

Soup (šūrbā) and its types

Šurbā – soup is one of the widespread dishes in traditional Tajik cuisine having many varieties. Soups are cooked from vegetables, meat, and grain products and are seasoned with various scented herbs and spices. This is how regularly the soup is prepared: first the cooking oil is heated and meat, which usually takes longer to cook, is fried first. After the meat is moderately fried other ingredients such as onions, potatoes, carrot, turnip and depending what type of soup is additional vegetables are added. The ingredients are seasoned with salt and spices and stirred every 2 or 3 minutes to give them regular fried texture, particularly the care is given not to burn the onion, which more delicate than other vegetables. The final taste and texture of the soup depends on the degree of initial 'light' frying of the ingredients. Water is added after the frying of the main elements and it is left to slowly simmer and bring to boil. When the vegetables and meat are nearly cooked chickpea, beans, lentil and other types of grain products, again depending on the type of intended soup, is added and cooked by simmering.

The way of cooking all types of soups is

identical and the distinguishing features are types of main products, which are added. In the Tajik cuisine there are nearly twenty types of soups, of which most popular are being *xomšūrbā* (clear soup), *murgh-šūrbā* (chicken soup) *būdana-šūrbā* (quail soup), *dum-šūrbā* (oxtail soup), *kabk-šūrbā* (partridge soup), *rezā-šūrbā* (finely cube-cut vegetable soup), *lūbīā-šūrbā* (beans soup), *nakhud-šūrbā* (chickpea soup) *nāsk-šūrbā* (lentil soup) and so on.

From the types of soups named only the cooking method of only *murgh-šūrbā* (chicken soup) and *rezā-šūrbā* (cube-cut vegetable soup) is slightly different. *Murgh-šūrbā* (chicken soup) is considered to be most nutritious and is advised to feed people with internal organ (digestive system, stomach) illness. In this soup cooking oil and potatoes, which has high starch content is not used at all.

In cooking *rezā-šūrbā* all ingredients are finely cube-cut, thus the name *rezā-šūrbā* literally meaning 'finely cut'. In its content *rezā-šūrbā* is similar to that *mastāba* (rice soup). The main difference being that the latter has rice but *rezā-šūrbā* contains only vegetables.

