

SCANDINAVIAN CUISINE

Scandinavian cuisine, the cuisines and customs of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark, countries that share borders and bounty. Danes lead with smørrebrød (an open-faced sandwich), which may be topped with cheese, green pepper, and sliced fresh strawberries. Finns specialize in earthy, chewy whole grain bread. Norwegians have wonderfully fresh fish and seafood, and the Swedes gave the world smörgåsbord! Scandinavian Cooking provides traditional menus for different occasions and seasons-- from a Farmhouse Brunch with Buttered Potato Soup to an Old-Fashioned Christmas Smörgåsbord with Dip-in-the-Kettle Soup and Norwegian Cream Pudding, to a sumptuous Midsummer's Day Buffet with Salmon-in-a-Crust and Fruit-Juice Glögg. A good Scandinavian cook has a flair for colour, texture, shape, and simplicity in creating the food that these menus show off to perfection.

DENMARK CUISINE

The cuisine of Denmark, like that in the other Scandinavian countries (Sweden and Norway), as well as that of northern Germany, its neighbour to the south, is traditionally heavy and rich in fat, consisting mainly of carbohydrates, meat and fish. This stems from the country's agricultural past, as well as its geography and climate of long, cold winters.

Before the widespread industrialization of Denmark, small family-based agriculture formed the vast majority of Danish society. As in most agrarian societies, people lived practically self-sufficiently, and made do with the food they could produce themselves, or what could be purchased locally. This meant reliance on locally available food products, which form the basis of the traditional diet: cereal products, dairy products, pork, seafood, apples, plums, carrots, potatoes, onions, beer and bread.

Agriculture still plays a large role in Denmark's economy, and Danish agricultural products are generally preferred over imported items, although products from Germany, The Netherlands and the rest of Europe are gaining increasingly larger market shares in Danish supermarkets.

As in most pre-industrialized societies, long winters and a lack of refrigeration meant that foods, which could be stored for a long time, came to predominate. This helps to explain the lack of fresh fruits and vegetables in many traditional recipes, and the emphasis placed on seasonally available foods. It also helps explain some of the traditional food preparation processes which favoured smoking, pickling and other food preservation techniques that prolong the storage life of products. Moreover, Denmark's geography, which comprises of many islands meant that before industrialization and concomitant advances in transportation it was difficult, time-consuming, and costly to travel great distances, or to ship products. These factors have thus helped mold the traditional eating habits of the Danish people.

During the second half of the 20th century, Denmark entered into a new modern age of affluence after World War II. Farming cooperatives continued to grow and develop, leading to a move towards bigger agricultural business, and away from the small family farm. This has been compounded by migration to the cities, and suburban sprawl around the cities. All these influences and conditions, and more common to the modern way of life, have led to new demands on the national cuisine, as well as new possibilities.

Although famously liberal with respect to social values, Danes are fairly conservative when it comes to food. They thus appreciate traditional cooking, and are hesitant to embrace new "different" types of food. In the new Danish cooking style, dishes are lighter, smaller and nutritious and generally offer more focus on fresh vegetables. This mode of cooking is increasingly international, highly influenced by French, American and Asian cuisine, especially the cuisine of Thailand.

INFLUENCE FROM ABROAD

France has been historically a strong influence, as a leading land of culture. Germany's proximity has also provided a long-term influence. The area now making up northern Germany was at times throughout history under Danish rule, and there are still many Danish people living in this part of

Germany (Schleswig), as well as Germans living in southern Denmark (South Jutland).

Although historically the average Danish person did not travel widely, in more recent years this has begun to change. Danes are travelling more now, and to farther, more distant and exotic destinations. The food cultures of the most popular travel destinations, sun-drenched southern European countries such as France, Spain, Italy and Greece, have become well known. This widened appreciation for new eating experiences has followed Danes home after their wanderlusts have been quenched.

Another influence that brings greater focus on exotic cooking has been the growing availability of exotic food products in the supermarket, and aggressive marketing efforts to make these more acceptable in the average home. These products have become more available primarily because of the growing immigrant population (Turkish, Pakistani, Chinese, Thai, African) in Denmark. American culture has also influenced the Danish cuisine. In a nutshell, Denmark and the Danish people are becoming more internationalized.

