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Dining WITH THE *Tsars*

FRAGILE BEAUTY
FROM THE HERMITAGE

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OFFICIAL BANQUETS AT THE RUSSIAN IMPERIAL COURT

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One of life's great pleasures in Ancient Russia was to hold a huge feast with ladles of heady drink and merry dancers and buffoons. A banquet might be held to mark an important event, such as a soldier's return from war, a wedding or a christening, or to celebrate something more modest, such as a new acquaintance or simply a meeting of friends. 'Get what's on the stove out onto the table!' was the cry, as welcoming hosts treated their guests to honey, ale, *kvas*¹ and foreign wines, to game and fish, pickles and smoked meats.

Amidst this wealth of lavish entertainment, the banquets given by the tsars were of course particularly luxurious. Initially these were served by numerous retainers but they were later joined by noble courtiers who stood beside the tables dressed in rich brocade kaftans and expensive furs. The main feature of these vast dinners was the specifically Russian nature of the hospitality. 'From the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries traditional Russian dinners usually consisted of four removes. Cold and hot hors d'oeuvres were brought out, broths and stews, fried dishes and of course all kinds of baked foodstuffs. Long oak tables were first laid with undercloths, then covered with tablecloths made of thick fabric or velvet embroidered with silver or gold. The first dishes were served on clay, wooden, pewter, silver or copper plates, the wine and mead was brought out in what were called *endovas*.'² One 'endova', a low bowl for drinking from, might be as large as a bucket – nearly thirteen litres or over 22 pints. Which is why in Russian – as in English – we talk about 'drinking bucketfuls'. It was only at the start of the eighteenth century that a more elegant European dining culture started to make itself felt in Russia. By this time society could no longer be guided solely by the instructions provided in the *Domostroy*, a set of moralising rules

for private and public life.³ Russia's first book of etiquette appeared in 1717, *The Honest Looking-glass of Youth, or instructions for everyday manners, gathered from different authors*.⁴ Amongst its instructions (some of them apparently translated from foreign handbooks) were those guiding behaviour at table:

'... do not wipe your lips with your hand, do not throw your arms across the table, do not lick your fingers, do not gnaw at bones, nor pick your teeth with a knife, do not eat noisily like a pig, nor speak before you have swallowed your food ...'⁵

This text is very telling in what it says about table manners at the time, in both Russia and Europe.

A comparison with a similar guide for the education of genteel children published nearly two centuries later reveals something of the historical civilising process affecting dining in the imperial capital:

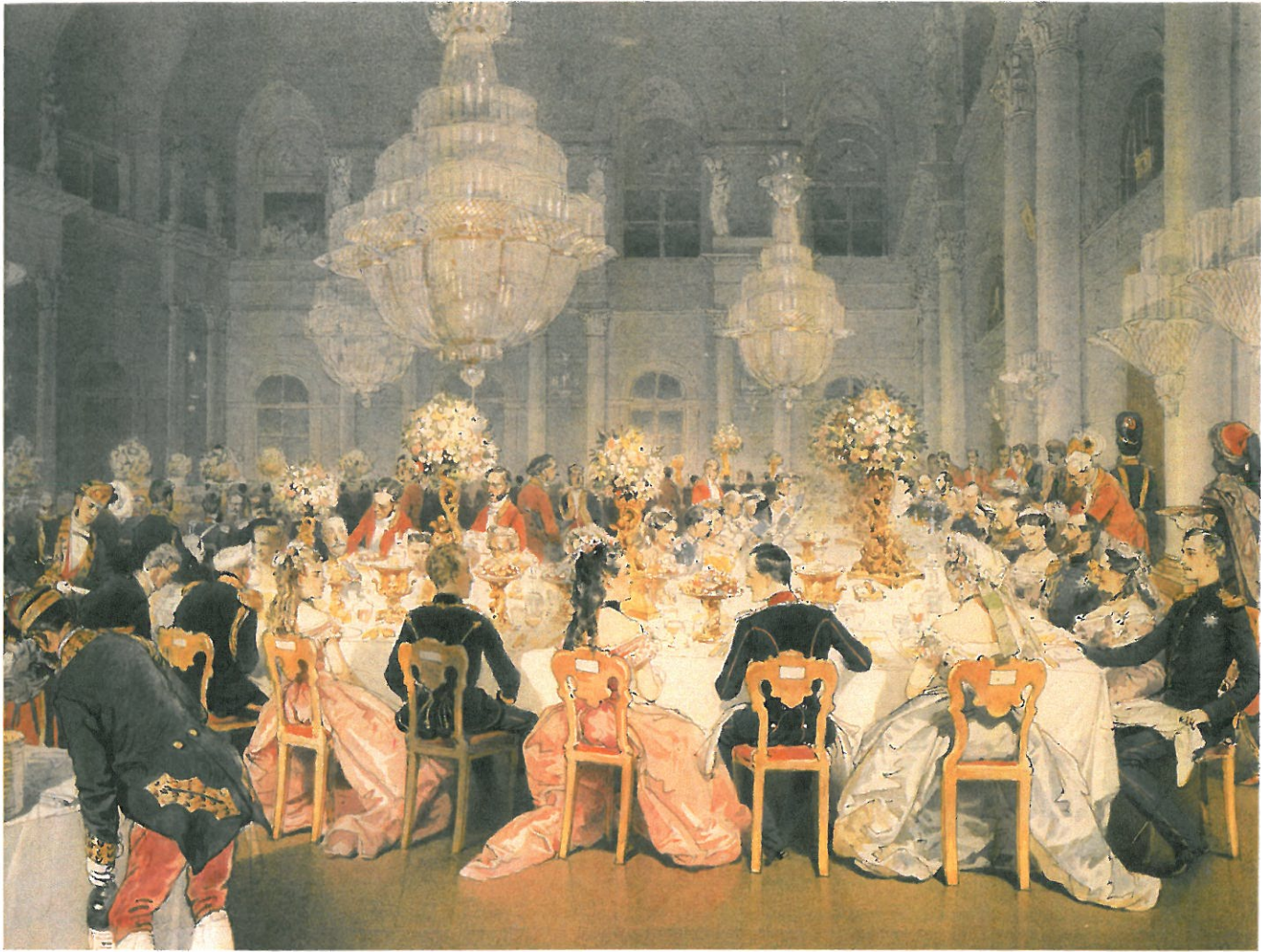
'... do not tie your serviette at the throat but place it on the knees, cut your meat on the plate but do not cut it into many pieces, cutting them off as you are ready to eat them; bread should be broken into pieces, not cut, nor crumbled, nor should balls be rolled from it.'⁶

PETER I (1682-1725)

During the reign of Peter I festivities and communal eating were just starting to emerge from the old rules of the *Domostroy*. New dining relationships radically altered the deep-rooted underpinnings of the Russian mentality. Napkins, for instance, appeared in Russia only during the age of Peter: men had previously used their long beards for this purpose, although beards were only washed during visits to the bath-house... The cultural transformations that Peter enforced on his people were not unaffected by the Tsar's



GALA DINNER IN THE CONCERT HALL OF THE WINTER PALACE
DURING THE VISIT OF THE GERMAN KAISER TO ST PETERSBURG



Mihály Zichy. Pencil, watercolour and white on card. 1873



**BOTTLE COOLER FROM THE VIENNA ARMORIAL
SERVICE WITH THE IMPERIAL ARMS**



Wiener Porzellanmanufaktur, Austria. 1730-35

well-known penchant for jokes. One contemporary recalled, for instance, that at one banquet given by Peter naked dwarves leapt forth from huge pies placed upon the table to universal amazement: a woman on the men's side, a man on the women's side.⁷ We can only imagine how the guests, initially shocked, adapted themselves to the royal merriment and happily dined on the pies, even though they had been 'degraded' by human flesh... Moreover, the table itself was for many years threatened by certain dangers, such as one official ritual on the second day of festivities marking a court wedding, when the bride and groom processed along it.⁸ In 1718 Peter passed a decree introducing a form of gathering known in Russian by its French name, *assemblée* (assembly). Such collective entertainments could be held outdoors or in the mansions of St Petersburg, the programme including polite conversation, dances and games, as well as food and drink. All sufficiently well-dressed individuals, save servants and peasants, were permitted entry, and women were allowed to attend 'open' gatherings for the first time. Peter himself kept an eye on the

proceedings at these assemblies and public punishment was meted out to those who stepped out of line.

'A huge cup, nearly two litres, with wine or even vodka, known as "the Great Eagle Cup", was presented at Peter's assemblies to guests who broke the rules, were very late or were unwilling to carry out any of the Tsar's instructions, whether relating to attire, forms of entertainment or anything else.'⁹ In summer Peter liked to hold events in the open air, with tables set up by the cool of the River Neva or in the shade of a park. His name day was celebrated in his Summer Garden, as was Glorious Victory Day, marking the Russian victory in the Battle of Poltava.¹⁰ Buffet food was served and people could eat and drink as they strolled through the gardens, engaging in unhurried conversations to the music of several small orchestras.¹¹ Peter personally presented honoured guests with 'the fruits of the imperial garden', such as apples or pears, cherries, raspberries or currants. As the time for dinner approached the gates of the Summer Garden were closed so that guests could set to with gusto and enjoy the royal offerings, with rich dishes, strong wine and vodka. Indoor assemblies were usually held during the winter period. In the relatively small rooms of St Petersburg's still modest mansions they were inevitably more crowded and guests were divided into two groups: 'whilst one group dined, the other danced... In the room where people supped and dined the servants removed the tables and swept the floor, in winter opening the windows to air the room now filled with the smell of food and the fug of tobacco, and then in that same room the gaily dressed gentlemen and their ladies went into the dance.'¹² Most of the more formal dinnerware in St Petersburg's great houses was silver. As for the food, the monarch himself had no taste for fish or sweet things, preferring sour cabbage soup (*shchi*), porridge and grains and Russian meat dishes, usually served extremely hot: Peter's food was served onto the table directly from the stove, to which end a serving hatch was made in the wall between the dining room and the kitchen.¹³ The Tsar drank his food down with *kvas* or Hungarian wine; of stronger drinks, his preference was for aniseed vodka, which was said to have curative properties. After his trips to Europe in



1697-98 and 1716-17 Peter developed a taste for Dutch milk products and did much to ensure the introduction of Dutch production methods to Russia. As a result, *smetana* [sour cream] and butter became widespread and eventually came to be seen as nationally specific.¹⁴

Towards the middle of the eighteenth century a precise court ceremonial came to be established, assigning to each particular festivity its own programme and ritual order. Banquets inevitably played an important part, grand spectacles that included an abundance of traditional Russian and exotic dishes. Ordinary court dining seemed like magnificent dress rehearsals for the banquets that formed the grandiose conclusion of all major festivities. An abundant table was obligatory at ceremonial events such as coronations or anniversaries of the monarch's reign, the birthday of the heir to the throne and the name days of members of the royal family, at gatherings of the knights of one of the great state Orders, on the main feasts of the Orthodox calendar and other major dates, as well as at receptions, balls and masquerades. Guests were seated at table according to the strictest protocol, reflecting the accepted hierarchy, diplomatic etiquette and social status. At one dinner in honour of Peter's widow and successor Catherine I (1725-27), for instance, tables were set beneath a baldachin beside the imperial table for the Duke of Holstein, the twelve highest ranks of the clergy, senators, generals and nobles of the state, with separate tables for ladies, deputies and officers.¹⁵

