

THE FOOD & COOKING OF NORWAY

Traditions • Ingredients • Tastes • Techniques • 60 Classic Recipes



JANET LAURENCE

with photographs by William Lingwood

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Front cover shows Roasted Salmon with Honey and Mustard (see page 52); page 1 shows Marinated Salmon (see pages 26–7); page 2 shows Roast Pork Loin with Red Cabbage (see page 76–7); page 3 shows Tosca Cake (see pages 122–3).

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Notes

Bracketed terms are intended for American readers. For all recipes, quantities are given in both metric and imperial measures and, where appropriate, in standard cups and spoons. Follow one set of measures, but not a mixture, because they are not interchangeable. Standard spoon and cup measures are level. 1 tsp = 5ml, 1 tbsp = 15ml, 1 cup = 250ml/8fl oz. Australian standard tablespoons are 20ml. Australian readers should use 3 tsp in place of 1 tbsp for measuring small quantities of gelatine, flour, salt, etc. American pints are 16fl oz/2 cups. American readers should use 20fl oz/2.5 cups in place of 1 pint when measuring liquids. Electric oven temperatures in this book are for conventional ovens. When using a fan oven, the temperature will need to be reduced by about 10–20°C/20–40°F. Since ovens vary, check with your manufacturer's instruction book for guidance. The nutritional analysis given for each recipe is calculated per portion (i.e. serving or item), unless otherwise stated. If the recipe gives a range, such as Serves 4–6, then the nutritional analysis will be for the smaller portion size, i.e. 6 servings. Measurements for sodium do not include salt added to taste. Medium (US large) eggs are used unless otherwise stated.

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The Norwegian landscape

Norway is a sensationally beautiful country. There are soaring mountains, peaceful valleys, dark forests, silver lakes, rushing rivers and deep fjords that lead to a coastline fringed with small islands. Some of the highest waterfalls and glacial streams in the world are in Norway. The simple grandeur of nature dominates the country and affects the whole way of life.

In Norway, a short season of long summer days is contrasted with a long season of short winter days. This makes both fishing and farming difficult for much of the year despite the abundance of fish in seas, rivers and fjords and the more temperate climate created by the Gulf Stream. Yet the beauty of the country is indisputable, making such hardships incidental for a population that makes much of the outdoors, all year round. Norwegians fiercely guard their ancient law of *allemannsretten*, a law which gives everyone the right of access to wild areas. The all-too-short summer is spent out of doors, revelling in days filled with a sun that for much of the country never

sets. The long, dark and icy winters, though, require preparation as four to six months of the year see much of the country covered in snow.

The Norwegian attitude to food is deeply bound up in their surroundings and history. Food and cooking traditions can be traced back to the days when maintaining regular food supplies involved ensuring that the short summer harvests yielded enough food to last through the long winters. Despite seasonal extremes, nature is generous in Norway. Both salt and fresh waters teem with high-quality fish. What agricultural land is available is fertile and can be made to produce crops and raise domestic animals. Sheep or goats can

feed on green pastures above deep fjords offering a backdrop of dramatic mountains, often with snow-covered peaks, an ever-constant reminder of the short summer season.

Climate

Norway hugs the edge of Scandinavia. A bulb shape in southern and central Norway, the land then stretches and elongates itself up the side of Sweden, over into the top of Finland and then curves over to hug the north of Russia. It is as though the coast of Norway, laced with small islands and fringed with fjords, offers protection to the other northern countries from the blast of the Atlantic. In part this is true. However, the coastal regions are also blessed with the softening effect of the Gulf Stream. Although most of Norway lies on the same latitude as Siberia, it enjoys a much more temperate climate than might be expected, which enables a wider range of crops to be grown.

Over one third of Norway lies within the Arctic Circle, which is the line of latitude linking the places around the world that have at least one full day on which the sun never sets and one day on which it never rises.

Left Soaring mountains provide Norway's fjords with a dramatic backdrop, but limit the amount of land available for agriculture.





