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Exploring North Dakota Foodways:

Scandinavian Cuisine (Past and Present)

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Brief History

Scandinavia is an area of northern Europe that includes the countries of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland. “Scandinavian” refers to people from all five countries whose ancestors were Vikings. The first Scandinavian immigrants to settle in northern Dakota Territory were from Norway in 1869.

Norway was crowded at that time, and farmland there was scarce, so America became the land of opportunity for many farming families. From 1892 to 1905, almost half of the immigrants in North Dakota were of Scandinavian descent. People from Sweden made up the second-largest group of Scandinavian immigrants to settle in North Dakota, and immigrants from Denmark, Finland and Iceland also were settling in North Dakota, although in fewer numbers.

The Scandinavian immigrants brought many food traditions to North Dakota. You might be familiar with foods such as lutefisk, lefse, Swedish meatballs, rømmegrøt, pickled herring, pickled beets, rye bread and a variety of baked goods. If these foods sound familiar, what are some of your favorites?

Maybe you have traveled to Minot, N.D., to enjoy the Scandinavian festivities for the Norsk Høstfest held each fall, with thousands of attendees from all over the world. Moorhead, Minn., is the site of the Hjemkomst Center, which has a replica of a Viking ship called the Hjemkomst (meaning homecoming), the Hopperstad Stave church and exhibits that allow people to learn about the Scandinavian heritage.

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The New Nordic Diet (NND)

Although the recipes have changed through time, traditional Scandinavian recipes still hold the value and sentiment they once held hundreds of years ago. Earlier generations did more physical work on farms, so the higher-calorie ingredients, such as cream and butter, were less likely to cause weight gain.

More recently, many traditional food items are being replaced with desserts, sweets, fatty milk products and other products. As a result, growing rates of overweight and obesity have become an issue in Scandinavian countries. In response, the New Nordic Diet (NND) has been implemented to promote a more healthful and sustainable lifestyle for Scandinavians while taking eco-friendly measures to improve longevity and sustainability.

The NND emphasizes consuming locally sourced and sustainably harvested foods from the countries of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Like the Mediterranean diet, the NND emphasizes whole-grain sources, such as rye, oats and wheat, and fruits and vegetables native to the Scandinavian region, along with fish and legumes. The NND is lower in sweets, higher-fat red meat and some higher-fat dairy products.

Consumption of locally grown crops such as carrots, onions, cucumbers, apples, pears and plums is encouraged. While the Mediterranean Diet encourages olive oil consumption, the NND emphasizes canola oil. Compared with the typical western diet, the NND offers twice as much fiber due to its high fruit and vegetable content, while the traditional western diet is higher in sugar and fat.

Unlike the typical western diet, the NND's main sources of protein are derived from locally sourced items such as seafood, legumes and root vegetables. Because the NND was created to counteract the growing rates of overweight and obesity, traditional food items such as butter, hard cheeses and higher-fat meats are consumed in moderation for health reasons.

The NND received an overall score of 4.38 out of 5 (5 = highest score) considering these factors: weight loss (4.75), healthful eating (5), sustainability (4.75), whole body health (3.75) and nutrition quality (5) (Leach, 2019).

Compare your typical diet to the recommendations for the NND in Table 1. Are you following the principles of the New Nordic Diet? Eating more whole grains, fruits and vegetables is among the dietary goals in the U.S. See www.myplate.gov for more information about the recommendations from the latest U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Table 1. Diet recommendations* used in the New Nordic Diet.

Food	Amount Recommended Per Day (or Per Week)
Whole grains	2 to 3 servings (per day)
Fruits	2 to 3 servings (about 2 to 3 c. per day)
Vegetables	2 to 3 servings (about 2 to 3 c. per day)
Fatty fish	Two (4-oz.) servings (per week)
Lean fish	One (4-oz.) serving (per week)
Legumes	2 to 3 c. at least three times a week Try ½ c. three times a week if you are just starting to incorporate legumes into your diet.

*Note: Other foods in moderation also play a role in this diet.



Recipes and Tips

The delicious taste of cultural Scandinavian heritage that rings true throughout the Midwest often is featured for holiday meals and family reunions. The recipes in this publication include one appetizer, two main dishes, two sides, a bread and three desserts so you can create meals.

