

Beef Stroganoff

Бефстроганов

In the nineteenth century, Russians of gentle birth often spent the social season in Paris. Although they professed a reverence for all things French—to the extent of employing foreign cooks—the Russians secretly cherished a love for their native cuisine. This led to the invention of many new dishes bearing the names of the Russian nobility: Veal Orloff, Salad Demidoff, Nesselrode Pie. Beef Stroganoff may have been born in a similar way, the brainstorm of a French chef to Count Pavel Alexandrovich Stroganov, a popular society figure in Paris at the turn of the nineteenth century. The culinary historian William Pokhlebkin believes the dish was invented much later and named in honor of a different Stroganov, Alexander Grigorevich, following his death in 1891. Whatever its origins, the dish commemorates the Stroganovs, one of the oldest noble families in Russia. As far back as the sixteenth century, when the Stroganovs were still merchants, Tsar Ivan the Terrible had granted them the right to develop land in Siberia. As their enterprise grew, so did their wealth, and by the nineteenth century the family had been flourishing for several generations.

Beef Stroganoff represents a happy marriage between French technique and Russian flavor: sour cream is added to a basic French mustard sauce, which is mixed directly with the meat instead of being served as an accompaniment. Beef Stroganoff eventually became an international favorite. Unfortunately, it has suffered all too often from a liberal addition of tomato paste and even ketchup; but made according to the original recipe, it is a noteworthy dish.

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- 1½ pounds tenderloin of beef, trimmed and cut into strips 2 inches long and ½ inch thick**
 - 2 tablespoons butter**
 - 1 small onion, sliced paper thin**
 - Salt, freshly ground black pepper**
 - 2 tablespoons butter**
 - 2 tablespoons flour**
 - 1 teaspoon dry mustard**
 - 1 cup rich beef bouillon***
 - ¼ cup sour cream**
 - Parsley**
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*To make a rich bouillon, boil down 2 cups of basic bouillon to concentrate it, or else use a commercial condensed broth.

In a heavy frying pan melt the 2 tablespoons of butter and sauté the onion until soft and just barely golden. Add the tenderloin strips all at once and cook over high heat for just a few minutes, until the meat is cooked through. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Set aside, but keep warm.

In a small saucepan melt the remaining 2 tablespoons of butter. Mix together the flour and the dry mustard and whisk into the butter. Cook for a minute, then gradually add the bouillon, stirring constantly, until a fairly thick sauce has been formed. Stir in the sour cream, mixing well. Pour the sauce over the meat, check for seasoning and heat through, but do not boil. Spoon the meat and sauce onto a large platter and garnish with parsley. Serve with **Straw Potatoes** (p75) mounded decoratively on the meat.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings.

Note Mushrooms may be added if desired, although they are not strictly authentic.