

From: Redacted  
Sent: 7/5/2012 11:04:50 AM  
To: Zafar, Marzia (marzia.zafar@cpuc.ca.gov)  
Cc:  
Bcc:  
Subject: Red Redemption

Hello from St Petersburg...from the lobby of the Hotel Astoria to be precise.

Where to begin...

Well, as expected, the volume of our food pictures dropped off sharply with our arrival to Moscow earlier this week.

We managed through a ton of research to find a few gems...but most not really rising above the status of "San Diego" restaurants. Good ones...but still San Diego...

If you're planning a trip to Moscow, first come talk to us...but when it comes time to eat, it's hard to do wrong by Georgian food. The flavor profiles are kind of a mashup of homey Russian food (but tasty), some Afghan flavors (tomatoes/eggplant/etc) and some damn fine bread. Istanbul had *pide* (kind of like a super awesome naan), and Georgians have fresh baked lavash (also kind of like an awesome fresh-baked yeasty naan). Plus kebabs and stuff. What else? Beer is better...far better here...because it's largely nice Czech or German beer...and our hotel here in St. Petersburg is really really nice. One of our heroines, HRC, stayed here in her last visit to the city. We have a view of St. Isaac's square and got champagne on arrival and every time we return from roaming the city a big dude follows us around the lobby because we do not look like we belong here.

In a nutshell, if Moscow was someone from your high school, he would be the class bully. Someone you were deathly afraid of (Moscow is menacing and you have to have immigration AND migration papers on you at all time and even the 5 star hotel warned us to take papers just in case the cops stopped us), but when they're nice to you at first you look kinda shifty-eyed at them and then you're like, "OH MY GOD YOU'RE SO NICE I LOVE YOU" and then they kick you as you walk past them. And probably laugh at you if you fall down but laugh without smiling. That's kind of what Moscow is like.

On the other hand, St. Petersburg is really beautiful. Not just because we just left Moscow. But it has canals and nice people and parks and some nice buildings and some museums (yes we went to one or two).

In Russia

What's weird:

About 1 in 20 cars here have snow tires still on them. In both St. Petersburg and Moscow.

Throughout the day a street cleaner goes down the street and sidewalk "wetting" the street and your legs down and spraying the dirt onto your legs at the same time. Weird, right? ya.

About 1 in 5 of the cars in Moscow retail at > \$150K in the US. Some highlights: a matte black Ferrari and a matte black Maybach. Matte is popular.

The trains go really really fast and when the doors shut you can lose a limb. We have a video.

What's amazing:

When someone is nice it's amazing. And some people are really really nice. See below. And above.

Stumbling across a Georgian restaurant that had a singer singing songs for a grandma's birthday. We have a video.

What could use some love:

Customer service in some places, mostly Moscow. A water-selling lady LITERALLY threw change at Marzia.

Non-Georgian food.

Redacted & Marzia