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Hi Everyone,

2010 was an amazing year for Projects Abroad Mongolia. We had record numbers of volunteers visiting us, who helped in various parts of the community. With the help of our volunteers, we have accomplished many things and achieved much for Mongolian underprivileged children. Projects Abroad Mongolia was awarded the best NGO award of Ulaanbaatar city for 2010.

In 2011, we are aiming to improve our operation even further. There is so much for volunteers to do in this warm-hearted, friendly land, and we hope for more volunteers to come to Mongolia and contribute their skills.

With warm regards,

OKO TOGTUUN  
COUNTRY DIRECTOR  
PROJECTS ABROAD MONGOLIA

## Lunar New Year (Tsagaan Sar)

Tsagaan Sar (the white month), the first month of spring, has been one of the most important celebrations of Mongols for centuries. This is a time of the year when winter passes away and spring comes in. This year's lunar year occurs on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of February.

Tsagaan Sar is a celebration of New Year, of age and the safe ending of winter for animals. This is a festival of white food (food with white colour – milk and dairy products, rice, etc.) Tsagaan Sar represents the heartfelt spirit of people and on this day people cleanse their body and mind from all bad things and start a new fresh clean life. Tsagaan Sar is the day when people express respect to elder people and relatives, renew friendships and sympathy to each other and reconfirm family ties. Family and relatives gather together.

The Tsagaan Sar eve or the last day of winter is called "Bituun", which means "full darkness", it is a night when no moon is visible in the sky. On this day people eat to be really full because it is believed that if you stay hungry, you will be hungry all the coming year. The Bituun ceremony is supposed to start when it gets dark outside.

On the first day of the New Year, people get up early before sunrise, wear new clothes, open the "Orkh" (ger's top window cover) and make a fire. Tsagaan Sar signifies the beginning of spring and although steppes are still covered with snow, the scent of spring is already in the air. The coming year's weather is analyzed based on animals' mood and behaviour as well as other signs of nature. All men go to the top of a nearby hill or mountain carrying food and pray to the Nature and the State, then they go in certain directions prescribed by the Buddhist horoscope and this ceremony is called "muruu gargakh", which means "starting your footprints". It is believed that it is important to start your way in the right direction on the first day of the New Year as prescribed by your lunar horoscope in order to be lucky all year round.



With the sunrise, the greeting ceremony starts within the family. The oldest person stays in "Hoimor" (ger's northern side) and younger family members greet him or her first and then greet each other. The younger family members greet the older by extending arms with palms up and holding the older's arms from underneath. Everybody greets each other except husband and wife. Usually, people hold "Khadag" (long and narrow piece of yellow, white or blue silk with a spiritual meaning) in their arms.

When the greeting ceremony is over, everyone sits around the table and starts exchanging "Khoorog" (a snuff bottle made usually of semi-precious stones and filled with finely pulverized tobacco). The typical greeting words are "Daaga dalantai, byaruu bulchintai, sureg mal targan orov uu?", which can be translated as "Does your 2-year old horse have enough fat on the withers (means good health), does your 2-year old yak have enough muscles (means good power), did all your animals survive winter safely?" and "Sar shinedee saihan orov uu? Nas suuder hed hurev?", which is used to ask an old person about his/her good health and age as people are proud of old age. Exchanging Khoorog means expressing friendly intentions to each other and is usually the starting point of introducing a stranger. Exchanging Khoorog creates a warm atmosphere between people and marks the start of friendly conversation and to get to know any visitors. People eat a lot of "Booz" (steamed Mongolian dumplings) and drink "Airag" (fermented mare's milk) and when the ceremony finishes the hosts give presents to everyone. The present symbolizes a wish for wellbeing, health, wealth and power. Everyone moves to the next family starting with the next oldest person's ger first. The Tsagaan Sar celebration can continue for a month, but the first, second and third days are the most important.

