

Tranoc's Mead

4 oz boiling water
1 tea bag
3 lbs. honey
3 fluid oz pure maple syrup
¼ cup brown sugar
3 TBS lemon juice
Yeast according to preference

Pour 4 oz boiling water into a cup with a single tea bag. Let sit 3 hours. Boil honey with 7 cups water until it stops foaming. Add maple syrup, brown sugar, lemon juice, and tea. Remove from heat and cool to about 70 degrees. Add yeast. Let mixture ferment for a month. Rack to a secondary. After about 2 more months, rack again and taste. If you like it, bottle it. If not, let it sit another couple of months and then bottle.

Yield: 1 gallon

“This place looks like a rain forest gone to snow,” Tranoc quipped about the herbs and the notes still stuck to every surface in the house. He made the sound of some bird he had heard in some jungle, and, aping his avian mating dance, I mimicked his plaintive cry. Communicating only with the jungle bird’s call, we built a blaze together with the coals we’d brought back from the Kupala fire. Excerpt from *Forest Song: Finding Home*, p 304

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Gerda Felden's White Bread

1 package active dry yeast
1 TBS granulated sugar
1 TBS salt
3 cups warm (110-115°) water
6 cups unbleached white flour
2 TBS olive oil
Extra oil
Cornmeal
½ cup water
1 ½ tsp. cornstarch
Sesame seeds

In a large bowl dissolve yeast, sugar and salt in warm water. Let stand 5-10 minutes. Stir in flour and oil. Knead on a lightly floured surface until smooth and elastic. Form into a ball. Coat a large bowl with oil. Place dough in bowl, turning once to coat both sides. Cover with a clean damp cloth and let rise in a warm place about 2 hours or until doubled in size. Form into three balls. Let rise 15 minutes. Shape each ball into a loaf about 12" long. Sprinkle a baking sheet with cornmeal. Place loaves on sheet so they do not touch. Cover with a clean damp cloth and let rise in a warm place 1 hour. Preheat oven to 450°. Combine remaining water and cornstarch until clear but thick. Brush onto loaves. Sprinkle loaves with sesame seeds. Cut three slashes into each loaf. Place a large pan of warm water on bottom shelf of oven. Place the baking sheet on middle shelf of oven. Bake 10 minutes. Reduce heat to 350° and bake 50-60 minutes more.

Yield: 3 loaves

But I did not sleep, at least not for hours. In the little black bed I came face to face with the merciless blankness of the room. Without Heidi to share it my pillow was a wasteland. Without Matka Lasu's warmth I shivered in the sheets. There was no fire to crackle orange light across the lumpy shadows of the room. No Zorya sparkled in the cloud-cluttered sky. I rocked and quietly sang to myself, but I could not shut out my thoughts. Excerpt from *Forest Song: Finding Home*, p 216

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Matka Lasu's Apple Walnut Pierogi

2 small unpeeled apples, cored and minced
½ cup chopped walnut meats
¼ cup honey
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
1 cup whole-wheat flour
¾ tsp. salt
½ cup mashed potatoes
1 egg, well beaten
2 TBS warm water
½ cup shortening
Powdered sugar

Stir together apple, walnuts, honey, and cinnamon in a medium bowl. Set aside. Stir together flour, salt, and mashed potatoes in a medium bowl. Stir in egg and water, mixing well. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface. Knead until light and elastic. Roll out to a 1" thickness. Cut with a 2 ½" round cutter. Roll circle until it's 3 ½" in diameter. Fill with 2 TBS filling. Fold circles in half. Press edges with the tines of a fork to tightly seal. Drop into 1 quart boiling water. Boil for five minutes. Drain. Heat shortening in a skillet. Fry turnovers until golden brown. Dust with sifted powdered sugar.