ANNA IOANNOVNA (1730-40)

Banqueting tables literally groaned beneath the weight of all kinds of culinary delights during the reign of Anna Ioannovna. Since the Empress was a great lover of hunting, her own trophies roasted on the spits in Her Majesty's kitchen on most days.¹⁶ She gladly treated guests and courtiers to bear, venison, boar and hare, all shot by herself, although her own preference was for roasted woodcock or grouse. As she had no particular interest in alcohol, however, only small amounts were drunk. Guests at traditional assemblies were increasingly served tea, coffee and cold drinks. In 1734 the taking of Danzig

was celebrated in high style in the Summer Garden, where the imperial family dined in the Grotto: tables stretched along the avenue of trees beneath a green silk awning supported on columns wound with garlands of flowers. Buffet tables with gold and silver vessels stood between the columns on one side, more tables with porcelain stood on the other. There were two removes each of 300 dishes, not counting the dessert.¹⁷

Anna Ioannovna indirectly contributed to the spread of interest in different national dishes through one celebrated event in 1740, the forced wedding between her jester, Prince Mikhail Golitsyn (known as 'kvasnik', since he served the Empress her *kvas*), and a hunchback serving woman, Evdokia Buzheninova. An Ice House was built on the frozen River Neva between the Admiralty and the Winter Palace, where the couple were ceremonially put to bed under guard. The mocking ceremony involved carefully selected pairs of men and women from the different ethnic peoples of the Russian Empire, some 300 people in all, who were commanded to appear in typical costume, bearing the musical instruments required for their traditional dances. Then came an unusual dinner, at which the couples were treated to their different national food and drink, the unknown and exotic dishes forming part of the amusement provided for guests.

Banquets for the highest ranks were held in the 'Winter House of Her Imperial Majesty' (1732-35; architect Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli) on the bank of the River Neva. Since the rooms of this Winter Palace were not spacious, stress was laid on the magnificence of how the table was laid and the food was served. From the second half of the eighteenth century faience and porcelain came to be used alongside gold and silver vessels: the first porcelain service of the House of Romanov is thought to be the Vienna Armorial Service of 1730-35 (fig. on p. 20),¹⁸ on which the main decorative motif is formed by the Russian state arms. When diplomatic gifts were made at European manufactories for presentation to the Russian court they often used the two-headed eagle motif, which was also to be the prerogative of Russian Suppliers to the Crown.



ELIZABETH (1741-61)

Both court etiquette and changing fashion determined the format of imperial dining. When Empress Elizabeth came to the throne the Russian court increasingly looked to France for inspiration. Elizabeth ordered a description of magnificent banquets held at Versailles and followed their lead. During her reign the cult of dining was reinforced, acquiring some of the brilliance of French style, although never quite reaching the level of refinement of Western models...

In Elizabeth's wooden summer palace beside the River Fontanka (1741-44; architect Bartolomeo Rastrelli)¹⁹ considerable emphasis was placed on themes and concepts – from triumphal allegories to hunting scenes and reconstructions of churches – and on the layout of the tables, to match the way things were done at grand events in the Palace of Versailles. Complicated arrangements of tables could be taken apart and re-assembled, their design – the work of leading architects, not least among them the prolific Francesco Rastrelli – taking account of the public nature of eighteenth-century dining, with spectators looking down from balconies and galleries above. Tables were laid out to form monograms, shells and spirals and much more. At times the convenience of the diners, who might find themselves back to back amidst the complicated interlocking tables, was secondary.

Tables were decorated with all kinds of compositions, including jokes and surprises, that Elizabeth liked to inspect after morning prayers as she returned to dine in her apartments, accompanied by the diplomatic corps and nobles of both sexes. Thanks largely to Rastrelli's universal talents, Elizabeth's reign produced some of the most magnificent table decorations known at the Russian court. In 1749, at a banquet marking the anniversary of her coronation, the decoration at the top table was, 'as was fitting to the occasion', 'the highest ascension of her Imperial Majesty to the throne of All Russia, with many emblems', while the second table was adorned with 'the Field of Mars'.²⁰

Eighteenth-century desserts formed a whole separate event at banquets, marvellous spectacles of 'culinary theatre'. There might be pyramids of sweets and pastilles, edible *trompe-l'oeil*, historic figures and

military actions, models of ships and frigates, miniature landscapes or architectural models, including 'the ruins of Ancient Rome'. Many of them would have been made of coloured sugar or dough, and have therefore not survived.

'Such fanciful decorations involving a host of surprises required appropriate utensils, plates and dishes. The silverware and porcelain of this period is irrationally complicated in shape and profuse in naturalistically treated décor. Service pieces merge into a baroque masquerade of *trompe-l'oeils* and illusions: a tray takes the form of a carved vine-leaf; a candelabrum becomes lost amongst the sprigs of leaves and flowers; an ice-cream mould turns into a bud, and the lids of dishes, cruet-stands and tureens conceal themselves under heaps of food and dead game.'²¹ Table adornment inevitably included real flowers, a huge luxury bearing in mind the local climate, which meant that most of the year they came from hothouses. Bouquets were arranged in jardinières or in small narrow-necked flower vases on special stands.

PORTRAIT OF EMPRESS ELIZABETH



Louis Tocque. 1758



GASTRONOMICAL EXTRAVAGANCE

Although many culinary masters were Russian others were 'imported' from abroad, along with many of the provisions required for imperial court dining. Empress Elizabeth herself was a hearty eater, drinking her food down with a mouthful of sweet wine, preferably Tokai. Her taste was for Russian dishes, and she was particularly fond of cabbage soups, pork roast, coulibiac and buckwheat; she preferred a piece of plain roast meat from a beast shot by herself to any more refined foods. Skilled foreign chefs may have been critical of the modest royal taste but 'one man's meat is another man's poison'. Elizabeth did have some gourmet tastes, however: according to legend each and every day she ate French 'pâté de Périgueux' – foie gras wrapped in pastry, with truffles or grouse or ground pork. This pâté was delivered to Russia in crates of ice and seemed to be above all political disputes. As one courtier recalled:

'... the Empress Elizabeth having the habit of eating pâté de Périgueux every day, throughout the Seven Years War the King [Frederick the Great of Prussia] let pass the couriers entrusted with delivering it, without the Russian court ever abusing the privilege or the court of Berlin believing there was reason for distrust.'²²

Perhaps the carriage also carried all kinds of delicacies as gifts on the return journey...

The European Enlightenment led to the burgeoning of gastronomy in Russia and it soon moved beyond the limited sphere of court life. During the second half of the eighteenth century there was a veritable orgy of culinary refinements. Members of the Russian nobility had a penchant for a dish known as 'Empress roast', a grotesque amalgamation of the abundance of court meals. To make this roast a lark was stuffed with olives and then inserted into a quail, the quail into a partridge, the partridge into a pheasant, the pheasant into a capon, the capon into a suckling pig, which was then roasted.²³ And all that was intended for a single human stomach! The description summons up associations with Russian folk tales such as that of Koshchey the Immortal, a supernatural ogre whose death is hidden away in a needle, the needle hidden in an egg, the egg in a duck, the duck in a hare, the hare in a chest

that hangs on an oak that grows far away on the mythical Island of Buyan.

If society dining does not seem to have retained any elements from medieval Russia, the endless imagination shown in the dishes created on Russian soil certainly echoed the luxurious dining habits of the Greek and Roman emperors. Guests of the Ancients might be fed on 'the brains of 600 ostriches, peas with grains of gold, lentils with precious gems and other dishes served with pearls and amber';²⁴ the dishes served at the table of the Russian tsars were no less inventive but certainly more edible! Increasing demand for delicacies to stimulate jaded palettes led chefs to ever greater heights, creating menus that listed dishes in a sort of culinary poetry:

'Fricassée of nightingales' tongues
Ragout of deer's lips and ears
Bull's eyes in sauce, wakening in the morning
Elk's lips in sour cream
Boiled bear's paws
Pie with baked-in doves
Wines: Burgundy, Hungarian, and other foreign brands.'²⁵

Gastronomical extravagance was a characteristic feature of the elegant eighteenth century, combining European innovation and national traditions and following the principle that 'the eyes are larger than the stomach'. In 1746, on the anniversary of Elizabeth's ascension to the throne, tables laid for 43 were served with 1,300 dishes and 300 pyramids of confectionery.²⁶

Sweets were made from fruits and berries and they might be wet (like a sort of runny jam) or dry – boiled in syrup, dried in a hot oven, a drier or even in the sun.²⁷ It is hard to imagine that a single individual might partake of some thirty different dishes and then go on to eat endless sweets...

Etiquette demanded that only a tiny portion be taken of each of the many dishes. Satisfying the physical demands of the stomach was far less important than the aesthetic pleasure derived from the beauty of all those edibles piled high. Even back in the days of Ancient Russia the dishes were displayed at royal dinners: moving at a measured pace servants carried



vast trays with whole roasted swans and pigeons, baked sheep's and pigs' heads, and all kinds of richly adorned platters, up to five hundred different dishes! Such dining ritual allowed for a visual appreciation of masterpieces of the culinary art that also tempted and stimulated the appetite.

DINING RITUAL

The French manner of serving all dishes simultaneously became accepted in palace dining over the course of the eighteenth century. When the hosts appeared the *Kammer-diener* or gentleman-of-the-table cried 'Lids!' and with a flourish the servants removed all the lids at once, revealing the variety of delicacies on offer to the diners. Each remove, from the main course to the dessert, was presented in the same way.

There were usually four courses – a cold collation, soup, a hot course and then the dessert – each course consisting of between two and fifteen dishes. Each diner had their own set of crockery and cutlery that included plates, knives, forks and spoons. Glasses were brought out as necessary, until the end of the eighteenth century being kept, like the drinks themselves, on separate buffets, in special coolers to hold glasses, bottles or liqueurs. Cloths were laid over leather or baize covering the table, sometimes over 'carpets' or thick cotton (bombazine), which prevented the crockery banging against the table. Double carpets and tablecloths were used for large banquets: when the *maître d'hôtel* removed the first course, the lackeys gathered up the dirty dishes in special boxes and the upper tablecloth was removed along with the carpet to reveal a clean tablecloth that was then laid with the dessert, with porcelain plates, cutlery and bread.²⁸ At the court of 'merry' Elizabeth feasting often dragged on long after midnight. Indeed, the brief reign of her nephew and successor, Peter III (1761–62) was also remarkable for its lengthy, frequently very drunken, gatherings. Elizabeth introduced the practice of serving not only cold drinks and ices during her night-time assemblies but also hot soup to revive the failing forces of the wilting guests. She herself kept a close eye on what was served and the selection of wines available, never forgetting liqueurs and light sweet wines for ladies.²⁹

There was unbroken musical accompaniment from orchestras, choirs and soloists. One visitor to the capital recalled:

'The ball lasted until eleven, when the grand master came to announce to Her Majesty that supper was ready. We entered a vast room, greatly ornate, lit by nine hundred candles, and set with a table for four hundred places, arranged in a patter... the dishes were of all the nations, as were those serving the food, French, Russian, German, Italian, who each asked of their compatriots what they would like.'³⁰ Such events unfailingly ended with fireworks and illuminations in the dark of the night.