Breakfast (*Morgenmad*)

A traditional breakfast is buttered bread, Danish *skæreost* (slicing cheese), a buttery creamy white cheese (often Danish havarti, Danbo or Danish tilsit), strawberry jam and a lot of coffee. Today most Danes eat different types of cereal with milk for breakfast or a yoghurt-like milk products (similar to junket) with cereal or crumbled bread on top. Another traditional breakfast, especially among the elder, are oatmeal porridge and bread-and-beer-soup (*øllebrød*).

Bread takes many forms: at breakfast it is most often a white bread known as *franskbrød* (French bread), rolls (*boller*, *birkes*, *rundstykker*) or croissants. The "Danish pastry", which is also eaten at breakfast, is called *wienerbrød* (Viennese bread) and it comes in many varieties. A festive breakfast calls for a shot or two of Gammel Dansk, a Danish stomach bitter.

Pålæg and *smørrebrød*

Literally translated, *smørrebrød* means "spread [on] bread", and the "spread" is generally laid on to a piece of buttered rye bread (*rugbrød*), a dense, black bread with many seeds. *Pålæg*, the topping, then among others can refer to commercial or homemade cold cuts, pieces of meat or fish, cheese or spreads. This is essentially the base on which the art of the famous Danish open sandwich, *smørrebrød* is created: A slice or two of *pålæg* is placed on the buttered bread, and then *pyntet* (decorated) with the right accompaniments, to create a tasty and visually appealing food item.

Det kolde bord

The Danish *kolde bord* (translated, the cold table) corresponds to its Swedish counterpart, the smorgasbord (in Swedish, *Smörgåsbord*). It is usually served at lunch time. The cold table may be a buffet arrangement prepared away from the dining table, or more likely it will consist of the many and varied items being brought to the dining table and passed around family-style.

As a first course (or first visit to the buffet table) one will in all likelihood eat pickled herring (*marinerede sild*), or another herring dish. The most common herring is marinated either in a clear sweet, peppery vinegar sauce (white herring), or in a red seasoned vinegar (red herring). Herring is usually served with ice cold snaps, which according to Danish tradition, helps the fish swim down to the stomach.

As a second course one will in all likelihood eat warm foods (*lune retter*) served on rye bread with accompaniments. Some typical warm foods would be:

1. Frikadeller -- Danish meatballs, the "national" dish
2. Chopped steak patty (*Hakkebøf*)
3. Danish sausage (*Medisterpølse*)
4. Parisian steak, (*Danish: Pariserbøf*)
5. Veal medallion (*Kalvemedaljon*)
6. Liver with sauteed mushrooms and onions
7. Dansk bøf med spejlæg og rugbrød
8. Veal tenderloin (*mørbradbøf*) with sauteed onions and pickle slices (*surt*)

Vegetables & the indispensable potato

Although the potato is the central vegetable in traditional Danish cooking, it is by no means the only vegetable associated with Danish cuisine. Those other vegetables that play an important role often had to be preserved for long periods of time in cold rooms, or were pickled or marinated for storage. Cauliflower, carrots and a variety of cabbages were often a part of the daily meal, especially when in season, in the days prior to widespread refrigeration.

Pasta and rice have made great inroads into the Danish diet. Danes eat more pasta than any other people, especially the younger population, and it is indispensable to young adults because it is so cheap and easy to cook.

Dairy products

1. Blue cheese
2. Danish tilsit
3. Feta
4. Havarti cheese

While the traditional, commonly-eaten cheese (*skæreost*) in Denmark is mild, there are also stronger cheeses associated with Danish cuisine. Some of these are very pungent. Blue cheese can be quite strong, and Danish cheese manufacturers produce molded cheeses that span the range from the mildest and creamiest to the intense blue-veined cheese internationally associated with Denmark.

Fruit

Similarly to vegetables, fruit had to withstand long storage during the winter to become a part of the traditional cuisine. Fruit is generally eaten in smaller portions, often as an accompaniment to cheese, or as decoration with desserts.

A combination of strawberries, red currants, black currants, blueberries and mulberries is known as "forest fruits" (*skovbær*) and is a common component in tarts and marmalades.

Danish cuisine has also looked inwards at the rich possibilities inherent in Danish traditional cooking, and in this way attempted to redefine itself, using local products and cooking techniques that have in the past been used in limited ways.

