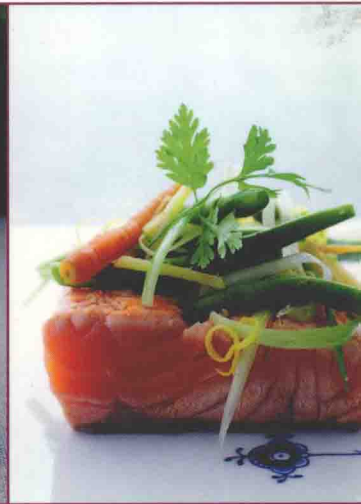
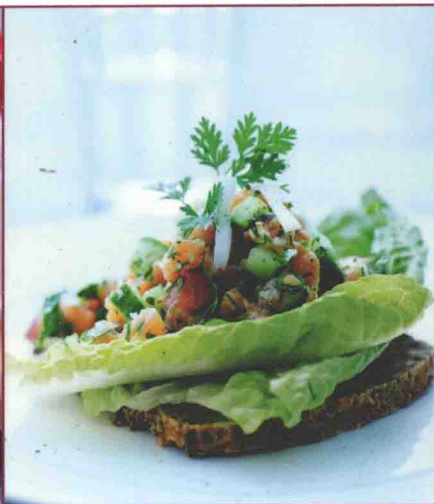


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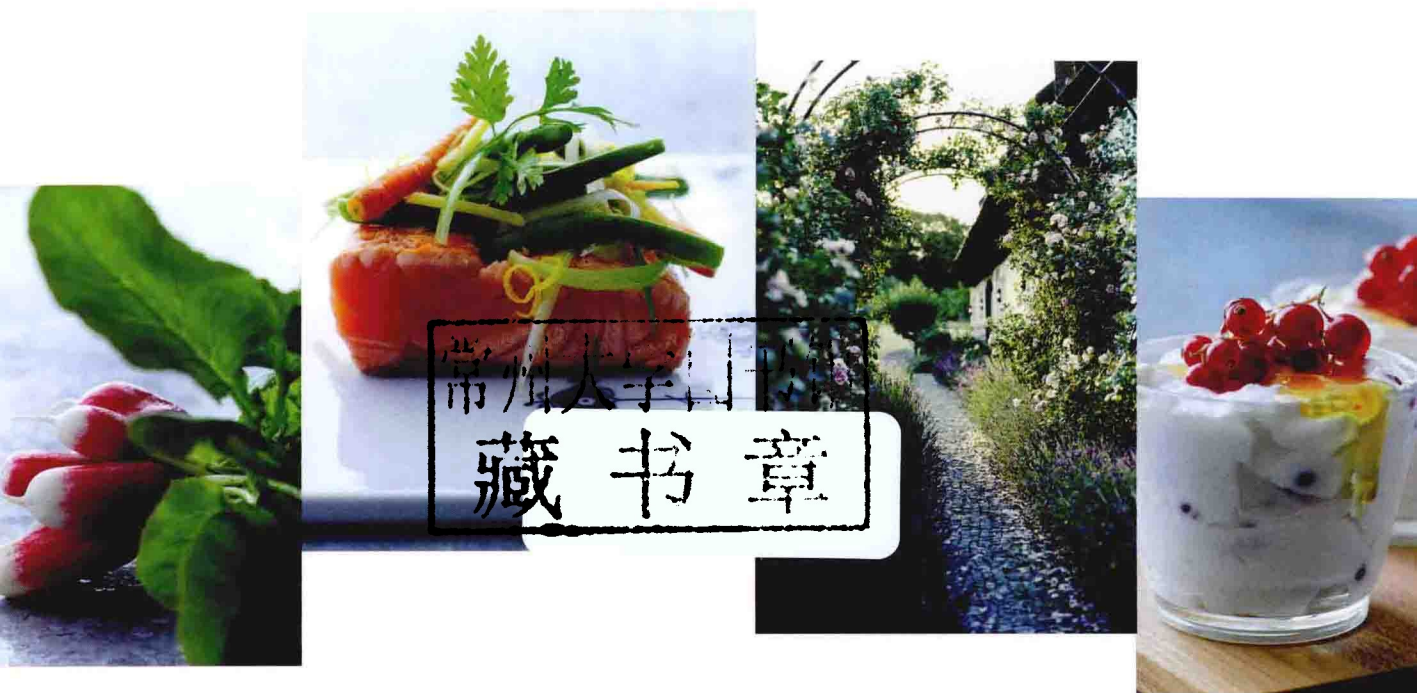
the nordic diet

