Rossols

A large bowl of this salad was included in any buffet. I can remember the day set aside, helping my mother and grandmother prepare it. I was allowed to peel the cooked potatoes or to chop cucumber, pickle or potato. Onion was regarded as too nasty for a child and beets too messy. Mixing and tasting were jobs for the experts. Assessing the taste and correcting the mix involved everyone in a discussion, sometimes even a heated argument.

The salad was decorated with geometric patterns of finely chopped egg whites, yolks and beets.

I failed miserably to uphold my Latvian roots when I made this for Christine’s wedding. I wanted to serve it partly because it is traditional and also because it is my cousin Inga’s favourite. I used my home-grown fingerling potatoes and added all possible ingredients (herring, beets, etc). I confess that I have never liked any salad with creamy dressing. Therefore, I missed the final, all-important step and neglected to taste the mix. I had added far too little salt. My horrified mother did not hesitate to reprimand me.

4 waxy potatoes (boiled and then peeled)
1 cucumber
2 big dill pickles
2 large boiled beets
1 small sweet onion
1 large piece marinated herring (schmaltz or matjes)
salt and pepper

Dressing:
1/4 cup sour cream
1/4 cup mayonnaise

Cut potatoes, cucumber, beets (and herring if using) in neat 1/2 inch cubes. Chop onion and pickle finely. Season with salt and pepper. Add dressing and blend together.

A variation of this salad that Inga developed that I like very much, leaves out the creamy dressing and has balsamic vinegar and olive oil instead.
Rossols Vinaigrette

4 small fingerling potatoes or other waxy potatoes
1 large carrot
4 medium beets
1 cup fresh peas or frozen if not available

½ cup finely chopped Vidalia onion
6 medium Polish dill pickles² chopped finely
balsamic vinegar
Spanish olive oil
salt and pepper

Roast beets: Scrub them; sprinkle with a little olive oil, salt and pepper; wrap in heavy aluminum foil and convection roast for 40-50 minutes at 400 degrees. Let cool and then peel and chop, fairly small.

Boil unpeeled carrot and potatoes. Let cool, peel and chop.
Boil peas. Let cool.
Mix all vegetables and add vinegar, oil and seasonings to taste.

² The pickles are not the salty, sour variety served as a side at a deli. Instead they are somewhat sweet.