#### Food and drink

Following the traditions of centuries, every family prepares the Tsagaan Sar Plate, which is the main food decoration of the table consisting of "Ih Idee" (big plate) and "Baga idee" (small plate). "UI boov" (Mongolian traditional biscuit) are put in layers on the big plate and the number of layers should be odd. Traditionally, grandparents have 7 layers of UI boov, parents – 5 layers, and young couples – 3 layers. "Uuts", sheep's back and tail, is a must on the table and the bigger and fatter the tail it is considered more delicious. Airag is the important drink during Tsagaan Sar, however, "Shimiin arkhi" (milk vodka) and regular vodka accompany food as well. Also the traditional food Buuz (small filled pockets, steamed) is a symbol of the Tsagaan Sar.

#### Tsagaan Sar in Ulaanbaatar

Tsagaan Sar is a thriving holiday season in Ulaanbaatar. It has been an official nationwide celebration since 1990. Today, it is one of the most favourite holidays for UB people.

The Tsagaan Sar national wrestling championship is held in the wrestling palace. It is one of the most important wrestling events where the winner earns the next title (the other one is the Naadam, 11-12 July). UB is full of heavy traffic during the Tsagaan Sar days. Everybody wears new national costumes and goes out to visit relatives, friends and family. Early in the morning, UB streets are full of people who "start their footprints". The main Buddhist monastery Gandan holds the Tsagaan Sar prayer, which is visited by the President and Prime Minister.

## **KHADAG (Blue Silk Scarf)**

Khadag is a traditional ceremonial scarf used in Tibet and Mongolia. It symbolizes purity, goodwill, auspiciousness and compassion and is usually made of silk. Tibetan khadag is usually white symbolising the pure heart of the giver, though it is quite common to find yellow gold khadag as well. Mongolian khadag is usually blue, symbolizing the sky.

The Khadag is a highly versatile gift. It can be presented at any festive occasion to a host or at weddings, funerals, births, graduations, arrivals and departure of guests etc. The Dalai Lama is known to offer khadag as a gift to diplomats, visitors, or other monks, which symbolizes purity of intention and the beginning of the relationship.

Mongolian khadag is a symbol of peace and honour, used as an honorary greeting and also it is often tied to ovoos, stupas or special trees and rocks. The traditional ceremony of greeting during the Tsagaan Sar (Lunar New Year) is performed once a year, the greeting with a khadag (blue silk scarf) is a tradition inherited from ancient times. It is strictly adhered to and is considered the highest and most revered form of greeting and if this was not followed it would be considered disrespectful and be condemned. Upon greeting, young people stretch both hands towards the elders with palms up, the elders do the same with palms faced down, but the young people hold the elbows of the old people as if to support them. Greeting elders in this way could be performed with a khadag. If the greeting is performed with a khadag, the open side of the triple folded khadag should face the elder or the receiver.



## Zaisan Memorial

The Zaisan Memorial is a memorial south of the Mongolian capital of Ulaanbaatar that honours Soviet soldiers killed in World War II. Located on a hill south of the city, the memorial features a circular painting that depicts scenes of friendship between the people of the USSR and Mongolia. The mural depicts scenes such as Soviet support for Mongolia's independence declaration in 1921, the defeat of the Japanese Kwantung Army by the Soviets at Khalkin Gol on the Mongolian border in 1939, victory over Nazi Germany and peacetime achievement such as Soviet space flights.

After driving to the uppermost car park on the hill, visitors must make a climb of three hundred steps before reaching the monument and mural. Those who make the climb are rewarded with a panoramic view of the entire city of Ulaanbaatar in the valley below, as well as the 'Tuul' River flowing past the city.



In 2003, a tank memorial, which previously had been located on a crossroads between Zaisan and the city centre, was moved to the foot of the hill. It features a Soviet tank from a brigade paid for by the Mongolian people and the memorial includes a map showing the route the brigade took from Moscow in 1943 to its participation in the fall of Berlin in 1945.

Zaisan is a popular meeting point for outings and school graduations and festivities.



Zaisan is a popular meeting point for outings and school graduations and festivities.

*We would like to introduce you to the new placement which received its first volunteer in January.*

### **The Railway's General Hospital of Ulaanbaatar**

The Railway's General Hospital of Ulaanbaatar was first established in 1951 with help of Soviet Union /Russia/ with the purpose of providing necessary medical services for the railway staff and their families. Today, 76 doctors, specialists and other workers work in this hospital to provide a variety of clinical services. This hospital has 15 fully functional wards that can serve up to 600 patients, for disease, heart, eye, nose and throat, surgery, gynaecology, children, neurology and sexually transmitted infectious disease etc.