Using Local and Organic Food to
Promote a Healthy Lifestyle

Trina Hahnemann
PHOTOGRAPHS BY LARS RANEK

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藏书章

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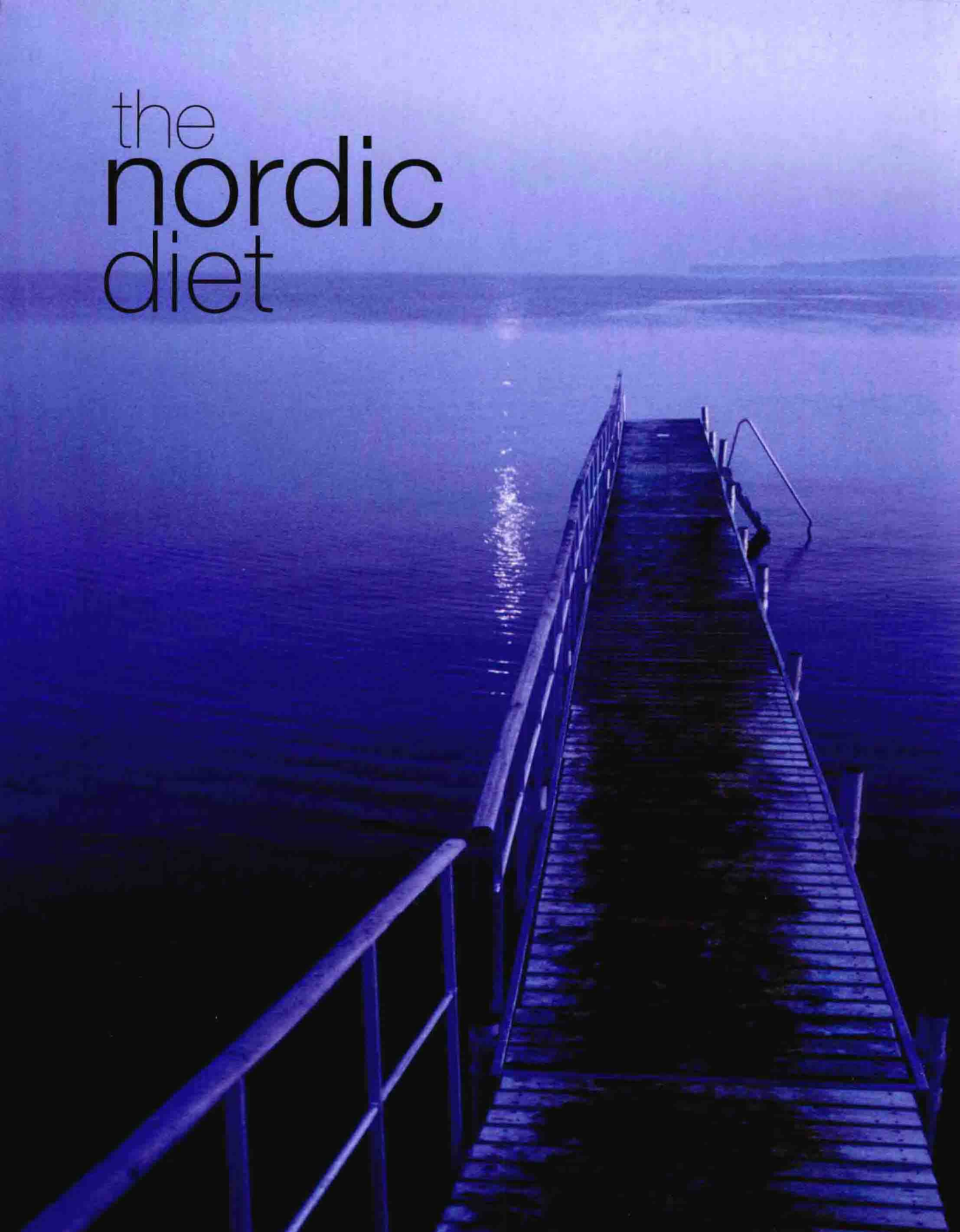
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To my mother Hanne Rodam
with thanks for all your support
and inspiration to do this book.