As you travel north during the summer, the days when the sun never sets lengthen into weeks. The midnight sun gradually approaches the horizon then, instead of vanishing below it, slowly begins an upward trajectory towards another day. The light around midnight is not quite daylight but has a pearly, mystical quality. Even in southern Norway, the summer sun lingers until almost midnight. Between late May and mid-August, nowhere in the country experiences true darkness.

Endless summer days contrast with polar nights when the sun never rises. Curiously, the periods of sunless days are not as long as those of the midnight sun. And, just as the light at midnight is not that of daylight, so the dark at midday in winter resembles a twilight as if the sun is struggling to break through. Only in a few places in the far north, such as the island of Svalbard, is darkness complete.

Norway offers great variations in both landscape and weather. Most of the country's eastern spine is mountainous, as is the central part of its southern peninsula. Here, winters are bitter and summer temperatures tend to be higher than coastal regions, which have a milder climate with less dramatic extremes between summer and winter. Rain falls generously on some coastal areas, while others have hardly any precipitation – the latter still manage to thrive, due to the many rivers that bring water down from the snow-laden mountains.

The natural landscape

Norway has distinctive natural features in its landscape, which were formed by prehistoric glaciers – mountains, rivers, lakes, waterfalls, glaciers and fjords. The mountain areas typically run from north to south, and consist of plateaus and

Above The shimmering curtains of the Northern Lights, the phenomenon seen in the sky in northern latitudes, are one of the wonders of the Arctic Circle.

Above left Norway's coastline adjoins the Barents Sea in the north, the Norwegian Sea in the west and the southern Skagerrak Strait.

lakes with peaks. Notable ranges include Dovrefjell and Trollheimen in the centre, Jotunheimen in the south and the Kjølén mountain range, which runs throughout most of Norway. Fjords, which are narrow inlets between cliffs or steep slopes with their bases eroded significantly below sea level, characterize the Norwegian landscape and provide spectacularly grand views. The largest fjord is Sognefjorden in the south-west, with other large ones Hardangerfjord, Dragsvik, Nærøyfjord and Geirangerfjord.

Norway: a brief history

Norway's name comes from the Scandinavian words for north, "nor", and way, "vegn". Its history goes back some ten or eleven thousand years. From the Sami through to the Vikings, an independent spirit has reigned and survived not only difficult living conditions but also repeated attempts at domination by the Danes and Swedes. Many have emigrated but those who stayed found countless ways to thrive.

As the last ice age was in retreat, ancestors of the Sami arrived in boats made from the hide of animals or in hollowed tree trunks. These early settlers were nomadic, hunting, fishing and herding. Lacking metal, their tools were made of antler and bone. Seals and whales were hunted with harpoons of bone. These early settlers quickly realized the wealth of food in the sea and that the coastal regions, thanks to the Gulf Stream, had a less extreme climate than other parts of Norway. On land, game was hunted with bows and arrows or with bone javelins. Before long the settlers started tilling the soil as well as domesticating animals.

From those early times, it was obvious that to survive the winter efforts had to be made to conserve food during the summer.

Travel within Norway was always difficult and in winter the terrain made it almost impossible. Building roads over mountains required major effort and winter snows and frosts made roads impassible and destroyed surfaces. Boats became the preferred transport, along coast and rivers and for crossing lakes. In winter, skis were used to traverse snow-covered land.

Early regional kingdoms

Norway first developed as a series of some 29 small kingdoms. A medieval system of masters and serfs operated

a seafaring and rural economy. Theirs was a pagan culture. Norwegians have created a rich tapestry of myths and legends, most of which survive to this day. (There is a saying that Norwegians are clever, they know that trolls don't exist. The question is, do the trolls know?) Norwegians believed a host of gods, giants and trolls were an inextricable part of the awesome scenery that surrounded them. Every facet of nature and geography could be ascribed to the actions or characters of one of the mythological creatures that they worshipped.