- Mission: To provide a quality and cost effective healthcare to the people who work for the railway and their families.
- Capacity: fully functional 15 wards, 210 hospital beds.
- Employees: Total – 327 full time workers.
- Medical staff: 76 doctors and 149 nurses.

The hospital is equipped with the latest medical tools and equipment for all departments.



## Projects Abroad Mongolia Wins Best Children's NGO Award

Director of Projects Abroad Mongolia, Oko Togtuun was proud to collect an award for Best NGO working with children in Ulaanbaatar last month.

Every year the Ulaanbaatar City Municipal Office presents awards to schools, kindergartens, NGOs and government organisations to show appreciation of their outstanding work with underprivileged children.

Projects Abroad's teaching and care projects in Mongolia have been focusing on arranging a wide variety of activities for orphans and street children for many years and it is fantastic to get this award as recognition of all the hard work.



Oko commented 'all the staff at Projects Abroad in Mongolia are very happy to receive this award. We would like to thank all the volunteers who have joined us in Ulaanbaatar in the past few years who have contributed to the success of our many projects working with underprivileged children.'

Photos page



## Volunteer Corner

*Kevin Chiang, Medicine (physiotherapy) , December- January 2011, New Zealand*

After a year of anticipation and planning, I am finally in Mongolia! I have always wanted to come here because I am obsessed with Chinggis Khaan and after typing "physiotherapy Mongolia" into Google I discovered that Projects Abroad offered placements in Mongolia so I applied right away!

I lived with a Mongolian host family consisting of the parents and an eleven year old girl. Both parents spoke basic English but the little girl spoke perfect English thus making my time at home a whole lot easier! During dinner we would all sit in front of the TV and watch Mongolian cross talking, music channels or the biathlon. I would also sit at the kitchen table with the little girl and we'd chat or she would try and teach me some Mongolian over buuz, khuushur or tsuivan! The family apartment was fully equipped with everything I needed including heaters [thank God!], plenty of bottled water, hot showers and internet access! On one of the first nights in Mongolia I managed to run out of battery on my phone, it was really late and having no way to contact my family I decided to stay in a hotel and return home in the morning. When I got home the next day the first thing I saw was my host mum sitting at the kitchen table looking worried with the phone in her hand and when she saw me walk in she was so relieved. I explained what had happened and this incident not only made me feel guilty about staying out late but it also made me feel like the family worried about me as if I was their own son. So not only are the host families here warm and hospitable but loving as well!

As for my physiotherapy volunteer work I was placed in Shastin Hospital and as the hospital specialised in neurosurgery I had the opportunity to see many neurological patients in need of rehabilitation. I followed a variety of different supervisors including massage therapists, physiotherapists and surgeons who all made me feel welcome and part of the team even though I was only there for a short time. My time at the placement allowed me to observe many different patient conditions, surgeries and treatment methods including some that would not have been done back home. Seeing the hospital environment and equipment was also an eye-opener for me as many basic things missing, however patients were still looked after well. For example, in the allied health room, which included the physiotherapist and the occupational therapist, there was only one double bed sized plinth. The plinth would have two patients on it at one time and the therapist would be required to jump on to the middle of the bed in order to access the other side of the patient's body. This was one of the

things that reminded me that I was in Mongolia, not back at home! Although I was of limited help in my placement as my physiotherapy work is difficult to perform without possessing the necessary language skills, I still learnt a lot through observation and with my supervisors teaching and explaining to me in various languages whether it be Mongolian, English, Japanese or sign language!

