

# A TASTE OF FINLAND

Natural, pure and fun



## Culinary pleasures from Finland

Authentic, pure, delicious and innovative – that is Finnish food today. Here in the north, we do not traditionally brag about what we have, but we are genuinely proud of our food.

Finnish raw materials grow in the cleanest soil and waters of the world. Research has proven that our air quality is the best in the world. Food production is conducted under strict supervision and ingredients can often be traced all the way to farms.

We are interested in international food trends and adopt new influences in our dishes. At the same time, we appreciate simplicity and pure tastes. Ecological and responsible eating are self-evident matters that drive new food innovations. Grocery shops in Finland sell locally produced food and many city dwellers are enthusiastic about growing vegetables on their own balconies.

Every school in Finland has offered a free lunch since 1948. At school, children and young people get healthy food and learn to eat together. Home economics is also a basic school subject. It is the only subject taught through the sense of taste. Many young Finns also cook with friends as a hobby.

Finnish pure ingredients come together in unique tastes in bakeries, microbreweries, cheese dairies and ice-cream factories around the country. Numerous food events, festivals and markets bring people together to enjoy food and drinks, often accompanied by music and art.

The Finnish table is set! Enjoy!

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*Pure and  
delicious  
- enjoy!*



## What is the Finnish food culture like?

“Finnish food is unique, but at the same time it’s influenced by international trends and other cultures. There are even regional differences in Finland, especially between Eastern and Western Finland. In the eastern part of the country, oven-cooked food like stews and pies have traditionally been more common than in the west,” says Professor of Food Culture **Mari Niva** from the University of Helsinki.

The Finnish tradition is similar to those of other Nordic countries.

“The Nordic countries have a short growing season and we’re used to eating what is in season, and what will last well through the winter. So, we look forward to the delicacies of each season: Strawberries and new potatoes in June and mushrooms, blueberries and lingonberries in the autumn. Even today, we tend to appreciate seasonal food.”

For decades, Finns have favoured various milk products, potatoes and cereal products in their cuisine.

“The shops here have an impressive selection of different milk products, especially cultured and sour milk products. They’re often used in cooking. Rye bread, oatmeal, a variety of fish and root vegetables like potatoes and carrots are part of the everyday diet. We like to have our meal on one plate: half a plate is filled with salad or vegetables, and the other half with potatoes or other staples, meat or fish. The free warm school lunch and catering at workplaces has influenced Finnish views about healthy food,” Niva says.

### ...AND WHERE IS IT GOING?

Finns too will have to reconsider their diet because of climate change.

“Many are willing to reduce meat in their diet, even though meat consumption has actually gradually increased. There are some local innovations like “pulled oats” made of oats, which can be used as a replacement for minced meat. These kinds of products help in transitioning to a diet with less meat.”

The EU's goal is to halve food waste produced in its member states by 2030 compared to 2015 levels.

"Food waste should be tackled at every step of the food production and serving chain. Food waste restaurants and shops are a step in the right direction."

Technology is now seen as a means of producing healthier food and one of the solutions to combat climate change.

"Finns are usually very excited about new technologies and innovations, and the functional food trend is well appreciated here. Future food innovations will probably be based on both technological development and the appreciation of healthy, ethical and environmentally friendly food," Niva concludes.

#### WHAT ABOUT EVERYDAY FOOD CULTURE?

"In Finland, food has always been a concrete way of showing your affection and bringing people together. One could say, that in Finland food is a routine of love," says **Bettina Lindfors**, Executive Director at the ELO Foundation for the Promotion of Finnish Food Culture.

What we eat and why we eat it tells one something about the Finnish nature, society, history, identity and culture. Meals bring people together in homes, schools and workplaces.

"I recollect, for example, a project called "Let's eat together" during the centenary celebrations of Finland's independence in 2017. Hundreds of organisations around Finland took part and organised thousands of events for thousands of people. Tables were set up at railway stations, in streets, courtyards and national parks. Other experiences included a coffee moment for the whole nation, blueberry pie day and a world record for organic oats. "Dinner under the Finnish sky" events were sold out and brought thousands of people together in different cities. The Hyvinkää Summer Picnic was attended by 4,000 visitors."

