



Today's E-edition



Sign Up for Newsletters



Opinion

## Guest columnist Dan Franch: For Ukrainians in Estonia, snowfall offers brightness in a time of darkness



Dan Franch

By Dan Franch Guest columnist

Posted December 26, 2022 12:00 am

The calendar shows that it is officially winter and it has been a real wonderland here in Estonia. More than 16 inches of snow has fallen.

ADVERTISING



The streets are white. The sidewalks are white. The trees are white. Everything is white, which is welcome considering that there are only six hours of daylight this time of year. That's just when there's no overcast, which is rare. So, darkness is the norm.

Yet, with the illumination brought on by all the snow, I couldn't be happier for my Ukrainian students. It's a welcome and uplifting contrast to the darkness in their lives. Back home, things are not nearly as bright - figuratively or literally.

Figuratively, things aren't bright at all as the war in Ukraine rages on. Feb. 24 will mark one year since the war began. That's a long time of uncertainty while watching, listening and reading about your country being turned to rubble.

Outsiders might wonder why winning the war is so important not just for Ukraine but for the rest of Europe, America and beyond.

One reason is ideological - keeping a strong-handed leader from bullying his way into another country, taking it over in an attempt to regain Soviet glory and live out a fantasy of power and eternal praise of his people.

Another reason is pragmatic - realpolitik as the Germans call it. Ukraine is a bonanza of natural resources. It's a Top 10 in the world producer of eight metallic and non-metallic minerals and a world's Top 20 producer of three mineral fuels. On top of that, it has recently been learned that the country has some of the largest lithium reserves in Europe. Lithium is used for manufacturing cellphone batteries, computers and electric cars.

So, there's a lot on the line in Ukraine.

**MILITARY DIET CHALLENGE**

**DAY 1** (1000 cal) **DAY 2** (1000 cal) **DAY 3** (1000 cal) **DAY 4** (1000 cal) **DAY 5** (1000 cal) **DAY 6** (1000 cal) **DAY 7** (1000 cal)

**DAY 8** (1000 cal) **DAY 9** (1000 cal) **DAY 10** (1000 cal) **DAY 11** (1000 cal) **DAY 12** (1000 cal) **DAY 13** (1000 cal) **DAY 14** (1000 cal)

**Train Like a Soldier**

No coach - this program will take you to the next level of fitness

MadMuscles [Open >](#)

Literally, things aren't as bright either.

The temperatures in Ukraine are in the 20s and teens - and will most likely get colder. Nevertheless, electricity is rationed, coming in two-hour increments for two to six hours each day. That means it's cold with very little heat to keep warm. One of my students spoke of her mom's colleague's operation at a

hospital being put on pause till they hooked up a generator because the electricity went down. That's borderline dark humor ... to laugh or cry it's so surreal.

School-aged students find it hard to learn because classes are online, yet with intermittent power outages throughout the day, consistency and reliability are nonexistent. Combined with COVID a few years ago, a generation of under-educated people in Ukraine is a near certainty as long as the war continues.

Despite the darkness, despite the cold, the longing for extended family and the human touch of your husband are strong magnets this time of year.

**MILITARY DIET CHALLENGE**

DAY 1 (500 kcal) Breakfast: Coffee, Toast, Peanut Butter & Granola. Lunch: Coffee, Spinach, & Tuna. Dinner: Meat, Beans, Apples, Green Beans, & Vanilla Ice Cream.

DAY 2 (500 kcal) Breakfast: Egg, Beans, & Tuna. Lunch: Chicken, Cottage Cheese, & Egg. Dinner: Meat, Beans, Apples, Green Beans, & Ice Cream.

DAY 3 (500 kcal) Breakfast: Chicken, Chicken, Cheese & Apples. Lunch: Egg & Tuna. Dinner: Beans, Tuna, & Ice Cream.

DAY 4 (500 kcal) Breakfast: English muffin, 1 cup ground beef. Lunch: 5 ounces of grilled fish, 2 sweet potatoes. Dinner: 1 cup of yogurt, 1/2 cup of berries.

DAY 5 (500 kcal) Breakfast: Medium pizza, 2 baked eggs. Lunch: Cup of berries, Cucumber. Dinner: Spinach salad, 2 baked eggs.

DAY 6 (500 kcal) Breakfast: Coffee, Tuna, Mashed avocado. Lunch: Mixed greens, cup of tuna. Dinner: Hard boiled eggs, 1 slice of beef.

DAY 7 (500 kcal) Breakfast: English muffin, banana. Lunch: Steak, shrimp, Avocado slice of beef. Dinner: Meat, Beans, Apples, Green Beans, & Vanilla Ice Cream.

DAY 8 (500 kcal) Breakfast: Egg, Beans, & Tuna. Lunch: Chicken, Cottage Cheese, & Egg. Dinner: Meat, Beans, Apples, Green Beans, & Ice Cream.

DAY 9 (500 kcal) Breakfast: Coffee, Tuna, Peanut Butter & Granola. Lunch: Coffee, Spinach, & Tuna. Dinner: Meat, Beans, Apples, Green Beans, & Vanilla Ice Cream.

DAY 10 (500 kcal) Breakfast: English muffin, 1 cup ground beef. Lunch: 5 ounces of grilled fish, 2 sweet potatoes. Dinner: 1 cup of yogurt, 1/2 cup of berries.

