

A Table in Alta

RECIPES FROM FINNMARK AND THE ARCTIC CIRCLE



COLLECTED BY ELLEN A. AHLNESS

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The recipes in this collection are thanks to over a decade of contributions and conversations with Norwegian and Saami friends, colleagues, and experts.

For inquiries, contact [*north66podcast@gmail.com*](mailto:north66podcast@gmail.com)

Ahlness, Ellen A.

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Mission

All funding from this cookbook goes to supporting graduate research on Arctic communities and politics.

The Arctic faces many challenges and is dominated by the influence of great states and power politics. It is my commitment to engage in research that empowers indigenous nations while remaining accountable and responsive to community needs. Travelling is an important part of the research process, and necessitates funding. Your purchase of this digital book supports important work that explores the role of indigenous nations in international politics

This inspiration for this cookbook came from my work creating *North 66*, a podcast that explores recent history and current events in the Arctic. My choice to engage in audial digital scholarship was intentional: I want my research to serve communities and go beyond traditional academic venues.

Thank you,

-Ellen Ahlness

A Brief History of the Saami

The Saami are the only indigenous peoples of Scandinavia. They live in Northern Scandinavia and are spread out among four countries: Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. During the Ice Age, they migrated to Northern Scandinavia from northwestern Russia. Their language, culture, traditions, and livelihood are distinct from other ethnic groups in Europe.



Traditionally, the Saami have pursued a variety of livelihoods—the two best known are coastal fishing and reindeer herding. Since the 1600's, the Saami experienced assimilation policies in Scandinavia, much like First Nations people in Canada and the US. In the 1970's, projects such as the Alta Dam construction in Norway and mining blasting in Sweden sparked environmental and indigenous rights concerns within Saami communities.

It was during this time that the Saami formed national associations, Saami Parliaments, to speak with a unified voice in protest of these projects, which they believed would damage the Northern ecosystem and disrupt herding and fishing. While the projects continued, the Saami demonstrated that they, too, were citizens with a voice. Saami continue to represent themselves in international discussions and politics through the transboundary *Saami Council*.

Today, about 10% of Saami still make a livelihood by their traditional practices, while many Saami engage in mainstream culture. Despite centuries of forced assimilation efforts from national governments, the Saami have rich traditions, languages, and cultures, and continue to assert their cultural autonomy domestically and internationally.

Special Ingredients

Many Saami entrees involving meat typically use reindeer steak. Since it is difficult to get your hands on this ingredient, there are two good substitutes you may use for these recipes: If you like a leaner, more gamey taste, you can use venison instead. If not, a good quality beef cut may be used. Either imparts a delicious taste to the dish.

There are many ingredients common and heavily utilized in both Sami cooking, and wider Scandinavian cuisine. These include berries such as:

- blueberries
- cloudbberries
- lingonberries
- bilberries

You may find that Sami dishes are elegantly simple, yet hearty and filling. This is part of what makes Northern Scandinavian food so unique. That northern communities have developed traditional dishes that are both varied and warming to the bone is a testament to the beauty of Northern culture and cuisine.



Breads

I wouldn't do it for all the butter in Småland.

- Swedish Saying

I'm in the middle of the butter melting in the porridge.

- Norwegian Proverb

May your life have variety: on one day, bread and water. On the next, water and bread.

- Finnish Expression

He was born behind a slice of brown cheese.

- Norwegian Saying



Take care not to over-mix the ingredients when forming the dough. Because there is no leavening agent, overmixing runs the risk of making the dough too heavy in the stomach.

Oat Flatbread

- ❖ 4 Tbsp dark karo syrup or molasses dissolved in 1 ¼ cups water
- ❖ Pinch of salt to taste
- ❖ 2 tsp lard or oil
- ❖ 4 heaped spoons of rolled oats
- ❖ 10 oz flour

Mix together all dry ingredients until uniform in texture.

Well out the bottom and pour in the wet ingredients, including lard/oil. Mix well.

When mixed well, knead the dough on a flat surface. If crumbly, add more water. Knead until it is the consistency of sugar cookie dough. It should be slightly sticky. Form a ball and let rest 10 minutes.

Heat a pan over high heat. Divide the ball into eight equal pieces. Dust with flour, and roll each out until each is about ¼ inch thick.

Cook one round at a time on the preheated pan for 30 seconds on each side. The flatbreads are cooked when they form dark brown spots on the side. Let cool.

Serve with stew or with syrup and berries.

This recipe is very similar to the oat flatbreads in the prior page, however, it uses rye instead of oats, rises due to yeast, and can be flavored by adding a little berry juice to the dough.

Rye Flatbread *Gahkko*

- ❖ 10 oz flour
- ❖ 4 Tbsp dark Karo syrup or molasses dissolved in 1 ¼ c. water.
- ❖ Pinch of salt to taste
- ❖ 2 tsp lard or oil.
- ❖ 4 heaped spoons of rye flour
- ❖ 10 oz flour
- ❖ ½ tsp yeast
- ❖ 1 tsp berry juice

Mix together all dry ingredients until well incorporated.

Well out the bottom and pour in the wet ingredients, including lard/oil. Mix well.

When mixed well, knead the dough on a flat surface. If crumbly, add more water. Knead until it is the consistency of sugar cookie dough. Form a ball and let rest 10 minutes.

Heat a pan on high. Divide the ball into eight equal pieces. Dust with rye flour, and roll each out until each is about ¼ inch thick.