Official imperial dinners were representative acts of state and they came to cost huge sums of money. The expense grew steadily, reaching astronomical sums. In 1746, for instance, the cost of spices, vegetables and wine for the table of Her Majesty Empress Elizabeth was 7,761 roubles; just 1,375 roubles had been spent on the same products for the table of Anna Ioannovna.³¹ And this was only a small part of the food bill! The overall calculation inevitably included the cost not only of the food but the flowers, several thousand candles, the erecting of the buffets and all the other many costs, including unseen costs.

THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF DINING

Refreshments also did much to contribute to personal intercourse and conversation, loosening the tongue and warming the spirits. So as not to dampen conversation, space of up to sixty or seventy centimetres was left between each laid place. Over dinner guests might discuss historic or cultural events and decide questions of economics or politics. But conversations at table were not always relaxed and light-hearted. Subjects might verge towards acute questions relating to state diplomacy.

A banquet held in the Winter Palace on 14 January 1746 for the 'the Order of Prussian Knights' was marked 'with somewhat less ceremony than was usual for other foreign chivalric orders', both with regard to how the table was decorated and the number of dishes and removes. But when the single toast was raised – for the health of the head of the



TUREEN ON A STAND FROM THE PARIS SILVER SERVICE



François-Thomas Germain, France. 1757-61

Order of the Black Eagle, i.e. the Prussian King – Elizabeth sipped from a small glass and the heir to the throne from a chalice. The Empress' small glass and the lack of a cannonade were perceived as an insult by the Prussian minister.³² This was indeed quite deliberate: shortly before the banquet the Russian ambassador to Prussia had reported that events honouring the Order of the Holy Apostle St Andrew the First-called in the German lands were extremely modest. Since this was Russia's first and highest Order, established by Peter I, of which all first-born male offspring of the House of Romanov were immediately made knights, the apparent lack of respect was seen as provocative. Celebrations of the different Orders served to reinforce state power. They inevitably included a ceremonial banquet, the tables laid with services

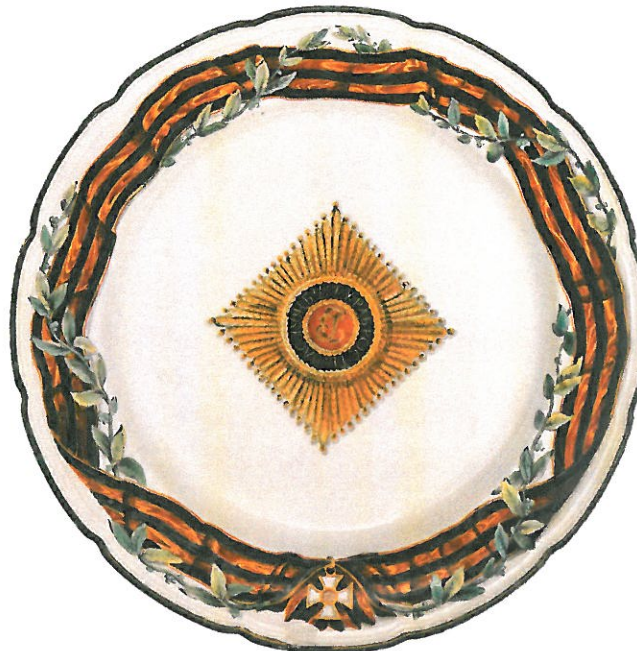
bearing the symbols of the relative Order. Under Empress Elizabeth, dinners honouring the Order of St Andrew were served using either the Gold Service or the special Meissen Service of the Order of St Andrew (1744-45; pp. 50-59). The latter – its main decorative elements Russian armorials and the cross of the Order – had been a gift to Elizabeth from August III, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, on the occasion of the marriage of her nephew, the heir to the throne Grand Duke Peter, and Princess Sophia Augusta of Anhalt-Zerbst (later to reign successively as Peter III and Catherine II). On one of the several days over which the wedding was celebrated the young couple sat beside Elizabeth at a table in the shape of a crown. At other Order banquets tables might be set with the silver Paris Service ordered by Elizabeth herself (fig. above).



SERVICE OF THE ORDER OF
ST ANDREW THE FIRST-CALLED



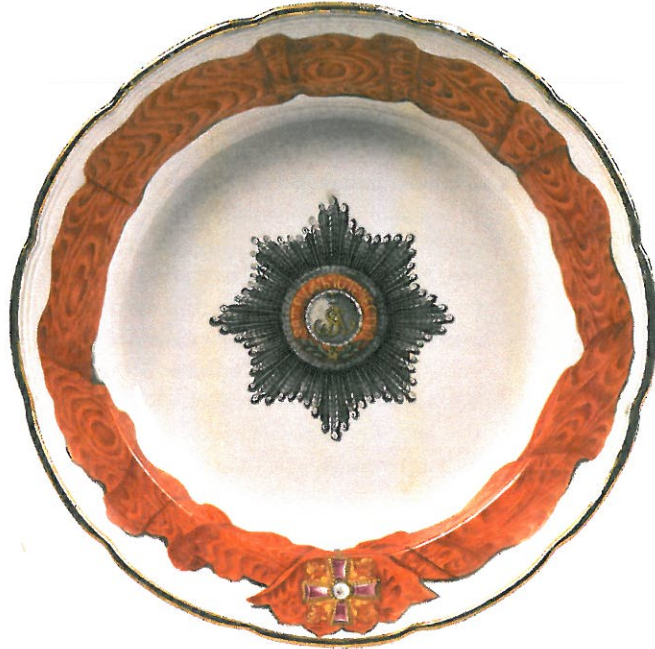
SERVICE OF THE ORDER
OF ST GEORGE



Plates from the four Order Services made by the Porcelain
Manufacture of Francis Gardner near Moscow, designed by Gavriil Kozlov.

Service of the Order of St Andrew the First-Called,
Service of the Order of St George, Service of the Order of St Vladimir,
Service of the Order of St Alexander Nevsky

Later festivities celebrating the Russian Orders were to centre around four porcelain services ordered from the manufactory of Francis Gardner, near Moscow, by Catherine II: of the Orders of St Andrew ('Andreevsky'; 1778-80), St George ('Georgievsky'; 1777-78; pp. 84-89), St Vladimir ('Vladimirsky'; 1783-85) and St Alexander Nevsky ('Alexandrovsky'; 1778-80). Objects in each service were decorated with the relevant ribbons, stars and insignia. Every year, on the relevant saints' days or the day each Order's statutes were established, annual ceremonies were held in the Winter Palace for the knights. Wearing their full robes, they sat at the tables according to seniority within the Order. Legend has it that Catherine II passed her own cup to newly elevated knights of the Orders: for some of them this was to be the start of a successful career...

SERVICE OF THE ORDER
OF ST VLADIMIRSERVICE OF THE ORDER OF
ST ALEXANDER NEVSKY**CATHERINE II (1762-96)**

Catherine's taste was for fatty foods, particularly beef with salted cucumbers and pickled cabbage, but she was generally moderate in her eating habits, particularly in her later years. To drink she preferred spring water or berry juice. Contemporary descriptions have created the image of the throne's occupant as a welcoming and informal hostess when surrounded by her closest circle:

'Four gold dishes were placed upon the table and sometimes a pot of Russian cabbage soup was set before the sovereign, wrapped in napkins and covered with gold lids, and she herself poured. The sovereign ate from gold plate, others from silver. The sovereign ate very quietly, dipping pieces of bread into sauces to feed her dogs.'³³

Yet official dinners continued to consist of a startling range of delicacies and inventive recipes. On one celebrated occasion, the military commander

Alexander Suvorov apparently caused dismay in the imperial kitchens by 'asking for "incredible" dishes, to wit, plain soldier's fare of cabbage soup and groats'.³⁴ Catherine usually started her day with very strong coffee with thick cream and toast, a habit she continued until the very last day of her life. A whole pound (nearly half a kilogram) of coffee was used to make just five cups! We must assume that it was sieved before being poured, or else the grounds alone would have filled twenty cups or more. Meanwhile, the lackeys and men who stoked the stoves were not above boiling up the remains from the imperial table... Russia developed a taste for coffee in the eighteenth century and often came up with new ways of flavouring it, for instance with stag's horn, fish glue or the yolk of an egg.³⁵ From the middle of the eighteenth century the main festivities in the capital were held in the Winter Palace that stands beside the River Neva today



(1754-62; architect Bartolomeo Rastrelli). This had been commissioned by Empress Elizabeth, but she died before it was completed and never occupied the new building. Very soon the stone palace on the Neva was ruled by the 'queen of all festivities', Catherine II, during whose reign the practice of holding magnificent ceremonies and balls finally became an integral part of life in imperial Russia. More official celebrations were gradually transformed into society entertainments, although these had an intellectual hue in the age of Catherine the Great.³⁶

As in the reign of Elizabeth, court entertainments were often themed. The rich arsenal of devices employed was intended to please all five senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste. In 1770, for instance, the four seasons were chosen for festivities in the Winter Palace marking the visit by Prince Henry of Prussia. 'After nine Her Imperial Majesty deigned to enter the hall, where 12 tables had been laid out, each bearing the name of one of the twelve months of the year. To identify each table signs of the calendar had been rendered with the painterly arts, and these appeared also on the tickets ... intended for each of the persons who should sit at each table. As they dined an orchestra played music dividing the whole year into four seasons, i.e. Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter... and during this children of genteel upbringing of both sexes danced a ballet which was divided into four seasons.'³⁷

Presumably each of the tables was decorated in accordance with the different months, with smells and food chosen to accord with the seasons. Such events were thought out down to the tiniest detail of the scenario and decoration. Leading artists designed the invitations and name tickets, and later the menus that were laid by each place. From Catherine's reign onwards tables were laid out in simplified geometrical combinations of round or rectangular form to make the Russian letters P (П) or G (Г). There were separate compositions of tables for crockery and the free space on the walls might be adorned with 'cascades of porcelain'. State symbols and those of the House of Romanov dominated the decoration of the state rooms and the tables, which also included fashionable architectural motifs, although everything was always subordinated to the event's set theme.

PORTRAIT OF CATHERINE THE GREAT



Johann Baptist Lampi the Elder. 1794

DINING STAFF

Programmes and scenarios and the arrangement of the tables, as well as the names of the different dishes served, were developed by the Expedition for Ceremonial Matters. With more than four thousand covers at major receptions and masquerades, dinner sometimes had to be served on the principle of however many could fit at any one time.³⁸ By no means all those present had the honour of dining with the imperial family, the names of the lucky usually being announced during the ball.

Palace protocol and the organisation of different ceremonies were in the charge of the Master of Ceremonies. Feasts were run by the Court Steward or Ober-Hofmarshal in charge of practicalities and the servants, and entrusted with the running of the imperial dining table, using his staff of office to give instructions. Various different offices had charge of the extensive palace household, with the maintenance and decoration of the imperial residences and the organisation of events run by the Court Office, of which the Hofmarshal's Office had once been part, but the imperial family naturally played a leading role in determining the nature of official dinners.