"Finns are very interested in experimenting and curious about creating new ways to eat together. Today, people long for meaningfulness and alternatives to their fragmented and busy lifestyle and a real connection with others outside of social media. The dinner table offers just that," Lindfors says.

#### FOOD SAFETY IS A PRIORITY

The air, soil and freshwater in Finland are comparatively clean. Because of the long winter, fewer pesticides are needed in the northern climate than in warmer areas. The cool weather is also a contributing factor in the much lower use of antibiotics in Finnish food production than the European average.

The key strengths of Finnish food production are food safety and traceability. External supervision of food production is efficient throughout the whole chain from farms to retailers or restaurants. All food sector employees are required to have a so-called hygiene passport to prove their knowledge of hygiene. For instance, salmonella is rare in Finland because of consistent testing and supervision of products.

[www.evira.fi](http://www.evira.fi)



Root vegetables, grains, and forest berries are important in the Nordic diet.



## Phenomena

### EVERYMAN'S RIGHT

Finnish forests are full of healthy food. The best thing is that it is available for everyone. According to the public right of access, "everyman's right", anyone can pick berries and mushrooms regardless who owns the land. Permission from the landowner is not required. Wild berries like arctic wild blueberries, raspberries, cloudberries or lingonberries have several health benefits. They strengthen the immune system. Wild blueberries are even considered a superfood!

Autumn is the season to pick mushrooms. Golden chanterelles, trumpet chanterelles and boletus mushrooms are a source of B vitamins.

Everyman's right of access also allows you to pick flowers and go camping. Fishing is also included in the public right of access, but a fishing license is required with the exception of angling with a hook and line.

### FISH FROM CLEAN LAKES

Many Finns love spending their holidays at their summer cottages by lakes. The thousands of blue lakes provide a wonderful opportunity to go fishing, swimming or boating.

White lake fish like perch, vendace and roach are good sources of protein, vitamin D, soft fat and calcium. The fish are found on the menus of fine-dining restaurants or grilled over the campfire.

Fishing is not only a summertime hobby. In the wintertime, it is possible to go ice-fishing. A line is then dropped through a hole in a frozen lake.

The second biggest lake in Finland, Lake Päijänne, is a source of drinking water for people in the Helsinki area.

### SUSTAINABLE CHOICES AT RESTAURANT LOOP

The idea behind restaurant Loop Lapinlahti in Helsinki is brilliant. The restaurant uses ingredients that are about to expire in grocery stores. The menu is different every day.

As food waste is a significant ecological problem, Loop is a Finnish pioneer in showing how food waste can be decreased.

The restaurant also helps young and unemployed immigrants as well as long-term unemployed people by providing them with employment.

It is worth taking in the scenery while at Loop. The restaurant is located in a beautiful 19th century building, which used to be a mental hospital. It is surrounded by a peaceful park and a sea bay.

Oats is a Finnish superfood that has several health benefits. Oat fibre promotes digestion and balances blood sugar levels. Beta glucan is found in abundance in oats. It has cholesterol-lowering properties.

### Super easy Finnish overnight oats

- ½ cup rolled oats
- ½ cup oat milk (unsweetened)
- 2–3 tablespoons applesauce (sweetened)
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- a pinch of salt

Garnish:

- ¼ cup fresh or frozen wild blueberries
- honey (optional)

Mix all the ingredients in a sealable container and place in the refrigerator overnight or for at least 5 hours.

Mix again and garnish with blueberries and add sweetness with honey.



## *Finland relying increasingly on local and seasonal food*

In Finland, we can still enjoy all four seasons, each with its own characteristics. These characteristics are reflected in our seasonal ingredients and food. The harvest periods are short and make berries and vegetables especially tasty.

Finns have always known how to use pure natural products from the sea, lakes and forests. Cultivated plants have brought variety to the diet. Fish, mushrooms and berries are preserved and enjoyed throughout the winter.

