Authentic food vs. invented food traditions

Locality, escapism and hedonism as a contemporary food identity

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Food and meal –
A shape that carry values
Why produce such different food and why serve it in meals?

For survival

Our choice
Flavours and tastes – Expressions for values and ideals

- We are born with the ability to feel the basic flavours (sweet, sour, bitter, salt, umami) with our taste receptors but we are culturally trained to interpret what they mean to us.

- ”Flavour” is therefore different in different social groups, classes and social situations.

- The food culture we show to each other is the one the best signalize the value ”good taste”
Our reasons to chose what to eat

- Basic taste receptors
- Cultural ideas
- Social attitudes
- Class
- Sex/gender

Less important

More important
Our values have through history developed our food preferences to become our food culture.

We want to work as little as possible for the maximum results.

We chose food that makes us accepted in our social and cultural group.

We follow the choices of society’s elite.

We develop technical solutions to fulfil our values and dreams.
Food and beverage are always selected to give us as much social and cultural success as possible (within the group we want to belong)
Our relation to food is therefore always the relation to “the fashion of food and meal”

1750

2008
An Urban Culinary Identity

The contemporary urban citizen’s interest in eating, drinking and buying local, regional and other ‘authentic’ food
The search for authentic food is a global political idea which is run in both private and governmental projects.
Urban citizens, preferably the urban middle class, search for values of genuineness and authenticity.

- Regional food
- Farmers market
- Countryside restaurants
Food as urban experience and a culinary excursion – The contemporary need of events and organised activities, Food festival in Stockholm, 2007
Urban fashion – Learning taste in a group

Wine tasting

Taste sessions

Taste Protocols at Stockholm Food Festival 2007
Chocolate festival at a Stockholm Museum, 2004 – 12,000 visitors during a weekend including the minister of trade.
Urban experience – A large part of the contemporary literature on food answers to an urban dream of authenticity
Urban Culinary Tourism

Contemporary leisure activities for the urban citizen
Triangle for a successful local food tourism experience

Comfort and good food

Experience

Entertainment and leisure activities in culture and nature

Good shopping
Different authenticity and food profiles for different target groups

Overall Guide to Sweden
(English speaking target group)

Restaurant Guide to Stockholm
(Swedish/English speaking target group)
Commercialising the local food culture –
Restaurant Kukkolaforsen by the river of Torneå, 20 km north of Haparanda, Sweden

Hoop net fishing

Smoked white fish
The ability to commercialise regional food culture is linked to the customer’s perception of the areas cultural characteristics.

Food cultural expectations for a Swede visiting Kukkolaforsen

Food cultural expectations for an American visiting Kukkolaforsen
Kukkolaforsen restaurant – The consumers food cultural idea decides what regional food culture dishes that can be sold

Older regional food culture
- White fish
- Dried meat soup
- Lard pudding

Restaurant owners idea
- White fish
- Dried meat soup

Produced food
- White fish
- Dried meat soup

Customers preference
- White fish
- Thai style
- Pike
- Rein deer

- Pike
- Rein deer
- Rein deer
Local and global consumer expectation’s produces different regional food culture

Locals uses a local restaurant as a
an everyday or weekend luxury – This food can be sold all year around

Global travellers uses a local restaurant as a
an cause to travel and experience – This food can only be sold during tourist season
The process that makes everyday food culture attractive with the right authenticity.

- **Notating phase**: "Real everyday food culture"
  - Uninteresting value
- **Codification phase**: Unclear value
- **Beatification phase**: Trivial value

"Authentic food culture"

Analysed from Metzger 2005.
Food culture is a commercial product and...

…the guest buys…

A social moment and a memory – not food

“A fantastic evening”

…but the company produces…

An event mixed with different components

“A quality the consumer is ready to pay for, at the lowest cost for the restaurant”
Examples on how local, regional and/or traditional food is made to a contemporary product
Creating a story - Inventing a local meal experience through storytelling

Figures made by school children around Sikfors manor restaurant symbolising the 700 inhabitants who lived in the village when the manor house was built (1849) – Every visitor ask the staff about the figures which creates a story and an relation to the site
Inventing traditions - The Taste of the Archipelago
- EU programme for development of tourism

EU-project 1996-2006 to increase the lack of employment in the Archipelago between Sweden and Finland. Several Culinary Competitions; best restaurant, best potatoes, best coastal cuisine in Europe etc.
Mixing different leisure activities - Urban middle class consumers are often interested in mixing food experiences with art experiences

