

Students of the International Polytechnic Summer School Study Molecular Gastronomy

For the first time ever, an educational module on “[Molecular Gastronomy](#)” was taking place within the frame of the [International Polytechnic Summer School](#) on the basis of the Higher School of Biotechnology and Food Technologies (HSBT&FT). The students learnt about the most unbelievable combinations of ingredients, got acquainted with special features of the present-day Russian cuisine, and mastered in receiving fermented dairy products using microorganisms. In 2018, 12 male and female learners from Spain, the Netherlands, China, India and other countries took part in the program. Notably, these were not only students but also several beginner restaurateurs who came to Polytechnic University to learn from SPbPU specialists.



The module was conditionally divided into several parts. In the first one, the participants attended master classes of the well-known St. Petersburg chef Kirill KLYUKVIN where they learnt to cook dishes of the Russian cuisine in the most extraordinary interpretations. At the lectures and practical training with the senior lecturer of HSBT&FT S.A. ELISEYEVA the students got acquainted with the national peculiarities and history of Russian cuisine, theoretical basics of the use of modern

types of food additives and ingredients in the cooking, and the effect of additives on the changes at the molecular level in the texture of food raw materials.



The second part was dedicated to the connections between the molecular gastronomy and biotechnologies. *“We are showing the students how we can obtain fermented dairy products from raw materials of animal and vegetable origin using various strains of microorganisms. Our students are making preparations with their own hands, study the structure of microorganisms that are used in fermenting milk or fruit and berry raw materials; they receive finished products and, of course, taste them. This way, they get acquainted with the basics of scientific research,”* said assistant professor of HSBT&FT ZHILINSKAYA, who was one of the coordinators of the module and the lecturer of the program.



It is difficult to find this kind of program of the summer school not only in Russia, but also worldwide: many participants of the “Molecular gastronomy” module say this. A student from Spain, Karina TAVDIDISHVILI, told that she had been looking for a course of such sort for a long time, and that she ultimately found a suitable one exactly in Russia.



The subject of the special pride of the organizers is that graduates of SPbPU were involved in teaching in the “Molecular Gastronomy” module. The well-known chef of a famous Petersburg restaurant Kirill KLYUKVIN is one of those. In a break between the master classes Kirill gave a short interview to the Polytechnic international services; he spoke about the special features of the course, molecular cuisine and gave an advice and recommendations to students.

- Kirill, please, tell us about the dishes you’ve cooked today. Why did you decide to choose those ones?

- I was tasked to show the students dishes of Russian cuisine in the present-day format. We have cooked today the traditional Russian vinaigrette but using modern techniques. We presented two types of the salad: as a paste and an ice-cream in a beetroot coat.

- Would the students be able to replicate these dishes on their own?

- Everything we are cooking within the frame of the module is easy to make at home, even with no culinary training. One must have an idea of how the products behave and have some basic skills, to use the knife, for example. (Laughing).



- In your opinion, what are the unique features of your course? Why the students were so eager to take part in exactly this course?

- In our course, the theoretical and practical classes harmonically complement each other, presenting a complex instrument. It often happens that students are either studying something with no mastering their practical skills afterwards, or, on the contrary, they start practicing right away, with no base. In our master-classes, the theory and practice are inextricably connected.

- Was it easy for you to work with students?

- Yes, it was great. The students were very attentive, showed themselves as responsible and interested participants of the process. This is very nice to see.

- For how long have you been working in molecular cuisine?

- Since 2010, when this phenomenon had just started in Russia. We did not then connect Russian cuisine with the molecular one; we had been mostly speaking about various mousses and foams, etc. However, by now, we have already transferred many things to the research sphere and have very much improved our knowledge and skills.

- To what extent is molecular cuisine on demand in St. Petersburg?

- The molecular cuisine is on demand as part of the present-day culinary. It is interesting to present a salad in the form of paste to the clients, and it is on demand. We have a great space for creativity. We discussed that with the students as well. Using various textures, techniques, and the scientific approach, we can present our guests the same dish in several interpretations.

- This is not for the first time that you have mentioned science. We can't help but ask what the molecular cuisine is more about: chemistry or culinary?

- It is more about chemistry. It is important to know chemical processes, all sorts of physical and chemical reactions, and various ways of thermo treatment.

- What were the most unusual combinations of tastes and textures in your practice?

- In my view, the most unusual combinations come up when you just go down to the storage room or come to a store, take two products in your hands, and understand that you can juxtapose them. For example, combinations of strawberries with bacon or octopus with kiwi are quite popular now.



- What advice would you give to students who decide to progress in this sphere?

- Don't give up. Many people, having watched series and movies about culinary, decide that it is an easy thing to become a famous chef. In the reality, you have to work for 14-16 hours per day, not to mention the abundance of routine work in the kitchen: you will have to cut, chop, and slice all the time. Many people get scared off with that. This is to say, that if you have the desire and the idea, I wish you to move on to your dream and never give up.

- Kirill, thank you very much for the interesting interview. We wish you all the success in your professional activity!

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