: tandir (oven made of clay in a hole in the earth), chala (pit), ojad (bonfire), saj (iron disk for baking bread), char-grill, bukhari (fire-place) and kura

(furnace), which, taking into account local features, make it possible to highlight certain nuances in local cuisine.

Islam had an enormous impact on Karabakh cuisine. In particular, it does not use pork, and pigs have never been bred and sold at local markets in Karabakh.

Archaeological and historical studies show that over the millennia, the culinary culture of Karabakh has maintained its traditional look. Excavations in the settlement of Chalagantapa indicate that materials from different layers (horizons) do not differ from each other. From the time it was founded (6th-5th millennia B.C.), the ancient population of Chalagantapa was familiar with the culture of farming, cattle-breeding, mining and stone and bone processing techniques.

Sources note the high agricultural culture of Karabakh residents. On irrigated land, they cultivated wheat, rice, cotton and mulberry. Mirza Jamal Javanshir (1773-1855) recorded in his book "The History of Karabakh" that one-fourth of seeded wheat provides 20 quarters of the harvest there. An especially rich harvest is yielded by rice and millet (over 50 quarters for one quarter). In addition, he points to large herds of cattle and sheep and goats.

The population of Karabakh ate various wild grasses and cultivated greens. The vizier of Ibrahim Khan of Karabakh – the outstanding Azerbaijani poet, thinker and statesman, Molla Panah Vagif, says in his poems:

"Guard your vegetables and fields of greens - coriander, dill and fresh watercress very well, and take care of them!"

In his book, Doctor of History Professor Ziyadkhan Nabibayli names 245 wild plants which were used



Stuffing kata with greens in Karabakh



Finished kata with greens

only in the cuisine of Lachin District.

Karabakh cuisine also widely used dried fruit, and it was served as a dessert. It was used to make khoshab (compote) and was added to the pilaf, soups, meat and other dishes. At the All-Russian Exhibition in Moscow in 1882, Karabakh fruits - Cornelian cherries, mulberry and cherry plum lavashana (sour candy), made by the daughter of the Kara-

bakh khan - poetess Khurshudbanu Natavan, were put on display. Having visited Azerbaijan, Alexander Dumas (father) and the painter Monet met with her, and Dumas described this meeting in his book "Journey to the Caucasus".

Lavashana was borrowed by Slavic cuisine from Azerbaijani cuisine: it is mentioned in "The Domostroy" under the name of "levashinki."



Funeral halvah with lavash



Finished lavash (yukha)

The Arab author Ibn Haukal (9th century) recorded that Barda chestnuts were larger and more productive than Syrian ones. This is confirmed by Hamdallah Qazvini, who writes about Barda in his essay “Nuzhan al-Qulub” (“Delight of Hearts”) (14th century): **“There are a lot of fruits here, especially nuts and chestnuts, which are better than anywhere else.”** His words are confirmed by other Arab travelers. The Arab traveler Al-Istahri (10th century) recorded in his “Kitab Masalik al-Mamalik”:

“If we talk about Barda, it is a place with a healthy climate, fertile, arable land and multiple fruits, and less than one farsakh from Barda, in the town of Andarab, there is a wide network of gardens and plantations where they grow melons and all kinds of fruit. The local hazelnut is better than those from Sa-



Dovga

markand, while chestnuts are better than those from Sham. Another fruit, called "ruchal" (zugal, zogal - Cornelian cherry - T.A.), grows here.

"The chestnut is half the size of the black walnut and tastes like persimmon and hazelnuts. Figs are brought to Barda from Lasub. This is the best fig. There are many ownerless mulberry trees here."

The Arab traveler Al-Muqaddasi writes about Barda in the 10th century: "Berda'a is a nice and beautiful city rich in fruits. It is a nice city with beautiful pastures and two rivers running through it: the faces of its inhabitants are like a pearl and coral, and they are also generous and merciful."

"In Berda'a, there is a Sunday market called 'Kurkiyu'... There is nothing

like the fruit called 'zukol'. They have figs and chestnuts of extremely good quality."

Ibn Haukal (10th century) also wrote about Barda. "In Bardaa ... there are nuts and shihaballut (chestnut – T.A.), which stand above the Syrian shihaballut in size, charm, taste and abundance of fruits. They grow 'zukal' (apricot), which is the size of 'gubeyra'. It has a date seed and tastes sweet when it is ripe. In Berda, figs are imported from Lasub, their mulberry trees are available to the public, and they do not have owners and are not sold or bought."

Nizami Ganjavi added in the 12th century: "How wonderful and glorious Barda is. And flowers bloom here in winter and summer."

The 17th century traveler Evliya Chelebi records: "Karabaglar... a gardener named Yazdon–gulu brought us 26 varieties of juicy pears. Trying the 'malanja', 'abbasi' and 'ordubadi' pears, you feel the taste of a candy in your mouth. There are pomegranates like a ruby. The chefs are clean and all Muslims." In another place, he says: "Karabakh includes separate sultanates in the possessions of Tabriz. Food and drinks deserve commendation. There are 10 sorts of juicy, ruby-colored grapes; cherry syrup, soft drinks; 18 kinds of delicious juicy pomegranates. The local quince the size of the human head is famous."