Serves 10

A wolf howled. I pirouetted to the right, hollering Tranoc's name. It howled again, this time from the left then again from somewhere behind me. The star strewn sky had gone black, an almost full moon hanging like a spider on her web. I shouted again, and again the wolf responded, opening the dam to a chorus of howls that sluiced away any inkling I had of Tranoc's whereabouts. My stomach growled. I shouted again, aware that my voice would be washed away on the gush of canine calls. My stomach rumbled again. I huddled into myself against the chill of the night. Swiping tears of frustration, I called out again. Excerpt from *Forest Song: Finding Home*, pp 269-270

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Matka Lasu's Charoset

24 unpeeled tart apples, cored and grated
Juice of 8 lemons
4 cups roughly chopped walnuts
4 cups golden raisins
2 cups honey
4 tsp. ground cinnamon
1 cup kosher for Passover sweet red wine

Combine all ingredients and chill.

Serves 18-20

“You can’t live without hope.” The mother slumped into fatigue as she switched her son to her other breast. He grunted and frowned when his meal was interrupted, found and claimed the other nipple, and began to nurse again. “Now that Gustav is gone all my hope is in Karl.” She fondled the baby’s cheek. “And in a Jewish state.” Her mind clicked into motion, the gears meshing slowly into each other. “This could be our big chance, may be a blessing in disguise.” Warming up, her psyche’s machinery recovered from its chugging and began to whirl. “Maybe Karl and I will be among the first to found a state of Israel.” Tossing her coffee-colored hair from her face and sitting up hazel stick straight, she flashed a victorious crooked-tooth smile. “Next year in Jerusalem!” she proclaimed as if finally believing in a lifelong dream. Excerpt from *Forest Song: Little Mother*, p 46

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Matka Lasu's Orange Glazed Chicken

3 lb. roasting chicken
Juice of 1 orange
3 TBS firmly packed brown sugar
4 TBS orange marmalade
1 TBS cider vinegar
1 medium onion, quartered
1 orange, quartered (skin and all)

Preheat oven to 325°. Remove giblets from chicken cavity. Rinse chicken inside and out under cold running water. Dry with paper towels. Measure orange juice, brown sugar, marmalade, and vinegar into a saucepan. Mix well. Bring to boiling over medium heat, stirring constantly. Reduce heat and simmer 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stuff chicken cavity with onion and orange. Place chicken breast side up on a rack in a shallow roasting pan. Brush with half the glaze. Cover loosely with foil. Roast 2 hours. Remove foil and brush chicken with remaining glaze. Roast 30 minutes longer.

Serves 4-6

Gerda tore a sheet from a sales receipt pad and drew a map so quickly I gathered she had made the trip many times herself. Then, whispering good-bye to the tables and counters, to the stock of winter fabric and to the ghosts, she locked the door, checked it twice, and placed the key in my hand wrapping my fingers around it. She nodded once then turned and pulled on her jacket, but instead of a cheerful bright turquoise bit of fluff, I saw a black mantle of grief. We both knew she would never see the store again, yet her chin didn't even quiver. I thought she was the bravest woman I knew. And I was certain I was the cruelest. Excerpt from *Forest Song: Little Mother*, p 103

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Matka Lasu's Herb Salad

6 cups chopped spinach
1 cup borage, chopped
1 cup chopped fresh parsley
1/3 cup basil leaves
1/4 cup hyssop leaves
1/4 cup lemon balm leaves
1 medium cucumber, diced
2 medium tomatoes, chopped
1 cup chopped green beans
1 yellow bell pepper, seeded and diced
1/4 cup red wine vinegar
1/4 cup vegetable oil
1 tsp. dried oregano
1 tsp. dried marjoram
1 tsp. dried sage
1 tsp. dried thyme
1 clove garlic, minced

Toss together spinach and next 9 ingredients in a salad bowl. Whisk together vinegar and remaining ingredients in a cup. Toss into salad.