A scarcity of agricultural land and a practice of taking more than one wife meant men had to go abroad to provide for their families. So, seafaring was in their blood, and life in the mountains and fjords, with the short summers and long winters, had bred a tough race.

The Sami

Previously known as Lapps, the Sami people are an indigenous group who for centuries inhabited the whole of northern Russia, Finland and eastern Karelia. Scandinavian settlers drove them north and, as one of the largest ethnic minorities in Europe, they are still found

Left The Sami of Finnmark, in northern Norway, depend on the reindeer (caribou) for their livelihood and their cuisine.



Right Fish have been hung to dry in Norway and Greenland since medieval times to produce the popular ingredient stockfish.

in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia, with over 60 per cent in Norway, largely in the most northern region of Finnmark, where they still herd reindeer (caribou). Their economy has always been based around a strong relationship with the land and its natural resources.

Finnmark has a dual character. Its wild coastline is deeply indented with fjords and scattered with fishing villages, while the interior is a high, broad plateau where the Sami people raise their reindeer. Although Sami ancestors arrived first, others migrated to Scandinavia from central Europe after the ice receded, settling particularly along the southern Norwegian coast. Tall, fair haired, with blue eyes, speaking a Germanic language, these hunter-gatherers may have introduced the fighting instinct that developed into Viking culture.

Vikings

The Vikings set out not only from Norway but also Sweden, Denmark and the Baltic countries. The name Viking comes from *vikingar*, to pirate. Initially establishing peaceful, farming settlements in Orkney and Shetland off the north coast of Scotland, the adventurous norsemen soon developed powerful boats capable of crossing oceans. Plundering and pillaging, the Vikings ventured far afield, and established themselves in England (King Canute ruled England, Denmark and Norway in the first part of the 11th century) and Normandy in France. From the 9th to the middle of the 11th century, they instilled terror throughout Europe and took possession of a vast horde of riches.



Norwegians have continued to be explorers. Two polar exploration pioneers were Fridtjof Nansen, who crossed the Greenland icecap in 1888, and Roald Amundsen, who reached the South Pole in 1911. Then there was Thor Heyerdahl, who made his name by taking the Kon Tiki raft across the Pacific in 1947.

Sustaining the sailors

Viking expeditions would have taken many weeks, during which active sailors needed to be fed large quantities of protein in ships with little storage and few cooking facilities. What made the voyages possible were two of the great culinary discoveries of the Norwegians, dried cod and pickled herring (a rich source of vitamin C, so necessary to avoid scurvy).

To preserve food for winter use, many of the cod that teemed in northern waters were gutted and dried in the wind, first on rocks and then on poles, until they became as hard as a board. Like the South African dried meat known as biltong, bits could then be broken off and chewed, or the whole fish soaked until it

was rehydrated, when it could be cooked. The dried fish was prepared without salt and was known as stockfish. Adding wood ash, or lye, to the boiling water, the Norwegians considerably improved the texture and flavour of the rehydrated fish. The result is the celebrated lutefisk, the taste of which is either adored or abhorred.

By the 6th century, the export of dried fish in exchange for other goods was established. By the 9th century, plants for drying cod had been introduced in Iceland and Norway and the finished product had found a market in northern Europe and the Mediterranean. Later, in the 19th century, the Norwegians perfected a system for salting and drying the cod, the method preferred by the Portuguese (for their *bacalhau*) and Spanish (for their *bacalao*), and cooked in many imaginative ways. In Norway, the salted and dried fish was known as klipfish and in fact was more valued as an export than a national delicacy. Until the Spaniards introduced olive oil and tomatoes, klipfish was usually boiled and served with potatoes.



Left Olaf II, known as The Holy, established Christianity as Norway's religion and became the nation's patron saint.

Unification and Christianity

While the Vikings were sailing farther and farther abroad, Harald Fairhair (859–935), the first king of Norway, was conquering and unifying the regional kingdoms at home. After a decisive sea battle in 872 the country became officially united as far north as Trondheim. In practice, however, it remained a country of regions with their own dialects and costumes.