Seasonal vegetables and fish are the cornerstones of the Finnish food tradition and traditional recipes use plenty of root vegetables and other vegetables.

Our food culture has been influenced by the East and West. Over time, these influences have fused into the local tradition. Globalisation and travelling keep bringing in more influences that enrich the Finnish food culture.

When we look at food trends, ethics and the locality of food are emphasised in Finland, as well as pure freshwater fish, mushrooms, berries, cereals and seasonal vegetables. The health benefits

and the origins of food, as well as the stories behind the products are increasingly important. The food choices we make are seen as an important way of affecting the environment and one's own wellbeing. More than ever, the aim is to consume food moderately and reduce food waste.

Bread is very important to Finns and they want it fresh from their local bakery, baked with Finnish flour. Fresh rye bread is something many Finns who live abroad miss the most.

We are known for successful food innovations and we consume them enthusiastically, too. For instance, food developed using Finnish oats and horse bean have met consumers' needs for sustainable sources of protein to replace meat.

There are plenty of ingredients to harvest from the pure Finnish nature and to inspire us all year round.

**Kimmo Ollila**

Food blogger and opinion leader  
Helsinki

## Spring

# Period of growth

The rhythm of light in the north is known for its long summer days and short winter days. The long and light summer days speed up the development of plants and give berries and vegetables their typical flavours, which are more full-bodied than in the south. The big disparity between day and night temperatures also affects the richness of aromas. Herbs become tasty and berries absorb many nutrients.

Some cereals hibernate during winter under the frost. Rye that has hibernated under the frozen soil has a genuine and strong taste. The cold winter also decreases the prevalence of plant diseases and pests.

In the southern part of Finland, the period of growth starts in spring, at the end of April. In the northern part of the country, the growing season starts only a month later, after the snow has melted. In southern Finland, the growing season lasts for half a year, while in northern Finland it only stretches over three to four months.

Spring brings back greenery after the winter. Grain crops sprout and plants start pushing up through the surface of the soil. Spring is the perfect time to benefit from young wild vegetables and shoots, which have a strong, fresh aroma. They are excellent and natural sources of vitamins and minerals. Wild herbs are ecological and sustainable. They are abundant in nature, and you know what you are eating.

In Finland, according to the so-called “everyman’s right” you can freely pick berries, mushrooms and edible wild plants. The nettle is the best known and maybe the most useful edible wild plant in Finland. Young top shoots and leaves are the best, and cut nettles keep producing new leaves. Nettles are a real superfood as they contain plenty of iron, zinc, calcium, and many vitamins.

Spruce shoots are also edible. They are delicious and have healing qualities. In Finland, you always need permission from landowners to pick soft young spruce shoots. They have a sour



Spring festivities in Finland include Mayday, which is a day for both workers and matriculants, but also the beginning of spring. On Mayday, Finns traditionally drink mead and eat doughnuts and a special pastry called “tippaleipä”.

taste, somewhat like lemon and menthol. They can be used, for instance, in salads, drinks, syrup or jam. The shoots contain in particular vitamin C and etheric oils.



## Nettle pancakes

- 2 eggs
- 500 ml milk
- 250 ml wheat flour
- 200 ml nettles that have been brought to the boil and cut fine or 75 ml dried nettles
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 tbsp. oil
- butter or oil for the pan

Beat the eggs lightly and add half of the milk and the flour. Add the rest of the milk, nettles, salt and oil. Set the batter aside for 30 minutes. On a hot frying pan, fry pancakes the size you want.

**Tip:** If you pour the batter into a plastic juice container, it is easy to mix and pour the right amount of batter into the pan. The container is also easy to take with you on outings.

## Sun-powered spruce shoot syrup

- spruce shoots
- organic sugar
- 1 clean glass jar

Take a clean glass jar and fill it half full with spruce shoots, pressing them in tightly. Add the same amount of sugar. Any sugar will do. Set a small plate on top of the jar as a lid and put the jar in a sunny spot, for instance on the windowsill.

The sun will heat up the jar and melt the sugar, which will run down through the spruce shoots, absorbing flavours and aromas.