Serves 6-8

As frail and as frightened as a captured wren, her eyes darting to and fro, her muscles rigid for escape, her mouth circled for a scream, she tugged love tears to my eyes. I blinked them away. I took a step. My teacher grasped my wrist. “*Willkommen, liebchen,*” she crooned, her German pregnant with Polish. She smiled blandly and stretched out her hand. “There, there,” she soothed. “You’re completely safe with us. Come. We were about to draw your bath.” Heidi opened her arms. Gerda stood where she was, her visage as blank as a hazelnut shell. Her sallow skin was so gauzy it utterly failed to soften the contours of her bones. Her startled eyes were all black, sunken deep within themselves and bruised with the shadows of fatigue. My teacher nodded and smiled. I did the same. Tranoc, awkwardly struggling not to look male, didn’t seem to know what to do. Excerpt from *Forest Song: Little Mother*, p 139

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Gerda Felden's Luncheon Salad

4 cups chopped lettuce
2 carrots, chopped
1 unpeeled Bosc pear, cored and chopped
1 rib celery with leaves, chopped
½ cup sour cream
2 TBS chopped chives

Toss together vegetables and fruit in a salad bowl. Whisk together sour cream and chives in a cup. Toss into salad to coat evenly.

Serves 4

The sun nibbled at the cotton batting of the clouds like a moth coming back from a trance. The pave stones gleamed. Little pools glistened in the street. The air smelled green, though the only visible flowers were new-planted marigolds and geraniums in the weather-silvered second story window boxes. I gratefully grabbed a gulp of rain-freshened air as the sun bit a chunk of another pallid cloud and, shining though the hole, spread a rainbow out before us. Excerpt from *Forest Song: Little Mother*, pp 86-87

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Matka Lasu's Orange Glazed Beets

2 TBS butter
2 tsp. cornstarch
¼ tsp. salt
1 TBS honey
1 tsp. cider vinegar
2 tsp. grated orange zest
Juice of ½ large orange
3 cups sliced cooked beets

Melt butter in a saucepan. Blend in cornstarch and salt. Add honey, vinegar, orange zest, and juice. Cook, stirring, over medium heat until smooth and thick. Add beets and simmer 10 minutes or until beets are heated through.

Serves 4-6

Tranoc kissed the backs of my hands as he had the night before then turned them over and kissed my palms. The gallantry of his gesture embarrassed me, and I felt a giggle bubbling in my mouth. But the grief in his eyes squeezed my titters to a lump that settled painfully in my throat. I took a deep breath and swallowed hard. The lump remained. Excerpt from *Forest Song: Finding Home*, p 95

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Bruna Bönor

1 lb. Swedish brown beans
14 cups water
¾ cup firmly packed brown sugar
¾ cup dark corn syrup
1/3 cup white vinegar
2 tsp. salt
½ tsp. ground nutmeg
2 tsp. cornstarch
1 TBS cold water

Wash and drain beans. Turn into a large bowl. Cover with 7 cups water. Cover and let stand overnight. Drain. Turn into a large saucepan. Cover with 7 cups water. Bring to simmering. Cover tightly and simmer 3-3 ½ hours or until tender. Stir in brown sugar and next four ingredients. Mix cornstarch and cold water in a cup. Stir into beans. Simmer, uncovered, 15 minutes until thickened. Add more cornstarch if necessary.

Serves 8-12

Allowing my feet to wander where they would, I roamed the shadow striped woods and absorbed the rhythmic sound of my shoes scraping through the trees' droppings. An acorn fell and then another popping as they hit the ground. A few leaves rustled to November's gusty breath. And for the second time in weeks, I remembered the line Pan Dąb had quoted to me once. "A little noiseless noise among the leaves, born of the very sigh that silence leaves. John Keats wrote that," he'd said then had continued. But I couldn't remember the rest. *Excerpt from Forest Song: Little Mother*, p 250

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Matka Lasu's Stuffed Zucchini

2 TBS butter
2 medium onions, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 large tomatoes, chopped
½ cup chopped fresh parsley
4 medium zucchini, halved lengthwise
Butter

Preheat oven to 375°. Heat butter in a medium skillet. Sauté onion and garlic until onion is translucent. Turn into a medium bowl. Gently stir in tomatoes and parsley. Scoop flesh from zucchini halves, leaving a ¼" shell. Dice zucchini meat and stir into tomato mixture. Mound filling into zucchini shells. Grease a baking dish. Arrange zucchini in dish. Bake 45 minutes.