Many of the Vikings who settled in Scotland, England and Ireland converted to Christianity. One of these was Håkon, one of six sons of Harald. Erik, the eldest, murdered four of his brothers, but never succeeded in overcoming Håkon. Erik became king on his father's death but ruled so badly that Håkon came back in 934 to rescue what was left of Harald's achievement. Erik fled to England and managed to take over the throne of York as King Erik Bloodaxe.

So, King Håkon the Good brought Christianity to Norway but neither he nor the new religion survived for long – Håkon was defeated and killed in 960.

It wasn't until Olaf II founded the Church of Norway in 1024 that Christianity was established as the national religion. Known as "The Holy", Olaf became Norway's patron saint. His tomb in Nidaros cathedral in Trondheim was one of the most important pilgrimage destinations in northern Europe.

Despite a period of civil wars, Norway at the start of the 13th century ruled over land from the Isle of Man in the Irish Sea to the Kola Peninsula (now part of the north Russian federation) in the east. In 1262, Greenland and Iceland became Norwegian dependencies. Despite various civil wars, an invasion by Denmark, and trading restrictions in northern Europe, medieval Norway flourished.

Economic change and loss of independence

In the 14th century, the Black Death and other plagues struck in Norway, and this brought a period of economic deterioration. Towns were ruined and land was left uncultivated. Some 80 per cent of the

nobility perished along with the feudal system of masters and serfs. From then on Norway was egalitarian and, until the 20th century, its population was primarily rural.

Denmark had long coveted Norway, and from 1537 to 1814 the country lost its independence and became subject to Danish sovereignty. Norway's economy improved gradually during this period, due to careful trade controls of products such as iron, timber and pulp, and by the late 17th century there was a rising generation of wealthy middle classes. The introduction of the potato in the 18th century, easy to grow on a wider range of land than cereals, initiated the development of Norway's rail transport network and significantly increased the country's prosperity, in combination with the expansion of herring fisheries on the west coast and the sale of whale, seal and walrus products.

Establishing nationalism

But political control continued to be passed from one country to another. After Napoleon's defeat in 1813, when Denmark and Norway sided with Napoleon against the British and its allies, Norway was ceded to Sweden in the Treaty of Kiel, and its dependencies, Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, were kept by Denmark. Norway had earlier lost control of the Orkney and Shetland Islands and now its only overseas possession was the uninhabited Bouvet island in the Antarctic.

The growth of trade and increasing prosperity during the 18th century had encouraged feelings of nationalism, further stimulated by the American and

French revolutions. In response to the Treaty of Kiel, and hoping to wrench control of Norway from Sweden, Denmark encouraged an attempt by the Norwegians to gain independence and a national constitution was drawn up on 17th May 1814, still celebrated as their national day.

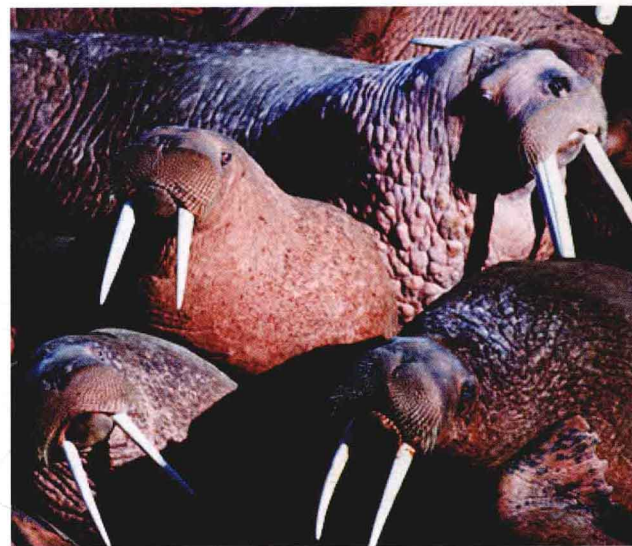
Throughout the 19th century, Norway's international trade increased, particularly of fish and whale products. Cultural life flourished as the country produced poet and playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906), painter Edvard Munch (1863–1944), and composer Edvard Grieg (1843–1907). Attempts to rescue the language from Danish influence resulted in the creation of a new form of written Norwegian, based on all the various regional dialects.

