

RUSSIAN FOOD NETWORK

Recipe:

Strawberry Apricot Kompot (or various other fruit mixtures)

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 20 minutes

Total Time: 25 minutes

Serving Size: 6-8

Ingredients

- 1 lb. strawberries
- 6-7 apricots
- 1 Gallon water
- 8 Tbsp. sugar
- 1 Tbsp. lemon juice
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Instructions

1. Cut fruit into small pieces.
2. Bring water to boil in a large pot. Add fruits to water and let simmer for 5 minutes.
3. Add sugar and lemon juice mix well and simmer for another 5 minutes.
4. You can adjust the sweetness.
5. Serve cold or hot.

Photo of kompot served cold:



The history of kompot:

Kompot's origins are somewhat unknown, but it has existed since at least the 15th century where it was found in cultures across Central, Eastern, Southern Europe and Central Asia.

It became popular in Russia largely due to how easily it can be preserved, which allowed citizens to enjoy fruit even in winter when fruit was scarcely available. During the Soviet period the prosperity of a household was in times judged by the amount of three-liter jars of kompot the home had stored for winter.

Today, you may purchase kompot in supermarkets, restaurants, and even fast food joints. It is so engrained in Russian culture, it even has its own phrase "And where's my kompot?" which means a person is puzzled as to why he has not been given something he should have clearly received.

The preparation of the kompot and when it would likely be best enjoyed:

Kompot was simple to make, and this recipe made enough to share with several friends.

I substituted apricots with nectarines, because nectarines were cheaper, in season, and a favorite fruit of mine. In the future, I will try different mixtures of fruit depending on what fruit is in season.

I drank mine cold, and it tasted similar to a fruit tea or flavored water.

Kompot could accompany many dishes or just be enjoyed by itself. A hot batch of kompot would best accompany a frigid evening, and a cold batch is best on a balmy day on the beach.

A work to accompany your kompot:

Vladimir Nabokov: *Pale Fire*

Despite being raised in a wealthy family of Russian nobility and living in numerous European cities known for their cuisine, Vladimir Nabokov didn't attach: "too much importance to food and wine." It is shown in letters to his wife Vera, Nabokov's own tastes were simpler—that is if you disregard his penchant for eating butterflies, which he said tasted "like almonds and perhaps a green cheese combination."

In one particular letter in 1926 while living in Berlin, he wrote: "Walked home and ate a second dinner (cold-cuts—sausage predominating. Mustn't forget two eggs and the oatmeal and the strawberry compote..." A compote is the Western European brethren of the kompot. It is very similar, but incorporates egg whites to make it thicker and more of a dessert (Nabokov enjoyed eggs, as is exemplified in his sole published recipe "Eggs à la Nabocoque").

With this history in mind, I recommend you enjoy your kompot with the hilarity of Nabokov's 1962 novel *Pale Fire* and its vegetarian (and kompot-drinking?) narrator Charles Kinbote. Like the kompot, *Pale Fire* is refreshing, full of creative possibilities, and is a joy to ingest.