

HOT BORSCHT



credit: Sigrid Estrada

Today, it's a different picture. It's been raining nonstop, and it's suddenly cold outside. I'm wearing jeans and a sweater and my husband's thick socks—I can't believe I was sweating in a tank top and shorts just a few days ago. The gas heater in our trailer has been broken for years, and the owners won't bother fixing it. They never live here themselves, and summer renters apparently don't need heat. "It's a rundown trailer," my husband says. "What do you expect?" We rent it for seven weeks for the price of what you'd typically pay for two, and I'm usually happy with the bargain. Not on a day like today, though. We tried an electric heater, but it was expensive and seemed to warm only the ten-inch area around it. What we do is this: We turn all four stove burners on and put four large pots of water on to boil. (We could try baking pies, but there are mice living in the oven, and I really don't want to go there.) While the water is boiling on the stove, we cuddle with the kids under a huge blanket and watch *Young Frankenstein* on my computer. (We never get tired of watching *Young Frankenstein*.) Well, I think, since we need to keep four large pots on the stove, why not cook borscht in one of them? I can cook and still keep an eye on *Young Frankenstein*.

INGREDIENTS

3 or 4 fresh beets	2 quarts beef broth
3 or 4 potatoes	Salt and pepper
1 medium carrot	1 or 2 bay leaves
1 medium onion	1 tablespoon white vinegar
3 stalks of celery	Sour cream
Olive oil	Chopped parsley and garlic (optional)
2 tablespoons tomato sauce	

Chop vegetables and sauté them right in the soup pot, in a little olive oil and the tomato sauce, for 15 to 20 minutes.

Pour the store-brought beef broth over the mixture. When it starts to boil, add salt, pepper, a bay leaf or two, and vinegar, and let the soup simmer until everything is tender, which sometimes takes so long that *Young Frankenstein* ends before my borscht is ready.

Hot borscht is served with sour cream just like cold borscht. I like to chop some parsley and garlic, smash the two together with a pinch of salt, and sprinkle this over a little island of sour cream in the bowls.

For some reason, it always seems warmer in the trailer when you make borscht than when you simply boil water. And there is another advantage. We don't have enough space at the table, so we eat balancing our hot bowls in our laps. And the laps get warm too.