CUISINE OF ICELAND

Iceland offers wide varieties of traditional cuisine. *Þorramatur* (food of the *þorri*) is the Icelandic national food. Nowadays *þorramatur* is mostly eaten during the ancient Nordic month of *þorri*, in January and February, as a tribute to old culture. *Þorramatur* consists of many different types of food. These are mostly offal dishes like pickled ram's testicles, putrified shark meat, singed sheep heads, singed sheep head jam, blood pudding, liver sausage (similar to Scottish haggis) and dried fish (often cod or haddock) with butter.

Meat

There is a wide range of high quality restaurants in Iceland, serving specialities including freshly caught seafood, meat from naturally reared animals and prize game from the unspoilt countryside. Iceland offers a fine variety of all kinds of foods produced locally. The quality is excellent, in part because of a very clean environment.

Icelandic fish, caught in the unpolluted waters of the North Atlantic, has established a reputation for its superb quality and delicious taste world-wide. Fish is the mainstay of the Icelandic diet, and fresh fish can be had all the year round. Icelanders eat mostly haddock, cod, plaice, halibut, herring and Shrimp.

Poultry farming is considerable in Iceland. The most common types of bird reared are chicken, duck and turkey. Certain species of wild birds are hunted, including geese.

Fruits and vegetables

Even though Iceland is situated near the polar circle, many garden vegetables are grown outside, including cabbage and potatoes. Other vegetables, fruits and flowers are grown in geothermally heated greenhouses.

Iceland has a range of traditional foods, called "thorramatur", which are enjoyed especially in the period from January to March. These preserved foods include smoked and salted lamb, salted lamb, singed sheep heads, dried fish, smoked and pickled salmon, cured shark and various other delicacies.

Breads & Cheese

Breads include laufabrauð (deep-fried paper-thin bread), kleinur (similar to doughnuts) and rye pancakes. There is a wide range cheeses and other dairy products made in Iceland. There are over 80 types of cheese made, some of which have won international awards.

CUISINE OF FINLAND

Finnish Food is pure, authentic and uncomplicated.

The Finnish food culture has been influenced by tastes both from the East and from the West. In Finland there are four very different seasons. Each season offers different ingredients and tastes. In the summer, long intense days go on as bright nights, growing high quality vegetables, herbs and berries, full of flavour. In the autumn, forests are full of mushrooms and game.

These ingredients give a mouth-watering challenge to any food-lover.

Finns have a large knowledge of the foodstuffs industry. Quickly globalized, Finland has been one of the top operators within the European high-tech experts, also in the fields of foodstuffs technology and research. Finland has been a leader in developing health-enhancing foodstuffs. The entire foodstuffs chain is committed to high quality work for food, from the farm onto a plate.

The cuisine of Finland is generally healthy, thanks in part to wholemeal products (rye, barley, oats) and berries (such as blueberries, lingonberries, cloudberry, and sea buckthorn). Fish and meat play a prominent role in traditional Finnish dish from the western part of the country, while the dishes from the eastern part have traditionally included various vegetables and mushrooms.

There are long traditions of hunting and fishing in Finland. The hunters focus on deer and moose, but small game such as hare, ducks and grouse are popular for their taste. Finnish restaurants are accustomed to serving reindeer dishes instead.

To add some vitamins and make the rather heavy food more enjoyable a traditional jam is made from lingonberry and served with meat. The wild strawberry (*metsämansikka*) with strong aroma is also a seasonal delicacy decorating cakes, served with ice cream or just cream.

Many Finnish dishes have very strong Swedish, German and Russian influences, although the connoisseur will notice small differences in preparation style: for example, Finnish dishes are usually less sweet than Swedish ones, and use much less sour cream (*smetana*) than Russian ones.

Dishes

1. Cabbage rolls (Kaalikääryleet)
2. Hot Pot
3. Pickled Herring (usually with small potatoes)
4. Smoked fish (Many types of fish, like Salmon, Zander, Pike, Perch and Baltic herring)
5. Cold Smoked fish
 - A) Cold smoked salmon, Lox (Kylmäsavustettu lohi)
 - B) Gravlax (Graavilohi)
 - C) Cold smoked Perch
6. Smoked ham or beef (palvikinkku) (palviliha)
7. Game food. Moose, deer, grouse, duck, hare, etc... dishes. Rarely attainable in restaurants. Common amongst those whose hobby is hunting.
8. Mashed potato

CUISINES OF SWEDEN

Swedish cuisine tends to be hearty, practical and sustaining. Only recently have Swedish restaurateurs attempted to interpret it with a modern gourmet approach. The cuisine differs rather much regionally, although it could be considered traditionally simple in general. In the south the supply of fresh vegetables is better. In Sweden many local, traditional meals are also eaten, in the north some with their roots in the Sami people, some not, including reindeer, and other game.