After the sugar has melted, sieve the syrup into a clean sealable dish and store in a cool place. Spruce shoot syrup can be preserved for up to two years in a cool place.

Nettle pancakes are a summertime treat and perfectly matched with spruce shoot syrup.

## Summer

### Time to eat outdoors

The Finnish summer often gets a good mixture of sun and rain, as well as warm and cool weather – at least if you look at it from the point of view of the growth period. Holidaymakers may dispute whether there are enough hot days, but at least there is enough light in Finland during the summer, even more than in continental Europe.

Plants grow when the climate is not too cold or hot and there is sufficient rain.

Finns come together to enjoy food especially during the summer, when they grill a lot and use fresh local seasonal ingredients. Tables are commonly set outdoors in the yard, on the balcony or terrace, or at holiday homes and summer cottages – another special feature of Finland, accessible to most of the population. Restaurants also open their terraces and street cafés are full of happy people enjoying the summer.

Finnish summer food is simple and tasty. Fresh white lake fish and vegetables are often found on



At midsummer we celebrate the midnight sun, set the table outdoors and enjoy a great meal surrounded by the green nature. Midsummer is also the time to taste the first domestic strawberries of the summer.

### Fresh new potatoes

- 1 kg early potatoes
- water
- sea salt
- fresh dill stems and fresh, chopped dill

Wash the early potatoes thoroughly until clean. Set them aside in a bowl of cold water. Boil the water in a pot and add salt (1 tsp. salt / 1 l water). Add the potatoes. The water should just about cover the potatoes. Add dill stems.

Let the potatoes boil slowly at a low temperature. Check the softness with a wooden cocktail stick or a small fork. Drain the potatoes and set a couple of paper towel sheets or a clean kitchen towel on top of the potatoes to suck in any extra moisture. Close the lid.

When the potatoes have dried for a moment, take off the paper towel or towel and sprinkle the potatoes with fresh dill. Serve immediately.

### Fast sour cream sauce

- 1 jar (200g) of Finnish *kermaviili* or sour cream
- fresh herbs, e.g. dill, basil, thyme, tarragon
- 2 tsp. lemon juice
- freshly ground pepper
- salt

Mix the ingredients for the sauce together to taste. Let it set in a cold place for about half an hour before serving.

### Lake fish and summer vegetables in foil

- 600 g filleted pike-perch, perch, pike or other lake fish. Reserve about 150g of fish per person.
- butter
- 1 big onion sliced
- 2–3 carrots
- a small courgette
- a piece of leek
- a small head of broccoli
- fresh herbs, like thyme and dill
- freshly ground black pepper
- salt
- aluminium foil

Slice the carrots thinly, parboil about 5 minutes and drain. Wash and slice the leek. Slice the onion and the courgette. Rinse the broccoli and cut it into bite-sized pieces.

Take a piece of foil and set some vegetables in the centre. Add a few small lumps of butter and spice the vegetables with a pinch of salt, some black pepper and fresh herbs.

Set the fish fillet on top of the vegetables and spice it with salt, pepper and herbs. Close the foil to form a tight package.

Cook on the grill for about 15–20 minutes.





the grill. Early potatoes are an inseparable part of summer meals. The delicious potatoes are boiled with dill and eaten with a small lump of butter. Pickled herring is a perfect accompaniment to the potatoes.

Our thousands of lakes offer mouth-watering freshwater fish, and the Baltic Sea is a source of ocean fish varieties. A fishing licence is easy to obtain online, making freshly caught fish available for many people. Most Finnish summer cottages have fishing equipment and if you get lucky on your fishing trip, preparing and eating fresh fish is a pleasure. In addition to grilling, smoking and blazing are popular ways of cooking fish.

When two Finns get together, they make coffee and often savour something small and sweet with it. Delightful summer moments are spent drinking coffee in cafés, market places, home gardens or on a trip to the forest. Finns are used to getting their coffee in one form or another almost

everywhere they go. On a beautiful summer day, they prefer having a cup outdoors in good company.