In our testing, we made a few minor adjustments to the traditional recipes to honor modern-day nutrition advice while maintaining the delicious flavor these long-established dishes provide. These changes are noted in the “cook’s notes” such as these:

- Try substituting about half of white flour with whole-grain flour for a heart-healthy and fiber-rich substitute. Nutrition experts recommend that we make half of our grain choices whole grain.
- Half and half often can be substituted for heavy cream and contains half (or less) the fat and fewer calories.
- For other ways to revitalize your recipes to make them more healthful, see “Recipe Makeovers” (FN1447) available at www.ag.ndsu.edu/publications/food-nutrition/now-serving-recipe-makeovers.
- If you run short of an ingredient and need a substitution, see “Ingredient Substitutions” (FN 198) available at www.ag.ndsu.edu/publications/food-nutrition/ingredient-substitutions.

We invite you to enjoy a taste of Scandinavian cuisine. We have provided a corresponding lesson to provide a look into the rich history of Scandinavians, particularly in North Dakota. This lesson is available through NDSU Extension. We hope that you enjoy this rich taste of Scandinavian history that lives on across the Midwest. Consider exploring the festivals and museums, which will help you learn more about the culture.



Key to abbreviations

c. = cup
tsp. = teaspoon
Tbsp. = tablespoon
oz. = ounce
lb. = pound
g = gram
mg = milligram
pkg. = package



Swedish Sandwich Cake (Smorgastarta)

This layered sandwich can be an appetizer or a main item for a luncheon.

Ingredients

12 slices whole-wheat bread

Yogurt-cream cheese spread

½ c. nonfat plain Greek yogurt

8 oz. nonfat cream cheese, softened

Salmon layer ingredients

5 oz. smoked salmon, sliced thin (plus about 1 oz. for garnishing the top, if desired)

¼ c. Greek yogurt/cream cheese mixture (see above)

1½ Tbsp. chopped chives

2 Tbsp. lemon juice (preferably freshly squeezed)

Touch of pepper

Egg salad layer ingredients

3 hard-cooked eggs, chopped

2 tsp. parsley, minced (preferably fresh, but can substitute ½ tsp. dried)

2 tsp. lemon juice, preferably freshly squeezed

2 Tbsp. mayonnaise or Miracle Whip salad dressing

Salt and pepper to taste

Top layer ingredients

1 oz. smoked, sliced salmon rolled into rosettes (to resemble roses)

2 to 3 small radishes, thinly sliced

1 medium carrot, thinly sliced and rolled (to resemble flower)

A sprinkle of chopped chives, plus some longer strands

Directions

1. Cut the crusts from the sliced bread.
2. Prepare the yogurt-cream cheese spread.
3. Mix the salmon mixture and refrigerate.
4. Mix the egg salad and refrigerate.
5. Lay out four slices of bread to form a square onto a large cutting board or tray.
6. Spread some of the yogurt/cream cheese mixture all over the bread slices and sprinkle with some of the chopped chives.
7. Remove salmon mixture and egg salad from the fridge. Spread the salmon mixture on top of the yogurt/cream cheese layer, and place four more slices of the bread on top of the salmon mixture.
8. Again, spread the yogurt/cream cheese mixture and sprinkle some chopped chives on the bread. Spread the egg salad on top, creating the second layer.
9. Add the last four slices of bread, spread the last of the yogurt/cream cheese mixture and decorate the top with the radish rounds, pea shoot greens, salmon rosettes, carrots rolled into rosettes and chopped chives.

You can follow the provided example or use your own creativity. Refrigerate.

Cook's notes: You can use the crust to make croutons or breadcrumbs.

Makes 12 servings. Each serving has 140 calories, 3.5 g fat, 12 g protein, 15 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber and 400 mg sodium.



Swedish Meatballs

Did you know that Swedish meatballs actually originated in the country of Turkey? The Turkish recipe was brought over to Sweden by King Charles XII in the early 18th century.



Ingredients

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| 1 c. mashed potatoes (about 2 medium-sized potatoes) | 1 tsp. salt |
| 1 medium onion, finely chopped | 1 egg |
| 3 Tbsp. butter, divided | 1 Tbsp. chopped parsley (or 1 tsp. dried) |
| 3 Tbsp. breadcrumbs | 2 Tbsp. vegetable oil |
| 1 lb. extra-lean ground beef | |
| 1/3 c. low-fat or fat-free half and half | |

Sauce:

- 2 Tbsp. flour
- 1 1/2 c. low-fat or fat-free half and half

Directions

1. Rinse, peel, cut and cook potatoes. Mash.
2. Cook the onion in 1 Tbsp. butter. Cook until the onion is soft but not brown.
3. In a large bowl, combine the onion, mashed potatoes, bread crumbs, meat, 1/3 c. half and half, salt, egg and parsley. Mix with a wooden spoon until well-blended.
4. Shape the mixture into small balls about 1 inch in diameter. Put on a flat tray and chill for at least one hour before cooking.
5. Melt the remaining butter and the oil in a 12-inch skillet. If using a nonstick pan, you may need less shortening.
6. Fry the meatballs on all sides until they are done through (160 F), about eight to 10 minutes.
7. Transfer the finished meatballs to a baking dish and keep them warm.
8. To make the sauce, stir in the flour with the drippings remaining in the skillet. Add half and half. Add additional flour if needed to thicken.
9. Stir constantly as the sauce comes to a boil and becomes thick and smooth.
10. Pour it over the meatballs

Cook's notes: To save time, you can substitute mashed potatoes with reconstituted potato flakes made according to the manufacturer's directions. Or use leftover mashed potatoes. Be sure to chill the meatballs for about an hour prior to cooking so the meatballs retain their shape.

Makes eight servings. Each serving has 280 calories, 19 g fat, 14 g protein, 12 g carbohydrate, less than 1 g fiber and 450 mg sodium.



Mashed Potato and Rutabaga

Rutabagas are thought to have originated in Scandinavia. This root vegetable is commonly found in many traditional Scandinavian dishes. Rutabagas are low in calories and rich in vitamin C, potassium and magnesium.

Ingredients

- 2 lb. red potatoes, peeled thinly if desired
- 1 lb. rutabaga (about 1 medium)
- 1/4 c. flour
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp. salt (to taste)
- 1/2 – 1 cup milk or fat-free half and half
- 1 Tbsp. butter
- 1/4 c. fine dry breadcrumbs

Directions

1. Rinse and scrub the potatoes. Peel if desired.
2. Place the potatoes in a large pot and cover them with water.
3. Heat to boiling and cook for 20 to 25 minutes, until the potatoes are tender.
4. Drain, peel and mash the cooked potatoes.
5. Meanwhile, using a peeler or paring knife, pare the rutabaga thinly and cut it into 1-inch pieces. Place in a saucepan, cover with water and bring to a boil. Simmer until tender, 25 to 30 minutes.
6. Drain, mash and add the cooked rutabaga to the potatoes. Beat with an electric mixer until the potatoes and rutabagas are smooth and fluffy.
7. Beat in the flour, eggs, salt and milk or cream.
8. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Butter a 3-quart shallow baking dish. Turn the mixture into the dish. Using a spoon, spread out the mixture, making indentations in the top of the casserole. Dot with the butter and sprinkle with the breadcrumbs. Bake uncovered for one hour, or until lightly browned.

Makes 10 servings. Each serving has 130 calories, 2.5 g fat, 4 g protein, 24 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber and 310 mg sodium.





Rosemary and Thyme Roasted Radishes With Greek Yogurt

This recipe does not provide distinct measurements. Be creative and adjust according to your taste preferences.

This dish traditionally is served with skyr, an Icelandic dairy product that has the consistency of Greek yogurt but is usually less bitter and sweeter to taste. Radishes are popular in Scandinavian countries, including Iceland and Sweden. They add flavor and color to salads. Try roasting them for the added flavor.

Ingredients

Size this recipe based on the number of servings you need. This “recipe” makes one serving.

3 whole medium-sized radishes
 Drizzle of extra virgin olive oil (about 2 tsp.)
 Sprinkle of thyme
 Sprinkle of rosemary
 Pinch of salt, optional
 Serve with plain skyr or nonfat Greek yogurt and minced chives (about 2 Tbsp. per serving)

Directions

On a sheet pan lined with parchment paper, toss radishes with a bit of extra virgin olive oil, thyme, chopped rosemary and a pinch of salt. Roast in the oven at 350 F for about 45 minutes. Serve with skyr and fresh chives.

Each serving (three radishes with 2 Tbsp. yogurt and no added salt) has 100 calories, 9 g fat, 4 g protein, 2 g carbohydrate and 20 mg sodium.

Pickled Beets (for Canning)

Pickling was once a common form of preservation among Scandinavian countries that usually began in the fall. This allowed Scandinavians to preserve the taste of summer throughout the long winter months.



Ingredients

7 lbs. (2- to 2 ½-inch-diameter) beets	2 c. water
4 c. vinegar (5% acetic acid; note ingredients on container)	2 cinnamon sticks
½ tsp. canning or pickling salt	12 whole cloves
2 c. sugar	4 to 6 onions (2- to 2½-inch diameter), if desired

Yield: About 8 pints

Directions

1. Trim beet tops, leaving 1 inch of stem and roots to prevent bleeding of color.
2. Wash thoroughly. Sort for size.
3. Cover similar sizes together with boiling water and cook until tender (about 25 to 30 minutes).

