



Sons of Norway Mini Presentations

#339: FAVORITE NORWEGIAN FOODS

To Norwegian-Americans, lutefisk—dried cod soaked in lye—and lefse, a soft, flat potato bread are considered typical Norwegian fare, with rømmegrøt a close third. In modern Norway, the picture is a little different. In 1985 the Norwegian Institute for Consumer Research did an extensive survey of the types of food that Norwegians prefer to eat. Not surprisingly, meatballs and sausages were the most frequently served courses. The Norwegian version of pancakes took third place, while fishballs, *torsk* (cod) and rice pudding followed as favorite Norwegian dinner courses. Bread and potatoes remain staples in most meals combined with a main dish of fresh seafood, meatballs, game or beef. Holiday meals often consist of mutton, pork and game dishes along with special desserts and festive treats.

Average Norwegians are fairly traditional in their choice of food. Ninety percent of the courses Norwegian men and women serve for dinner were also standard fare in their parents' home. While Norwegian families used to eat five meals a day, there appears to be a slight change in this trend. Of the standard meals—breakfast, lunch, dinner, afternoon coffee and supper—only four are observed by most families in modern Norway. It is usually the afternoon coffee or supper which is skipped.

Frokost the first meal of the day is a *smørgåsbord* of bread, butter, sliced deli meats, cheeses, jams, cucumber, tomato and liver or fish pâté. This assortment of toppings is called *pålegg*. When the toppings go on the *brødslike* to create an open-faced sandwich, it is called *smørbrød*, which literally translates to “butter bread.” *Smørbrød* is

commonly eaten for breakfast, lunch, and supper. People often have lunch right where they work, preferring a short lunch break in order to leave work early. *Middag* is eaten between 4 and 5 p.m. and is the big family meal of the day. The average adult Norwegian goes to a restaurant for dinner about once a month. Young Norwegians have dinner away from home, on the average, about every third week.

Norwegians have not always consumed as much meat as they do now. Going back one or two generations meat was not an everyday occurrence, it was something you ate during the holidays and special feasts. In everyday life, meat was an extravagance that few could afford. Today the situation is quite different. Most Norwegians eat meat every day, several times a day.

Traditional Norwegian desserts tend to be dairy-based with almond, cardamom or cinnamon flavoring. Special occasions call for *kransekake*, a cake made of stacked concentric almond rings adorned with loops of white icing and small Norwegian flags. A typical birthday cake is *bløtkake* (soft cake), a layered sponge cake soaked with milk or juice which is filled and topped with whipped cream and fruit. What Norwegian desserts lack in extravagant ingredients, they make up for with the richness of dairy.

Norwegians make their food in a simple style by sticking with the basics of bread, fish, meat, dairy and vegetables, although other influences have become more commonplace. Chinese, Indian, Italian and Turkish restaurants are common in major cities. Pizza and tacos have become popular weekend foods in Norway, so much so that they have their own trending hashtags such as #fredagstaco (Friday's taco) and #lørdagspizza (Saturday's pizza). Over the past few decades



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Norwegians have become increasingly enamored with frozen pizza, with “Grandiosa”—also nicknamed *Grandi/Grændis*—being the most popular brand. Twenty-four million frozen pizzas were sold annually between 1980 and 2014. The Norwegian pizza brand is a piece of modern culture, jokingly referred to as the “national dish” by some Norwegians.

Incorporated in these strong food traditions are some delicious foods—and some are even available in the United States. Jarlsberg (yarls-behrg) cheese has become very popular on the North American market along with the special Norwegian goat cheese —*geitost* (YIGHT-ooht). The cheese goes well with several types of imported Norwegian flatbread.

It is no secret that Norway exports frozen fish to the North American market. In recent years, the import of fresh fish from Norway has been growing rapidly. Fresh salmon, trout and torsk are flown to the U.S. daily, with salmon being Norway’s second-largest export. Pickled herring and canned sardines in a variety of sauces are other Norwegian fish products known to North Americans.

In North American towns with a heavy concentration of Norwegian heritage, other Norwegian foods may be available and you may be tempted to try a few of them. Bon appetit—or, as they say in Norway—Håper det smaker! (HOH-pehr deh SMAK-kehr)