Cook one at a time on the preheated pan for 30 seconds each side. The flatbreads are cooked when they form dark brown spots on the side. Let cool.

This is a no-hassle bread recipe that goes well with stew or soup. It is hearty and its Scandinavian influence shines through its inclusion of rye and other flours.

Saami Bread *Saami láibi*

- ❖ ¾ cups flour
- ❖ 1 ½ c. coarse whole meal flour
- ❖ 1 ½ cups whole meal flour
- ❖ ¾ cup coarse rye meal
- ❖ 6 Tbsp yeast
- ❖ 2 Tbsp sugar
- ❖ 1 tsp salt
- ❖ 2 Tbsp molasses or maple syrup
- ❖ 2 Tbsp oil
- ❖ 6 cups water, warm
- ❖ 2 ¼ cups flour

Mix the yeast with water. In a separate bowl, mix together all dry ingredients, *except* the 2 ¼ cups flour.

Add the wet ingredients.

Knead the dough, adding the 2 ¼ cups flour.

Let rise until doubled in bulk.

Divide the dough into four parts. Place into buttered molds or loaf pans, and rise until doubled.

Preheat the oven to 350°

Bake for 45 minutes until there is a golden crust.

These biscuits go well with either a sweet or savory palate. Either mop up stew or soup with them, or smother them with butter and jam!

Finnmark Biscuits

- ❖ 2/3 cups flour
- ❖ 1 Tbsp sugar
- ❖ ¼ tsp salt
- ❖ 2 eggs, yolk and white separated
- ❖ 2/3 cup milk
- ❖ 1 Tbsp butter

Beat egg whites, set aside.

Beat egg yolks until thick and lemon colored, about 5 minutes.

Add sugar, flour, milk, butter, and salt. Beat 3 minutes.

Gently fold in beaten egg whites.

Spoon batter into greased muffin pans, filling to 2/3 full.

Bake at 375° for 30 minutes.

Vegetable Dishes

Go where the pepper grows!

- Swedish Admonishment

How can a stranger know what a squirrel eats?

- Sami Proverb

Don't come here and play 'king carrot'!

- Danish Saying

Don't make a cabbage of it.

- Norwegian Saying

It fits like the yolk in the egg.

- Norwegian Idiom

She sure stepped in the salad, there.

- Norwegian Saying



This casserole is usually found on the tables spring through fall. It is a filling yet sweet dish, perfect for meatless meals. It can easily be frozen to be eaten later. There are several variations, which make the dish healthier.

Carrot Casserole *Porkkanalaatiko*

- ❖ 2 cups rice (white or brown)
- ❖ 2 cups cream (or milk)
- ❖ 2 lbs carrots, shredded
- ❖ ½ tsp salt
- ❖ 1 Tbsp brown sugar (or honey)
- ❖ 2 eggs
- ❖ 3 Tbsp butter
- ❖ 1/3 cups fine breadcrumbs
- ❖ 1 tsp nutmeg (optional)

Cook the rice and set aside when done, letting it cool as you prepare the rest of the dish.

Preheat the oven to 375.

Peel and shred the carrots in a bowl.

Add the cooked rice, milk, eggs, brown sugar, and spices. Stir until incorporated.

Pour the mixture into a baking dish.

Melt the butter and coat the breadcrumbs. Sprinkle the mixture over the casserole.

If you so desire, you can pattern the surface of the dish with slits from a knife or a spoon to allow for venting.

Bake for 45 minutes.

A seemingly genetic trait in Scandinavia love for foraging, drying, and eating mushrooms. This soup, as well as the following salad, honors the ability to live off the land, taking only what you need, and leaving the rest for others.

Chanterelle Soup

- ❖ 3 Tbsp butter
- ❖ 4 cups fresh chanterelles, chopped.
- ❖ ½ cups chopped onion
- ❖ 3 Tbsp flour
- ❖ 3 ½ cups vegetable stock
- ❖ ¾ cup whipping cream or heavy cream
- ❖ Salt and pepper to taste
- ❖ Parsley for topping

Sauté the onion and mushrooms in butter.

Stir in the flour.

Pour in the vegetable stock, continuously stirring.

Simmer for 15 minutes.

Add the seasoning and cream then bring to a boil.

Sprinkle with parsley just before serving.

This dish is wonderful for spring or summer, lightly altering the flavor and texture of the mushrooms.

Mushroom Salad

- ▶ 4 cups mushrooms, any variety
- ▶ 1 onion
- ▶ $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cream
- ▶ 1-2 tsp lemon juice
- ▶ $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp sugar
- ▶ Dash of white pepper
- ▶ Salt

Clean the mushrooms by rinsing them under cool water.

Boil the cleaned mushrooms in plenty of water for five minutes, rinse and cool.

Place the mushrooms in a glass jar, alternating with thin layers of salt. Let sit and soak in salt between two to four hours. Remove the mushrooms and clean off extra salt.

Peel and chop the onion and mushrooms.

Mix the wet ingredients into a smooth dressing.

Stir the mushrooms and the chopped onions into the dressing.



Main Dishes

You'll never catch any fish if you're afraid of getting your feet wet.

- Saami Proverb

The thing is steak.

- Swedish Saying

The cat too likes fish but doesn't want to get its claws wet.

- Saami Advice

I have made soup out of all kinds of stock.

- Saami Proverb

It's not worth going further than the sea for fish.

- Finnish Saying

The man from Luoto in church merely sleeps and dreams of herring.

- Finnish Proverb

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