In terms of my free time in Mongolia I have experienced many things and with the company of my fellow Projects Abroad volunteers there is endless fun to be had! "Only in Mongolia..." is a catchphrase that we have started to use to describe the many events that we have encountered during our stay here. From being asked at a pub whether we wanted to help out in a commercial for English tuition to being taken to the backstage of the State Opera and Ballet centre by a random Mongolian, there are many surprises that you can truly describe as "Only in Mongolia..." Mongolia is quite a confusing country to be in as the Mongolians look Asian however the culture here is very Western. For instance you see pubs everywhere and you can get a litre of beer for just over 4000 MNT, which is nothing compared to back home. The Mongolians that you will meet will definitely be the most pleasant and affectionate people you may ever meet in any country. One of the many things I love about Mongolians is that they are just like one big family. The 331 kilometre drive took 5 hours with one rest stop for food, you can imagine how cramped we were during this trip however this is normal to Mongolians. To me it felt like being on an awesome road trip with strangers who by the end of the trip will be like family. Everyone chatted, laughed and sang throughout the trip and all I could do was enjoy the vibe which just made me want to join in their conversations even more! Learning the language can definitely make your time in Mongolia a lot more exciting and, of course, convenient!

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time here in Mongolia although initially I did feel homesick and thought to myself "what have I gotten myself into?" but as the days go by you will change from counting down the days to going back home to counting down the days you have left in Mongolia. Thanks to the fellow volunteers and the Projects Abroad team, especially Badma, my dream trip to Mongolia has certainly felt like a dream that has gone by far too quickly! To all of those still thinking of volunteering in Mongolia, it will definitely be an experience that you will remember for a lifetime and you know the people you meet in this awesome country will be amazing people because it's "Only in Mongolia" that like-minded people will gather having had the courage to choose to travel to Mongolia...especially in winter!

### Getting to Ulaanbaatar

Mongolia is an enormously large country with a very small transport infrastructure, most travel still has to be done cross country by rugged jeeps. This is of course part of the charm of coming to Mongolia, discovering the virgin landscape of the country but it can also make travelling from place to place arduous and time consuming. Arriving in Mongolia is possible by plane or by train, some people also like to come by motorbike, driving 2 C.V's or even on horseback. This blog contains all sorts of information concerning the various means of getting in and out of the country.

#### **TAKING THE TRANS-MONGOLIAN TO ULAANBAATAR**

Travelling by train to Mongolia is often a dream for many people and a reality for few. In many cases it is an adventure in itself which is well worth the experience. There are a number of options available to the traveller who takes the time to travel. The trains generally run between Moscow and Beijing. While all the trains leave Moscow and arrive in Irkutsk in Siberia there are then three options available, the first is to carry on with the Trans-Siberian and go on to Vladivostok, the second option is to take the trans-Manchurian which goes north of Mongolia to Siberia and then curves around to China without entering Mongolia ending up in Beijing. The third option is to take the trans-Mongolian which goes in a direct line Irkutsk – Ulaanbaatar – Beijing.

There are various classes of travel available on the train, first class is usually a comfortable 2 bed cabin, often with small washing facilities and maybe even a television if you are very lucky. In China the first class is known as “soft sleeper class”. There then is a second class which consists of either 4 or 6 beds in a cabin, this is generally shared with a Chinese/Russian/Mongolian family and can provide for an amusing if sometimes noisy and drunken distraction. This class is known in China as “hard sleeper”. The third class of travel is a large dormitory with approximately 46 beds in one compartment, this is taken by the locals and is often a very happening place and gives you a great insight into the life of the region you are travelling in. Do not expect to get any sleep or rest in this class but in return you will have amazing stories of gambling, corruption, deceit, drunken behaviour, violence, love, spontaneous demonstrations of joy and anger, in short, all the ingredients for undying friendships with the local smugglers, soldiers and peasants. This class is known in China as “hard seater”.

