

A Grand Dinner at the Nyköping Castle

The tables of the Vasa kings were filled with silver plates, deep dishes and platters. It was the church silver that were used! The kings table was also layed with knives and forks, otherwise the guests used to have knives and forks in a small boxes of their own. The king also had plates for all the guests, the usual habit was that two persons shared one plate, and often you also had soup and porridge at the same plate.

For everyday use you had pewter plates, or in less fortunated homes wooden plates. You could also use a round, hard piece of bread as a plate. The table leafs for the banquets used to hang at the wall. They were often very beautifully painted and were taken down and put on wooden jacks in special occasions.

If you had to wipe your mouth you often used the cloth, if one was available. But the king Erik XIV owned 151 table napkins, so none of his guests had blown their noses in the cloth. While dining you also could leave your hat on.

Menus

There are only a few recipes left from the 16th century and there existed no Swedish cookery books. Perhaps the courtiers of the Vasa kings had some in their libraries for example "De honesta voluptate" (about the decent voluptuousness) written by a librarian from Cremona, Barholomeus Sacchis. This book was published in 1474 and reprinted several times. Or the first German cookery book "Kuchenmeisterey" from 1485 or some other of the expensive German cookery books that were published in the 16th century.

But there do exist menus which gives just as good information as the recipes about what you had for dinner at castles and manors. For example could a Sunday dinner by the king Johan III totally concentrated in different kinds of veal. There were roasted veal with currant, patés of chopped veal, yellow veal with green herbs, "gallerad" veal, veal with currant and sap in formation of pears, a dish of veal and sugar and veal with ginger.

Caption: There is also a menu from a royal dining table of Johan III, from one of many meat free days. Dishes with " " around is very old and impossible to render.

The Dining Table of King Johan III

Fresh pikes with lemon
"Långganges" with eggs and sugar
Charutze pates
Stewed apples
Chopped pikes
Fresh salmon with raisin and almond
Bream pate
Stewed figs
Charutzer with stewed cherry and wine
Almond cheese with bonbons
Eel pate
Roasted bream with apples
Preserved perch with eggs and sugar
Swetzke cake
Egg pate
Roasted salmon with sap
"Bemfish" with mace
Stewed rice
Boiled bream with black"sod"
"Leeses" of sugar, milk and rosewater
Blank essen containing of rice, rosewater and sugar
Chopped pikes made look like pears



Roasted whitefish with capers
 Stewed plums
 Pike pate
 Apple cake
 Roasted "karutzersittruneret"
 Stewed pike
 "Lumer" with brown "sod"
 Rice cake
 Flatfish with green herbs
 "Rocker" with ginger powder
 Pike in jelly
 Cloudberry cake
 Stewed prune
 Pear cake
 Pears boiled with wine and cinnamon
 Ice with horse radish
 Raisin and almond

Other popular royal meals was roasted hazel hen with lemon, hen boiled in wine and orange juice, boiled filled lamb, pan steak with horse radish, blackcock pate, boiled geese with raisin and almond, boiled "birkhaner" with pears. Ox feet (called låsyss), eggs in jelly, roast beef with capers, stewed lungs, hen in jelly, cheese and fruit.



Ham was indispensable in a banquet. Records from a banquet makes clear that the dinner table provided 2 hams, 2 tongues, 2 big sausages, 3 plates of pan steak, 3 plates of roast beef, white bread and rye bread. And you had 2 barrels of beer to drink.

Ham and pork were smoothly salted after the slaughtering and then hung up to dry in the air and sun. They became larded hams and larded pork. They also made sausages and we know the larded sausage, and of course the leg of mutton. When they had dried meat they loved to have butter on it.

Goose were very common and there were often a lots of geese held in the farms. The geese eggs were frequently used in the cooking. Wild birds like partridge, blackcock, capercailzie, hazel hen and grouse were much liked as winter food. The latter were transported frozen from the northern parts of the country.

Cheese was since long time ago required at banquets. *Västgöta cheese* was in favour and they were often so big that two men had to carry them. *Västgöta cheese* was made of cow milk and the *Östgöta cheese* of sheep milk but you could also make cheese out of goat milk. Cheese cake was obligatory at banquets.

A Lot of Beer

The 16th century was swimming in beer. Most of it was brewed at home but the Swedes also imported beer from Germany and Holland. To raise the quality of the Swedish beer the king Gustav Vasa demanded every farmer to grow at least 40 hop poles. And when there were a lack of hop the beer were flavoured with bog myrtle. The average person consumed about 2½ liters per day. Beer was not only for the thirst, it also gave about 3000 calories a day.

The writings tells us about how much beer was consumed by the Swedish court. For example the master of the royal household drank 22 stoup (1 stoup = 1,3 liter = 2,75 U.S. pint). The Åkesson children had 2 stoup for breakfast, for dinner and evening 5½ stoup and as night beer 1 stoup. **The wet nurse drank 27 stoup a day.**



You never drank beer when eating. You had it before or after the meal and sometimes instead of eating. The beer was served in wooden cans or in cups of silver, pewter or wood. It depended on the occasion or the economic status.

Vegetables

Roots and vegetables were, just like bread, served with meat and fish. The potato did not arrive in Sweden until two hundred years later. In the field the farmers grew corn and also peas, beans and turnips.

Pea soup was a very liked and common meal. But it was only Erik XIV that had his soup flavored with arsenic by his brother and rival Johan III. Every farm had its own onion plot and cabbage garden but also a vegetable garden where parsnip, spinach, lettuce, cucumber, and parsley were grown. This knowledge was transferred from the monasteries.

Carl IX, Erik XIV and their down-to-earth brother Johan III were very interested in growing the royal gardens. But while Carl and Erik grew oranges and grapes their brother grew melons and pumpkins and also common beets and carrots in his vegetable garden. This knowledge was quickly handed over, first to the manors and then to big and small farms.

Many green plants were also fetched from the forests and the pastures. Chenopodium is related to spinach and was frequently used, as well as sorrel, in stews and soups. The vegetables were seldom eaten raw but boiled or stewed. And for the winter supplies the vegetables were acidified or dried and kept in a earth cellar or a heap of sand.

Parts from the Swedish book: 16th century food, Banquets and dinners, menus, gentlemen's bread, candy and bonbons, ordinary food, prices and recipes.

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