Finns drink the most coffee in the world. The blond roast, traditionally drunk in Finland, is found alongside an increasing amount of darker roasts. The Finnish coffee shop culture has started thriving over recent years. Increasingly, micro roasters are started up and Finnish coffee expertise is acknowledged internationally.

Fresh berries can be enjoyed in Finland throughout the summer. Strawberries ripen first in June and from July onwards, blueberries, raspberries and currants come into season. Lingonberries are ready to be picked only later in the autumn. Traditionally, plenty of berries are also preserved for the winter as juices, jams and by deep-freezing whole berries.



#### PURE FINNISH WATERS

Clean water is a source of great pride for Finns. Accessible groundwater can be found in almost every part of Finland. It is utilised by homeowners and waterworks and can usually be consumed without any treatment.

Other sources of drinking water include lakes, of which Finland has more than 188,000. The water is purified before use in homes and restaurants.

#### Traybake with summer berries and apple

24 pieces

- 300 ml whipping cream
- 175 g butter
- 3 eggs
- 250 ml sugar
- 500 ml wheat flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 3–4 medium-sized apples, quite acidic
- 2 tsp. lemon juice
- 300 g raspberries and wild blueberries (fresh or frozen and defrosted)
- icing sugar
- butter or vegetable oil for greasing the tray

Line a 32cm x 22cm tin with baking paper and grease it. Preheat the oven to 180 °C.

Heat up the cream and butter in a saucepan, do not let it boil. Let the mixture cool down a bit.

Peel the apples and slice them thinly. Add some lemon juice to prevent them turning brown.

Beat the eggs and sugar for about five minutes, until creamy and pale. Add the cream and butter mixture into the egg and sugar mixture. In another bowl, mix the flour and baking powder. Add the flour mixture to the dough through a sieve. Stir until the dough is even.

Add the vanilla extract and mix in the apple slices and the berries. Pour the dough into the tin and bake on the lower level of the oven for 40–50 minutes or until a stick stays dry when you stick it into the cake.

Let the traybake cool down completely and dust it with icing sugar. Cut into serving-sized squares.

**Tip:** You can use any berries or mixture of berries you like, fresh or frozen.



## Autumn

### Harvest time

The Nordic light and pure air and water during the summer produce brilliant raw materials for food. The pure Finnish soil produces a rich autumn harvest. When compared internationally, Finnish soil is also pure when heavy metals are considered. The winter eradicates pests and weeds.

The short harvest time lasts only for some weeks in August and September and ends with the coming of winter. During that time, cereals are threshed, root vegetables are harvested and autumnal mushrooms and berries are picked in forests. Root vegetables have always been one of the staples of the Finnish food culture and have been cultivated alongside cereals. Meat was consumed less before and the diet consisted mainly of root vegetables, cabbage, legumes and cereals. Root vegetables were easy to preserve for nutrition over the winter.

The increasing focus on responsible eating has made Finns appreciate locally produced food

even more. The aim is for food transport chains to be short and for food to take the shortest route from forests, lakes, seas, fields, livestock farms and vegetable gardens to consumers' kitchens and plates.

Researchers estimate that in 20 years' time, Finnish consumers will have switched to a more plant-based diet in their everyday lives. Currently, different methods are being developed for food production that will slow down climate change.

Gourmands are pampered in the autumn. The evenings get darker quickly and the weather gets cooler as the winter approaches. In kitchens, we can hear the simmering of warm, rich stews, casseroles and soups.

Roasted root vegetables are an easy and fast way to enjoy the season's yield. You can vary the root vegetables according to your own taste and availability and bring out new flavours by marinating them with e.g. balsamic vinegar and herbs. Roasted root vegetables are suitable for autumn

meals served with meat or fish. The serving is crowned with a delicious mushroom sauce.

Fish has always been part of the Finnish food culture and fishing is an important livelihood in the water-rich inland areas, on the coast and in the archipelago.