In his book "Yelizavetopol Province, Impressions and Memories,"

the Russian scientist I. L. Segal describes the Agdam bazaar in 1902 in the following way:

“Vans and carts were filled with bags and chuvals of grain bread, baskets of fruits and motals (cheese in wineskin – T.A.). The Agdam market has existed since 1867. Gardening, mainly mulberry-growing, is one of the most important sectors of the economy in Agdam.”

Under Article 6 of the Treaty of Kurakchay signed on May 14, 1805 between Ibrahim Khan of Karabakh and the Russian Empire (signed by P. D. Tsitsianov), Ibrahim Khan agrees to sell the Russian army wheat and oatmeal.

One of the main components of the meal of every Azerbaijani is bread. Various types of bread were baked in Karabakh - kullama, bozlamaj, tandir, churak, kozlama, komba (ash-cake), lavash, khamrali, yukha, fatir, galincha, maldili, chapartma, jad and ajitma.

In both summer and winter, the favorite kind of bread was yukha, which was thin as paper. It could be stored for years. People took a saj with them when traveling in order to bake yukha. Baked yukha was dried and stacked in a pile. Before use, water was sprinkled on it to make it “fresh”. For messengers, it was milled into flour, and they could eat it on the go without dismounting from the horse or quickly prepare it like the Russian “tyuri” by adding water and dried minced meat.

Yukha is used to make the traditional sandwiches “durmak” or “burmak”. To do this, yukha is stuffed with cheese, cottage cheese, herbs or butter, jam or meat, rolled up as a tube, folding the bottom so that the stuffing does not fall or spill out.

The oldest sajs – made of clay – were found in Karabakh during

excavations at Uzarliktapa (Agdam District). They belong to the 4th millennium B.C. Stone and clay sajs were found during archaeological excavations in the entire territory of Azerbaijan. Now iron sajs are used.

Sajs are good not just for baking bread and yukha (a kind of flat bread), they are also used to bake jad (corn cakes), kata and gutabs (thin pieces of dough stuffed with meat and other fillings), national pastry products such as fasali, kata and various dishes - sajichi, govurma and jiz-biz. An inverted saj is used as a kind of tava (pan).



Khamrali

Unlike other regions, the saj was used in Karabakh to bake “layli yukha” – yukha made of layers: in this case, one side of yukha was prepared on the previous one. This bread could not be stored for a long time, but it was more aromatic and tasty than the usual yukha.

If the dough was kneaded with milk adding honey or sugar, “khirt-khirt yukha” (crispy yukha) was made. It was made on holidays and sometimes without the sweet filling. “Lavaş” was made on a saj and

tandir. The lavash was mostly cooked in Gubadli, Jabrayil, Zangilan and Fizuli districts of Karabakh. “Komba” of puff pastry was made in a tandir and under a saj, or on ashes.

Such flour products as “sudlu churak” (milk bread), “fasali”, “bishi”, “yagli koka”, “eyirdek”, “keppeche” and “sakkizlik” are common in Karabakh. We would like to dwell separately on the “kata” (flat pie with greens). Kata is made on a saj. To this end, chopped greens and various fillings (with cheese, cottage cheese, potatoes, etc.) are spread on half of a thinly rolled yukha. The other half covers the staffing. The edges of the dough are stuck and baked on both sides on a saj. When it is served, a piece of butter is placed inside and gatig (yogurt) is served alongside. Another type of kata is gutab. It is smaller in size. Gutabs are cooked with herbs, meat, pumpkin, etc. They look like Azerbaijani chebureks (chiy borak, borak with raw meat), but unlike chebureks, they are not fried, but baked without oil. Such products are common to all Turkic peoples. In Turkey, they are called “ay (lunar - T. A.) borek”, in Borchali - “taycharig” and in Bashkortostan and Tatarstan - “kystybyy”.

Armenians have also learned to cook this dish in Karabakh and only in recent years. The Armenians present this dish under the name of “zhingalov hats”.

For example, in this connection, we read on the website analitika.at.ua: “On April 21 at 2000, the opening of the festival ‘Zhingalov Hats’ will be held on the stairs of the City Cafe (in Moscow – T. A.). ‘Zhingalov Hats’ is an originally Karabakh dish, which is not found in the cuisine of all other regions of Armenia.” But this dish is cooked in all areas of Azerbaijan and almost by all the Turkic peo-

ples "in general". So neither the saj nor kata have anything to do with Armenian cuisine, whatever they call it, and consequently, this Karabakh dish and Karabakh itself have no relation to the Armenians.

Hats in Armenian (ats, khats) derives from the Turkic word has (khas, as, khash, ash) and means bread or food. Zhingal derives from the word khingal or khangal – a Turkic dish made of thinly rolled dough. 🍀

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Sliced vegetables and salads

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To be continued