Occupying the ground floor of the Winter Palace were numerous service quarters and offices, with caretakers and their assistants. Services made of precious metals and of porcelain were kept in boxes, 'specially made so as not to be too big, in case of fire or need to transport them, so as not to hinder their transportation'.³⁹ Lined with soft fabrics, these boxes bore special inscriptions indicating to whom they belonged, the contents and their inventory number, such as 'E II plates: small no. 13' (i.e. small plates belonging to Catherine II). The most valuable pieces were kept in the imperial private apartments or even in the rooms of the Hermitage.

Teams of individuals were appointed to take responsibility for each table, including a maître d'hôtel, Kammer-Führer, Hof-Führer and chef. Special court officers – their titles usually based on German practice – performed specific tasks: the Küchenmeister was the head chef while tables were laid by Tafeldeckers; buffet and kitchen officers were responsible for the table itself and its crockery; the Mundschenk (cup-bearer) was entrusted with serving alcohol while the Kaffeeschenk served tea, coffee and hot chocolate; dessert was in the hands of various Konditors and their assistants.

All were loyal servants who unfailingly performed their duties but they also had an eye for personal gain: there were frequently leftover delicacies at imperial dinners, which by tradition were gathered up and shared among the staff. Indeed, members of the imperial family sometimes deliberately left sweets behind as a tip. But food might also disappear straight from the kitchen, under the monarch's nose. One anecdote tells us that Catherine II was walking in her gardens when she noted lackeys carrying porcelain dishes out of the palace, piled with peaches, pineapples and grapes. Tactfully turning her back, the Empress said to her companions, 'They might at least have left me the dishes...'⁴⁰

CATHERINE'S HERMITAGE DINNERS

Not only were there strictly regulated dinners, at which the Kammer-Führers distributed numbers according to set seating plans, but more relaxed situations in which places were allocated by lottery.

A ball in the Winter Palace held on 2 January 1791, for instance, had the supper table arranged in this way. Numbered tickets were folded up – the same number as there were men and women (on this occasion there were less women than men, just 42 in all) – and then placed in two separate bowls. The two sexes drew their places from the separate bowls to produce a chance pairing of couples. Gentlemen were supposed to devote themselves to the lady seated to the right, although that lady was permitted, when required, to talk to the gentleman to her right. But problems might arise when the sexes were not evenly matched. On one occasion, for instance, '... more than forty two pairs were without tickets and there were 28 gentlemen who had no lady partner'.⁴¹ Presumably those gentlemen were forced to talk to each other! In the Winter Palace small dinners might be held 'in the room with the diamond objects', or there might be food and dancing amidst the paintings and sculptures in the Hermitage. Catherine gave the name Hermitage not just to the place where she could be separate from the wider court but to the small entertainments she held, at which she dined without the formality of court etiquette and even without servants. These 'small Hermitages' or small gatherings were usually held in a very specific part of the palace, the north pavilion of the Small Hermitage (1764-75; architects Jean-Baptiste-Michel Vallin De la Mothe and Georg Veldten), on the site of what is now the Pavilion Hall. Food was served 'invisibly' with the aid of 'tables volants' or flying tables for between six and fifteen people: using a cunning mechanism the tables were lowered down to the ground floor where servants laid the plates and dishes and were then raised back up again.

Catherine had a set of rules for behaviour at her 'Hermitages', any infringement of which carried 'severe' punishment: 'If any shall infringe the above, on the evidence of two witnesses, for any crime each guilty party shall drink a glass of cold water, ladies not excepted, and read a page from the *Telemachida* out loud. Who infringes three points on one evening shall be sentenced to learn three lines from the *Telemachida* by heart. If any shall infringe the tenth point, he shall no longer be permitted entry.'⁴² Contrasting with these intimate dinners were the vast banquets of the kind to be found wherever people



love to be entertained. The rooms of Catherine's museum were adorned with real flowers and plants rare in these northern climes, including orange and lemon trees in pots. Palms were brought from the palace hothouses and St Petersburg's Botanical Gardens to form awnings beneath which dinner was laid out. The air was cooled by watery cascades and fountains, sometimes installed on the dining table itself. Enhancing the festive mood were the colourful illuminations, from decorative pyramids of bowls filled with wax to candelabra and chandeliers with thousands of candles.

Heightening the emotional tone were the speeches and accompanying sound effects that asserted the very concept of imperial dining as a glorification of the Russian state. Regardless of the ostensible purpose of a particular dinner, the most important toast was always the health of the monarch. During dinner the health of the sovereign was drunk to the accompaniment of trumpets, kettle drums and the firing of cannon placed before the imperial palace.⁴³ Toasts were pronounced standing, holding a glass of champagne. At this time champagne was served only with the hot course at dinners organised according to the rules of the very finest dining and so this was when toasts were raised.⁴⁴ On very rare occasions the sovereign raised a toast to one of those present, which was considered a signal honour.

All that was in keeping with European norms, but the defining national feature of Russian dining was the insuperable desire to celebrate and make merry, so the clinking of foaming glasses and the clanking of ice within them were frequently to be heard well before the main course. With instrumental music playing and voices singing throughout the dinner, interrupted by loud toasts, it hardly seems likely that anyone would have heard amidst the noise the chirping of the little canaries pecking at food in cages amidst the plants...

'IMPERIAL' DINING IN NOBLE HOUSES

From the middle of the eighteenth century wealthy nobles who wished to keep up with the luxury of imperial dining started to hold 'open tables' in their own houses, which soon became known for their

scale (twenty to thirty covers) and the elegance of the delicacies served. It was considered old-fashioned to serve such a dinner without porcelain on the table in wealthy houses.⁴⁵ Anyone in the host's circle might drop in without an invitation, although not infrequently the host or hostess were themselves at court and thus not present at the dinner. By the end of the more economical nineteenth century, however, such wasteful open house dinners were frowned upon in respectable society and etiquette now dictated that 'a dinner is not a ball or an evening reception; the number of guests is determined beforehand and unexpected alterations are exceedingly unpleasant for the hosts.'⁴⁶

In their own homes the great men of the age of Catherine the Great – Prince Grigory Potemkin, Prince Nikolay Repnin, Count Grigory Orlov, Count Ivan Osterman and others – sought to rival the table in the Winter Palace, but only for the glorification of the Russian Empress. Private receptions might serve 'sterlets an arshin [71 cm] long, perch from their own pools; asparagus nearly as thick as a cudgel from their own gardens; veal as white as snow from calves nursed in their own cattle-yard. Peaches and pine-apples also came from their own hothouses; even tasty wine made of berries, something like champagne, was of their own production.'⁴⁷

TABLEWARE IN THE AGE OF CATHERINE THE GREAT

In order to give these elegant dishes a fitting setting increasing quantities of different kinds of handsome tableware was demanded.

'Food was served in voluminous tureens and bowls on high trays...; dishes and bowls with tall covers on massive under-plates; and in pans of varying shapes, sauce boats, oil pots and salt cellars. Spice stands were usually arranged on a figured tray together with statuettes, vases and candlesticks, forming a fanciful *plat-de-ménage* – one of the key table adornments. Wines and corresponding cups were cooled in bottle- and wineglass-containers. The crystal cruets of *plats-de-ménage*, decanters, glasses, goblets, and wine-glasses necessary for the table setting were made at local factories or commissioned from abroad. Completing the sumptuous table decoration were



branched candelabra and massive candlesticks that either formed part of the service ensemble or were selected from those kept in the storerooms.⁴⁸ Superb examples of gold and silver formed an obligatory part of the tableware during the reign of Catherine, but the true measure of a table's luxury was the 'white gold of princes' – porcelain, whether European or Russian. It is indicative that it was the age of Catherine II that brought imperial commissions for the great official services still famed today, services that were recognised as outstanding examples of the decorative arts from the moment of their creation in Europe.

One of these famous historic services was not, in fact of porcelain: the Hermitage's famous Green Frog Service (1773-74; pp. 72-81), produced at Josiah Wedgwood's manufactory and adorned with architectural views of historic Britain. It was made of the prestigious earthenware mass known as Queen's Ware and bore a little green frog on each piece, a sort of topographical indicator of the swampy marsh where the Chesma Palace – for which the service was originally intended – was located, just outside St Petersburg.

Another ceramic masterpiece, was the magnificent porcelain Cameo Service (1778-79; pp. 94-107) ordered by Catherine II from the Sèvres Porcelain Manufactory for her favourite, Prince Grigory Potemkin. This impressive complex of dinner, dessert and coffee services consisted of over 700 items, decorated with copies of ancient engraved gems, a choice that was in part a reflection of Catherine's own personal passion for these objects, what she herself described as 'cameo fever'. In St Petersburg the Cameo Service was initially kept in Potemkin's Taurida Palace but after his death in 1791 it was moved to the service stores of the Winter Palace. In addition to the more usual forms this French ensemble included a unique table decoration, *Russian Parnassus*, composed of individual figures and sculptural groups with a bust of Catherine II as Minerva, one of the images of herself that the Empress preferred.

Services made for the Russian court during the last quarter of the eighteenth century inevitably included thematic table pieces, which were known by a French name, *surtout de table*. The first of these was a grandiose piece in the Berlin Dessert Service

(1770-72; pp. 60-70) presented to the Semiramis of the North (Catherine II) by Frederick II of Prussia. Figures made after models by the brothers Wilhelm Christian and Friedrich Elias Meyer personify the virtues and merits of the Empress herself, represent the different peoples and classes of Russia's vast lands, the triumph of Russian might and allegories of the liberal arts (pp. 66-67). Symbolic sculptures surround Catherine enthroned beneath a baldachin, as if to carry 'the Empress to the Olympian heights where she feels quite at home amidst the Ancient gods.'⁴⁹ Such table pieces were arranged on a silver platter (*plateau*) in the centre of the table.

Three-dimensional figures had now superseded the flat decorative forms – painted, incrustated and filigree, or richly embroidered tablecloths – used on the tables of Old Russian tsars. Moreover, the decorations on ceremonial dining tables demonstrated the host's manners, education and wealth. The sculptural decorations in the centre indicated the intellectual focus around which human interaction unfolded. Their themes and subjects were specifically intended to reflect not only the artistic tastes and preferences, even the status, of the hosts, but the aims of the state itself. Depending on the specific occasion, the tables at official dinners might be decorated with polychrome sculptures based on models by the French sculptor Jacques-Dominique Rachette from the series *Peoples of Russia* or *Traders and Artisans* (1780s-1790s; p. 66 left), which were carefully preserved and used in succeeding reigns. Influenced by Europe, table figures and groups came to be produced at the Imperial Porcelain Manufactory in St Petersburg. These table decorations formed 'encyclopaedias of symbols and allegories, peoples and classes, virtues and fashions' and they were 'incorporated into the stream of festive fulfilment, presenting to the world yet another ideal model for its existence'.⁵⁰

PAUL I (1796-1801)

Catherine II's son Paul led a more restrained lifestyle and during his reign the imperial court was more noted for small, select dinners and suppers, the tables laid for between two and fourteen people. There can be no surprise that small services known as a *déjeuner* became popular at this time. They included



breakfast ware, comprising a tray, teapot, milk jug and sugar bowl and one or two cups, giving them their name, a *solitaire* for one, a *tête-à-tête* for two. Food was extremely simple – cabbage soup, a fried meat, meatballs or rissoles – but the Emperor nonetheless loved to have the table richly adorned with flowers and fruits as well as rich crockery and tableware made of the rarest materials, and with an emphasis on desserts. For all the cultural elegance of these ‘exhibitions’ the monarch’s tendency for petty tyranny was revealed even here: ‘When dinner was over Paul removed the bowls with the remains of sweets and cakes and threw them into the corner of the room, apparently finding amusement in watching the pages pushing and shoving each other in their efforts to gather up as many as they could.’⁵¹ Porcelain almost entirely replaced silver at table during Paul’s reign. The last of the silver services commissioned by Catherine II for her governors were melted down to make armour for the Cuirassiers to wear during Paul’s coronation ceremonies. Descriptions of the serving dishes cite only porcelain and sacred gold.⁵² This preference for porcelain was another reflection of Paul’s contradictory personality: despite his many faults he was a man of educated tastes with a certain sentimental sensibility. He literally kissed the image of his beloved Mikhail Castle, recently completed specially for him, on the porcelain of a new Russian service, at a fateful family dinner on the last evening of his life...