Still one of Europe's poorest countries, however, emigration increased. In the final three-quarters of the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th, some 750,000 Norwegians re-settled in North America, nearly as many as remained at home.

Europe and 20th-century prosperity

Norway has long been a seafaring nation with a large merchant fleet. During World War I, despite being neutral, Norway lent Britain considerable aid by delivering essential supplies in return for much needed coal. Neutrality was not maintained in World War II. After the German invasion, King Håkon VII and his government established a government in exile in Britain. Norwegian merchant ships in Allied waters were requisitioned to act as war transports and supply services. By the end of the war, Norwegian naval vessels were fighting alongside the British. After the war, Norway was a founding member of the United Nations.

Towards the end of the 1960s, Norway's economy was transformed by the discovery of oil and gas in the North Sea. From being one of the poorest countries in Europe, it became one of the richest. Successive governments used oil windfalls plus income tax to



Above The ivory tusks of the walrus have always been attractive to hunters. Many were etched and carved by sailors into scrimshaw, products made from marine mammals.

build one of the most extensive social welfare systems in history. Free medical care and higher education, generous pension and unemployment benefits add up to what the government claim is "the most egalitarian social democracy in western Europe". Norway is now ranked as having the highest standard of living in the world, and is also considered to be the most advantageous place for women to live because of its cultural and political freedoms and income equality.

Norwegians today retain their hard-won independence and their deep and abiding love for their country. Almost the whole population has a place in the countryside where they can enjoy rural pursuits. Hiking, fishing, hunting, skiing and seafaring are as important now as they have ever been.

Left Hiking on Djupfjordheia, one of the many outdoor activities that draw not only Norwegians but foreign tourists as well.



Festivals and celebrations

Unsurprisingly, Norwegian celebrations have much in common with those of other Scandinavian countries. One important Scandinavian celebration is the day of Santa Lucia, or the festival of light, which originates in Sweden, with light symbolizing a powerful force that combats the long hours of darkness. Here is a selection of annual holidays and festivities, covering ancient traditions, modern interpretations, as well as more recently introduced festivals.

Festivals can be traced to the changing seasons, the church calendar and historical influences, and range from the very start of the year with New Year's Day, when people's fortunes were predicted, to Christmas, with the traditional key figure of the Norwegian fjøsnisse, or goblin, as well as the more modern figure of Santa Claus.

New Year's Day

This used to be a traditional day of omens when the successful production of crops and food was predicted, as well as the

general fortunes of the forthcoming year. It is still an official flag-flying day that is associated with the making of resolutions.

Shrovetide

Fastelavn, or Shrovetide, runs through Shrove Sunday, Shrove Monday (Blåmandag) and Shrove Tuesday or Fat Tuesday (Fetetirsdag), the latter marked by eating a traditional pastry, called semla, filled with marzipan and whipped cream. Officially celebrated on the day before Lent, Shrovetide is also a celebration of the approach of spring.

Easter

The year's most important church festival, Påske, or Easter, is sometimes referred to as the Quiet Week, linked to the Easter message of the suffering of Jesus and his resurrection. Now the celebration has lost much of its sober connotations and provides another occasion for days in the mountains, skiing and celebration. Easter eggs are decorated and rolled down a slope. Easter dishes are typically egg dishes and lamb, the latter originating in the sacrifice of lambs during the Jewish celebration of spring.

Whitsun

Pinse, or Whitsun, in Norwegian means the 50th day after Easter. While less of a tradition, it is still a national holiday.