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Foreword

After many years of advice concerning healthy food and eating being given on the basis of the Mediterranean diet, I am extremely pleased to introduce the Nordic diet as a meaningful alternative. It is a really healthy and sensible option for all of us who happen to live in the northern parts of this planet, and it can serve as an example for everybody everywhere interested in healthy food and living. Literally, it is like reaching out into your own backyard—all the produce is there to cook tasty, healthy Nordic food, beautiful dishes with kale, mackerel, cod, salmon, barley, spelt, oats, potatoes, horseradish, dill, and stinging nettles.

Ever since my childhood I have eaten good local produce introduced to me by my grandmother and parents. Then for some years I was led away from it by all kinds of foreign cuisines that seemed healthier choices with more flavors. For the last seven or eight years, though, I have gone back to my roots and cooked new and exciting recipes combined with elements from the cuisines of the world. I have found a very healthy way of living, by means of which I feel fit and can maintain my weight by eating good home-cooked food, which is seasonal, and where I really pay attention to what I buy, cook, and eat.

I cannot make myself eat strawberries out of season, because there is no joy in that. I'd much rather have them for three to five weeks a year and then really enjoy them, and when the season is over I will move on to the next seasonal thing. In many ways, I really believe your body needs that balanced diet, which good seasonal produce naturally provides.

The Nordic diet is also about cooking and eating habits: getting into the kitchen and cooking from fresh ingredients. Start baking your own bread! The most important thing about your diet, the way you eat, is that you should gain control over *what* you eat. You gain that by going into the kitchen and starting to cook. I cook three or four times a week and my husband will cook on the other days. We eat a lot of seasonal dishes and when we feel like a light meal we cook some pasta with seasonal vegetables, often using spelt or rye pasta, so it is about going back to your roots in a modern, healthy way.

Every evening we will be in the kitchen, which in my house is also an office, living room, and the place where I create all my recipes. We will be talking, our daughter doing her homework, her friends hanging out, our son coming by, neighbors dropping in, our lives being lived. And lives should be lived in the kitchen: cooking, baking, talking, eating, tasting, and being there together.

Take the time to get acquainted with the seasons and with what grows around you. Locate the markets nearby. What veg box schemes can you join? What could you grow yourself? And eat things that grow naturally around you. It does not have to be complicated. It is all about eating according to the season, cooking at home, appreciating what you eat, and taking time to enjoy life.

Velbekomme,

Trina Hahnemann



What Is the Nordic Diet?

The countries of the northern hemisphere have their own very healthy food culture, ingredients, and traditions which have, for too long, been eclipsed by the perceived benefits of the cuisines of other nations deemed to be intrinsically better for us. Rediscovering our Northern heritage also helps us address several issues around food other than health.