Not long before his death Paul ordered that the Winter Palace have a kitchen installed rather like that in his new Mikhail Palace, to make food exclusively for the imperial table. Now the palace kitchens had the very latest equipment, meeting the most up-to-date recommendations for both hygiene and efficiency. Moreover, the sovereign ‘ordered that all orders from palace suppliers cease and that food supplies be purchased at the market, at market prices. Palace expenses were immediately cut drastically.’⁵³ Receptions given by the heir to the throne, Grand Duke Alexander, frequently departed from strict court etiquette. Amongst the innovations at this time was the buffet dinner, at which ‘the Emperor, Heir Presumptive and his wife did not sit down to table but would eat wherever they chose’.⁵⁴ Nonetheless the formality of main events underwent no

fundamental changes at Paul’s court and although banquets were held more rarely they continued to be run according to existing tradition. Some six thousand people attended a ball marking Paul’s name day in 1797, the men in typical masquerade dominoes (a long cloak with a cowl), at which an open-air ball was followed by supper and then by fireworks.⁵⁵ Restaurants and dining clubs started to appear across Russia at the beginning of the nineteenth century, helping to spread multi-national cuisine – not just Russian but French, Italian, English etc. All the city’s most important dinners – save court affairs – were held in the strict English Club established in the capital in 1770 with the slogan ‘Accord and good cheer’, where the best chefs amazed everyone with their art.⁵⁶ On high days and holidays the list of magnificent dishes usually opened with the English Club’s celebrated sterlet fish soup. Such was the skill of the Club’s chef that he only made one or two specific dishes as the highlights of the evening, to adorn the table and ‘amaze’ on the menu.⁵⁷

Gradually the establishment of new places to dine in style weakened the dominance of dinners in the Winter Palace, although these continued to represent the pinnacle of society life. Official festivities there, demanding the strictest etiquette, served as models for lesser events in other imperial residences, in the palaces and mansions of the Grand Dukes and aristocrats, in embassies and in nobles’ and officers’ clubs.

ALEXANDER I (1801-25)

When Alexander I came to the throne public life in Russia became more staid, morals became stricter, and there was less emphasis on entertainments. Obligatory attendance at court festivities was relaxed. Official ceremonies were reduced to the minimum required to support state prestige. After the defeat of Napoleon, who invaded Russia in 1812 before being forced to retreat ignominiously, it became common to hold military dinners glorifying outstanding individuals or commemorating specific victories. Such events were accompanied by the firing of cannon, regimental songs and high-flown toasts to the health of the victors and Russia’s



prosperity. Menus were decorated with state symbols and military insignia and included thematically entitled dishes.

Alexander himself preferred discriminating French cuisine. His gastronomical tastes were reflected in his choice of breakfast: toasted bread with strawberries and green tea with thick cream. The sovereign had no tolerance of immoderate consumption of wine and according to legend removed 'drunkards' from the lists of those to be promoted or given awards with a bold stroke of his pen. Even the Emperor's critical gaze, however, could not rid his subordinates of their desire for profit, as was described in the memoirs of Countess Sophie de Choiseul-Gouffier, who visited St Petersburg in 1824.

'The servants, very good people who adored their august master, worked by the quarter and changed every week. As what was left over was a perquisite to them, they were very eager to have us eat. They served us tea, chocolate, coffee, and all sorts of cakes in the morning; soon afterwards a second breakfast; dinner at three o'clock, all kinds of ices at dessert and the choicest of wines; tea in the evening, and later supper whether we wanted it or not. Moreover, in the intervals between these meals they came to ask us if we were not hungry.'⁵⁸

The classical balls that had become firmly established in the second half of the eighteenth century continued in Alexander's reign, retaining the same main features, including the traditional banquet. At the start of the nineteenth century, however, changes took place in how dinners were served. Curious and witty table decorations were now a thing of the past, even being considered vulgar. Porcelain sculpture *surtouts-de-table* gave way to tall vases, to tiered stands, pyramids for cruets, guéridons and multi-branched candelabra, ranged along the central axis of the table, usually on long mirrored platters. Porcelain ware was used alongside silver, cupronickel and glass items of Russian and European production. Critical eyes made close study of the unity of the ensemble, the fresh whiteness of the tablecloths and napkins in their elegant rings. Fine table linens embroidered with the Russian arms and the monarch's cipher were produced at the court Alexandrovskaya Manufactory or at leading European textile manufactories.

Whilst the French manner of service was still used, a more convenient and practical Russian manner was increasingly practiced. Now guests sat down to a table on which there was nothing edible save fruits that formed part of the decoration along with flowers. The food was arranged on buffets and offered one after another according to a strict order set out in the menu.⁵⁹ Bread was arranged in baskets, with black and white bread kept separate. The 'Russian manner' made it possible to serve food straight from the kitchen, so it was still warm, retaining the full freshness of all the flavours. It became standard to start with hors-d'oeuvres chosen to stimulate the appetite, the main part of the dinner usually consisting of four courses: 'The first serving contains all meat and Lenten soups, small snacks, hot or cold, and all cold appetizers. The second includes all roasts, i.e. beef, poultry, fowl, fish and all salads. The third contains hot and cold pies and all entremets. The fourth contains dessert; it consists of fresh fruit, sweetmeats and jams.'⁶⁰

Water and wine were poured as required. Glass-coolers more or less went out of fashion since now glass and crystal was arranged on the table itself before each place, the range of different vessels depending on the number of different drinks on offer. Large services included carafes in three sizes, for water, wine and vodka, plus drinking vessels: two sizes of tumblers, tall narrow glasses for champagne, three small glasses of different sizes for various wines and liqueurs, a broad glass for Madeira and a heavy *roemer*.⁶¹ If other kinds of wine were offered lackeys brought in additional glasses when they brought the wine, serving from the guest's right – in contrast to the serving of food, which was from the left. By the end of the nineteenth century the geography of the fine wines in the houses of the wealthy aristocracy encompassed a vast territory:

'... after the soup Madeira; with the first course Burgundy or Bordeaux; between the cold entrées and the meat a Château d'Yquem and Rhine wine. After the second dish, the meats and vegetable entremets Bordeaux and Burgundy are served once more; sherry accompanies the sweet entremets, and with dessert Muscat, white Alicante, Malvasia



ITEMS FROM THE CORONATION SERVICE OF TSAR NICHOLAS I



Imperial Porcelain Manufactory, St Petersburg. 1826

and Tokai are served in order. As for champagne, it is mistakenly thought it is fitting only to be served with dessert; on the contrary, it is drunk throughout the meal, from start to finish.⁶² Russian service represented a considerable economy on the costs of the table, since the number of dishes and the leftovers were sharply reduced and there was need for less servants. According to the new dining etiquette waiters carried out the food and lackeys served it. Gold dishes stood before members of the imperial family, who were served by specially trained Kammer Pages. 'Every time a new dish was brought forth the Kammer Page had to skilfully set upon the gold plate one of porcelain, without clanging them together, then remove the porcelain plate and the cutlery and place a new set of crockery and cutlery on the gold dish with the next dish.'⁶³ Thus porcelain plates and cutlery were replaced after each course, the gold plate remaining in position throughout.

By the middle of the nineteenth century this system of serving had taken firm root not only in Russia but in Europe. No further important changes were to affect service at the imperial table until the end of the Russian Empire.

In the nineteenth century guests might sit at a common table or at lots of small tables, served according to the nature of the event and its ceremonial. Characteristically, commissions were increasingly given to the Russian national manufactories that were growing in strength and number. Porcelain ensembles were now regularly provided by the Imperial Porcelain Manufactory in St Petersburg, which also provided additions to and replacements for broken items in the historic eighteenth-century services by European and Russian suppliers. For the more important ceremonies, particularly coronations, services were ordered with coats-of-arms, ciphers and dedicatory inscriptions.



Coronation banquets were traditionally held in Moscow and the ritual here was quite specific. At ceremonial dinners the Ober-Vorschneider accompanied and cut the dish being presented to the tsar, while the Ober-Schenk, in charge of the palace wine cellars, proclaimed and served the ritual royal gold cup with wine.⁶⁴ When this was served to the Tsar the Ober-Schenk announced loudly: 'His Majesty drinks!' This was a sign for all but His Majesty's subjects to leave the room: aliens were to remove to the Faceted Chamber or other parts of the Kremlin palace. Russian porcelain adorned with Russian two-headed eagles, ideological supports of the sovereign's prestige, did much to enhance the impression created by these majestic ceremonies.⁶⁵

The first Russian Coronation Service stood on the tables at the banquets marking the accession to the throne of Nicholas I (p. 34).

NICHOLAS I (1825-55)

Unlike his predecessor, Nicholas 'was no lover of cunning French cuisine but preferred simple Russian food, particularly cabbage soup and buckwheat, which he ate if not every day, then at least very often, served in a special pot.'⁶⁶ During family dinners the Emperor demanded that no more than three or four dishes be served. These modest daily meals were the antithesis of the much-anticipated ceremonial banquets.

On the other hand, during Nicholas' reign the imperial court returned to its earlier love of entertainments, largely thanks to the cheerful Empress Alexandra Fyodorovna. Summoning everyone to enjoy themselves were richly appointed high-protocol balls in the Concert Hall of the Winter Palace, which ended with dinner accompanied by music in the Antechamber. Just how these magnificent banquets were perceived depended largely on the guest. Thus Dolly Ficquelmont, granddaughter of Fieldmarshal Mikhail Kutuzov, hero of the war against Napoleon, attended a ball in 1832 in honour of the name day of Grand Duke Michael and noted in her diary: 'On the dining table – in January! – stood hundreds of hyacinths and yellow daffodils. The sight of these flowers brings both joy and tears... they seem to me to be the symbol of civilisation's falsity and

superficiality... The Emperor seemed to me to be more preoccupied and more severe than usual.

