



ago, but “it isn’t Easter if babci doesn’t make barszcz,” said Pokrywka’s daughter, Carolyn Wos, using the Polish-American word for grandmother.

Recipes vary, but all contain kielbasa and hard-boiled eggs. Older versions begin with *zur*, fermented rye flour, though modern cooks give their soup its tart edge with lemon juice, vinegar, or sour cream. “Everyone does it different depending on where their family came from,” Pokrywka said, as she simmered kielbasa for the broth. When the soup was done, she seasoned her bowl with horseradish and reminisced about “cousins by the dozens” enjoying *biały barszcz* after Easter Mass. “Those were the good old days,” Pokrywka said, “when we were all together.” —Melissa Pasanen

### Bialy Barszcz (Polish White Borscht)

SERVES 4-6

The recipe for this Polish Easter soup (pictured, above) works just as well with prepared horseradish.

- 2 lb. smoked kielbasa
- 2 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 leeks, trimmed, sliced
- 1 small yellow onion, sliced

- 2 medium russet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1" cubes
- 2 sprigs marjoram
- 1 bay leaf
- 1½ cups sour cream
- ¼ cup flour
- ¼ cup freshly grated horseradish
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ¼ cup roughly chopped dill
- 2 tbsp. chopped parsley
- 4 boiled eggs, cut into wedges

Boil kielbasa and 8 cups water in a 6-qt. saucepan. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook to flavor broth, about 25 minutes. Pour liquid and kielbasa into a bowl; reserve. Return saucepan to medium heat. Add butter, garlic, leeks, and onion; cook until soft, about 10 minutes. Add reserved liquid, potatoes, marjoram, and bay leaf; boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook until potatoes are tender, about 30 minutes. Discard marjoram and bay leaf; purée soup in a blender. Return soup to pot; bring to a simmer. Meanwhile, whisk sour cream and flour in a bowl, add ½ cup soup, and whisk until smooth. Pour mixture into soup; cook, stirring, until thickened, about 5 minutes. Cut kielbasa into ½"-thick slices; add to soup along with horseradish, salt, and pepper. Garnish with dill, parsley, and eggs.



### QUEEN OF SNACKS

It looks like a block of peanut butter, but gjetost is cheese, even if it is brown and sweet. Meaning “goat cheese” in Norwegian, gjetost (pronounced YAY-toast) is made by caramelizing whey left over after removing the curds from goat’s milk. Whey, which has been a part of the Norwegian diet since the Viking Age, is boiled until thickened, and then placed into molds to harden. Pure goat’s whey cheese has a salty, burnt sugar taste. The most popular whey cheese in Norway, however, named *Gudbrandsdalsost* for the Gudbrands Valley, where it originated, has only 10 percent goat’s whey; the rest is cow’s whey, milk, and cream. The brand available in the U.S., called Ski Queen Gjetost, has a mild caramel flavor. In Scandinavia, it’s added to sauces for reindeer and other game, and it’s great, too, for fondue. Like Norwegians, though, I enjoy it best sliced and simply served on crispbread. —Nachammai Raman

### One Good Bottle

## Spud Spirit

Farmers in central Pennsylvania dig up nearly 300 million pounds of potatoes per year. Most of them are supplied to snack companies to be sliced and fried for chips. Lately, though, there’s another buyer for the crop. Boyd & Blair Potato Vodka (\$33) was created in 2008 by two friends from Pittsburgh, Barry Young and C. Prentiss Orr, who won an agricultural grant aimed at helping potato farmers develop new markets for their spuds. They opened a distillery in a glass factory where their bottles are manufactured on the premises. Pot-distilled using the high-starch Katahdin variety and other potatoes grown in Pennsylvania, Boyd & Blair—named in tribute to relatives of the partners—is, like its Eastern European counterparts, sweeter than grain-based vodkas, with surprising notes of vanilla and coffee. All that potato starch gives it an exceptionally creamy mouth feel, but it’s also bright and luscious on the back end. Though it’s wonderful in fruit-based cocktails, this vodka is smooth and sweet enough to sip neat. —Joe Dolce



### On the Web

## Map Quest

Since *SAVEUR*’s first issue in 1994, we’ve traveled to nearly every corner of the world, exploring markets, restaurants, taverns, food carts, and home kitchens everywhere, from the highlands of Scotland and the coast of Kenya to just a few blocks from our office in New York City’s Koreatown. Now, on *SAVEUR*.COM, we’re bringing that wealth of global culinary knowledge together in a tool designed for the convenience of the hungry traveler: The *Saveur* Essentials. Each month, we reach into our archives to collect stories, recipes, maps, itineraries, and photographs from a particular culinary destination. January kicked off with the *Essential Spain*; February brought the Caribbean; March was Mexico; this month, it’s the Middle East—its history, its cultures, and most of all, its many vibrant foodways. Whether you’ve already bought your plane ticket or you’re just looking for a good story for when you serve that Lebanese beef *kafta* to friends, you’ll find everything you need at [SAVEUR.COM/ESSENTIALS](http://SAVEUR.COM/ESSENTIALS).



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TODD COLEMAN (2); ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI