

Northern delights

In search of inspiration for your festive table? Look to Scandinavia for refreshing alternatives to the traditional turkey and stuffing

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Janssons frestelse (Jansson's temptation: potato and anchovy gratin)

Serves 4-6

The Scandinavian Julbord, or Christmas table, is such a fabulous way to entertain over the festive season. There's no last-minute carving or frantic draining of vegetables - everything can be prepared ahead, freeing you to enjoy the day with friends and family.

INGREDIENTS

• 20g butter • 1kg floury potatoes, peeled and cut into matchsticks • 2 onions, finely sliced • 100g Swedish-style anchovy fillets in brine • black pepper • 400ml double cream • 2 tbsp breadcrumbs

- 1 Pre-heat the oven to 220°C/200°C fan/gas mark 7.
- 2 Grease a gratin dish 25cm x 20cm with a little of the butter.
- 3 Lay about half of the potatoes over the base of the dish and cover with the onion slices and anchovy fillets (reserving the brine). Cover with the remaining potatoes.
- 4 Mix the cream together with some of the brine from the anchovies and plenty of black pepper. Taste. It should not be too salty (because of the salty fish) but it does need to be well seasoned.
- 5 Pour the cream over the dish, leaving some of the potatoes high and dry (this will become wonderfully crusty); sprinkle over the breadcrumbs and dot with the remaining butter.
- 6 Bake in the oven for 45-55 minutes until the potatoes have softened and the top is golden brown.

This dish can be made in advance, then you can just add an extra 100ml of cream when re-heating it.

COOK'S NOTES

Swedish anchovies are available online and also from Ikea but, if you are unable to find them, Mediterranean salted anchovies will give a different - but equally delicious - result.

Swedish 'anchovies' are, in fact, cured sprats, which have a sweeter, spicy flavour.

Janssons frestelse (per portion, assuming 6 portions) 560 cal, 40.8g fat, 40.2g carbs, 5.2g sugars, 1.9g salt



Beetroot Gravadlax Serves 8

You will need to begin this recipe at least 48 hours before serving, but then all the work will be done, leaving you free to relax and enjoy yourself.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 x 800g piece of salmon fillet, boned, but skin left on
- 4 tbsp vodka or gin
- 250g peeled, raw beetroot
- 100g salt
- 80g demerara sugar
- plenty of ground black pepper
- zest of 1 lemon, grated
- 1 large bunch of dill

- 1 Place a large, double sheet of foil or clingfilm into a dish that will hold the salmon in one flat layer (a roasting tray or gratin dish is ideal). Check the salmon for any bones and lay it skin-side down on the foil.
- 2 Trickle over the vodka or gin, massaging gently into the flesh.
- 3 Now it's your choice: you can work by hand or use a food processor to grate the beetroot coarsely. Mix together the beetroot, salt, sugar, pepper and lemon zest. Chop the dill stalks finely (setting aside the delicate fronds for later) and add these to the curing mixture.

- 4 Spread the cure over the top of the salmon, patting it down well, then wrap the foil or clingfilm over the dish to seal it within. Place a heavy weight on top (a dish or chopping board topped with a couple of cans works well).
- 5 Refrigerate for 48 hours, turning the salmon parcel over once after 24 hours and discarding any juices that have seeped out.
- 6 Remove from the parcel, scrape off the marinade and rinse the salmon under cold water. The cured fish can now be kept in an airtight container in the fridge for up to five days.
- 7 Slice the fish finely, sprinkle with freshly chopped dill and serve with a rather sweet, mustardy vinaigrette, Swedish mustard or horseradish.
- 8 The salmon is glorious with any dark rye or pumpnickel bread and particularly good with Knäckebröd (see recipe below).

Pickled Cucumber Makes 1 large jar

INGREDIENTS

- 250ml white wine vinegar
- 125 ml water
- 1 tbsp salt
- 3 tbsp sugar
- 1 tbsp coriander seeds
- 1 large cucumber, finely sliced
- a few sprigs of dill

- 1 Warm up the vinegar, water, salt, sugar and coriander until the salt and sugar have dissolved. Set aside to cool down.
- 2 Layer the cucumber and dill into a large glass jar and, once the pickle solution is cold, just pour it over the top. Leave to marinate for at least 24 hours. These quick pickles will last for two weeks as long as the cucumber is kept submerged in the liquid.



Knäckebröd (Seeded Rye Crispbread) Makes about 12 large discs

You can make these crispbreads to the traditional size of a side plate, or cut them into individual biscuits before baking as canapés. Play around with the seeds – add nigella, fennel or caraway to enhance the flavour – but keep them whole to add crunchy texture.

INGREDIENTS

- 10g fresh yeast (or 5g of dried yeast)
- 350ml blood-temperature water
- 400g rye flour
- 1 tsp salt
- a little plain flour for dusting
- 2 tbsp poppy seeds
- 2 tbsp flax seeds (also known as linseed)
- 2 tbsp sesame seeds

- 1 Preheat the oven to 200°C/180°C fan/gas mark 6.
- 2 Mix the yeast with a few tablespoons of the water until creamy.
- 3 Put the rye flour into a large bowl and add the salt, water and the creamy yeast. Stir to combine the mixture until it has absorbed all the water – it will seem quite sticky. Lay a clean tea towel over the bowl and set it aside for about an hour in a warm place to loosen up and rise a little.
- 4 Line two baking trays with baking paper (three if you have oven space).
- 5 Divide the dough into 12 roughly equal pieces (it's easiest to make quarters first, then work from there) and roll out on a lightly dusted surface until the dough is wafer thin. If the dough is sticking, just add a little more flour.
- 6 Cut into traditional circles or squares, or just leave as rough-edged sheets. Sprinkle over some of the seeds and roll them into the dough. Using the rolling pin, lift onto the lined baking sheets, then use a fork to pierce the surface of the dough.
- 7 Bake for 15 minutes, or until hard and crisp, and then cool on a rack. The crispbreads will keep well for a few days in an airtight tin.



Rye crispbreads (each)
148 cal, 4.1g fat, 25.4g carbs, 0g sugars, 0.4g salt

Pickled cucumber (per tbsp)
4 cal, 0g fat, 1g carbs, 0.5g sugars, 0.4g salt

Beetroot gravadlax
247 cal, 11.1g fat, 8.8g carbs, 8.7g sugars, 3.7g salt



COOK'S NOTES

Here's a handy way to avoid pomegranate stains and keep the seeds intact. Score the skin from top to bottom of the fruit to make quarters. Take a large bowl of water, submerge the fruit and pull it into four pieces. Pull the seeds away from the pith with your fingers. Any pieces of pith or membrane will rise to the top of the water to be skimmed off before draining the little seeds.

Hazelnut kale salad
146 cals, 13.3g fat,
4.1g carbs, 3.9g
sugars, 0.4g salt

Kale, Pomegranate and Hazelnut Salad (Serves 4-6)

This salad may sound like a bow to the clean-eating trend, but the Swedes have been eating raw kale for years. The secret is to buy whole leaves, strip away the stems and really massage the leaves to soften them up. You can dress this well ahead of time as the kale will not wilt like lettuce. Add slithers of traditional Västerbotten cheese if you want to make a full meal of it.

INGREDIENTS

• 50g blanched hazelnuts • 250g kale leaves, thick stems removed (trimmed weight) • ½ tsp salt • juice of 1 lemon • 4 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil • black pepper • 1 red-skinned apple, cut into chunks • 1 pomegranate

- 1 Pre-heat the oven to 180°C/160°C/fan/gas mark 4.
- 2 Roast the hazelnuts in the oven for about 10-15 minutes, until golden and smelling divine.
- 3 Meanwhile, slice or tear the trimmed kale into bite-size pieces and place in a bowl. Sprinkle with the salt and massage the

leaves, squeezing firmly, for about a minute. This will tenderise the leaves, reduce the natural bitterness and turn them a wonderful deep green colour.

4 Add the lemon juice, olive oil and pepper to the apple as soon as you have chopped it. Toss the salad with the apple and the dressing and taste – you may want to increase the lemon juice or salt if the kale still tastes too bitter. Refrigerate the salad until ready to use; it will keep well for 24 hours.

5 Remove the seeds from the pomegranate.

6 Place the salad in a serving bowl and sprinkle with the pomegranate seeds and hazelnuts just before serving.