Germans from Russia Recipes

by Clyde Eisenbeis, 20-Nov-2026

Many Germans from Russia live in North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, and Colorado. Some of their recipes are not common in Germany or Russia.

Are these German recipes which were carried from Germany to Russia in the late 1700's and early 1800's? Or are some of these recipes from Russia or a neighboring country?

Some assumptions can be made about some of the recipes. For example, "Mehl Speise", food consisting primarily of flour, such as Knöpfla and Strudla, are almost certainly from the early German years. Others such as Fleischkuechle and Grautbirach are of a less certain origin, perhaps Russia.

The key ingredient missing is farm cream (not pasteurized). The farm cream was good with everything!

These recipes are based on the knowledge of my mother, Esther Eisenbeis, these recipes are original as they were "handed down" to her. The recipes bear some authenticity as the words, while in English, are written in a German grammatical structure (which can be humorous to read). Plus some ingredients were a pinch of this and add until it is soft.

Thanks to my sister JoAnn Eisenbeis Crabtree for helping convert them to modern English.

Note that **knöpfla (knoepfla)** is misspelled by many restaurants, who spell them as **knoephla**. **Knopf** means button. **Knöpfen** means buttens. The **la** (or **le**) means “small” in the German Schwäbisch dialect. **Knöpfla** means small buttens - in this case small buttons of flour!

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Fleischküchla

Dough	2 teaspoons salt	2 teaspoons shortening
4 cups flour	2 teaspoons baking powder	1 1/3 - 2 cups milk (or cream)

- Sift flour, salt, and baking powder together.
  - Cut in shortening and add milk.
- Mix to make a medium hard dough.
- Let the dough then rest about an hour to make rolling out easier.
- Divide into 10 equal balls.

Filling:	1 medium onion, grated fine
1.5 lbs ground beef	salt and pepper to taste

- Mix meat ingredients well. Set aside.
- Roll out the dough into circles the size of a dinner plate.
- Spread half a circle with a thin layer of the meat mixture.
- Fold the remaining dough over filled half.
  - Seal edges by rolling a saucer around the kuechle.
- Deep fry until golden brown turning once.
  - Drain well on paper towels.

- Eat with hands.

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Grautbirach (Krautbirach)

The Sauerkraut needs to be rinsed. Sauerkraut juice ruins the flavor

Dough:
2 cups warm water
1/3 cup sugar
2 packages yeast
2 eggs
6 1/2 cups flour
1 tablespoon salt
1/3 cup butter

- Combine water, sugar, and yeast.
  - Stir and let set until dissolved.
- Mix in eggs, 2 cups of the flour, salt, and butter.
  - Beat for 1 minute.
- Add remaining 4 1/2 cups flour and knead lightly.
  - Let set 20 minutes.
- (May use 2 loaves frozen bread dough instead. Let thaw.)

Filling:
1 1/2 pound diced smoked ham
1/3 cup onion
1/2 teaspoon pepper
1 quart sauerkraut

- Place ham, onion, and pepper in hot skillet.
  - Toss until onions are soft.
- Rinse sauerkraut to remove sauerkraut juice.
- Add sauerkraut and stir until hot.
  - Remove from heat.
- Pull off 3 inch ball of dough.
  - Roll with a rolling pin into the size of a dinner plate until 1/4" thick.
- Fill one half side of dough with 2 inches of the ham / sauerkraut mixture (like an apple turnover).
  - Fold remaining dough half over filled half (like a half dinner plate).
  - Place on greased cookie sheets and bake at 350 degrees for 20-30 minutes until golden brown.

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Brotküchla or Lederküchla

2 cups warm water
1/3 cup sugar
2 packages yeast
2 eggs
6 1/2 cups flour
1 tablespoon salt
1/3 cup butter

- Combine water, sugar, and yeast.
  - Stir and let set until dissolved.
- Mix in eggs, 2 cups of the flour, salt, and butter.
  - Beat for 1 minute.
- Add remaining 4 1/2 cups flour and knead lightly.
  - Let set 20 minutes.
- Pull off 2-3 inch ball.
  - Stretch into 5-6 inch circle until 1/4" thick.