Serves 8

“Look, whether or not you choose to be grateful, the woods will be beautiful. They can't help it any more than they can help loving life.” She pointed to a wild strawberry vine tracing its way across the ground. Its white flowers shone like stars in the brown of the dead leaves and the green of the living ones. “Wars will come and go, and people will die. But the woods will go on and on. Take comfort in that. Do what you have to do. But remember the beauty of life!” Excerpt from *Forest Song: Little Mother*, p 117

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Matka Lasu's Apple Lentil Soup

6 cups vegetable broth (See Below)
1 TBS olive oil or canola oil
1 cup lentils
¼ cup chopped fresh mint leaves
7 cloves garlic, minced
1 medium red onion, diced
2 medium carrots, diced
1 rib celery with leaves, diced
2 apples, cored and diced
Freshly ground pepper to taste

Bring first 8 ingredients to boiling in a soup pot. Reduce heat to medium and cook 15 minutes. Reduce heat to low. Stir in apples and pepper. Simmer 10 minutes more or until apples reach desired tenderness.

Serves 6-8

Suddenly the Nazi menace was as real as a kiln-fired earthen bowl. For the first time I could smell the acrid fear inside the thing. For the first time I staggered under its weight. I wanted to smash it against a stone and watch it shatter into tiny sharp-edged bits.
Excerpt from *Forest Song: Little Mother*, p 194

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Second Crones' Bean Soup

½ cup dried chickpeas
½ cup dried kidney beans
½ cup dried lentils
½ cup split peas
¼ cup hulled (not pearled) barley
6-8 cups vegetable broth or more, if needed (See below)
2 medium onions, chopped
2 carrots, chopped
2 turnips, peeled and chopped
1 cup green beans, cut to 1" lengths
6 cloves garlic, pressed
1 TBS vegetable oil
2 cups chopped fresh parsley
1 TBS dried dill
¼ cup chopped fresh basil
2 TBS fresh hyssop leaves
1 TBS fresh rosemary leaves
1 lb. chopped fresh spinach

Soak chickpeas and kidney beans in cold water overnight. Drain. Turn into a soup pot with lentils, split peas, and barley. Add vegetable broth. Bring to boiling. Cover, reduce heat, and simmer 15 minutes. Stir in onions and remaining ingredients except spinach. Simmer until vegetables reach desired tenderness. Stir in spinach. Simmer just until spinach wilts.

Serves 8-10

Her tears fell as gently as spring rain, as softly as the breath of May. She unfastened herself from Matka Lasu's embrace and, accepting the tea, perched elegantly on the edge of the sun-gilded chair. I'd seen the image before. An incipient memory teetered at the edge of my grasp. I thrust a mental arm out to steady the thing and positioned it in place and time. She looked just like the vision I had seen three years before when I'd hoped she'd gone to Gorkitz for her mother's funeral. And for the first time I knew that, while presentiments are right, interpretations of them can be wrong. Excerpt from *Forest Song: Little Mother*, p 148

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Vegetable Broth

10 cups water
1 large onion, minced
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 large carrot, minced
1 rib celery with leaves, minced
½ cup mushrooms of choice, minced
1 medium yellow crookneck squash, minced (do not peel)
1 large potato, scrubbed and minced (do not peel)
1 cup chopped fresh spinach
½ cup minced fresh parsley

Bring all ingredients to boiling in a soup pot. Cover, reduce heat, and simmer 2 hours or until vegetables are very soft. Strain or process in a blender until smooth. Freeze in one-cup containers.

“We have to think about this.” Ingeborg’s words quivered like violets in the rain. I took a breath to speak. Heidi touched my knee. I shut my mouth and let Ingeborg continue. “You say to pack what we want, but it isn’t that easy. These dishes belonged to my mother. The china in the dining room was Grand Mama’s. We have pillows that the women of our family made and silver and vases and furniture that belonged to my aunts and uncles. Gerda embroidered this tablecloth when she was only twelve years old.” She petted the tablecloth’s pink and yellow roses. “I could tell you the family’s history just by giving you a tour of the house.” Her eyes briefly toured the first floor of the place. “What would we take? What would we leave behind? How long would we be gone? This takes time to think through.” Excerpt from *Forest Song: Finding Home*, p 82

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