

Victor BELYAEV

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FOOD
Festival

Viktor Belyaev worked for a total of 30 years in the Kremlin, cooking for leaders and high-profile politicians from various countries, and he knows one thing for sure: A chef's level of responsibility does not change depending on who is eating the food. Itogi's Vitaly Dyachkov sat down with Belyaev to talk about his experience and how official cuisine has changed over the years.

At school, Viktor was interested in history and planned to study the subject in college, but, on his grandfather's insistent advice, he ended up going to cooking school. Victor graduated with honors and was assigned to work at the Praga, then Moscow's best restaurant. At that time, the best restaurants provided their chefs, waiters, and maitre d's to the Kremlin to work at official state receptions. That was how, in 1975, he happened to be working there during a reception celebrating the 30th anniversary of the end of the Great Patriotic War. In time, he was noticed and left the Praga restaurant to work as a chef in the special kitchen, cooking for Kremlin officials and the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union.

During his time at the Kremlin, Victor cooked for Indira Gandhi, Erich Hoenecker, Helmut Kohl, and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. He even managed to please Margaret Thatcher and U.S. President Richard Nixon with his cooking.

These days, Victor gives many lectures at Plekhanov Russian Economic University. He is president of the Russian Chefs Federation and, while head of the Russian Culinary Association in 2010, declared it 'the year of Russian cuisine' to remind people to eat more traditional Russian food.