The fundamentals of the Nordic diet

- Balanced meals with an emphasis on whole grains and seasonal vegetables
- Home-cooking with fresh ingredients, including home-baked bread
- Eating less
- Eating fish at least twice a week
- Eating vegetarian meals twice a week
- Eating game, chicken, or meat only three times a week at most
- Taking time to eat with friends and family on a daily basis

The Nordic diet builds on tradition, but is also very much a modern, everyday cuisine incorporating influences from other cultures. It is based on the produce available in the northern hemisphere, where many grain and vegetable crops grow naturally or have ideal conditions for cultivation, where animals live wild or are farmed, and where fish that favor cold waters are caught or farmed.

Scientific evidence supports the claim that a balanced diet based on a wide base of ingredients with a variety of minerals, vitamins, beneficial fatty acids, and natural disease-fighting compounds will help you live a healthier and happier life. Of course, that alone is not enough. We also need to eat less—particularly of unhealthy foods like sugars and those full of saturated fats—and we need to get more exercise. Balance is at the core of a healthy and happy life.

The Nordic diet offers such a balance, with its focus on lots of different whole grains, root and green vegetables, locally caught fish and game, grass-fed lamb, and free-range poultry. It comes allied with a growing organic, eco-conscious movement and a focus on seasonality, so that during the year we dine more or less according to what nature has to offer.

The Nordic countries also offer a way of life that can positively add to the debate on the right balance between work, leisure, family time, and time spent cooking and eating. In Denmark, for instance, taxation makes cars so expensive that everyone cycles, to the great benefit of their fitness, their economy, and the air quality of Danish cities. In the Nordic countries we still cook a good deal and bake our own bread. Also, the evening meal is still a daily family event and that is an important part of being happy and healthy.

It is a myth that everything was better in the good old days. The food industry was not as developed as it is now and, faced with various socioeconomic problems, was not capable of feeding the population. Generally, there was not enough food, the diet was limited, vegetables and fruit were rare, and meat too expensive for average households. So when we consider all the problems today caused by the food industry, manifested in unrecognizable food that is full of additives, sugar, and salt, it becomes apparent that these are to some extent the result of circumstances in which it was necessary to produce food as efficiently and plentifully as possible.

These developments were also linked to the fact that many more women had entered the workforce, and generally nobody else volunteered to take over the cooking. This created a huge gap for the food industry to fill and our food culture suffered immensely.

This is, of course, a very short and generalized description of a highly complex problem, because there are a lot of important issues at stake here. However, I believe that, with the knowledge that we have today about health and obesity, we have to move forward and stop romanticizing the past. We have to decide on the food culture we want in the future and how we are going to lure people back into their kitchens: not to use their microwave oven to heat mass-produced convenience food but actually to cook food themselves from fresh ingredients; not buying bread made from grains that have been so refined that they have no taste or structure left, but making their own from nutritious and filling whole grains.

The Nordic diet is all about good, home-cooked food that is full of flavor, and about eating healthily without having to count calories all the time or obey strict dietary rules. It affords us an opportunity to change our diet according to local produce, seasons, tradition, and contemporary taste. Never before have the developed nations had access to so much food from all around the world; never has there been so much choice. However, in order to play our part in a sustainable global food culture for the future, we must now focus on our local cuisines, traditions, and produce. At this point in history we have an extraordinary opportunity to re-examine our daily food habits and, with our knowledge and technology, to develop a diet that encompasses different traditions with local produce.



Diet & Lifestyle

Changing to a healthier lifestyle can be difficult, but the benefits are significant.

Change your diet

Your aim is to cook and eat food that is really tasty and full of fresh flavors that will give you joy and make you feel fulfilled and happy. This involves eating home-cooked meals, where love and care have been put into their preparation. Set the table, sit down, and enjoy the moment, eat slowly, and get your palate to work.

Take care to eat three main meals a day made up of whole grains, lots of tasty vegetables and fruit, and cut down on portion sizes. Your daily intake should be about 30–50 percent vegetables. In between meals you can snack on fresh or dried fruit, raw vegetables, and nuts. Keep your blood sugar levels in balance and don't starve yourself, but don't eat if you are not hungry.