The Empress more serious.'⁶⁷

It was not just flowers that adorned dinner tables in the nineteenth century: flowering trees and shrubs were arranged as if they were growing through the table tops, their trunks surrounded with rings of mirrored platters laden with sweets, biscuits and other edible decorations. Little bouquets might be placed before each setting, elegantly wound round with ribbons bearing a commemorative inscription or thematic design. Rare fruits were always there to amaze the public, the 'most exotic' in Russia always the much-loved pineapple, with its strong pleasant smell and sweet taste that seemed to be a mixture of all one's favourite fruits wrapped in one:

'Russians see particular luxury in having an abundance of the rarest fruits on the table at any time: pineapples, grapes, cherries, peaches, strawberries and melons should never come to an end throughout the year. These fruits are partly grown in hothouses, partly brought from the southern provinces, with huge sums being expended on their transportation.'⁶⁸ Chief of the delicacies on the Russian table was often an outsized sturgeon or a 'miraculous' sterlet, so big that they had to be carried by several lackeys, reducing the guests to frozen amazement. These purely Russian delicacies embodied the abundance of native resources and the phenomenal royal tastes and were frequently enthused about in the memoirs of contemporaries. Théophile Gautier waxed lyrical:

'a gastronomical phenomenon unknown even at the most refined tables outside Russia... it is a most exquisite fish, its flesh white and tender, perhaps a little fatty... it is a dish worthy of the most discerning gourmets. For the delicate palette the Volga sterlet is worth the voyage.'⁶⁹

GUEST LISTS IN THE REIGN OF NICHOLAS I

Balls and masquerades continued to be the most important entertainments in the capital, obligatory attendance at which had been laid down during the reign of Catherine II. The scale of such events, with the inevitable groaning table, largely determined



which room was chosen to hold them. The Concert Hall in the Winter Palace could hold about five hundred people, literally the cream of society, while the vast balls in the Nicholas (White) Hall of the Winter Palace were attended by up to one and a half thousand individuals and were known as the 'Great Balls in the Nicholas Hall'.

Despite the regimented selection of certain categories of guests, only the imperial couple and influential members of their closest circle could determine who had the right to be present at a court ball, or even look down upon it from the galleries. Invitees might include hereditary or military aristocracy, diplomats, visiting foreign celebrities. Clearly the right for someone of lower status to be present at the great imperial balls had to be earned through long, hard and notable labour, or purchased through intrigue in the corridors of power... This situation was recorded in the memoirs of Baron Modest Korff, writing in January 1839:

'It would be hard to find any common features uniting the different elements from which these high society balls are composed. Of course the whole of the aristocratic circle is present; but it is hard to explain just who makes up this circle in such a state, where nobility of itself gives no rights in society. In this circle there is a little of everything, but there is nothing that one might call complete or rounded.'⁷⁰

The colourful high society guests clasping their invitations in their hands moved in stately fashion towards the court. At the appointed hour the approaches to the Winter Palace were blocked by numerous carriages or, in winter, sledges, the owners of these different modes of transportation indicated by the family arms or ciphers on the doors, often beneath a coronet indicating rank. Family crests also adorned the livery of the accompanying servants, there to assist their masters and mistresses and to affirm their noble status. From the start of the dancing to the official banquet lackeys carried cool drinks and ices round to the guests. Supper commenced after the mazurka and was served in a separate room, the highest ranks first. The imperial couple sat at a table on a dais, the guests at round tables, each with one chair left free in case the Emperor chose to come and chat.⁷¹ The hierarchy was thus maintained throughout.

After a devastating fire that started in the Winter Palace on 17 December 1837 and raged for thirty hours, totally destroying the first and second floors rapidly restored. We know that a magnificent ball was held as early as April 1839. Baron Korff was enthusiastic in recording his impressions, saying of the banquet:

'Yesterday's ball in the White Hall was truly grandiose... Particularly handsome was the dining room with its vast orange trees and music coming from two galleries. There is only one fault with the restored palace, which is that it has lost its many former little nooks and crannies where once buffets were set up and there is now nowhere to warm up the food save on the staircases and in corridors, and although everything is tidy and masked with flowers, the smell of food penetrates everywhere, and one keeps catching glimpses of the chefs' jackets and hats.'⁷² At the start of January, during the balls celebrating the new year, the number of people granted formal right to be presented to the Emperor (men) and Empress (ladies) reached two or three thousand. For Christmas and New Year a huge fir tree was set up in the Winter Palace and arrayed with candles, despite the fire hazard. Smaller, brightly decorated trees were set on tables in the main rooms (usually the Concert Hall and the Rotunda), 'named' and intended for each of the imperial children and their cousins. Gifts were piled up on their white tablecloths. It is worth noting that the palace confectioners were traditionally in charge of setting up these Christmas trees. It was they who were issued with a sum of money to buy both the ordinary decorations (which were then handed out to the servants at the end of the festive season) and the edible surprises, such as chocolates, sugar-plums, apples and mandarins. On festive days the imperial family might dine in a unique tent of patterned glass lit from without, which was set up in the court theatre. Everything was intended to recall the fairy tales of childhood, to summon up the trembling anticipation of something magical...

The adults, meanwhile, were busy with various official and unofficial visits, whether to the houses of nobles to receive their congratulations or to church services, attending dances or set banquets. Leafing through the Kammer-Führer journals, the



ALEXANDRA FYODOROVNA AND NICHOLAS II AS THE 17TH-CENTURY
TSARINA MARIA ILYINICHNA AND TSAR ALEXEY MIKHAYLOVICH



Photos from the *Album of the Costumed Ball in the Winter Palace in February 1903*,
Expedition for the Making of State Papers, St Petersburg. 1904



official court records, we see Their Majesties dashing between an endless round of meals at table or hurriedly taken in their studies.

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, 'folk balls' or 'people's masquerades', which we know dated back at least to the age of Empress Elizabeth, were held during the New Year masquerade season. On these days high-ranking guests in the Winter Palace dressed up in particular style, the ladies wearing the traditional pointed Russian headdress known as a *kokoshnik*, the men in dominoes, and ordinary citizens – merchants and their families and such like – were permitted to enter the imperial house and to remain until midnight. Anyone could come in but the number of guests was limited to forty thousand, and they were strictly counted at the entrance. No special measures were put in place to ensure good behaviour, although certain precautions were taken: lackeys used a silver spoon to stir the tea but the tea itself was served without the spoon and ladies put on paste jewellery rather than diamonds. Moreover, there was a special team of 'black caretakers' ready to come to the aid of the police.⁷³ These unusual events were part of the less formal programme intended to bring the imperial court closer to the people, which included other measures such as the classless celebrations out on the streets at Shrovetide and Easter. Traditional Shrovetide pancakes were an official festive dish served in the Winter Palace, yet another sign of the imperial family's loyalty to national traditions. Symbolic painted eggs – porcelain pieces among them – were presented by courtiers and those in the royal circle to the imperial family.

Nicholas I sought to introduce order and norms of behaviour in all aspects of private and public life, not least in his own household. The service stores of the Winter Palace also drew his attention and in 1838 an inventory was taken of all the services kept there, with notes on those in need of supplementation. These included some of the most marvellous ensembles of previous reigns – Catherine the Great's Arabesque Service, the Yusupov Service of the reign of Paul, the Guryev Service of the reign of Alexander – all of which continued to be used at the most important court banquets. The four Order services made at the Gardner factory and the Meissen

St Andrew Service continued in use. Additions were also made for the eighteenth-century silver, such as the Paris and Orlov services (1770–71; see pp. 57, 120–23) which were kept in the stores of the Winter Palace alongside modern silver, the London and Gilded services made for the imperial house in the middle of the nineteenth century.

New services now included a vast variety of knives and forks, spoons and slices, little bowls of different forms and many other elegant items, each with their own specific purpose. New 'hygienic' habits came into fashion, with cups and bowls to rinse the mouth and hands. One contemporary lamented:

'In homes where one expects to find the most urbane treatment, dessert is followed by the servants offering each guest a bowl holding some cold water, and a goblet of lukewarm water placed therein.

In full view of the others, one dips one's fingers in the cold water as though intending to wash them, and takes a couple of mouthfuls of the lukewarm water so as to rinse one's mouth, spitting out the gargle into the bowl.'⁷⁵

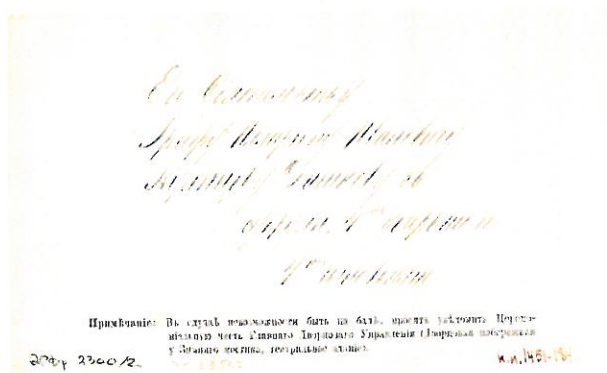
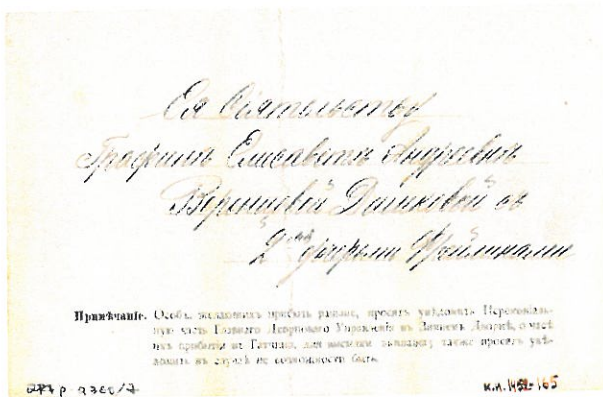
This most unusual habit was not to become widespread, nor was it to last long.

ALEXANDER II (1855–81)

AND ALEXANDER III (1881–94)

Marriages of Grand Dukes and Duchesses – children and grandchildren of monarchs – were of particular importance within the official state ideology and imperial manufactories continued to be commissioned to produce objects worthy of such events. One of the most brilliant weddings in all the nineteenth century was that of Grand Duke Alexander Nikolaevich – later Alexander II – and Maximilienne Wilhelmine Auguste Sophie Marie, daughter of Ludwig II, Duke of Hesse (she took the Russian name Maria Alexandrovna on her marriage). With some four hundred people seated at three huge tables, the magnificently decorated dinner held 16 April 1841 in the Nicholas Hall of the Winter Palace was a superb reflection of the ambitions of the Russian court. At its heart was a special Banquet Dinner and Dessert Service made at the Imperial Porcelain Manufactory, bearing the cipher *A* and blue *rocaille* motifs (pp. 108–19).