HISTORY

Sweden's long winters explain the lack of fresh vegetables in many traditional recipes. Plants sustaining winter became the cornerstones: various turnips in older times such as the native rutabaga (a.k.a. "the swede"), gradually supplanted by the potato in the 18th century. A lack of spices made the food rather plain, although a number of local herbs and plants have probably been used since ancient times.

The importance of fish has governed population and trade patterns far back in history: due to the vast supply of fish, in particular herring, people settled on the east coast around present-day Stockholm, and on the west coast around present-day Gothenburg. These remain Sweden's most populated areas to this day. For preservation, fish were salted and salt became a major trade item at the dawn of the Scandinavian middle ages, which began circa 1000 AD.

Cabbage, conserved as sauerkraut, or lingonberry jam was used as a source of vitamin C during the winter. Lingonberry jam, still a favorite, also added some freshness to the often rather heavy food.

MEALS

Swedes usually have three main meals per day, but there are at least two traditions followed:

The older tradition, still common among Blue collar workers, consists of breakfast in the early morning (*frukost*), a light lunch before noon (*lunch*), and a heavy dinner (*middag*) at around five.

Since the early sixties, most 9 to 5 workers eat breakfast when they wake up, a steady lunch around noon, and a lighter dinner around six in the evening.

It is also common to have a snack, often a sandwich or fruit, in between meals (*mellanmål*). In all schools including high school, a hot meal is served at lunch as part of Sweden's welfare state. Most Swedes also have coffee after lunch, and a coffee break in the afternoon, often together with a biscuit or similar.

DISHES

Kräftskiva (crayfish party). In August, Swedes traditionally eat boiled crayfish at feasts known as *kräftskivor*.

The most highly regarded mushroom is the chanterelle. It is considered a real treat. The chanterelle is usually served together with a piece of meat, or just fried with a sauce and some onions and put on a sandwich. Second to the chanterelle, and considered almost as delicious, is the porcini mushroom, or *Karl-Johansvamp* named after Charles XIV John (Karl XIV Johan) who introduced its use as food.

The internationally most renowned Swedish meal is the meatballs, or *köttbullar*.

Typical smörgås (an open sandwich) with hard-boiled eggs and cod roe caviar from a tube.

Potatoes are the main complement to most dishes. Only in the last 50 years have other complements such as rice and spaghetti become standard on the dinner table. There are several different kinds of potatoes: the most appreciated is the *new potato*, which ripens in early summer, and is enjoyed at the feast called Midsummer. Other sorts of potatoes are eaten all year around.

Other typical Swedish dishes:

1. Smörgåsbord — Smorgasbord
2. Köttbullar — Swedish meatballs
3. Julskinka — Christmas ham
4. Inlagd sill — Pickled herring
5. Surströmming — Fermented Baltic herring - a rather different tasting species of herring - it has

about 10% fat whereas Atlantic herring is 16% - this may occur because of the Baltic having half the salt concentration of usual seas.

6. Gravad lax — Salmon, salted, and cured
7. Kåldolmar — Cabbage rolls
8. Raggmunk — Potato pancakes
9. Blodpudding — Black pudding
10. Kaviar — Swedish caviar comes in tubes and is typically made from cod roe.

CUISINES OF NORWAY

Norwegian cuisine is in its traditional form largely based on the raw materials readily available in a country dominated by mountains, wilderness and the sea. Hence, it differs in many respects from its continental counterparts with a stronger focus on game and fish.

Modern Norwegian cuisine, although still strongly influenced by its traditional background, now bears the marks of globalization: Pastas, pizzas and the like are as common as meatballs and cod as staple foods, and urban restaurants sport the same selection you would expect to find in any western European city.