Constitution Day

Norway's celebration of its independence, also called National Day, falls on 17th May, commemorating the signing of the first constitution in 1814. Breakfast often starts with spekemat (cured meats), smoked salmon, scrambled eggs and pickled herrings, as well as stewed fruits, bread and coffee. In the morning, citizens assemble to greet the king and

Left Constitution Day falls on 17th May. The festival processions include brass bands and school children waving flags.



Right Women on the northern island of Vardö celebrate Midsummer's Eve by dressing up as witches and dancing around the bonfire.

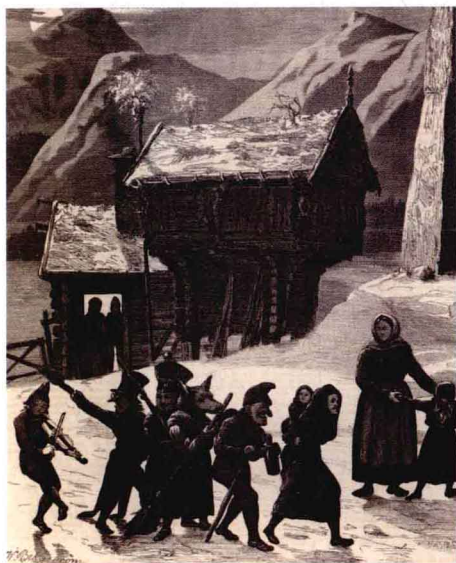
royal family as they appear on the balcony of the royal palace in Oslo. In other places, the local mayor will stand in for the royal family. Citizens' processions are headed by school brass bands with school children holding Norwegian flags or sprays of newly emerged birch leaves.

Midsummer's Eve

Sanktansaften, Jonsok, or Midsummer's Eve, on 23rd June was an ancient festival to celebrate the summer solstice. On this night, witches were believed to be abroad, plants picked were thought to have healing powers, and bonfires were lit up along the coast to protect against evil spirits. Now Jonsok is a private celebration where people dance around the bonfire.

St Olaf's Day

Olsok, or St Olaf's Day, on 29th July marks the death of King Olaf Haraldsson



Above Children dress up as gnomes at Yuletide on a 19th-century Norwegian farm.



in 1030, who brought Christianity to Norway. An important holy day, traditionally bonfires were lit, especially in rural areas.

All Saints Day

Allehelgens Dag, or All Hallows Day, on 1st November commemorated the Saints, and *Alle Sjeles Dag*, or All Souls' Day, on 2nd November commemorated the dead. 1st November, on the first Sunday in November is now celebrated as All Saints Day, when wreaths and lighted candles are placed on graves. The traditional celebrations are also being influenced by US Halloween customs.

Santa Lucia Day

This custom, which originates in Sweden, is celebrated on 13th December as a feast of light. Dressed in white, young girls wear a crown of lighted candles and offer coffee and buns or cookies.

Christmas

The main Christmas celebration is held on Christmas Eve when it is common to attend carol services. Norwegians use the traditional celebrations of Advent, the

Christmas tree, cards, gifts, and Santa Claus, although there is also the more ancient influence of the Norwegian Fjøsnisse (goblin who lives in the barn), a much-seen symbol at this time of year.

Festive fare varies, but sour cream porridge, usually made with rice and traditionally hiding an almond, is a lunchtime favourite inland. Lutefisk is most often eaten on the coast, where it is a speciality, usually followed by a whole cod. Roast rib or loin of pork is eaten in central and eastern Norway. On the west coast, the traditional dish is pinnekjøtt, smoked and dried lamb ribs.

On Christmas Day there is usually an elaborate koldt bord, or cold table. A Christmas ham studded with cloves or decorated with mayonnaise provides a festive centrepiece, sometimes given extra flavour by being cured in a beer brine before being smoked. The Christmas baking tradition is still strong, and custom used to dictate that seven different kinds of biscuits (cookies) were baked and offered alongside cakes and coffee. What's more, any guest who leaves without eating anything brings bad luck to the house.