20



Left (top and centre):
Personal invitations to a Court TEKST



SAUCE BOAT AND BOTTLE COOLER FROM THE GOTHIC SERVICE



Imperial Porcelain Manufacture, St Petersburg. 1832

Alexander II had a great taste for festivities. Official dinners continued to be run according to the well-rehearsed practice established since the start of the century. Even the serving of particular dishes was indirectly tied in with protocol, or at least with the order of toasts, which was set out on special cards issued to guests. Cards for an official dinner honouring the coronation of Alexander II and Maria Alexandrovna in 1856 read as follows: 'During the dinner the following toasts shall be drunk: 1. With the beef – to the Sovereign Emperor. 2. With the fish – the Sovereign [Dowager] Empress Alexandra Fyodorovna. 3. With sauce – the Sovereign Empress Maria Alexandrovna. 4. With the asparagus – the whole Imperial House. 5. With the meat – the Clergy and all loyal subjects.'⁷⁶ During the long banquets Alexander II 'moved from table to table, addressing a few words to all those whom he wished to distinguish, sometimes taking

a seat and dipping his lips into a glass of champagne, then going to do the same a little further on. These halts of a few minutes each are considered a great favour.'⁷⁷

If public celebrations were increasingly relaxed in tone, Alexander II introduced a time limit on everyday dining in the imperial household, exactly fifty minutes.

Alexander III was renowned for the relative simplicity of his lifestyle. He had a great penchant for fishing and the trout he caught was served at dinners for his close circle, although often in a truffle sauce. Specific sums continued to be set aside to cover the cost of court dining and Alexander, like emperors before him, continued to try and keep control of them. After one reception in the Winter Palace he looked over the accounts of the Hofmarshal's Office and remarked on the excessive expenditure on sweets and fruits. But his close adviser calmly explained that:



'... such costs are permitted. For instance, he himself had eaten one orange but taken away with him another and a pear for Marfinka, his adopted daughter. Many guests do the same, taking some sweet or other home to their children from the palace, as if it were an imperial gift. Previously unaware of this habit, the sovereign was reassured.'⁷⁸ New services continued to account for some of the money spent on dining but the list of imperial services used in the last quarter of the nineteenth century indicates that many of the 'antiques' were still being pressed into service. Knights of the Russian Orders still dined off the Gardner services, historic dessert plates with military scenes were used for regimental events and dinners of the Knights of St George, while imperial family dinners and banquets made use of the Sèvres Turquoise Service, the Banquet Service (pale blue, with the cipher of Alexander II) and the Gothic Service. (p. 40) On special occasions, such as a dinner in honour of the German Emperor, they even got out plates from the famous Berlin Service⁷⁹ (pp. 60-70).

PORTRAIT OF TSAR ALEXANDER II



Georg Botmann. 1870-80

PRINTED MENU OF A DINNER ON THE OCCASION
OF THE CORONATION OF TSAR NICHOLAS II,
14 MAY 1896



Designed by Viktor Vasnetsov. The menu itself is in the space below the double-headed eagle.



PRINTED MENU OF A DINNER ON THE OCCASION OF THE
CORONATION OF TSAR NICHOLAS II, 20 MAY 1896



Designed by Viktor Vasnetsov



NICHOLAS II (1894-1917)

THE LAST EMPEROR

Nicholas II was indifferent to the entertainments in the Winter Palace. Indeed, one of the first events to be celebrated at the start of his reign took place in a funereal atmosphere: his wedding to Princess Alix of Hesse-Darmstadt, who became Russian Empress Alexandra Fyodorovna, took place in St Petersburg on 14 November 1894, just a few days after the early death of Nicholas' father, Alexander III. The Dining and Dessert Service created at the Berlin Porcelain Manufactory for the wedding of the last Russian emperor is today in the Hermitage (pp. 124-33). It was a gift from Kaiser Wilhelm II and is a complex of all kinds of crockery and candelabra and a multi-piece table decoration standing on a mirrored *plateau*, including sculptures and even monumental vases bearing the couple's initials.

Although Nicholas II and his family moved out of the Winter Palace into the Alexander Palace at Tsarskoe Selo, south-east of the city, in 1905, official events continued to be held in the House of Romanov's official residence. The tradition of holding official banquets as an act of obligatory court ritual continued to be used to support the exclusivity of aristocratic recreation. Attendance at a court event was seen as part of one's service to the sovereign and the state.⁸⁰

According to established custom, such dinners continued to be long and drawn out. There might be up to twelve different soups on the table, thick and fatty, kept warm (so that the fat did not congeal) in double-bottomed porcelain vessels with a double lid, into which boiling water was poured. The same principle of double lids was used for desserts such as ice cream, but the hot water was replaced with ice, stored the year round in the cellars of the Winter Palace.⁸¹ At festive dinners Nicholas II preferred not to eat publicly, tending to sit briefly chatting to guests at different tables before going off to dine in a neighbouring room with his close circle.

Throughout Russia's history the deep-rooted tradition of communal dining had reflected the culture and psychology of the nation. This is illustrated by the patriotic mood engendered by balls 'in Russian style' held from the middle of the nineteenth century, a time of increasing national awareness. Amongst

PORTRAIT OF TSAR NICHOLAS II



Unknown artist. 1915-16

the most memorable of these was the costumed masquerade ball held in the Winter Palace in February 1903. Conceived by Empress Alexandra Fyodorovna, the ball was attended by three hundred guests all dressed in historical costume of the age of Tsar Alexey Mikhaylovich (1645-76; p. 37). After a performance of Modest Mussorgsky's opera *Boris Godunov* came dinner in the galleries of the Imperial Hermitage, surrounded by Old Masters. The tables were laid with the porcelain Gothic Service, made in St Petersburg (p. 40), that was taken out of the stores for the occasion. Although this pseudo-medieval ensemble was not quite in keeping with the aesthetics of Ancient Russia, it supported the general emphasis on history and tradition.

The age of historic dining came to an end in 1913 with celebrations for the 300th anniversary of the rule of the House of Romanov. Menus were stylised, incorporating elements of Russian folklore and allegories on Russian prosperity and continued autocratic rule. Heraldic motifs – depictions of two-headed eagles, royal regalia, the arms of the Romanovs – formed an obligatory part of the artistic setting. Among those designing that setting were famous artists, including Viktor Vasnetsov, a leading



PRINTED MENU OF A DINNER ON THE OCCASION OF THE
CORONATION OF TSAR ALEXANDER III, 19 MAY 1881



Unknown designer



PRINTED MENU OF A DINNER ON THE OCCASION OF
THE FESTIVITIES TO MARK THE 300-YEAR JUBILEE
OF THE HOUSE OF ROMANOV, 25 MAY 1913



Designed by S. Yaguzhinsky

painter of the day (pp. 41-42). Legendary royal dishes of days gone by confirmed the 'historical' nature of the dinner, and surviving menus read like a lexicon of haute cuisine: 'Peter the Great Soup', 'Imperial Sterlet', 'cold salmon-trout', 'saddle of wild goat with garnish', 'chicken with truffles', 'ducks and fatted fowl', 'asparagus with sauce', 'Victoria punch' and so on.⁸²

Magnificent banquets continued to demonstrate the efficient workings of the royal household. Buffet tables were set out in the Nicholas and Malachite halls, the Antechamber, Rotunda and Pompeii Gallery of the Winter Palace, along with sweet and tea tables, and dining tables were laid with crockery from the palace stores in accordance with the importance of the event... The rich decoration of the state rooms, the menu and service were all worthy of the Russian court but in truth differed little from the endless succession of similar receptions in past reigns.⁸³ As always, the illusory festive world with its cult of food, perceived as a divine gift, was balanced by the real world with its everyday inconveniences and contradictions. 'The laid table, or rather the changing dishes upon it, was a model of an earthly paradise, in which all the fruits of the earth were on offer.'⁸⁴

At the start of Lent each year the bustling noisy festivities paused. Meat dishes gave way to Lenten fare, served in simple crockery on a modestly arranged table. This tranquil period directed the thoughts to the transience of life on earth, towards ideas of the eternal renewal of life... But the inevitable passage of time brought back the merry, substantial feasts. Nor did the revolutionary upheaval of 1917 put a total stop to the tradition of official banqueting developed over the centuries. Although tinted with different 'diplomatic colours' and different tastes, official dining in all the succeeding periods reflected the symbolism and ritual of ages past, evidence of the particular role they played in Russian history and culture.