Balance and variety are the key: Eat a balanced diet with lots of seasonal ingredients, while also making time for a piece of homemade cake or dessert now and then, a nice glass of wine, and eating more than you really should if you are having a good time eating with friends. Finding and keeping that balance is the key to a healthy and happy life.

Exercise more and spend time outside

It is important to understand that no matter how healthily you eat, exercise is still a key to health and happiness. Your heart is a muscle and it needs to be exercised, so cardiovascular exercise is good for your blood circulation, for your stress level, and for general psychological well-being, as well as to maintain a steady weight throughout

your life. If you don't exercise already, choose something you like—walking, swimming, running, cycling—something you will actually look forward to and enjoy doing. Start taking the stairs whenever you have the opportunity. Find other people to exercise with, set goals, or make a bet as an incentive to continue.

We have a saying in Denmark: “There is no such thing as bad weather, only wrong clothing.” We bicycle a lot: to work, when we go shopping, and with our children. It's a great way to get around without being trapped in traffic. You do your bit for the environment, plus it is cheap and you get regular exercise built into your daily routine. If you can't cycle to work, get off one stop before your destination and walk the rest of the way.

We know vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants are important for the body's development and maintenance, but this is just one element of an overall balance in life. I therefore recommend living according to eight guidelines:

Eight guidelines to a healthier lifestyle

1. Exercise every day for at least thirty minutes.
2. Avoid junk food and ready-made meals; eat only things you know and recognize.
3. Eat at least six pieces of fruit and vegetables a day.
4. Eat whole grains in bread, cereals, salads, and pasta every day.
5. Reduce the fat in your food, especially dairy products and meat.
6. Eat fish two to three times a week.
7. Drink plenty of water.
8. Avoid sugar, especially in sodas, candies, cookies, and cakes.

Eat seasonal local produce

Another way to help the planet and to eat well is to buy meat, poultry, and dairy products from small or local farms. Buying organic or local food is a lifestyle in itself. No studies have yet proven that organic food is better for your health than nonorganically produced food, so eating organic is about what you believe is right. The main reason is to ensure that we do not over-exploit the earth and that we maintain an ecosystem without hormones, pesticides, and other chemicals that are difficult to recycle and harmful to the body.

Eggs from hens that find their food outside or from household leftovers taste better, and they improve results when baking. Cows from a farm where the farmers care



about their pasture and the whole ecosystem, feeding their cows outside on good grass with clover, taste ten times better than cows produced in a shorter time frame on industrial feed. And to get really tasty seasonal vegetables: grow your own, join a veg box scheme, or buy at local stores and markets. Buy sustainable fish and support fairtrade products.

I support local buying, but I am also realistic. Coming from a Nordic country in which much food is not available locally all year round, we do need some supplies from other regions. Wine, coffee, and tea are prime examples of things that I would really miss if I could only buy food from a distance of up to 100 miles from where I live. Like everything else, it's all about finding a balance.

Eat meals together

Food must be a joy, not a burden, and this includes the social aspects of eating. I strongly believe it is immensely important to sit down regularly as a family to eat together. Eating with friends is also where you exchange life goals and life stories. Thinking about my dinner table and all the meals I've shared there with my friends, I recognize that it is an important part of my life: eating well-prepared food, talking, laughing out loud, crying, and enjoying all the stories told. It is also known that countries where food is prepared and shared have lower obesity rates.

Getting back into the kitchen, cooking healthy food from fresh ingredients, regularly setting a table nicely, and sitting down to share a meal—these are among the keys to



healthy and happy living. I talk about this all the time, and the response I often get is: "We don't have time, we work late, and by the time everybody is home it's too late." Well, this is not necessarily true. You have plenty of time; you have a whole life full of time. Time is your capital; it is actually the most precious thing you have. The choice to be made is how to use that time. You have to ask: "Do you want a healthy life that includes two of the most important things for your body—proper food and exercise?" Then plan it to be so, and make a conscious decision that home-cooked food and eating together is part of your everyday life, and one thing you want to spend time doing.

