

Kissel

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Kissel or kisel (Russian: кисель *kiséľ*, Ukrainian: кисіль, Polish: kisiel, Lithuanian: kisielius, Latvian: ķīselis, Finnish: kiisseli, Estonian: kissell) is a fruit soup, popular as a dessert in Eastern and Northern Europe. It consists of sweetened juice, thickened with arrowroot, cornstarch or potato starch, and sometimes red wine or dried fruits are added. It is similar to the Danish rødgrød or German Rote Grütze.

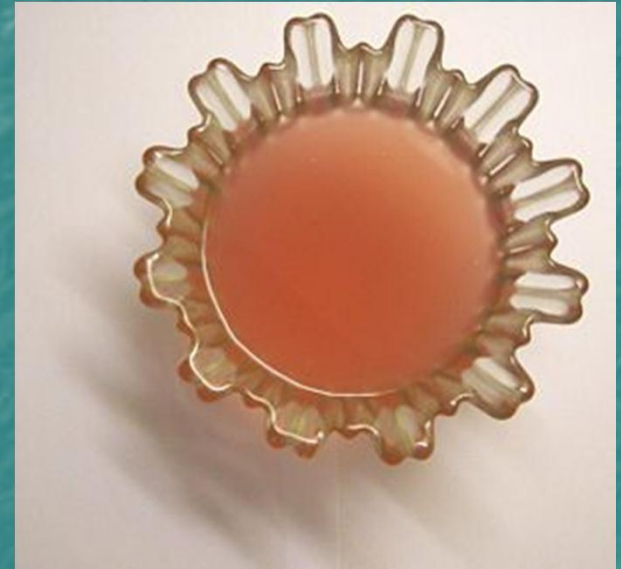
Kissel can be served either hot or cold, also together with sweetened quark or semolina pudding. Kissel can also be served on pancakes or with ice cream. If the kissel is made using less thickening starch, it can be drunk - this is common in Russia. Swedish blåbärssoppa is a bilberry kisel similarly prepared and consumed, although fresh or frozen bilberries, not dried berries is used to prepare it.

History and background

Its name is derived from a Slavic word meaning "sour" (cf. Russian кислый *kisly*), as sour fruits are preferred. In the Russian Primary Chronicle there is a story of how kissel saved a 10th-century city, besieged by nomadic Pechenegs in 997 (the first mention of this type of dessert). When the food in the city became scarce and a hunger started, the people of the city followed an advice of one old man, who told them to make kissel from the remnants of grain, and a sweet drink from the last mead they could find. Then they filled a wooden container with the kissel, and another one with the mead drink, put those containers into the holes in the ground and made up two fake wells over them. When the Pechenegian ambassadors came into the city, they saw how the Russians took the food from those "wells", and the Pechenegs even were allowed to taste the sweet kissel dessert and mead beverage. Impressed by that show and degustation, Pechenegs decided to lift the siege and to go away, having concluded that the Russians were mysteriously fed from the earth itself.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 lb cranberries
- 1 quart water
- sugar
- 2 tablespoons potato flour



Directions:

- Rinse cranberries and put to boil in water.
- When all the berries have burst, strain and force through a sieve.
- Retain the liquid and pulp; discard the skins.
- Reheat the juice while mixing in the sugar to taste.
- Mix the potato starch with cold water and slowly stir into the juice until thickened. It should be the consistency of thick syrup.
- Pour the hot kissel in to a serving dish and sprinkle the top with sugar to avoid forming a skin on top.
- Cover and cool.
- Serve topped with whipped cream.