

# Russian Made *EASY!*



## Podcast



## Episode #23

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[RussianMadeEasy.com](http://RussianMadeEasy.com)



Welcome to episode 23. I'd like to start right off the bat with a question.

Please say, in Russian:

This is your pizza.

Did you say:  
ЭТО ТВОЯ ПИЦЦА.

Or did you say:

Это ваша пицца.

That is, did you use: Твоя or Ваша? Ideally you should've asked: Who are we talking to? Are we speaking casually or formally?

In other words, I didn't really give you enough information to answer. This concept of formal and informal speech is pretty foreign to English speakers, which is why today I'd like to do a lot of practice with it.

I mean, think about it...Let's say you're with two people: your Russian friend, and her grandmother who just came over for a visit. If we're all speaking English, I can turn to my friend and say, "Would you like some tea?" I can then turn towards her grandmother and say, "Would you?"

I don't have to change my words. I referred to both of them in English as "you." We don't even think about it. But in Russian....You'd certainly **better** think about it. Trust me: Speak to your friend's grandmother on ТЫ without an invitation to do so, and you're gonna hear about it later.

So let's try that in Russian. Ask your friend:

Tanya, want tea?

Таня, хочешь чай?

Now let's ask her grandmother. Just two words, literally:

Tea....want?

Чай хотите?

Another way they'd phrase all that is like this. Imagine you're in the process of making tea, and you want to know how much to make, so you say...

Tanya, will you have tea?

Таня, ты будешь чай?

And then to her grandmother you say:

And will you have tea?

А Вы будете чай?

So you're all sitting there, drinking tea. Now as the host, you open a box of chocolates and offer them first to your friend. With just one word, ask her:

Want some?

Хочешь?

She takes one and says Thank you...  
Спасибо.

Now, with just one word, ask her grandmother:  
Want some?  
Хотите?

She says, No thanks.  
Нет, спасибо.

So, your friend is drinking the tea. In two words ask her:  
Do you like it?  
Literally: To you is pleasing?  
Тебе нравится?

Ask the same question to grandma:  
Вам нравится?

Something on the TV in the next room causes your friend and grandma to get up from the table and go watch. Being a good host, you pick up their cups of tea and carry them in.  
Tell your girlfriend:

This is your tea.  
Это твой чай.

And then to her grandmother, say...  
And this is yours.  
А это Ваш.

Before going on, let's do a quick review of one of the words we learned last time.  
With just two words, say:  
Moscow is pretty.  
Москва – красивая.

Now say:  
Kiev is pretty.  
Киев – красивый.  
Красивый - Красивая

So Красивая is the feminine form. Whereas: красивый is the masculine form.  
Now, remember how we learned in the last episode that – along with masculine

and feminine nouns -- Russian also has some neuter nouns, too? Most, though not all, neuter nouns end with an "o" in their basic form, although it doesn't always sound like it. For example...

МОЛОКО

...that clearly ends in an O. But this word...

ПИВО

...you can't really hear the "o" there. And it's the same with this word:  
САЛО

So how do we tell if a word that has an "ah" sound at the end is neuter or feminine? Well, one way is to wait for someone to say, "This is my \_\_\_\_\_." Because the word "my" will be very different. Listen:

This is my soup.  
Это мой суп.

We know that version of "my" very well. We also know this version:

This is my pizza.  
Это моя пицца.

But listen to how you say:  
This is my milk.  
Это моё молоко.

This is the neuter version of "my." Listen again:  
моё

So say: My milk.  
Моё молоко

Now say:  
This is my pig fat.  
Это моё сало.

Ask: Is this my beer?  
Это моё пиво?

How do you think you'd tell a friend:  
This is your beer.  
Это твоё пиво.

So that was the neuter version of the casual or informal word “your.” Listen again:  
твоё

Imagine your friend has asked you for a cup of tea and a glass of milk. As you serve them to her, say:  
This is your tea, and your milk.  
Это твой чай и твоё молоко.

Say: This is your pizza and your beer.  
Это твоя пицца и твоё молоко.

Let's try it with three very Russian foods. Tell your friend:  
This is your borscht, your pig fat, and your caviar.  
Это твой борщ, твоё сало и твоя икра.

Say those three forms of “your” again:  
Masculine, neuter, then feminine:  
твой....твоё....твоя

All this leads me to our tip of the day....