Öland Harvest Festival - Started in 1996 to create an autumn tourist season. It is visited by 200,000 tourists (mainly middle aged and older persons) during three days, and these customers spend more money than the summer tourists (mainly families).
Developing traditional food to contemporary dishes - Traditional food can be accepted by young consumers when presented in a contemporary shape – a new north Swedish food culture is born

Elk burgers  Rein deer burgers  Rein deer pizza
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive local food culture – sellable</th>
<th>Negative local food culture – un-sellable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matches the urban citizens expectations and ideal of authenticity</td>
<td>Not associated to urban citizens expectations or related to rural consumers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicates one clear origin</td>
<td>Communicate different origins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasty, light and exotic with an authentic and nostalgic touch</td>
<td>Related to ethnic or social problems or low ranked minorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impression of artisan production with high skill and integrity</td>
<td>Every day food with high energy content and food which is complicated to cook</td>
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The return of the Schnapps table (Brännvinsbord)
The Schnapps table (Brännvinsbord)

- Informal start of a supper, clearly separated from the dinner.
- Often eaten in a separate room, standing up or sitting down at small tables. No formal sitting order.
- Always five basic dish types – Fish, meat, cheese, butter and bread. Several aquavits and sometimes beer is served.
- Only preserved food is served, no vegetable dishes. Seasonal shape and always super local.
- 21th century revival of the Schnapps table by food stylists and chefs.

The Smörgåsbord

The Schnapps table
Schnapps table (Brännvinsbord)
New interpretation Schnapps table by Lars Eriksson, 2005
New interpretation Schnapps table by Lars Eriksson, 2005
New interpretation Schnapps table by Lars Eriksson, 2005
New interpretation Schnapps table by Fredrik Eriksson, 2007
Photo: Beatrice Lundborg, DN
Interpretation of the tradition at home

“We had guests this week end and served the Schnapps table in a 18th century style. It’s an unusual tradition and we will probably stick to it because it is so fascinating different. It gives something to talk about and it surprises the guests.

From the blog “I Lilla Kamomillas Villa”, 2008
New Nordic Food –

A political project for national identity and regional development
The Nordic food culture is related to only 120 days of agricultural production – Saving and preservation techniques gives the Nordic cuisine its flavors.
Architectural skill is necessary to create the Nordic food culture – Some storage buildings found in the Nordic countries.
Nordic food culture - The tastes from preservation and freshness

- Sour/fermented
- Dried
- Salted
- Smoked
- Sweet
- Stored food
- Fresh food
- Frozen
- Chilled

Preservation and freshness
Nordic bread culture (until approx. 1880’s)
A mixture of hard and soft breads
New Nordic Food – The cuisine

- “Nordic Light and Nordic Delight” – combine food and design to make a well tasting cuisine that expresses a good flavour

- Based on Nordic raw stuff’s own taste which can be related to the Nordic climate (“terroir”),

- Each Nordic country contributes to the “umbrella” of New Nordic Food with it’s own specialties and characteristics,

- Traditional and simple cooking techniques but updated and in an healthy way, no unnatural additives,

- Use of the tastes from traditional preservation techniques (sour, salt, sugar and smoked)
What is new in "New Nordic Food"?

- Mixing tradition with innovation
- Seasonal raw stuff and simple cooking
- Balance between hedonism and healthiness
- Raw stuff from the geographic Nordic area
- Raw stuff should express the landscapes qualities
- Food as identity is emphasised

From nynordiskmad.org
Local production gives authenticity which is important to the contemporary customer.

Farmers market in larger cities

Local and small dairies around the country

Farmer’s shop – Buying food directly from the farmer
What is not included in the New Nordic Food?

- No contemporary immigrants food culture,
- Not the minority's food culture,
- Not the traditional trade with the rest of the world,
- Not the taste from culture - the taste from nature (terroir) is emphasised
14 development projects during 2007-2009

- The taste of Nordic food in relation to other cuisines
- Making a safe small scale food production
- Focus on the youths – Food for health and identity
- Cooking competition – Nordic hobby chefs
- The importance of storytelling for food with an authentic profile is emphasised.
- Food as a travelling memory and a souvenir
- Etc.
Promoting values through food culture –
Nordic Food Week, 2007
Some conclusions
Authentic food vs. invented food traditions

- Food culture is the result of a process where values are expressed in products/resources.

- Food is today used to express an urban identity, and local, regional and other food with a history of authenticity is useful in this identity work.

- Food is an important tool in the contemporary search for hedonistic escapism.
Thank you!

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