#### **IRKUTSK – ULAANBAATAR**

The journey between Irkutsk and Ulaanbaatar is a stunning one. The train leaves Irkutsk in the afternoon and glides seemingly effortlessly around the abrupt cliffs of the Baikal Lake as the sun sets over it. This leg of the journey is accompanied by the many legends and tales surrounding the construction and logistics of the most difficult few miles of the Trans Siberian express. At first the train was loaded at the village of Baikal on two enormous British made ships to be taken to the other side of the lake, but at the first try the ship sunk with its train, the second ship never left the harbour. After this first failure, tracks were laid over the ice in winter so that the train could cross the lake; sadly the first train to attempt the crossing rejoined the other one at the bottom of the lake. It then became obvious that the only way of doing it was to blast an impossible track along the edge of the lake. This resulted in one of the most breathtaking train journeys in the world. The journey takes about 1 day and 2 nights arriving in Ulaanbaatar early on the morning of the second day. It is of course possible to go to the other way, Ulaanbaatar – Irkutsk. Please remember that all

trains travelling in Russia travel at Moscow time, which is very different to the time in Siberia. This means that your ticket would say departure from Irkutsk at 10:20 but this is Moscow time, the real departure time would be at 16:20 Irkutsk time. This system has caused many travellers to miss their train, so beware and ask at the train station well in advance to confirm departure times and actual time zones. There is a slight wait at the border as passports are checked and the trains restaurant wagon is switched between the Russian one to the Mongolian one (the Mongolian one is considerably better).

### **ULAANBAATAR - BEIJING**

The Beijing – Ulaanbaatar route is a bit more monotonous than the one described above but is nonetheless interesting. The train departs from Beijing in the afternoon and travels out of Beijing more or less following the path of the Great Wall. There is a stop on the way to admire the wall and then onwards towards Mongolia. Next morning the train crosses the wide expanses of the Gobi before reaching Ulaanbaatar later that same afternoon.

Please note that it can be extremely difficult to obtain train tickets in July and August as there are a limited amount of trains on the line and most tickets are booked long in advance by large tour groups. If you plan on using the train to Beijing or Ulaanbaatar book well in advance. A single way ticket to either one of those should cost no more than 200USD in 2<sup>nd</sup> class.

### **Flying to Mongolia**

Travelling by air to Ulaanbaatar is generally considered as one of the most comfortable and fastest options available. The network of airlines and destinations is growing year after year with destinations such as London, Milan and Shanghai rumoured to be in planning. The airlines flying in and out of UB vary in quality and reliability with Aeroflot very much at the bottom end of the scale and with ANA or Korean Air offering excellent flights. Flights to Mongolia from Europe with Korean Air go via Seoul, and therefore take longer than the more standard Aeroflot Service which goes via Moscow, and the same applies the other way round. The International airport of Mongolia is the Chinggis Khan International Airport of Ulaanbaatar. The airport is often subject to strong winds and while Mongolian pilots are renowned for being fearless and landing the plane in any conditions, other airlines will sometimes turn back to their original point instead.

### **UB – BEIJING**

Air China and MIAT both fly regular flights between Beijing and Ulaanbaatar, the frequency of the flights depends very much on the season with more regular flights in summer than winter. There is generally a daily flight from one of the two airlines in summer and about three times each week in winter. The cost of a return ticket is generally around 500USD to 600USD and the flight time is approximately one and a half hours. This route is also useful to reach the rest of Asia as well as Europe and the USA as Beijing is a large international and regional hub.

### **UB – MOSCOW**

Aeroflot flies between Moscow and Ulaanbaatar with flights two to three times a week depending on the season. Aeroflot runs the old Tupolev planes on this route, comfort and safety do not seem to be priorities so a route which is generally best avoided. Price of a return ticket is around 500USD and the flight time is an impossibly long and stressful six and a bit hours. It is possible to take a connecting flight to Europe from Moscow but the wait in Chermetyevo airport can be up to 12 hours long, the airport itself looks like it was built by prison contractors and has about as much charm as its draconian staff. This route is generally considered to be the last option reserved only for the terminally poor or the truly adventurous characters. Should this be your last resort the author would recommend spending the 10 hour wait trying to make a

local employee smile without the exchange of monies or goods, so far this author has been unsuccessful.

### **UB – BERLIN**

MIAT airline (Mongolian national airline) runs bi-weekly flights from Berlin to UB. The plane would often stopover in Moscow for refueling and a couple of hours rest before it carries on to UB. MIAT runs a fleet of modern Boeing and Airbus planes, has an efficient and polite service on board and comes warmly recommended by the author as a comfortable and cost effective flight. Return flight would generally cost around the 800USD mark and from Berlin there are connecting flights to the rest of Europe.