The Norwegian cuisine

The food in Norway is defined by its simple, delicate flavours. The traditions of preparing food in this region have always been driven by the practical need to ensure that the produce of the short summer is preserved to last through the long winter. Creative ways of using ingredients, to make them taste good all year round, have been devised and refined ever since the first cod was dried as stockfish to sustain sailors centuries ago.



Above A typical 19th-century Norwegian lunchtime, with porridge and flat bread, shown at the Maihaugen Working Museum.

The Norwegian cuisine derives from its peasant culture, a simple, wholesome diet where food was harvested from sea and land. Families had their own smallholding and it was common for those who lived along the coast to be both fishermen and farmers, with the men fishing and the women running the farm. As a result, the Norwegian diet has been defined by livestock, grain and fish, with plentiful supplies of milk, butter, buttermilk, cheese, meat, bread and fish, particularly cod and herring. Even in contemporary Norway, the

emphasis on outdoor activities such as hunting, walking and skiing have ensured that the traditional, sustaining dishes have remained in demand.

Preserving for winter

In Norway, food has always been grown and preserved. Vegetables were selected for their ease of storage, such as beetroot (beet), easily pickled and providing a tasty vegetable accompaniment, and small, plump cucumbers, used to make pickled gherkins. Barley and other grains were great standbys for making sustaining porridge, as well as soups and bread. After the mid-18th century, potatoes appeared and, because they were so easily stored, quickly became an ingrained feature.

Domestic animals (cows, sheep and goats) were fattened on plentiful summer feed and slaughtered in the autumn, when cooler temperatures helped with conservation. Smoking, salting, drying and curing were all traditionally used to preserve meat and fish for winter use.

With the introduction of the cooking stove in the 17th century, oven-prepared dishes shifted the balance from fresh food. However, in modern Norway traditional dishes and cured ingredients –

such as rakefisk, pinnekjøtt and the sour milk cheese gammelost – have once again become popular, in a collective modern nostalgia for the traditional patterns of life, as well as a new awareness of the importance of using seasonal produce.

Mealtime traditions

The strong farming heritage dictates that classic dishes are based on local produce. This results in certain regional variations, although the wide availability of all ingredients now makes such differences less marked.

Eating well in the morning was essential for all families to give energy to those working long hours in the open air, and



Right A Fat Tuesday buffet, with yellow pea soup, salted and boiled pork and lamb and smoked sausages with mashed swede.

Right A couple enjoy coffee in a café in downtown Trondheim.

energy was also needed to stave off the cold brought by the long winters. Frokost, or breakfast, would typically include grøt, a filling porridge that was made by boiling milk with flour, or the richer rømmegrøt, with cream and flour. A sweet version of this is often used for birthdays, summer parties and at Christmas. Breakfast also features cold or cured meats and fish, cheese, eggs, stewed or fresh fruit, fresh and sour milk, and hardbread, with lots of coffee.

Lunchtime has always been a rushed affair, nowadays usually an open sandwich wrapped in special paper called "matpakke" and a very short break of less than half an hour.

The 5 p.m. "middag" for most people is the only hot meal of the day, consisting of a main dish of meat, seafood or pasta, almost always accompanied with potatoes and a small amount of other vegetables.

Dishes for this main meal might include fårikål, a stew with lamb, cabbage and whole peppercorns. In earlier times, this would have been made from mutton, lamb being reserved for the wealthy. Another meat dish is pinnekjøtt, made with cured and sometimes smoked mutton ribs, which is also a favourite for Christmas lunch in the west of Norway. Smalahove is another speciality of the west, made with smoked lamb's head.

Preserved meat and sausages are available in many regional variations, and are typically served with sour cream dishes and flat bread or wheat/potato wraps. Other meat delicacies include an air-dried lamb's leg called fenalår, and mor, a smoked cured sausage.



One of Norway's most recognized fish dishes is smoked salmon, and this is typically served with scrambled eggs and dill or mustard sauce. Then there are the many guises of pickled herring and anchovy, which adorn the main dinner table as well as being eaten for "aftens", a snack often taken later in the evening.