Dealing with climate change

We all have to do our bit to help reduce climate change and global warming. Most of our attention is focused on travel, especially air travel and cars and their exhausts, but the world's livestock production is responsible for a large part of all greenhouse gases. The calculation is clear: It takes ten times more energy to produce a steak from a corn-fed cow than to produce the oats needed for a portion of oatmeal.

The solution is not only to return to grass-fed cows but to cut back drastically on the amount of meat we eat. So the modification of your diet is an area in which you can make a difference immediately: Stop eating meat every day; it's that simple. Cut down to a maximum of three times a week; your health will benefit, and you will do your bit to alleviate climate change. When you do buy meat spend more money on getting quality rather than on increasing the quantity.

One thing is sure: Driving a car to buy groceries every day is not good for the planet. Retrain yourself to shop only a couple of times a week or less, and walk or bicycle instead. But food transportation is also a complicated issue. We have established that for ecological and health concerns we need to cut down on meat consumption and eat more vegetables in our daily diet. The whole question of food mileage is very complicated, but I think one should be cautious about it: Do your own research and make your own judgment.

Small steps to fight global warming

- Reduce the amount of meat you eat.
- Buy as much food that's in season as possible.
- Choose locally grown fruit and vegetables that have not had to travel too far.
- Buy local fish, not exotic fish from the other side of the planet.
- Use your car as little as possible.

The Ingredients of the Nordic Diet

The Nordic diet is based around the indigenous produce of countries in the northern latitudes: whole grains, root and green vegetables, cold water fish and seafood, poultry and wild game, berries, and herbs. With only a few additions from other countries, these are all you need to provide a super-healthy balanced diet.



Grains

The grains used are those suited to cool climates—spelt, rye, oats, and barley, all of which are high in fiber and rich in protein. But beware, these are generally as refined and processed as most wheat flours, so it is vital to buy good-quality whole grains and whole-grain flours. Just as important is to bake for yourself, thereby avoiding mass-produced bread, which has little of the nutritive value of the grain and is full of additives to make it last. Never eat bread that is marked to last for more than a week.

Vegetables

Cabbages of all kinds—white, red, savoy, and pointed—together with their close relatives kale and Brussels sprouts, grow well in cold climates. They are low in calories, full of flavor, and can be cooked in many different ways. They have been found by scientists at the University of Oslo to contain some of the highest levels of antioxidants of any vegetable and are a good source of omega-3 fatty acids as well as vitamin K, which plays a role in blood coagulation. Moreover, they are full of phytochemicals strongly associated with anticancer action.

Root vegetables are also low in calories. At their seasonal best in fall and winter, they store well, and are versatile, filling, and fueling. Don't just stick with the usual potatoes and carrots: Try beet, celeriac, parsnips, parsley root, Jerusalem artichokes, and salsify, all of which are highly nutritious and tasty.

Green vegetables such as nettles, garlic, ramps (ramsons), Swiss chard, asparagus, peas, spinach, lettuce, and leeks provide us throughout the spring and summer with a wide range of nutrients and disease-fighting phytochemicals.

Fish and seafood

Fish from the cold northern waters are, of course, herrings, salmon, mackerel, and cod, but we also have wonderful lobster and crab, haddock, ling (cod), and monkfish, mussels, and oysters. They are all very healthy eating, low in calories and saturated fats but rich in protein and a wide range of nutrients.

Meat, poultry, and game

As with eggs, the flavor in meat, poultry, and game comes from the animal's diet. Animals that naturally feed in the wild, or are bred on pasture, generally have a better flavor than meat from animals reared in pens or stalls, unable to move and eating unnatural, commercial feed.

Chicken, and other poultry, is a very important source of protein, low in calories, and easy to prepare. However, a great deal of chicken nowadays is not so much raised as

manufactured. You must be aware of the living conditions of the birds and what the creatures are fed on (both of which can be truly horrible), not only for their sakes but also because of what you are eating. I always buy free-range or organic chicken—more expensive, but our whole philosophy should be one of quality first, and reducing how much and how often we eat it.