Rainbow trout or rainbow salmon is the most important farmed fish in Finland and the most popular used in cooking. The fish farmed in Finland are very pure and contain plenty of fatty acids and vitamins essential for humans. Rainbow salmon is also a good source of vitamin D for Finns when the amount of sunlight decreases.

Rainbow salmon can be used in many ways and it is sold both fresh and cooked, for example warm or cold smoked and as gravad salmon (salted). The most popular dishes are rainbow salmon casserole and salmon soup, where seasonal root vegetables can also be used.



#### *Honey-roasted root vegetables*

- 5 carrots
- 5 small potatoes
- 5 medium-sized beetroots
- 1–2 parsnips
- a piece of celeriac
- a piece of swede
- 4 small onions
- vegetable oil
- rosemary and other herbs
- runny honey
- salt
- freshly ground pepper

Preheat the oven to 200 °C.

Wash all the root vegetables thoroughly. Chop the unpeeled potatoes and carrots. Peel and chop the beetroots, parsnip, celeriac and swede. Cut the onion into chunks.

Spread the mixed vegetables on a large oven pan or an oven tray. Add a generous amount of oil and honey. Spice with rosemary, salt and pepper.

Roast in the oven for 30–45 minutes, until the vegetables are cooked, yet firm.



#### ONE FOURTH OF THE WORLD'S CARAWAY COMES FROM FINLAND

The exceptional light in Finland produces very flavoursome caraway. This is why it is sought after around the world. Caraway is used as a spice and caraway oil is utilised as a raw material in the cosmetic and pharmaceutical industries.

In Finland, caraway is used to spice many baked goods and it is suitable for use in spice mixtures and marinades. In Scandinavia, caraway is used to spice alcohol. Germans season their sausages and sour kraut with caraway and Indian cuisine would be very different without caraway.

Finland produces more than one fourth of the the world's caraway (28%). Altogether, about 1,500 farms cultivate caraway in Finland on 20,000 hectares of farmland. In peak years, up to 2,000 kilograms per hectare are produced.

Many people who love herbs, not only use the seeds of the plant, but also the flowers, leaves and young sprouts to season salads or soups, for example.



#### POPULAR ORGANIC FOOD

It is easy to find organically produced food in Finland. When grocery shopping, Finnish consumers appreciate pure, additive-free and pesticide-free food. Taste, healthiness, and environmentally friendliness are also common reasons for consumers to buy organic food.

*“Finns idealise local, simple and pure ingredients and appreciate their original flavours. Traditionally, spices have been limited to salt and pepper and some herbs. Pickles, especially beetroot or cucumber preserved in vinegar, are often served as a side dish.”*

– Professor of Food Culture Mari Niva, University of Helsinki



#### *Creamy salmon soup*

- 400g boneless rainbow trout (salmon trout)
- 2 tbsp. butter
- 1 l hot fish or vegetable stock
- 4 firm potatoes
- 2 carrots
- a piece of parsnip
- a small piece of celeriac
- 1 onion
- 2 bay leaves
- 6 whole allspice kernels
- 4 whole white pepper kernels
- 100–150 ml cream
- fresh dill finely chopped
- (salt)

Peel the root vegetables and cut them into cubes. Peel the onion, cut in half and chop the halves finely.

Melt the butter in a pot and sauté the root vegetables and onion for about five minutes.

Add the stock and the spices into the pot and let it boil until the vegetables are cooked, yet firm, about 15 minutes.

Cut the fish into bite-sized cubes.

Add the fish, cream and chopped dill into the soup, turning carefully. Let the soup simmer under the lid for about 5–8 minutes. Do not boil. Taste and add salt if needed.

Serve immediately with rye bread and butter. You can sprinkle some fresh chopped dill on top of the soup.

**Tip:** You can make the soup without cream and butter, and replace the butter with oil.

## Winter

# Winter food for travellers

The Finnish winter offers travellers gorgeous nature experiences. The landscape is covered in snow already in November and December in northern Finland. The lakes and sea freeze over and the air is cold and crisp. Even if it is dark and icy, there are plenty of activities inviting you to get some fresh air – skiing and snowboarding, hiking in nature, ice skating, sledding – you name it.