### **V.O. And now, here's your Tip of the Day from Russian Made Easy...**

We haven't learned any new words today yet, but that doesn't mean we're not learning new things. This is what I was referring to at the end of the last podcast. Another one of the biggest mistakes that new students make is what I call the **Gigantor Vocabulary** mistake. They try to build a big vocabulary too fast. I wasted my first year of Russian this way, trying to learn every word I could. I mean, I studied the Russian word for *octopus*, for *pond*, for *engine* and so on. But could I use these words? Not really. I didn't know how to say, “I **saw** an octopus,” or, “I walked **to** the pond,” or “I need a **new** engine,” etc. I mean, what's the point of learning a new word if you can't use it?

So here's my tip: It is far better to learn a smaller core vocabulary, and master it, than it is to have a gigantic vocabulary that you can't really use. Especially in Russian, where each word – as you now know – has many, many forms.

And here's the good news: Once you've mastered the core vocabulary of Russian and the grammar patterns that go with them, then it's easy to pile on new words. Take today's lesson. Now when you learn a new neuter word, you'll know what to do with it....at least in certain constructions. You'll be able to use it.

So let's get back to it. Remember earlier in this podcast we were serving things to our friend and to her grandmother, and that we need to speak formally and respectfully to grandma. So as you serve each of the following items, say simply: Your \_\_\_\_.

For example, as you hand grandma her salad, tell her:  
Your salad.  
Ваш салат.

Or: Hand your friend her soup:  
Твой суп.

See how it works? Ok, now it's your turn:

Hand grandma her vodka:  
Ваша водка.

Hand your friend her beer:  
Твоё пиво.

Hand grandma her caviar:  
Ваша икра.

Hand your friend her tea:  
Твой чай.

Hand your friend her milk.  
Твоё молоко.

Hand grandma her pig fat.  
Ваше сало.

Hand grandma her salad.  
Ваш салат.

Hand your friend her coffee.

Твой кофе.

Hand your friend her pasta.

Твоя паста

But what about the word *pancakes*? Listen as I hand my friend her pancakes:

Твои блины

And then I hand some to grandma:

Ваши блины

We haven't worked much with plural, but we do know there's that "ee" sound at the end in many of the forms. Do you hear the rhyming? I'll exaggerate the "ee" endings:

Твои блины ... Ваши блины

Now listen to a native speaker again:

Твои блины ... Ваши блины

How might you ask:

Are these my pancakes?

Это мои блины?

Tell your boss:

I like your cars.

Literally, of course: TO me are pleasing your cars.

Мне нравятся Ваши машины.

This might seem like a total non-sequitor, but do you remember how to ask someone:

What's your name?

Как вас зовут?

But what are we literally asking there?

How you they call?

That's the word I wanted to bring up: The Russian word for "how" is...

как

As a question word, it's obviously one of the most common words in Russian.

Listen to how it's used:

Как твой салат? Вкусный?

She said: How's your salad? Tasty?

How will she ask you the same thing about the caviar you're eating? Listen...

Как твоя икра? Вкусная?

See how both the words “your” and “tasty” are in their feminine forms, to rhyme with the word “ikra”?

So, as the host, ask grandma the same thing about the pig fat that she's munching on.

Ask her: How's your pig fat? Tasty?

Как ваше сало....вкусное?

In this next one, let's add in the extremely common Russian word, “ну” which translates as “well?” or “So?”

Ask your friend about his pizza.

Well, how's your pizza? Tasty?

Ну, как твоя пицца? Вкусная?

Ask your friend about his milk:

Ну, как твоё молоко?

Ask your friend about his pancakes...

Как твои блины? Вкусные?

Now that was a new word, kinda, in these podcasts. Listen again to the plural form of the adjective “tasty.”

Вкусные

Hear that ending? fkuus-nee-yeh

Imagine you're leaving a cafe where you and your friends tried a few different salads....all delicious. Comment to the waiter as you leave:

Your salads are tasty!

Ваши салаты вкусные!

Let me again exaggerate the endings there:

Ваши салаты вкусные!



So what I want you to get used to is switching between formal speech and casual speech. As you go through your day, ask yourself whether – if speaking to them in Russian – you'd address them formally, on **Вы** or informally, using the **Ты** forms. Keep practicing, and I'll see you in the next episode where we'll fill out our greetings and chit-chat. See you then!