### **UB – SEOUL**

Korean Air flies directly between Seoul and Ulaanbaatar. It is the preferred route between Europe and Mongolia for most of the executive expats based in UB as the flights are comfortable and the quality of service excellent. Flights between UB – Seoul – Europe do have the disadvantage of being longer than any other route as you fly back over Ulaanbaatar on your way from Seoul to Europe. There is also the added disadvantage that the connecting flights in Seoul can be around 9 hours apart but the airport hotel in the transit lounge is excellent. There are about 3 flights a week between Seoul and UB.

### **UB – TOKYO**

There are weekly flights between Tokyo and Ulaanbaatar; this is operated by MIAT during most of the year but predominantly in summer while ANA sometimes fly during the summer months. Excellent quality and service can be expected on the ANA flights while the MIAT crew also provides for a pleasant journey. The cost can be expected to vary between 600USD and 800USD and the flight time is around two and a half hours.

### **UB – OSAKA**

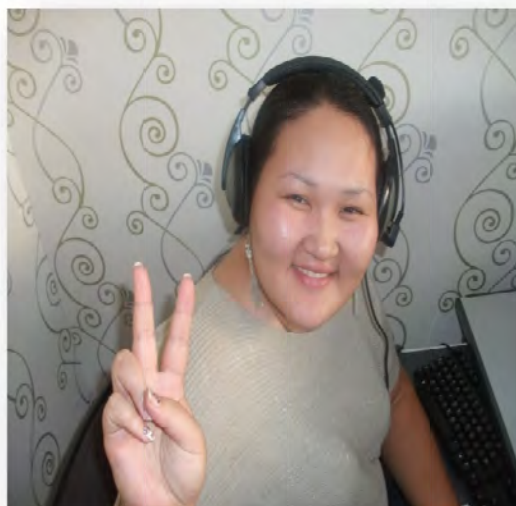
As with Tokyo but flights only operate in summer and generally by ANA. Flight is a little bit longer and slightly more expensive than Tokyo.

### Staff Update: Sayo, one of our funniest supervisors

Sayo, (Saruul Ganzorig) has been working with Projects Abroad Mongolia since May 2009. She started her work as a casual assistant and now she is one of the longest serving workers in our office.

Saruul was born in 1987 in Moscow, Russia and she is the oldest of three children. She lived there until 2002 and then moved to Mongolia with her family. Her hobby is singing which she does very well and also she also likes to travel. One of her special abilities is that she can smile all day long, she is a very happy and nice person.

She likes to say: I love to live with my friends and for friendship I don't consider any of their previous achievements, I love all those who feel comfortable with me and who make me feel comfortable with them.



### Host Update: Mr. Bayarbal's family

This time we would like to introduce one of our nomad families. Nomad Bayarbal lives with his wife and three children: one boy (born in 2005) and two girls (born in 2007 and 2009). The family live in a traditional 'Ger' (it is the word of Yurt, a portable felt dwelling structure used by nomads in the steppes of Central Asia) and they keep 2 horses and 340 sheep and goats. The place is situated in Terej National Park which is surrounded by forests, mountains and a river. There are several tourist camps in this area as it is a very beautiful place.

Mr. Bayarbal and his family have lived as nomads for many years. Mongolian nomad families' breakfast and lunch are mostly similar and include milk tea (green tea boiled with milk), boortsog (homemade fried cookies), butter (cream of the milk) and home-baked bread. You could also sometimes be provided with jam, chocolate, cream and ordinary tea bags. The families sometimes cook for lunch. For dinner you will be offered mostly noodle soup, fried rice and noodles with mutton or beef, they also have vegetables such as potato, carrot, cabbage and onion. Nomad families' favourite dishes are traditional meals, for example "khuushuur" (fried pancake filled with minced beef), mutton flavoured with onion, garlic and salt, or "buuz" (steamed dumpling and milk tea with dumplings). If the family have mares, during summertime you'll have a chance to taste fermented mare's milk which is famously known as Mongolian "airag".

### Buuz- БҮҮЗ

Small filled pockets, steamed.