SEAFOOD

The one traditional Norwegian dish with a claim to international popularity is the smoked salmon. It is now a major export, and could be considered the most important Norwegian contribution to modern international cuisine. Smoked salmon exists traditionally in many varieties, and is often served with scrambled eggs, dill, sandwiches or mustard sauce. Close to smoked salmon is *gravlaks*, (literally "dug salmon"), which is salt-and-sugar-cured salmon seasoned with dill and (optionally) other herbs and spices. Gravlaks is often sold under more sales-friendly names internationally. A more peculiar Norwegian fish dish is *Rakfisk*, which consists of fermented trout, a culinary relation of Swedish *surströmming*.

The largest Norwegian food export in the past has been (Tørrfisk, Clipfish) - stockfish in English, in Portuguese 'bacalhau', - dried codfish. The atlantic cod variety known as 'skrei' because of its migrating habits, has been a source of wealth for millennia, fished annually in what is known as the 'Lofotfiske' after the island chain of 'Lofoten'. Tørrfisk has been a staple food internationally for centuries, in particular on the Iberian peninsula and the African coast. Both during the age of sail and in the industrial age, tørrfisk played a part in world history as an enabling food for cross-Atlantic trade and the slave trade triangle.

A large number of fish dishes are popular today, based a large variety of species, such as salmon, cod, herring, sardine products and mackerel. Seafood is used fresh, smoked, salted or pickled. Variations on creamed seafood soups are common along the coastline.

Due to its availability, seafood dishes along the coast are usually based on fresh produce, cooked by steaming and very lightly spiced with herbs, pepper and salt. While most coastal Norwegians consider the head, caviar sack and liver an inseparable part of a steamed seafood meal, most inland restaurants will spare diners this part of the experience. A number of the species available have traditionally been avoided or reserved for bait, but most common seafood is part of the modern menu.

MEAT & GAME

High cuisine is very reliant on game, such as moose, reindeer and fowl. These meats are often hunted and sold or passed around as gifts, rather than bought in shops, and as such tend to be served at social occasions. Because these meats have a distinct, strong taste, they will often be served with matching condiments like wild berry jam, juniper berries and rich sauces.

Preserved meat and sausages come in a bewildering variety of regional variations, and are usually accompanied by sour cream dishes and flat bread or wheat/potato wraps. Particularly sought after delicacies include the *fenalår*, a slow-cured lamb's leg, and *morr*, usually a smoked cured sausage, though the exact definition may vary regionally. Due to a partial survival of an early medieval taboo against touching dead horses, eating horse meat was nearly unheard of until recent decades, though it does find some use in sausages.

Lamb's meat and mutton is very popular in autumn, mainly used in fàrikål (mutton stew with cabbage). Pinnekjøtt, cured and sometimes smoked mutton ribs that is boiled for several hours, is traditionally served as Christmas dinner in the western parts of Norway. Another Western specialty is smalahove, a smoked lamb's head.

Because of industrial whaling, whale was commonly used as a cheap substitute for beef early in the 20th century. More recently, a combination of rising prices stemming from a quota reduced to ca. 300 animals p.a. and the easily ruined flavour of the meat has made whale a much rarer delicacy. Eating whale meat, although not common, is not controversial in Norway.

FRUIT & DESSERTS

Fruits and berries mature slowly in the cold climate. This makes for a tendency to smaller volume with a more intense taste. Strawberries, apples and cherries are popular and are part of a variety of desserts. German and Nordic-style cakes and pastries, such as sponge cakes and Danish pastry (known as *Wienerbrød* or "Vienna bread") share the table with sweet breads - *kaffebrød* (coffee bread, named for its accompaniment, not ingredients), waffles and bisquits. Cardamom is a common flavouring.

Coffee is an extremely common part of social life, enjoyed both before and after meals, with desserts and with liquor. The average Norwegian consumes 160 liters of coffee p.a, or ten kilo per person. 80% of the population drinks coffee. As in the rest of the west, recent years have seen a shift from coffee made by boiling ground beans to Italian-style coffee bars, tended by professional Baristas.

DAIRY PRODUCTS

Dairy is still extremely popular in Norway, though the variety of traditional products available and commonly in use is severely reduced. Cheese is an export, in particular the plain-brand favourite Jarlsberg cheese. The sweet *geitost* or brown/red cheese (not a true cheese, but rather caramelized lactose from goat milk or a mix of goat and cow milk) is very popular in cooking and with bread. More sophisticated or extreme cheeses include the *gammelost* (lit. "old cheese"), an over-matured, highly pungent brown cheese.