Caution: Drain and discard liquid.

4. Cool beets. Remove roots and stems and slip off skins. Slice into ¼-inch slices.
5. Peel and thinly slice onions.
6. Combine vinegar, salt, sugar and fresh water. Put spices in a cheesecloth bag and add to the vinegar mixture. Bring to a boil.
7. Add the beets and onions. Simmer for five minutes. Remove the spice bag. Fill jars with beets and onions, leaving ½ inch of head space.
8. Add the hot vinegar solution, allowing ½ inch of head space. Adjust the lids and process for 30 minutes in a boiling water-bath canner at altitudes of 0 to 6,000 ft.

Variation: Pickled whole baby beets. Follow the above directions but use beets that are 1 to 1½ inches in diameter. Pack whole; do not slice. Onions may be omitted.

For more information about pickling and canning in general, see www.ag.ndsu.edu/food.

This nutrition information is based on a commercial product from the U.S. Department of Agriculture database. One ounce of drained, sliced pickled beets has 20 calories, 0 g fat, 0 g protein, 5 g carbohydrate, 0 g fiber and 140 mg sodium.



Breads and Desserts



Swedish Rye Bread

Courtesy of Extension agent Vanessa Hoinés' mom. 4-H'ers who have made this bread have been the recipient of several 4-H ribbons, including grand champion, through the years.

Ingredients

- 1 packet yeast (about 2¼ tsp. or ¼ oz.)
- ¼ c. water
- ¼ c. brown sugar, packed
- ¼ c. molasses
- 2 Tbsp. shortening (such as Crisco)
- 1½ tsp. salt
- 1½ c. hot water
- 2½ c. rye flour
- 3½ to 4 c. bread flour
- 2 Tbsp. caraway seeds

Directions

1. Soften yeast with warm water.
2. In large bowl, combine sugar, molasses, shortening and salt.
3. Add hot water and stir until sugar is dissolved. Cool.
4. Stir in rye flour and mix well.
5. Add yeast, caraway seeds and the bread flour.
6. Knead until smooth and place in greased bowl to rise.
7. After it doubles in size, punch down and shape into two round loaves.
8. Place on greased pans.
9. After the loaves have doubled in size, bake for 25 to 30 minutes at 375 F.

Makes 24 servings (12 servings per loaf). Each serving has 140 calories, 1.5 g fat, 4 g protein, 28 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber and 150 mg sodium.



Lefse

Lefse originally was used as a storage-extending method for potatoes and flour during the long winter months. After many generations, the potato-based delicacy became a special tradition during Nordic holidays and events.

Although it is used in many Scandinavian dishes, it is most commonly served topped with butter and sugar and rolled into a tight cylinder.

Lefse is a traditional Scandinavian soft flatbread that ranges from very thin to cakelike. You will need a potato ricer, lefse rolling pin, smooth board, pastry cloth, lefse grill and lefse turning sticks. If you never have made lefse, start with smaller balls of dough until you become comfortable with the rolling, transferring and baking process.

Ingredients

- 3 c. cold riced potatoes (packed tightly) – about 2 pounds potatoes as purchased
- 3 Tbsp. cream
- 4 Tbsp. butter
- 1 Tbsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 c. all-purpose flour (may need to add a little more)



Directions

1. Peel the potatoes and cut into uniform chunks. Over medium heat, bring the water and potatoes to a boil. Cook until the potatoes are soft, about 10 to 12 minutes. Drain thoroughly.
2. Press hot potatoes through a potato ricer.
3. In a large bowl, mix together all ingredients. Mix thoroughly until the butter and cream are fully incorporated.
4. Use ⅓ or ¼ cup scoop and shape into balls. Roll between your palms.
5. Refrigerate the balls of dough on a sheet pan and cover.
6. Take out a few dough balls at a time to allow remaining balls to stay cold.
7. Roll on a lightly floured pastry board until about ⅛ inch thick (or less).
8. Cook on a hot lefse griddle until bubbles form and each side is light brown.
9. Use a pastry brush to remove as much excess flour as possible.
10. Dampen a clean cotton kitchen towel. Stack the lefse and place the damp cloth on top.
11. Store lefse in the refrigerator or freeze in freezer bags after they cool fully. Label with the contents and the date made.