The ingredients for dough and filling of the Buuz are exactly the same as with Khuushuur and Bانش. The differences are in the size, shape, and cooking method. Buuz are cooked under steam, and usually have an opening at the top.

Varieties of Buuz and with yeast dough are called mantuun Buuz.

#### Ingredients

##### Dough

- 250 g flour
- 150ml water

##### Filling

- 300 g minced meat
- 1 onion (minced)
- 2 garlic cloves (minced)
- 100 ml water
- Salt
- Pepper
- Caraway



##### Prepare the filling

- Mix minced meat, onion and garlic.
- Add water until the mass is smooth to work with.
- Add enough salt and spices (the dough has no salt).

##### Prepare the dough

- Mix flour and water to create a pliable dough. Let it rest for 15 min.
- Cut the dough into 2 cm thick slices roll the slices.
- Cut the rolls into pieces of 3 cm flatten the pieces with a finger.

##### Form the pockets

The decorative design of the buuz is a matter of honour for the cook. At first, the result will probably look a bit clumsy. Mongolian experts produce small miracles in no time almost without looking.

There are several different possibilities to form the buuz, but the beginning is always the same:

- The pieces of dough are rolled into circles of about 7 cm diameter, making the centre slightly thicker than the edge. It is best only to roll

as many circles as you can process otherwise the pockets will be more difficult when the dough is starting to dry.

- Hold one circle in the open hand and place about one teaspoon of the meat mass in the centre.

### **Round Buuz**

This is the most traditional shape, and differs most from the other forms of Mongolian filled pockets:

- Fold the edge at one side, and press it together with your fingers.
- Create another fold next to the previous one, slightly offset to the outside and press it together as well.
- Continue this way, rotating the buuz as you go along.
- When done right, then this will result in a ring, which keeps the pocket together at the top.
- A small opening remains open in the centre.

### **Folded Buuz**

This method doesn't require as much dexterity, but also yields an aesthetically pleasing result:

- Fold the circle from both sides, and press the opposing edges together in the middle over the meat.
- Fold the edges from across as well, and press them together into the previous connection.
- The result is a flowerlike pouch, with four openings around the top.
- With a little practice, you can also try to make six 'petals'.

### **Semicircular Buuz**

This shape is normally reserved for khuushuur or Bانش, but as shown here, it is extremely quick to produce:

- Fold the circle in half, to create a crescent shape with the edges lying on top of each other.
- Press the edges together along the semicircle to close the Buuz.
- Place the Buuz on its "back", and compress the round edge by lifting the ends. This will result in various shapes, with a meandering edge.

### **Cooking the Buuz**

The finished Buuz are cooked under steam without pressure. The easiest way to do this is in a special pan with perforated inlays. Such inlays are also available for normal pans. Flat and wide inlays are used for the wok type pan used on the stove in the yurt.

- Oil the inlays, or dip the bottom of each Buuz in oil.
- Place the Buuz on the inlay, ideally without touching each other.
- Fill sufficient water into the bottom of the pan.
- Insert inlays, close the lid, and don't open it until the Buuz are finished.
- Keep the steam going for about 15 min.

- Now open the lid, and fan some air to the Buuz, e.g. with a cutting board. This will give them a glossy look, and a tasty looking slightly reddish colour.

#### Serving suggestions

Traditional Mongolian cuisine uses very little vegetable, so the Buuz are considered a complete meal (possibly with ketchup or other condiment).

Served this way the quantities given are good for two people.

When served with vegetables or other side dishes, the quantities should easily feed four people.

Traditional dishes like Buuz, Bانش and Khuushuur are sold in Mongolian supermarkets frozen and packaged and ready to cook but the results of our comparative experiments were unambiguous: Handmade lasts and tastes better!



## Useful information

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### *Official Facebook Group!*

Check out our Facebook group: [Projects Abroad Mongolia - The Official Group](#)! It is regularly updated with photos from Social events, news on the projects and the city of Ulaanbaatar.

### *Official Newsletter!*

Read our monthly newsletter: [The Official Newsletter of Projects Abroad Mongolia!](#)

### *Official Country Blog!*

See what is going on with Projects-Abroad Mongolia! Read our [Country Blog](#).