

Polish-style chłodnik

Ingredients

For the beetroot kvass

10 beetroot, peeled and grated
2 tbsp raw honey
1 bay leaf, crumbled
1 tbsp sea salt flakes
few black peppercorns, roughly crushed
1.5 litres/2½ pints mineral water, from a bottle
chunk sourdough bread (rye sourdough would add an extra kick)

To garnish

8 soft-boiled quails' eggs, peeled and halved
8 cooked crayfish tails
8 Jersey Royal potatoes, boiled and chopped
8 radishes, stalks on, quartered lengthways
½ cucumber, diced
1 tbsp chopped spring onion
1 tbsp chopped fresh dill
1 tbsp chopped fresh tarragon

To serve

good-quality kefir, to serve, (optional)
sourdough melba toast

Method

1. For the beetroot kvass, mix all the ingredients together including the sourdough and leave, covered with a muslin, at room temperature to ferment. Depending on how hot your kitchen is it could take from two days to a week. You are looking for bubbles to appear and for a slightly fizzy, pleasantly sour taste. Drain, reserving the liquid and discarding the beetroot. Correct the seasoning (salt, honey, pepper) before serving. It should be a perfectly balance of sweet, sour and salty.
2. If you are short on time, you could make the Lithuanian version of this beetroot soup instead. Scrub the beetroots really well, then boil them in 2 litres/3½ pints water until they can be skewered through easily. Take the beets out (keep the water) and leave to cool. Peel them, grate, add a squeeze of lemon juice and 1 tablespoon honey, then add to the reserved water and keep in the fridge overnight or for at least two hours.
3. Spoon the beetroot soup into serving bowls, add a little bit of each garnish and, if using, swirl a little kefir through it. Enjoy on a (hopefully) hot day with a sourdough melba toast.

Preparation time

overnight

Cooking time

over 2 hours

Serves

Serves 4

Dietary

Vegetarian

This tangy, cold beetroot soup is a summer staple in Poland. If you don't want to spend several days making it, follow the simpler Lithuanian instructions below.

By Olia Hercules