

## KYRGYZSTAN



**Kyrgyzstan** is a mountainous independent republic in Central Asia with a population of 5.3 million. The country is rich in mineral resources, but more than half the people work in agriculture, which accounts for 38 per cent of GDP. Kurmanbek Bakiev, who won a landslide victory to become president in July 2005, promised to root out corruption and fight poverty. The economic situation, however, continues to be dire: factories remain closed, unemployment has soared and malnutrition is rife.

## Borscht (Beetroot soup)



STARTER

A Kyrgyz celebration starts with bread, which is highly respected in the culture, plus a selection of seasonal salads. A soup is then served, possibly borscht, followed by a lamb dish, most likely the national dish, besh barmak - a plain mutton and onion stew with noodles. Typical recipes call for a medium-sized lamb and large quantities of onions! A samovar of tea would be on the table and between courses the guests might sing folk songs and dance.



INGREDIENTS

- 4 medium to large cooked beetroots
- 2 medium onions
- 2 medium carrots
- 600ml beef stock
- 30ml lemon juice
- 90ml dry sherry (optional)
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1 tablespoon soured cream per serving
- 2 tablespoons chopped chives to garnish (optional)



METHOD

- Grate beetroot and carrot coarsely and finely chop onions
- Place in a large pan with the stock and bring to the boil
- Cover and simmer for 50 minutes until cooked, adding extra water if needed
- Add the lemon juice and sherry (if used)
- Add salt and pepper to taste
- Serve either chilled or piping hot with a swirl of soured cream and a pinch of chives

Serves  
6-8



When Gylnaez and her brothers were abandoned by their alcoholic mother, Tearfund partner Children of Tien Shan, based in Balykchy, Kyrgyzstan, took them in.

Photo: Jim Loring/Tearfund

## KYRGYZSTAN Caring for children at risk



Life in the countryside may be fine now, but for thousands of young people from rural Kyrgyzstan, moving to cities is one of the few options they have for improved employment prospects and education. Photo: Jim Loring / Tearfund



**Tearfund's *Children at Risk*** programme reaches many thousands of children in 53 countries around the world. The need is great. Unicef estimates that 600 million children (one in three) live in sub-standard conditions and 13 per cent of 7 to 18-year-olds have never been to school.

Tearfund's Christian partners have a unique understanding of how to meet children's emotional, spiritual and physical needs in their own environment. Here in Balykchy, it has helped to fund the Children of Tien Shan Centre.

Irina Trofimov, Director and founder says, 'Praise God for Tearfund! When we started the centre my prayers were that God would bring some Christians to help us. So when I met the people from Tearfund it was like light in the darkness! Really! I was crying. It means we can provide food and clothes for the children. From Tearfund, our staff has salaries. Also I have been to conferences to help me start foster care.' The centre now cares for 21 children from difficult backgrounds.

One little girl called Gylnaez tells how her mother was forced to go far away to find work and how she was left alone at home with her two brothers. They lived with relations for a while under difficult circumstances and then went back home on their own.

Gylnaez says, 'Then one day Dima, from the Children of Tien Shan Centre found us. He said, 'There is no way that small children should be living in a place like this!' So he brought us to the centre. Here it is very warm and everything is so clean! We have nice food – four meals a day. And my brothers have become clean boys!'