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For our family, as for many other Russian families, there is maybe only one special dish – so-called "Olivier salad" also known as Russian salad. This is one of the New Year's symbols along with the mandarins and champagne in all families in ex-USSR, so it is in mine. Nevertheless, this is so obvious and I am going to tell you about the really special dish in my family. It has recently come to my family, but it is very important for us. It is pilaf – a traditional dish of the peoples of Central Asia and the Middle East, better known in Russia as Uzbek pilaf. Important events (wedding, the birth of a child, commemoration) in the life of these peoples rarely go without pilaf. In everyday life, family pilaf is prepared by women, pilaf for a large number of people is prepared by men or invited pilaf masters.

We can say that this tradition began with the Tashkent earthquake in 1966, after which civil engineers from all over the country rushed to rebuild the capital of Uzbekistan. One of them was my grandmother's brother. He stayed to live in this Central Asian republic and since messengers did not exist that period, communication with that branch of our family was not very active for some time. However, my, then future, dad, after serving in the army, went to Tashkent to build an adult life under the patronage of his uncle. It was there where he learned how to cook original pilaf. This is how a special family dish appeared in our family.

It is difficult to estimate exactly how many dishes are united under the single collective name of "Uzbek pilaf." The pilaf that is prepared in Bukhara, and let's say in Andizhan or Tashkent, can be startlingly different in the method of preparation, outward appearance, and flavor characteristics. More so, even the pilaf of two neighbors can appear completely different, even if they start with the same ingredients. And all the while, believing that it is he, and only he who is, in fact, making the correct version. I do not know how to cook this dish, but my brother knows. He does not like cooking at all, but pilaf is his passion. He puts whole his heart into this dish. Pilaf does have many recipes, but my brother has it in his mind, he "takes it out of his heart". Today he is the keeper of the family tradition that is uniting us.