Most game is seasonal and therefore forms an important part of fall eating, but you can get wild boar and some game birds all year round. Growing in the wild, game meat is healthier, leaner, and more digestible. If cutting down on meat intake, it makes sense to cut down on farmed meat and poultry and switch to wild game when it is in season.

Berries

Berries—blueberries and blackberries, red and black currants, rose hips, cloudberries (raspberries), lingonberries (cowberries)—are nature's free gift to us, growing wild in the countryside, ripe for picking. What is perhaps less well known is that research has now shown that they are among the healthiest foods we can eat, due to their ability to strengthen the human immune system and their high levels of antioxidants. The healthiest way to eat them is raw when in season, so take a walk in the woods, pick them fresh, and eat them as soon as you can.

Herbs

Herbs are immensely important in everyday cooking. Popular garden herbs include dill, parsley, chives, mint, tarragon, chervil, bay leaves, thyme, and rosemary. But we often forget the many wild herbs growing along our roadsides, such as horseradish and ground elder, considered as enemies by gardeners but full of health and taste. To get the most nutritional benefit from herbs you must eat large amounts, which you can do in soups and sauces, pestos, or salads like tabbouleh.



A Few Notes on Nutrition

I want to emphasize the properties of various foods and why they are good for you, so it might be helpful to provide some explanations of a few nutritional factors. You don't need to know all this, but it will make a useful reference to help you understand things more readily.

Antioxidants are molecules that prevent other molecules from oxidizing, i.e., combining with oxygen, a process that usually produces free radicals. In the body, such free radicals can be responsible for lots of health problems.

Carbohydrates are our source of energy from food. There are two types: complex and simple carbohydrates (or starches and sugars). The former come from foods like cereals, grains, and vegetables; the latter from sugar cane, vegetables like sugar beet, fruits, and honey. Complex carbs come with lots of other nutritional goodies, like dietary fiber, and provide a slow, steady source of energy. Simple carbs, on the other hand, generally offer little else but a quick jolt of energy that can cause the blood sugar level to climb rapidly and then collapse, causing you to feel hungry soon after eating them.

Cholesterol is a type of fat essential for the health of our cells. It is made by the body, but is also found in food. If we have too much of it in our blood it can form sticky deposits on our artery walls, which may build up and lead to strokes and heart disease. The body has mechanisms for controlling blood cholesterol levels, even if we eat large amounts of cholesterol-rich foods, like eggs, cheeses, meat, and shrimp. However, this process can be impaired by some health conditions and by an intake of too much saturated (animal) fats. There are two types of cholesterol, HDL and LDL, and it is too much of the latter that causes

furring of the arteries, while the former actually helps clear the latter from the blood. Research has shown that blood HDL levels rise with activity and exercise.

Omega-3 and -6 fatty acids are also called essential fatty acids as they are the only fats the body needs but can't make itself. A good supply of them helps against all kinds of ailments, from heart disease and cancer to skin complaints. The average diet tends to provide more than enough omega-6s, but omega-3s, which act to reduce the stickiness of the blood, are harder to come by and are mostly found in oily fish . . . another reason to feast on fish.

Phytochemicals are compounds found in a wide variety of plants that don't provide nutrition but which actively help us fight disease. Many, and there are literally thousands, do this as they are antioxidants (see above) but others have the power to inhibit cancerous growth, lower levels of bad cholesterol in the blood, or actually thin the blood, and much more. These chemicals also tend to be those that give fruit and vegetables their characteristic colors, odors, and flavors. If nothing else, these are the reasons to eat your six-a-day . . . and more.

Protein is made from chains of amino acids and is essential for the body's growth and repair. Nowadays in developed countries we tend to get more than we need, as we only require about 0.4g a day per pound of body weight.

