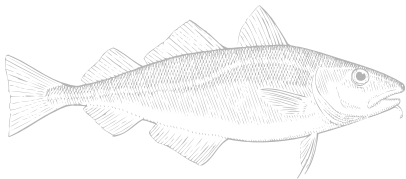
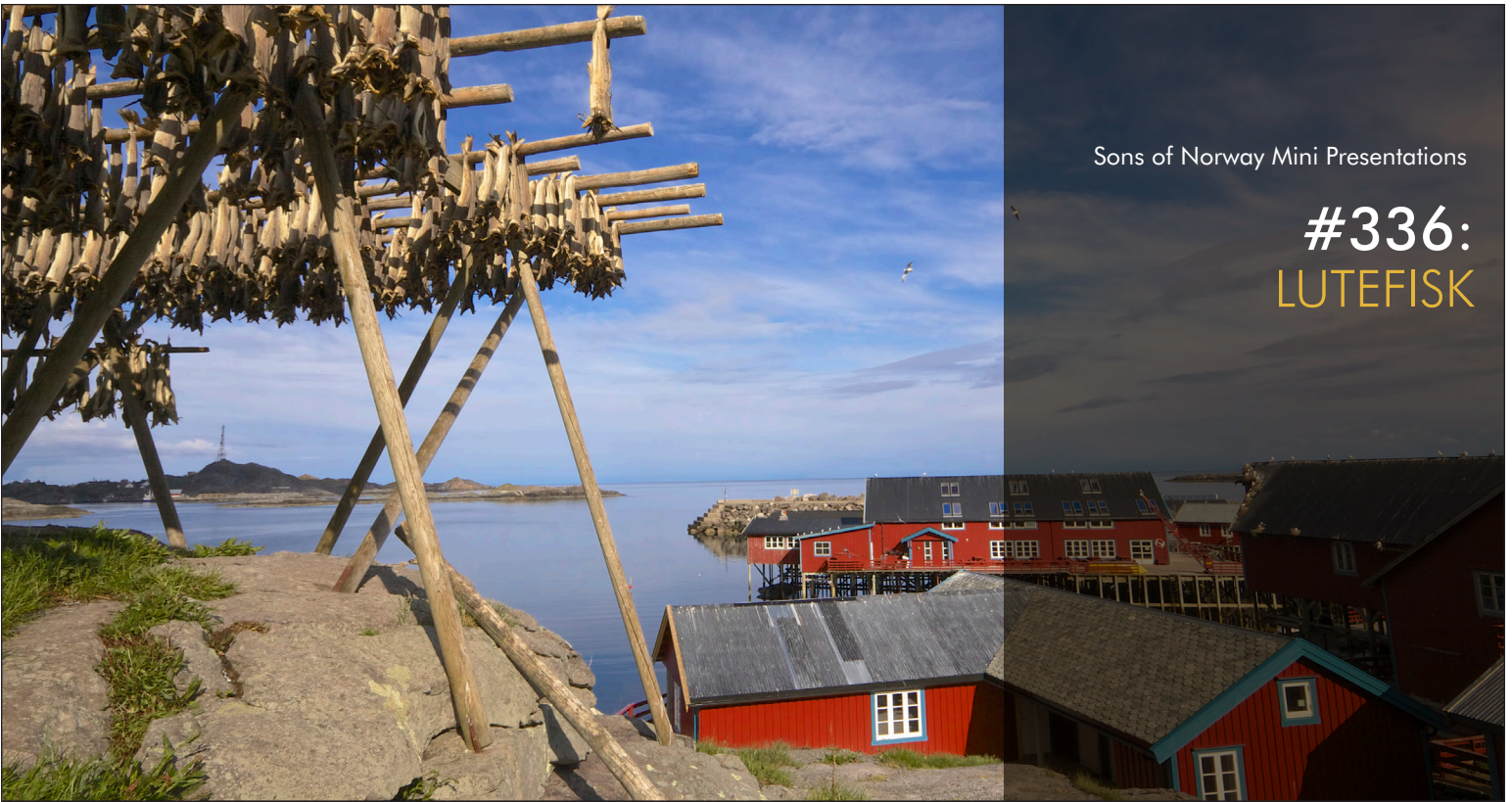


# #336: LUTEFISK



A Norwegian tradition, *lutefisk* is dried cod that has been reconstituted with lye before being cooked. While lutefisk has greatly lost favor in Norway,

Norwegian-Americans have a long tradition of serving lutefisk during the fall and winter holiday season. Still, opinions on lutefisk vary from intense distaste to a strong feeling of enjoyment and connection to one's heritage when consuming this highly acidic dish. Because of its nature – its strong smell and ashy taste – lutefisk is often the butt of many Norwegian-American jokes.

Lutefisk can be made by a variety of stockfish such as haddock and pollock, but cod is the most common. Though it used to be a complex process to make lutefisk, today modern food suppliers offer frozen lutefisk that only requires cooking. Traditionally, after the lutefisk has been soaked to remove the lye and steamed, it is served with either a cream sauce or copious amounts of melted butter.

While lutefisk is still loved by many, its origins remain a mystery to this day. While it is well known that Norway had a strong fishing culture and fish were regularly consumed, the exact creation of lutefisk is unknown. Treating stockfish, like cod, with lye in order to make it edible is something that Norwegians have been doing at least since the Middle Ages. According to the foremost expert on the subject, Norwegian

ethnologist Astri Riddervold, lutefisk might simply have come about by pure accident instead of by intention.

A common story for the creation of lutefisk is one about Viking fishermen that hung their fish out to dry on birch racks. Unfortunately, fish had been left out to dry when these fishermen were attacked by some neighboring Vikings that set the racks of fish on fire. The fire was then put out by a precipitous rain storm from the North Sea, and the fish were left to soak in a mixture of water and birch ash for months. This fish was then discovered by some hungry Vikings who reconstituted the fish for a feast thereby creating the first lutefisk.



While there is no proof that this is how lutefisk came into existence, lutefisk has served a long, vital role in Norwegian culture by providing generations with protein during the winter months. When Norwegians immigrated to the United States they brought lutefisk with them. Today, lutefisk is a rare dish in Norway while it continues to be consumed by Norwegian-Americans as part of their holiday traditions and community lutefisk dinners. The love of lu-

tefisk in the Norwegian-American community has become so ingrained that Madison, Minnesota has proclaimed itself to be the "Lutefisk Capital of the United States."

To make your own lutefisk, click the [link](http://www.sofn.com/norwegian_culture/showRecipe.jsp?document=Lutefisk.html) to the Sons of Norway Recipe Box or visit [http://www.sofn.com/norwegian\\_culture/showRecipe.jsp?document=Lutefisk.html](http://www.sofn.com/norwegian_culture/showRecipe.jsp?document=Lutefisk.html)