- Deep fry until golden brown (turn once while frying).
- (Good with butter or pancake syrup or choke cherry jelly. Also good dusted with powder sugar or sugar with cinnamon.)

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Knöpfla (Small buttons of flour)

2 eggs
2 quarts water
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
flour

- Use ingredients to make dough
  - Add flour, if needed to make dough stiff.
- Bring 2 quarts water to a rolling boil.
- Drop small pieces (1/4" in diameter) into boiling water (the tip of a teaspoon works well to cut the pieces and drop them into the water).
  - Leave heat on high until all knoepfla are in the kettle.
  - Reduce heat and simmer uncovered for 15 minutes.
  - Drain water with colander.
- Brown 1/2 cup bread crumbs with 1/4 cup butter.
  - Toss over cooked knoepfla.
  - Garnish with sweet or sour cream.

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Strudla

Dough: 4 cups flour
1 egg
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 1/4 cups warm water

- Mix ingredients and knead well. Cover and let stand 1 hour.

Base: potatoes and / or cooked meat
1/2 cup diced onion
1/4 cup butter
bacon grease

- Roll out dough paper thin.
  - Spread with thin layer of melted bacon grease.
  - Roll up loosely (as for cinnamon rolls).
  - Cut rolls into 1 inch lengths.
- Dice potatoes and place in heavy skillet with onion and butter.
  - Cover potatoes with water and bring to a boil.
- Layer strudla on top of potatoes in skillet.
  - Cover when boiling and simmer 30 minutes.
  - Do not remove cover during cooking time or strudla will set.

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Fleischknöpfla

Dough: 2 eggs
2 cups warm water
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt

approximately 5 cups of flour to make the dough stiff.

- Beat eggs.
  - Add remaining ingredients and mix well.
  - Set aside and let rest (easier to work dough if allowed to rest for several hours.)

Filling: 1 pound lean ground beef
1 egg
1/4 cup finely diced onion
1 teaspoons salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
1 tablespoon parsley.

- After mixed, the meat filling can be refrigerated for several hours (or overnight) to enhance the flavor.
  - The dough needs to be used the same day is it made.
- Place filling in a separate bowl. Mix well.
- Boil water and a dash of salt in a large kettle.
- Roll dough out into a large square.
  - Cut into 3 inch squares.
- Place approximately 1 teaspoon filling in center of small squares.
  - Take care not to get filling on edges.
- Fold in half and seal edges with fingers.
- Drop into large kettle of boiling water.
  - Leave heat on high until all pockets are in the kettle.
  - Reduce heat and simmer uncovered for 15 minutes.
- Drain water with colander.
- Brown 1/2 cup bread crumbs with 1/4 cup butter.
  - Toss over cooked pockets.
  - Garnish with sweet or sour cream if desired.

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Käsknöpfla

Dough: 2 eggs
2 cups warm water
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt.

- Beat eggs.
  - Add remaining ingredients and mix well.
  - Set aside and let rest (easier to work dough if allowed to rest for several hours.)

Filling: 1 pound dry curd cottage cheese
1 egg
1/4 cup finely diced onion
2 teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon pepper
1 tablespoon parsley

- Place filling in a separate bowl. Mix well.
- Boil water and a dash of salt in a large kettle.
- Roll dough out into a large square.
  - Cut into 3 inch squares.
- Place approximately 1 teaspoon filling in center of small squares.
  - Take care not to get filling on edges.

- Fold in half and seal edges with fingers.
- Drop into large kettle of boiling water.
  - Leave heat on high until all pockets are in the kettle.
  - Reduce heat and simmer uncovered for 15 minutes.
- Drain water with colander.
- Brown 1/2 cup bread crumbs with 1/4 cup butter.
  - Toss over cooked pockets.
  - Garnish with sweet or sour cream if desired.