- 1 Kvas is a traditional fermented Russian drink made from rye bread.
- 2 Ya. Kiblit'sky, 'Кушать подано!' [Food's on the table!], in: *Приглашение к обеду. Поваренная книга Русского музея* [Dinner is Served. The Russian Museum Culinary Companion], exh. cat., Russian Museum, St Petersburg, 2013, p. 8
- 3 *Домострой* = Domostroy, which literally means 'organising your household'. This codex was drawn up in the sixteenth century, although its roots lay in at least the previous century.
- 4 *Юности честное зерцало, или показание к житейскому обхождению, собранное от разных авторов*, St Petersburg, 1717
- 5 Cited in: Natalya Kazakevich, *Царские застолья в XVIII веке. Церемониал и декоративное оформление парадных столов при дворе императриц Елизаветы и Екатерины II* [Imperial Dining in the Eighteenth Century. Ceremony and the Decoration of Dining Tables at the Courts of Empresses Elizabeth and Catherine II], St Petersburg, 2003, p. 3
- 6 *Жизнь в свете, дома и при дворе* [Life in Society, at Home and at Court], Moscow, 1990 [reprint of the publication of 1890], p. 132
- 7 Yulia Fagurel, 'Праздник – Зрелище' [Festivity – Spectacle], in: *4 чувства. Праздник в Петербурге XVIII века* [The Four Senses. Festivities in St Petersburg in the Eighteenth Century], exh. cat., State History Museum, Moscow, 2003, p. 16
- 8 These walks were unfailingly recorded in the *Kammer-Führer Journal*, the official record of court events (the 'court circular'), kept from the late seventeenth century. Natalya Sipovskaya, *Фарфор в России XVIII века* [Porcelain in Russia in the Eighteenth Century], Moscow, 2008, p. 84
- 9 P. Klimov, 'Застольная история' [A Tale of the Table], in: *Приглашение к обеду. Поваренная книга Русского музея* [Dinner is Served. The Russian Museum Culinary Companion], exh. cat., Russian Museum, St Petersburg, 2013, p. 20
- 10 The Battle of Poltava in 1709 was a decisive victory over Sweden in the Northern War (1700-21) that resulted in long-lasting security for Peter's newly-founded northern capital, St Petersburg.
- 11 Since the habit of serving food in this way, arranged on long tables for each to choose what they wanted, was borrowed from ancient Scandinavian tradition, the buffet is known in Russian as 'a Swedish table'. Dinners might be served by lackeys or help themselves, and in less populated regions rare guests were immediately presented with all the food available, saving time on preparation and allowing more time for conversation and enjoyment.
- 12 A. E. Zarin, *Царские развлечения и забавы за 300 лет* [Royal Entertainments and Pastimes over 300 Years], Leningrad, 1991, p. 72; cited in: E. E. Keller, *Праздничная культура Петербурга: Очерки истории* [Festive Culture in St Petersburg: Outlines from History], St Petersburg, 2001, pp. 272-73
- 13 Yuri Lotman, E. A. Pogosyan, *Великосветские обеды. Панорама столичной жизни* [Dining in High Society. A Panorama of Life in the Capital], St Petersburg, 2006, p. 17 (in the series *Былой Петербург* [St Petersburg of Yore])
- 14 Kiblit'sky 2013, p. 8
- 15 N. A. Ogarkova, *Церемонии, празднества, музыка русского Двора XVIII – начала XIX века* [Ceremonies, Festivals and Music of the Russian Court from the Eighteenth to Early Nineteenth Century], St Petersburg, 2004, pp. 21-22
- 16 P. V. Romanov, *Застольная история государства Российского* [The History of Dining in the Russian State], Moscow, 2000, p. 61
- 17 O. Yu. Zakharova, *Светские церемонии в России XVIII – начала XX в.* [Ceremonial in High Society in Russia, Eighteenth to Early Twentieth Century], Moscow, 2001, p. 167.
- 18 It is not known if this Vienna service was a gift from the Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI or was commissioned directly by Russian Empress Anna Ioannovna.
- 19 This fell into disrepair and was dismantled in 1796. By order of Paul I work began immediately on the site, to erect a new building, the Mikhail (Engineers') Castle (1797-1801; architect Vasily Bazhenov), which still stands today.
- 20 Sipovskaya 2008, p. 135
- 21 Tamara Kudriavtseva, *Russian Imperial Porcelain*, St Petersburg, 2003, p. 26
- 22 '... l'impératrice Elisabeth ayant l'habitude de manger tous les jours du pâté de Périgueux, le roi, pendant toute la durée de la guerre de Sept ans, laissa passer les courriers qui en étaient chargés, sans que jamais la cour de Russie en eût abusé, ni que celle de Berlin eût cru devoir s'en défier.' Comte Féodor Golovkine, *La cour et la règne de Paul Ier. Portraits, souvenirs et anecdotes*, with an introduction and notes by S. Bonnet, Paris, 1905, p. 198
- 23 Kazakevich 2003, p. 52
- 24 Lotman, Pogosyan 2006, p. 28
- 25 Cited in: Kudriavtseva 2003, p. 52
- 26 Kazakevich 2003, p. 25
- 27 Kazakevich 2003, p. 49
- 28 Kazakevich 2003, p. 48
- 29 Romanov 2000, p. 70
- 30 'le bal dura jusqu'à onze heures, que le grand-maître vint annoncer à S. M. que le souper était prêt. On passa dans une salle fort vaste et fort ornée, éclairée de neuf cents bougies, et ornée d'une table de quatre cents couverts, dessinée... il y avait des ragoûts de toutes les nations, ainsi que des contrôleurs de la bouche, Français, Russes, Allemands, Italiens, qui chacun demandaient aux convives de leur patrie ce qu'ils désiraient.' M. de la Messelière, *Voyage à St. Pétersbourg, ou nouveaux mémoires sur la Russie*, Paris, 1803
- 31 Kazakevich 2003, pp. 24-25
- 32 Kazakevich 2003, pp. 16-17
- 33 'Императрица Екатерина в домашнем быту. Воспоминания Н.П. Брусилова' [Empress Catherine in her Everyday Life. Reminiscences of N. P. Brusilov], in: *Помещица Россия по запискам современников* [Estate Life in Russia from the Notes of Contemporaries], compiled by N. N. Rusov, Moscow, 1911, pp. 14-16; cited in: Lotman, Pogosyan 2006, p. 23
- 34 Romanov 2000, p. 86
- 35 Kazakevich 2003, p. 18
- 36 O. Strugova, 'Праздник в Петербурге XVIII века' [Festivities in St Petersburg in the Eighteenth Century], in: *4 чувства. Праздник в Петербурге XVIII века* [The Four Senses. Festivities in St Petersburg in the Eighteenth Century], exh. cat., State History Museum, Moscow, 2003, p. 10
- 37 Cited in: Kazakevich 2003, p. 30
- 38 Kudriavtseva 2003, p. 47
- 39 Kazakevich 2003, p. 48
- 40 Romanov 2000, p. 89
- 41 *Камер-фурьерский церемониальный журнал 1791 года* [The Kammer-Führer Ceremonial Journal for 1791, St Petersburg, 1890, p. 26
- 42 The *Telemachida* was a poem by the eighteenth-century Russian scholar-poet Vasily Trediakovsky, a free translation of François Fénelon's *Les aventures de Télémaque*. With its criticism of absolute monarchy the work was a source of much displeasure to Catherine II.
- 43 Kazakevich 2003, p. 8
- 44 M. A. Bubchikova, *Душа обедает сама... Обед в русской культуре конца XVIII – начала XX века* [The Soul doth feed itself... Dining in Russian Culture from the Late Eighteenth to Early Twentieth Century], Moscow, 2005, p. 163
- 45 Kudriavtseva 2003, p. 61
- 46 Life in Society... 1990, p. 129
- 47 Mikhail I. Pylyayev, *Старый Петербург. Рассказы из былой жизни столицы* [Old Saint Petersburg. Tales from the Capital's Former Life], with an introduction by A. A. Alexeev, St Petersburg, 2010, p. 415
- 48 Kudriavtseva 2003, p. 50.
- 49 Vasilissa Pakhomova-Göres, 'Фарфоровый гимн Семирамиде Севера' [A Porcelain Hymn to the Semiramis of the North], *Линакотека: журнал для знатоков и любителей искусства* [Pinakoteke: Journal for Art Specialists and Lovers], 1999, no. 10-II, p. 232
- 50 Sipovskaya 2008, p. 151
- 51 Pylyayev 2004, p. 373
- 52 Sipovskaya 2008, p. 94
- 53 Pylyayev 2004, pp. 370-2
- 54 S. N. Kaznakov, 'Павловская Гатчина' [Paul's Gatchina], in *Старые годы* [Days of Yore], July-September 1914; cited in: Kudriavtseva 2003, p. 89



- 55 Leonid V. Vyskochkov, *Будни и праздники императорского двора* [Everyday Life and Festivities at the Imperial Court], St Petersburg, 2012, p. 310
- 56 Lotman, Pogosyan 2006, p. 35
- 57 Bubchikova 2005, p. 79
- 58 Madame la Comtesse de Choiseul-Gouffier, *Historical Memoirs of the Emperor Alexander I and the Court of Russia*, translated from the original French by Mary Berenice Patterson, London, 1904, p. 280
- 59 Kudriavtseva 2003, p. 156
- 60 K. Avdeeva, *Ручная книга русской опытной хозяйки* (Handbook for the Experienced Russian Housewife), Moscow, 1854, p. 214; cited in: Kudriavtseva 2003, p. 160, note 79
- 61 Kudriavtseva 2003, p. 153, note 63
- 62 Life in Society... 1990, p. 126
Entrées were usually light dishes of pastry, eggs and greens, or frozen punch served as a palate cleanser. Entremets formed the second part of the supplementary dishes, and tended to consist of asparagus, artichokes, peas and such like.
- 63 P. M. Daragan, 'Воспоминания первого камер-пажа вел. кн. Александры Феодоровны. 1817-1819' [Reminiscences of Grand Duchess Alexandra Fyodorovna's Chief Kammer Page. 1817-19], *Русская старина* [Russian Antiquity], 1875, no. 4-6; cited in: Sipovskaya 2008, pp. 100-01
- 64 Tamara Kudryavtseva, 'Приемы в Зимнем дворце' [Receptions in the Winter Palace], *Зимний дворец. Очерки жизни императорской резиденции* [The Winter Palace. Essays on Life in the imperial Residence], vol. I: XVIII – первая треть XIX в. [Eighteenth to First Third of the Nineteenth Century], St Petersburg, 2000, p. 76
- 65 See further: Irina Bagdasarova, Ekaterina Khmel'nitskaya, 'Геральдика в искусстве русского фарфора из собрания Государственного Эрмитажа (середина XVIII – начало XX в.)' [Heraldry in the Art of Russian Porcelain from the Collection of the State Hermitage Museum (Mid-eighteenth to early Twentieth Century)], *Геральдика на русском фарфоре* [Heraldry on Russian Porcelain], exh. cat., with essays by Georgy Vilinbakhov, Irina Bagdasarova, Ekaterina Khmel'nitskaya, St Petersburg, 2008, pp. 45-48 (from the series *Поднесение к Рождеству* [A Christmas Gift])
- 66 A. V. Evald, 'Рассказы об императоре Николае I' [Tales of Emperor Nicholas I], *Исторический вестник* [Historical Herald], 1896, no. 8, p. 345; cited in: *Быт пушкинского Петербурга: Опыт энциклопедического словаря. Л – Я* [Life in Pushkin's St Petersburg: An Attempt to Produce an Encyclopaedic Dictionary. L – Ya], St Petersburg, 2011, p. 179
- 67 D. Fiquelmont, *Дневник* [Diary], Moscow, 1999, 31 January 1832; cited in: Vyskochkov 2012, pp. 315-16
- 68 From the diary of Friedrich Balduin Ludwig von Gagern: F. Gagern, 'Дневник путешествия по России в 1839 году' [Diary of a Journey Through Russia in 1839], *Россия первой половины XIX глазами иностранцев* [Russia in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century Through the Eyes of Foreigners], Leningrad, 1991; cited in: Bubchikova 2005, p. 156
- 69 '... phénomène gastronomique inconnu sur les tables les plus recherchées, en dehors de la Russie... c'est un poisson exquis, à chair blanche et fine, un peu grasse peut-être... c'est un mets digne des gourmets les plus précieux. Pour une fourchette délicate, le sterlet du Volga vaut le voyage.' Théophile Gautier, *Voyage en Russie*, Paris, 1867, vol. I, p. 218
- 70 Baron Modest A. Korff [Korff], *Записки* [Notes], Moscow, 2003, p. 619; cited in: I. V. Zimin, *Повседневная жизнь Российского императорского двора. Вторая четверть XIX – начало XX в. Взрослый мир императорских резиденций* [Everyday Life at the Russian Imperial Court. Second Quarter of the Nineteenth to Early Twentieth Century. The Adult World of the Imperial Residences], Moscow, 2010, pp. 333-34
- 71 Vyskochkov 2012, p. 317
- 72 Baron Modest A. Korff [Korff], *Дневники 1838 и 1839 гг.* [Diaries for 1838 and 1839], ed. I. V. Ruzhitskaya, Moscow, 2010, 25 April 1839; cited in: Vyskochkov 2012, p. 319
- 73 Vyskochkov 2012, p. 283
- 74 Kudriavtseva 2003, p. 151
- 75 Cited in: Kudriavtseva 2003, pp. 153-54
- 76 Cited in: Bubchikova 2005, p. 171
- 77 'L'empereur parcourait les tables, adressant quelques mots à ceux qu'il veut bien distinguer, s'asseyant quelquefois et trempant ses lèvres dans un verre de vin de Champagne, puis s'éloignant pour faire la même chose plus loin. Ces stations de quelques minutes sont considérées comme une grande faveur.' Gautier 1867, vol. I, p. 241
- 78 N. A. Epanchin, *На службе трёх императоров. Воспоминания* [In the Service of Three Emperors. Reminiscences], Moscow, 1996, p. 179; cited in: O. Yu. Zakharova, *Светские церемониалы в России XVIII – начала XX в.* [Ceremonial in High Society in Russia from the Eighteenth to Early Twentieth Century], Moscow, 2001, p. 176
- 79 Kudriavtseva 2003, p. 193
- 80 Keller 2001, p. 293
- 81 Keller 2001, pp. 292-93
- 82 Bubchikova 2005, pp. 55-57, illustrated menu
- 83 Kudriavtseva 2003, p. 208
- 84 Bubchikova 2005, p. 35