Cook's notes: Some people prefer Russet potatoes.

Makes 16 small lefse rounds or eight large. Each small lefse round (without added toppings) has 90 calories, 3.5 g fat, 2 g protein, 14 g carbohydrate, less than 1 g fiber and 210 mg sodium.



Cinnamon Roll Twists

Cardamom dough is commonly used in many Scandinavian baked goods. Cardamom is believed to have been introduced to Scandinavian countries by the Vikings, who likely traded for the spice with the Turkish Empire.

Ingredients

Dough:

1 c. reduced-fat milk
¼ c. butter
¾ c. all-purpose flour
¼ c. white granulated sugar
2¼ tsp. instant-rise yeast
2 tsp. ground cardamom
¾ tsp. salt

Filling:

½ c. butter
½ c. packed light brown sugar
2 Tbsp. ground cinnamon
1 tsp. ground cardamom
1 tsp. vanilla extract

Topping:

1 large egg (whisked together with
1 Tbsp. water)
Pearled sugar*

*Pearled sugar is common in parts of Europe, especially Belgium. It is available in some grocery stores. Decorative “sanding sugar” or crushed sugar cubes can be used as a substitute.

Directions

1. Combine the milk and ¼ c. butter in a small saucepan. Heat over medium-low heat, stirring frequently to melt the butter, until the mixture reaches 110 F.
2. Mix the dough. In a separate large mixing bowl, briefly whisk together the flour, sugar, yeast, ground cardamom and salt until combined. Add the warm milk mixture and stir until the dough begins to form. Turn the dough out onto a floured surface and knead for seven to 10 minutes, or until the dough is smooth and soft.
3. First dough rise: Form the dough into a ball, place it in a greased bowl and cover with a damp towel or plastic wrap. Let the dough rise in a warm space for one hour, or until it has doubled in size.
4. Mix the filling. Meanwhile, stir together the filling ingredients in a separate mixing bowl until evenly combined.
5. Roll out the dough. Once the dough is ready to go, turn it out onto a large floured work surface. Use a rolling pin to roll the dough into a 22- by 15-inch rectangle. Carefully and evenly spread the filling mixture across the entire surface of the dough. Then fold the left third of the dough in toward the center, and fold the right third of the dough over that toward the center, like you’re folding a business letter. Gently run the rolling pin over the dough to press out any big bubbles. Then roll the dough out a bit more so that it forms a 15- by 8-inch rectangle.
6. Using a pizza cutter, pastry cutter or a knife, slice the dough into even 1- by 8-inch-long strips. Take one strip and twist it several times, gently stretching it as you do so until it nearly doubles in length. Grab one end of the twisted strip and loosely wrap the dough around two fingers twice, like a bandage. Then loop the rest of the dough perpendicularly around the dough so that it forms a knot, and tuck the loose end in at the bottom. Transfer the dough to a large parchment-covered baking sheet and repeat with the remaining dough strips.
7. Second dough rise: Loosely cover the dough buns with a clean kitchen towel and let them rise for 45 to 60 minutes.
8. Brush and sprinkle. Heat the oven to 375 F. Brush each bun with the egg wash, then sprinkle with a pinch of pearled sugar.
9. Bake for 15 to 18 minutes, or until the rolls reach your desired level of golden brown.
10. Transfer to a wire baking sheet and let cool for five minutes.
11. Serve warm. These rolls are best enjoyed the day that they are baked.

Makes 15 servings. Each serving has 230 calories, 10 g fat, 4 g protein, 30 g carbohydrate, less than 1 g fiber and 210 mg sodium.





Pecan Cookies

Pecans originate from hickory trees. Although hickory trees are commonly found in Sweden, they take 10 to 12 years to start producing nuts and only produce fruit every three years.

Ingredients

- 1 c. butter, softened
- $\frac{3}{4}$ c. brown sugar, packed
- 1 large egg, separated
- 2 c. all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c. finely chopped pecans, lightly salted

Directions

1. In a large bowl, cream butter and brown sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in egg yolk. Gradually add flour until blended.
2. Shape into small balls. In a small bowl, beat egg white. Dip balls in egg white, then roll in pecans.
3. Place 2 inches apart on ungreased baking sheets; flatten slightly.
4. Bake at 375 F for eight to 12 minutes or until edges are lightly browned. Remove from pans to cool on wire racks.

Makes 48 cookies. Each cookie has 80 calories, 5 g fat, 1 g protein, 8 g carbohydrate, 0 g fiber and 35 mg sodium.

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