DAY 11 (500 kcal) Breakfast: English muffin, banana. Lunch: Steak, shrimp, Avocado, slice of beef. Dinner: Meat, Beans, Apples, Green Beans, & Vanilla Ice Cream.

DAY 12 (500 kcal) Breakfast: Medium pizza, 2 baked eggs. Lunch: Cup of berries, Cucumber. Dinner: Spinach salad, 2 baked eggs.

DAY 13 (500 kcal) Breakfast: Chicken, Chicken, Cheese & Apples. Lunch: Egg & Tuna. Dinner: Beans, Tuna, & Ice Cream.

DAY 14 (500 kcal) Breakfast: Coffee, Tuna, Mashed avocado. Lunch: Steak, shrimp, cup of tuna. Dinner: Hard boiled eggs, 1 slice of beef.

MadMuscles

Train Like a Soldier

No coach - this program will take you to the next level of fitness

Open >

One of my former students was home for 10 days to see her husband. Two other women are soon going back with their kids to see their husband/dad. Then there is another woman and her son. They're not going home, though they would love to. Their husband/dad is holed up underground near the front line.

As his wife wrote to me, explaining why she was too emotionally distraught to meet for lessons:

"My husband is in [the front line]. They live in the basement, no heating ... They are constantly bombarded. They work at night because it's safer ... They can't use technology at work, they use shovels ... and they work in total darkness. Every evening we say goodbye as in forever ... It's terrible. I try to keep hope."

Suffice it to say, it's dark in every sense of the word. But still, these Ukrainians

put on happy faces and get on with what they have to do. They keep moving forward - learning English, learning Estonian, finding jobs and integrating as best as they can for as long as they can, never knowing how long it will really be.

**MILITARY DIET CHALLENGE**

Train Like a Soldier

No coach - this program will take you to the next level of fitness

MadMuscles [Open >](#)

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DAY 7
<b>Breakfast:</b> Coffee, Toast, Fruit Juice & Grapefruit	<b>Breakfast:</b> Egg, Banana & Toast	<b>Breakfast:</b> Chicken, Chicken, Cheese & Apple	<b>Breakfast:</b> Egg on toast, 1 slice peanut butter	<b>Breakfast:</b> Melon juice, 2 boiled eggs	<b>Breakfast:</b> Coffee, Toast, Peanut Butter	<b>Breakfast:</b> English Muffin, Banana
<b>Lunch:</b> Coffee, Tuna, & Tuna	<b>Lunch:</b> Chicken, Carrot, Cheese & Egg	<b>Lunch:</b> Egg & Tuna	<b>Lunch:</b> 2 steaks of grilled fish, 2 sweet potatoes	<b>Lunch:</b> Dip of Hummus, Cucumber	<b>Lunch:</b> 3 hard-boiled eggs, one of them	<b>Lunch:</b> 3 hard-boiled eggs, one of them
<b>Dinner:</b> Meat, Banana, Apple, Green Beans & Vanilla Ice Cream	<b>Dinner:</b> Hot Dog, Carrot, Banana, Broccoli & Ice Cream	<b>Dinner:</b> Banana, Tuna, & Ice Cream	<b>Dinner:</b> 1 cup of yogurt, 1/2 cup of berries	<b>Dinner:</b> 3 hard-boiled eggs, 3 slices of ham, Green Beans	<b>Dinner:</b> Hard-boiled eggs, 1 slice of ham	<b>Dinner:</b> Meat, Banana, Apple, Green Beans & Vanilla Ice Cream

DAY 8	DAY 9	DAY 10	DAY 11	DAY 12	DAY 13	DAY 14
<b>Breakfast:</b> Egg, Banana, & Toast	<b>Breakfast:</b> Coffee, Toast, Peanut Butter & Grapefruit	<b>Breakfast:</b> Apple on toast, 1 slice peanut butter	<b>Breakfast:</b> Egg on toast, banana	<b>Breakfast:</b> Melon juice, 2 boiled eggs	<b>Breakfast:</b> Coffee, Toast, Cheese & Apple	<b>Breakfast:</b> Coffee, Toast, Peanut Butter
<b>Lunch:</b> Chicken, Carrot, Cheese & Egg	<b>Lunch:</b> Coffee, Tuna, & Tuna	<b>Lunch:</b> 2 steaks of grilled fish, 2 sweet potatoes	<b>Lunch:</b> 3 hard-boiled eggs, one of them	<b>Lunch:</b> Dip of Hummus, Cucumber	<b>Lunch:</b> Egg & Tuna	<b>Lunch:</b> 3 hard-boiled eggs, one of them
<b>Dinner:</b> Hot Dog, Carrot, Banana, Broccoli & Ice Cream	<b>Dinner:</b> Meat, Banana, Apple, Green Beans & Vanilla Ice Cream	<b>Dinner:</b> 1 cup of yogurt, 1/2 cup of berries	<b>Dinner:</b> Meat, Banana, Apple, Green Beans & Vanilla Ice Cream	<b>Dinner:</b> 3 hard-boiled eggs, 3 slices of ham, Green Beans	<b>Dinner:</b> Banana, Tuna, & Ice Cream	<b>Dinner:</b> Hard-boiled eggs, 1 slice of ham

- Dan Franch, franchdan@gmail.com, a former Peace Corps volunteer, grew up in Addison and left for good in 1998. He has traveled to more than 50 countries, starting with a backpacking adventure around the world for a year in 1991. He currently lives and works in Estonia.