

Danielle Shapiro  
SID: 26273443  
May 10th, 2019

## Russian Dinner Parties

**Overview.** The organization of a Russian meal is a complex organizing system that goes beyond what is placed on the table. Whether it be a 600 person wedding, or an intimate birthday party, each meal follows the same organizational system based on years of Russian culture and history. The food, entertainment and family dynamic all play a part in the organization of the event, which influences the order food comes to the table, what each course is, when speeches are made and when it is acceptable to start eating. All of these factors make for an elaborate event that lasts at least 4 hours, including loud drunken relatives and cheesy Russian music and dancing.

**What is being organized?** A Russian dinner party consists of two categories of resources. The first category is social resources, including the guests, hosts, entertainment, and restaurant workers. The second is food courses, that are broken up into cold appetizers, hot appetizers, the main course and dessert. The flow of the event is the same each time and revolves around these resources and the purposes they serve. Social resources alternate with the release of different courses so that there is time for the food to be switched around and then for guests to sit and eat again. They are also there to entertain the guests and make sure everyone has a good time. One major aspect of the entire event is the consumption of Vodka. Vodka, as stereotypical as it may seem, is a large part of both the food and social resource categories. Without it, the event would no longer resemble the typical Russian culture that guests expect. Each party begins with the arrival of family members. The hosts stand by the door to greet everyone as they arrive, and as each guest arrives they begin to sit down. Seats are not

assigned at smaller events, but at weddings or at the discretion of the host people will be assigned a table. Guests start to eat as soon as they sit, as the cold appetizers are already on the table as guests arrive. Tables are adorned with full cutlery and china sets, including glasses for water, soda, wine and vodka. There are food stands that serve the purpose of allowing a variety of dishes to be served at once. Each dish will appear multiple times per table, so guests have access to all the options they desire without having to move around. Also on the table are pitchers filled with Coca Cola, Sprite and plain water, as well as sparkling water bottles and multiple bottles of Vodka. When the guests finish with their first course, they will stand up to dance and restaurant workers will clear empty plates and bring the next course to the table. Typically after the hot appetizers are served, some sort of entertainment provided by the restaurant will begin. Most likely this is a Russian singer or band, with very loud music and bright, colorful light shows. The event will continue for 4-5 hours, alternating between food and entertainment/dancing, until finally all the guests leave.

**Why is it being organized?** There could be many reasons for why this event takes place.

Russians use birthdays and other celebrations as an opportunity to throw extravagant parties for close relatives. Weddings fall into this category as well, but the guest list includes more than just close relatives. Regardless of the type of event, close and distant family members are invited to celebrate as well as reunite. Many people take the opportunity of a birthday to see family they might not have seen in a while, as well as eat the food they know and love, which they may not have access to all the time.

**How much is it being organized?** Much of how the event is organized is based on years of tradition and the restaurant itself. The restaurant that is chosen most likely has a preset menu

that the hosts can choose from, which make the organization of the event much simpler. The restaurant is also usually responsible for providing entertainment, so again the hosts do not have much to decide. These events are so similar each time because of the organization principles already in place by the restaurants, but the guests also uphold principles that contribute. One of the ways that guests add to the structure of an event is the way they behave/ are expected to behave. Guests understand what is expected at these events, such as when to eat, when to dance, and of course when to drink. Russian restaurants host a lot of these events per year, and by creating fixed menus and having entertainment options at the ready, they have a much easier time planning and putting on these events because they follow such a similar structure. The strict structure of these events shows a complex organizing system at the start, however, this allows for a much easier process when it comes to planning new events.

**When is it being organized?** The hosts do not need to plan too far in advance because things are mainly pre-planned by restaurants. Reserving of the restaurants can be made as far in advance as the hosts would like, and invitations are sent by the discretion of the hosts, but actual details can be finalized within the last month before an event takes place.

**How or by whom is it being organized?** The event is organized by the hosts and the restaurant itself. Russian restaurants provide several set menus that hosts can choose from, and hosts will plan with the restaurant to decide on what decor and entertainment will be provided. The decisions that have to be made are minimal because the events follow such a typical timeline and there are specific expectations, therefore the organization itself is partially complete before the planning even begins.

**Where is it being organized?** Depending on the size of an event, usually these types of dinner parties will take place within the Russian restaurant itself. If the party is larger however, such as a wedding, it will take place in a remote location and will be catered by the restaurant.

**Artifact:**