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Käsküchla

2 cups dry curd cottage cheese
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 cup sugar
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
3 well-beaten eggs, flour

- Beat baking soda into cottage cheese.
  - Add eggs and beat some more.
  - Add remaining ingredients. Mix well.
- Add enough flour to make a soft dough.
- Roll entire ball of dough into a large rectangle 1/4 inch thick.
  - Cut into 2 inch by 4 inch strips.
  - Add filling.
  - Cut a slit into the center of each strip.
  - Loop one end through the slit.
- Deep fry in hot oil until brown turning once.
  - Let cool.
  - Shake in powdered sugar or white sugar.

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Stirum

1 cup milk
3 eggs
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon sugar
1 tablespoon baking powder
flour to make a thin batter.

- Place milk, eggs, salt, sugar, and baking powder into a mixing bowl. Mix well.
- Add flour until the batter is the consistency of pancake batter.
  - Stir until smooth.
- Heat 3 tablespoons cooking oil in a medium-sized kettle.
  - When hot pour the batter over the hot oil and stir fast over high heat with a spatula.
  - Continue to chop batter into small pieces until all pieces are light brown.
- Remove and serve immediately.
- Good with garden lettuce.

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Nudla

2 dozen eggs
2 cups water

1 tablespoon salt
flour to make a very stiff dough.

- Mix well.
- Knead dough.
- Roll dough into large thin circles.
  - Cut by hand into noodles (or cut with pasta machine)
  - Let dry in single layer.
- Store in airtight containers.

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Summer Sausage

80 pounds ground beef
25 pounds ground pork one half bag of Tenderquick
1.75 pounds salt
1 cup brown sugar
.25 to .5 pound pepper
All Spice
1 garlic medium to large diced and soaked in hot …water for a couple of hours

- Stuff using sausage stuffer into 2 to 3 inch pork casings
  - 8 pounds of pork casings for 100 pounds of sausage.
- Hang sausage and smoke in smokehouse (or have smoked at butcher shop).

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Halupsi (Pigs in the Blanket)

1 cup rice
1 pound lean ground beef
1 medium onion
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
tomato juice or V-8 juice

- Cook rice for 10 minutes.
  - Drain, rinse, and mix with remaining ingredients.
  - Set aside.
- 1 large head green cabbage.
  - Blanch several cabbage leaves in a large kettle of boiling water for 2-3 minutes.
  - Remove leaves and drain in colander.
  - Repeating process until all leaves are blanched.
- Spoon beef mixture onto a cabbage leaf (multiple times).
  - Roll up leaf and place in greased baking dish tucking sides of cabbage under the roll.
- Pour tomato juice over cabbage rolls in baking dish until several inches deep.
  - Do not submerge cabbage rolls.
- Bake uncovered at 300 degrees for 2 hours.

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Kartofelwergele

3 cups boiled potatoes
1/4 cup chopped onion
2 eggs
1 1/2 cups flour
salt, pepper

- Mash potatoes.

- Season with salt, pepper, and onion.
- Let cool.

° Add eggs and flour. Mix well.
° Boil water and a dash of salt in a large kettle.
° Divide dough into 3 parts.
- Form 3 long 1 inch diameter rolls on floured board with your hands.
- Cut into 1 inch slices.

° Drop into boiling water.
- Remove when they float on top.
- Drain in colander.

° Repeat process until all slices have been boiled.
° Deep fry until brown.
- Drain well on paper towels. (Boiling the slices before deep frying is optional.)

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Dampfnudla

Dough: 2 cups warm water
1/3 cup sugar
2 packages yeast
2 eggs
6 1/2 cups flour
1 tablespoon salt
1/3 cup butter

° Form 1.5 inch balls out of the dough.
- Let raise on greased cookie sheet.

° Season porkchops or chicken with salt and pepper and brown in skillet.
° Place browned meat in roaster.
- Pour 1 can of cream of chicken, or cream of mushroom, mixed with 1/2 can milk over meat.
- Cover and bake meat at 350 degrees for 1 hour.

° Place raised dumplings single layer over meat.
° Bake uncovered an additional approximately 20 minutes or until golden brown.

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Borscht

° Make a beef broth using beef bones, onion, celery, salt, and pepper.
- Cover bones with cold water in a large kettle.
- Cook a long time.
- Strain into a large bowl.
- Discard bones, onion, and celery.
- Cover bowl. Let cool. Refrigerate.
- Remove and discard fat.
- Set broth aside.

° In another large kettle sauté diced onion, minced garlic, a little butter.
° When onions are translucent, add the broth to the onion and garlic.
- Heat over medium heat.

° When the broth is hot.
- Add chopped cabbage, cubed or stewed tomatoes, diced potatoes (optional), frozen mixed vegetables (such as lima beans, corn, carrots, peas, cut green beans), fresh whole dill weed (remove before serving) or dill seed or dried dill, two whole allspice.
- Simmer until flavorful. Taste. Adjust spices as necessary.

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Fasnachtküchla

4 eggs
1/2 cup sugar
2 cups sweet or sour cream
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons vanilla
flour

- Beat eggs, sugar, cream, baking powder, salt, and vanilla.
- Add enough flour to make a soft dough. Mix well.
- Roll entire ball of dough into a large rectangle 1/4 inch thick.
  - Cut into 2 inch by 4 inch strips.
  - Cut a slit into the center of each strip.
  - Loop one end through the slit.
- Deep fry in hot oil until brown turning once.
- Let cool.
- Shake in powder sugar or white sugar.

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Kucha (Kuchen)

Dough (makes 15 kuchen):
3 packages yeast
1/2 cup warm water
1 cup sour cream
3 cups milk
1/2 cup sugar
1 tablespoon salt
5 eggs
1/2 cup soft butter
9 cups flour

- Dissolve yeast in lukewarm water.
- Combine with remaining ingredients in large mixing bowl.
  - Knead.
- Add additional flour if necessary to make a soft dough.
  - Let rest 20 minutes.
- Roll out with rolling pin into 1/4" thick circles and place in greased pie plates.
  - Dough needs to come up the sides of the pie plates, but not onto the lip of the pie plate.

Custard (for 3-4 kuchen):
2 eggs
2 cups sour cream (farm cream if possible as unpasteurized cream tastes better)
1 cup sugar
2 tablespoons flour
salt
1 teaspoon vanilla

- Beat eggs well.
  - Place eggs, sour cream, sugar, flour, and pinch of salt in saucepan.
  - Cook over medium-high heat stirring constantly until mixture begins to boil.
- Remove from heat.
- Add vanilla. Stir. Use hot or cool.
- It is necessary to cook the custard in batches for the kuchen.
- The dough and custard recipes are not on a 1:1 ratio.

Fruit filling: Dried prunes … or fresh apricots … or dried apricots … or fresh apple slices … or fresh peach slices … or concord grapes … or dry curd cottage cheese (1 lb) … or poppyseed (1/2 cup)

- Place one layer of fruit on top of dough in pie plate.
- Cover fruit with a layer of above custard.
- Sprinkle with cinnamon.
- Bake at 350 degrees 15-20 minutes or until golden brown.
  --- or ---
- for cottage cheese or poppyseed filling
  - Stir cottage cheese or poppyseed into above custard recipe.
  - Pour 1/2"-3/4 " layer of custard mixture over dough into pie plate.
- Bake at 350 degrees 15-20 minutes or until golden brown.

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Lebkuchen Cookies

2 cups honey
2 2/3 cup white sugar
4 eggs
1/4 cup cooking oil
1 teaspoon soda
1/2 teaspoon cloves
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
8 cups flour

- Combine all ingredients in mixing bowl. Mix well.
  - Roll out. Cut with cookie cutters.
- 1 beaten egg white
  - Brush top of cookies with beaten egg white
- Place a blanched slivered almond on top of each cookie.
- Bake at 325 degrees for 10-15 minutes.
- Place in airtight container for several weeks to soften.

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Brown Pfeffernuß Cookies (this recipe still made in Germany)

The dough needs rest in a refrigerator for one week or longer.

