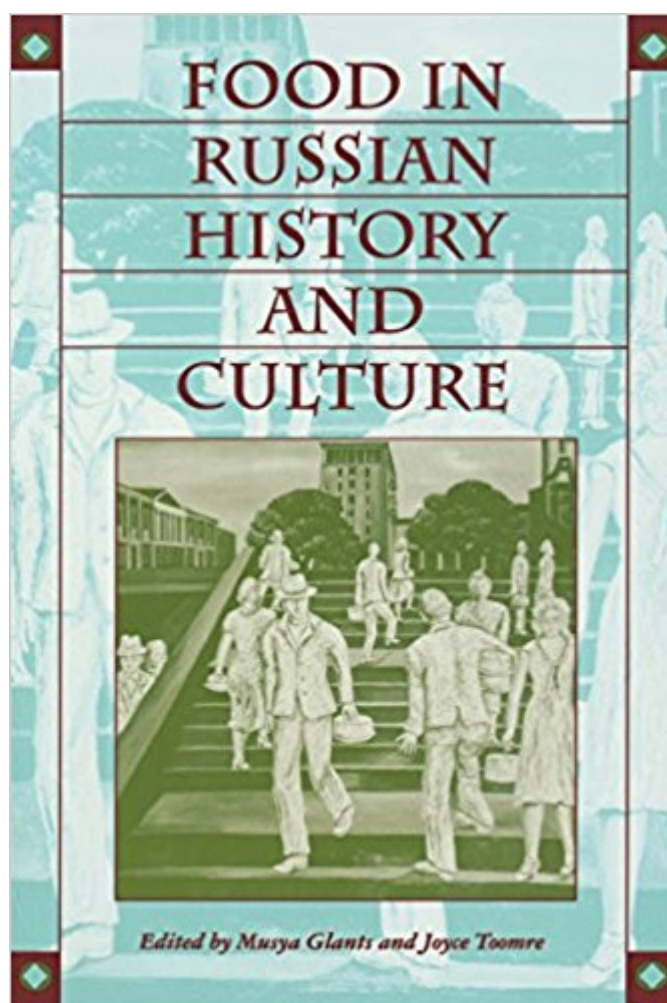


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# Food In Russian History And Culture (Indiana-Michigan Series In Russian And East European Studies)



## Synopsis

"... the specificity and breadth of this [work] makes it unique.... lively reading... particularly recommended for academic collections with a strong focus in Russian history." *Library Journal*"... a remarkable new collection of essays... The book reads like a literary hybrid of cookbook, historical treatise, and novella; its subject is, literally, the essence of life itself.... Glants and Toomre deserve further praise for the book's consistent, animated directness of style." *The Boston Phoenix* This sparkling collection of thirteen original essays gives surprising insights into what foodways reveal about Russia's history and culture, from Kievan times to post Soviet Russia. Some of the chapters focus on historical topics while others consider images of food in literature and art.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Fourteen scholars have contributed 13 essays, each impeccably documented with endnotes, on the place of food ("foodways") in Russian history and culture. Edited by Glants, a specialist on 19th- and 20th-century Russian painting, and Toomre, a Slavicist and culinary historian, the book spans over ten centuries, from Kievan Rus to the present. Relying on sources as diverse as personal journals, police records, paintings, poems, and cookbooks, the writers examine changing attitudes about food—moral, ideological, and spiritual—through the eyes of peasants as well as tyrants. Recent works have dealt with the relationship between food and power (Sidney Mintz, *Tasting Food, Tasting*

Freedom, LJ 8/96), but certainly the specificity and breadth of this one makes it unique. Although lively reading, it is particularly recommended for academic collections with a strong focus in Russian history. Wendy Miller, Lexington P.L., Ky. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"... the specificity and breadth of this [work] makes it unique... lively reading ... particularly recommended for academic collections with a strong focus in Russian history." oLibrary Journal "... a remarkable new collection of essays ... The book reads like a literary hybrid of cookbook, historical treatise, and novella; its subject is, literally, the essence of life itself... Glants and Toomre deserve further praise for the book's consistent, animated directness of style." oThe Boston Phoenix

This book gets a high rating because of its well chosen grouping of essays on various aspects of Russian cuisine and how it ties into the culture and daily life. Having studied some of the same at the Yastreboff School of Russian Language in San Francisco, the essays herein expanded my understanding even further while presenting a different angle to the analysis. When you are living in the thick of it, you may not even be aware of how a tradition or circumstances (Soviet era) may look from an objective observer's point of view. This was the great value of this book for me. It is written by two very well-credentialed authors, whose other writings I would also endorse. A bonus for me was a greater understanding about the significance of bread, the Russian pech (oven) and why my great grandmother was horrified one year when her kulichi (Easter bread) did not come out. That was the year the Bolsheviks shot her husband.

These essays -- by a roster of accomplished contemporary scholars of Russian Studies -- are wonderfully accesible and informative. Readers with interests in folk culture and history, Russian studies (history, literature, whatever) and/or culinary history will feel like they've struck gold. The thirteen scholarly pieces, some with a few illustrations, cover a wealth of topics (see table of contents above)-- consistently well. It's anything but dry; Pamela Chester's article on the relationship between (state-) tormented poets Marina Tsvetaeva and Osip Mandelstam (and their uses of food as symbol and, tragically, their deprivation of it, later) is heartbreaking. Peasantry, the gentry, and the Eastern Orthodox church; brilliant fussbudget Tolstoy's vegetarianism is in here; the uses of food in the writing of Dostoyevsky; fasting and food fashions; Catherine the Great (hardly any tastebuds; hearty interest in 'presentation'); the new Soviet state with its ambitious dreams for the citizenry, and the ultimate cynical mess that resulted. Food as power, class marker, moral symbol, and solace. The roots of asceticism (Orthodox church). Unfortunately, Jewish life and gulag

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