The ancient seafarers' staple of stockfish (also called tørfisk or clipfish), the unsalted fish that is dried hard in the open air, is a highly nutritious ingredient used within various fish dishes. The distinctive taste of lutefisk, another long-established speciality, which is created with salted and dried cod soaked in a lye solution, produces a jelly-like substance which is eaten with boiled potatoes and flatbread, traditionally on Christmas Eve or at Easter.

Another classic Scandinavian fish dish is gravlaks, as it is known in Norway. This is made with oily fish smothered with salt, and then buried in the ground to preserve it. Left for under a week, the

flesh cures to produce the clean flavour and smooth texture of gravlaks. If the fish is left longer, for up to several months, the flesh ferments into a sour product with an individual smell known as rakefisk, an acquired taste, which is usually served with raw red onion rings, boiled potatoes, butter, lefse (traditional bread) and sour cream.

Fruit and sweets

Many Norwegian desserts feature fruits and berries, which mature slowly in the cold climate, producing a smaller volume with a rich taste. Fruit soup, a speciality of Scandinavia, is made with seasonal fruits, often cooked with tapioca. Another traditional dessert is rødgrøt, a fruit pudding made from red fruit juices. Norwegians are also big coffee drinkers and an important social pastime is "kaffe", coffee served with kaffebrød (coffee bread), cakes or waffles with jam and cream in the afternoon or early evening.

Traditional foodstuffs

The wild expanses of Norway and its natural supplies of fish, game, dairy products, vegetables and fruit mean that fresh and preserved local foodstuffs form the basis of the cuisine. Ingredients such as Atlantic cod and salmon, wild meats such as elk (moose), and forest fruits such as the native lingonberry are constantly reinvented in dishes of the country. In common with other Scandinavian countries, ingredients are used simply and effectively to maximize their flavours.

Fish and shellfish

One of Norway's most important staple foods has always been fish. Cod is still a crucial mainstay of the diet and economy, and herring rivals cod in popularity. Other popular fish include sprat, haddock, mackerel, capelin, sandeel, ling, ocean perch, coalfish, blenny and catfish. Once-plentiful supplies have been depleted by over-fishing, however, making cod a luxury, and herring, once a cheap treat, quite expensive. Norwegian seas also offer shellfish: prawns, mussels and Norway lobsters, also known as Dublin Bay prawns or langoustine. Norway lobster is smaller and has a brighter, pinker shell than the American variety.

Norwegian salmon is regarded all over the world as of the highest quality. *Salmo salar*, Atlantic salmon, has long provided great fishing in its unpolluted waters and favourable Gulf Stream temperatures.

Norway's lakes and rivers also yield a rich harvest of fish, with perch, grayling, bream, arctic char, tench, eel, and, in the south, brown trout, inhabiting the clear and bright waters.

Domestic and wild meat

Beef is raised in the southern peninsula valleys and is a frequent sight on the Norwegian table. Sheep and goats are raised in the mountain and fjord areas. In summer, they are taken up to mountain pastures or out onto the islands. There they graze on the rich, green grass and develop meat with exceptional flavour. Lamb is very popular in Norway and forms the basis of many traditional dishes, such as the casserole *fårikål*.

The popular pastime of hunting has always provided Norwegians with valuable meat protein. Elk (moose) can

be found throughout Norway, from the forests in the south right up to the lower part of Finnmark in the north. Norway also has large herds of both wild and domestic reindeer (caribou), as well as deer in the south.

Smaller game also proliferate. Hare (jack rabbit) is found throughout the country, mostly on mountain moors but sometimes in woodland areas, too. Mountain ptarmigan (small grouse) live on high and stony mountainsides, with larger wood ptarmigan in the forests. Black and wood grouse are considered at their most delicious in autumn, when they are plump after a plentiful summer of berries, a diet that helps to produce flavoursome flesh.

Below, left to right: Salted herring; fresh Atlantic cod; marinated herring, or sild, canned as sardines.