2 1/2 cups brown Karo syrup
1 cup butter (not margarine)

- Put in large kettle, bring to a boil.
- Add

4 teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon vinegar

- Stir quickly or it will boil over.
- Cool and set aside.
- Add

3 eggs (beat with mixer)
1 cup sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon cardamom
1 teaspoon cloves
1 teaspoon black pepper

- Mix well.

- Add

8 to 9 cups of Bread Flour

- Add everything to kettle and mix well
  - Let the dough rest in a refrigerator for one week or longer in a bowl with a firm cover.
- Roll the dough so it is like a rope, then using a teaspoon or knife, scoop pieces and place on a greased cookie sheet (small cookies).
- Bake at 350 degrees for 9 mins, or until light brown (bake one cookie first. If it is flat, add more flour).
- Makes eight pans, four pans at a time (about 500 small cookies).

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Soft Pfeffernuß Cookies

2 cups white sugar
1 1/2 cup lard
3 eggs, 1 cup honey
1 cup strong coffee
1 cup buttermilk
4 teaspoons baking powder
2 teaspoons soda
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon cloves
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
2 teaspoons anise flavoring
7 1/2 cups flour

- Mix cream, sugar, and lard.
- Add eggs and beat well.
  - Add remaining ingredients. Mix well.
- Drop by spoonfuls on greased cookie sheet.
- Bake at 350 degrees for 12-15 minutes.
- Shake baked cookies in bag of powder sugar.
- (Makes about 100 cookies.)

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Molasses Cake

1/2 cup soft butter
1/2 cup sugar
1 cup dark molasses
2 eggs
1 1/2 teaspoons soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon cloves
1/2 teaspoon ginger
1 teaspoon cinnamon
2 cups flour
1 cup boiling water

- Beat eggs.
- Add remaining ingredients.
- Beat with mixer until smooth.
- Pour into greased 9" x 13" cake pan.
- Bake at 350 degrees for approximately 30 minutes.
- Test with toothpick.

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Keraps Plachindla

Dough: 2 cups sugar
5 eggs
1 cup sour cream
1 cup milk
1 teaspoon vanilla
1/2 teaspoon salt
3 tablespoons baking powder
9 cups flour

- Mix ingredients together to make a soft dough.
- Let set 15 minutes.

Filling: 8 cups canned pumpkin
8 cups sugar
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
4 tablespoons cinnamon
3/4 cup minute tapioca

- Place ingredients for filling in a separate bowl. Mix well.
- Roll dough out into 5 inch by 6 inch ovals.
  - Fill 1/2 side of dough with a thing layer of filling (like an apple turnover).
  - Fold remaining dough half over filled half.
  - Seal turnover by rolling a saucer around the edges.
- Place on greased cookie sheets.
- Brush top with milk.
- Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes or until golden brown.

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Ginger Snap Cookies

2 cups white sugar
1/2 cup molasses
4 teaspoons baking soda
1 1/2 cups lard
2 teaspoons cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 beaten eggs
2 teaspoons ginger
4 cups bread flour

- Cream the sugar and lard.
- Add eggs and beat well.
- Add remaining ingredients. Mix well.
- Form 1 inch balls.
- Roll in additional white sugar.
- Place on ungreased cookie sheet. Do not press down.
- Bake at 375 degrees for 9-11 minutes.

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Raisin Oatmeal Cookies

2 cups sugar
4 eggs
2 cups cooking oil
2 tablespoons molasses
2 teaspoons vanilla
4 cups flour
4 cups old-fashioned oatmeal
2 tablespoons cinnamon
2 teaspoons baking soda
2 cups of cooked raisins
…(save water from raisins)

- Beat sugar and eggs.
  - Add oil, molasses, and vanilla. Mix well.
  - Add flour, oatmeal, and cinnamon.
- Dissolve baking soda in 10 tablespoons raisin water.
- Add to cookie mixture. Mix well.
- Stir in raisins by hand.
- Drop by spoonfuls on ungreased cookie sheet.
- Bake at 350 degrees for 12-15 minutes.

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