Meanwhile, in home kitchens and restaurants, food experiences are bubbling away: stews, soups,

roasts and at the beginning of the year some blinis and many sweet seasonal delicacies. Glogg or “glögi” as the Finns call it, a type of mulled wine, is a favoured hot drink at Christmas.

In January, it is time to eat burbot, a cod-like freshwater fish. At the beginning of the skiing holiday in early spring, “laskiaispulla” is enjoyed, a cardamom-spiced wheat bun filled with jam or almond paste, topped with whipped cream.

Even if hunting is more like a hobby in Finland today, it still has an important role in game management. Game meat is pure, sustainable wild food. In Finland, 10 million kilograms of pure game meat is hunted each year. In Lapland, reindeer herding is a significant livelihood. The most traditional stew consists of frozen game meat carved into a pot and spiced with juniper berries.

## Venison stew from Lapland

(6–8 portions)

- about 900g deer or elk roast
- 150g bacon or 3 tbsp. butter
- 2 onions
- 2 carrots
- 500 ml dark beer
- 1 l game stock or dark meat stock
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 rosemary spring
- 8 whole juniper berries
- 5 whole allspice kernels
- 1/2 tsp. ground black pepper
- 2 tsp. corn starch
- 2 tsp. water
- 300–400g mild Finnish flat, bread-shaped cheese called *leipäjuusto*, cut in cubes. You can leave the cheese out, if it is not available.

Preheat the oven to 200 °C.

Peel and chop the onion. Wash the carrots thoroughly and slice them. Cut the meat in bite-sized pieces.

Slice the bacon and sear in a frying pan with the onions and carrots until the onion is soft. Spoon the ingredients into a casserole, but leave the bacon fat in the pan.

Sear the meat in the same frying pan in a couple of batches and put the meat in the casserole.

Pour about 200ml of beer into the pan and let it boil, scraping the pan clean at the same time. Pour the beer into the casserole.

Add the spices, the rest of the beer and the meat stock to the casserole. Heat the stew to boiling hot on the stove, put the lid on the casserole and put it in the oven. Let it simmer first for

30 minutes at 200 °C and then lower the oven temperature to 160 °C. Let the stew simmer for another 1–1,5 hours until the meat is tender. Add hot water during cooking if the stew gets too dry.

Mix the water and corn starch and thicken the stew. Add the *leipäjuusto*-cheese cubes on top and close the lid of the casserole for another five minutes.

Serve with Puikula potato mash and lingonberry sauce.

**Tip:** If you are using a cheaper piece of meat, like a shoulder, it is advisable to keep the stew simmering for at least 1–2 hours more.

## Mashed Puikula potatoes

- 1 kg “Puikula” potatoes, a potato cultivar from Lapland
- 1 tsp. salt
- water
- 50g butter
- 100 ml hot milk
- salt

Wash the Puikula potatoes thoroughly, do not peel.

Boil the potatoes in salted water until slightly overcooked.

Poor out the water and crush the potatoes in the pot until they form a coarse mash.

Add butter, milk and a pinch of salt and mix turning the mash carefully until it is even. Do not mix too much, to avoid the mash becoming gluey.

**Tip:** You can peel the potatoes before boiling, if you like.



Plant proteins made of pure Finnish raw materials are noteworthy Finnish food innovations, e.g. pulled oats is a meat replacement product made of oats, pea protein and horse bean protein.

## Innovations that taste good

The first Finnish functional food product to conquer the world was the tooth-friendly sweetener xylitol. It was followed by products that are good for the stomach, cholesterol levels and blood pressure. Today, many innovations are aimed at helping consumers reduce their meat consumption.

"I think the most interesting Finnish food innovations right now are plant proteins made of pure Finnish raw materials. They are challenging the position of meat proteins in our diet. You can use them in the same way as meat and milk. They are a healthy and environmentally friendly source of protein that taste good," says **Janina Granholm**.

She is an expert in sustainable food and a sustainability specialist at strategy consultancy Hopiasepät in Helsinki. She has studied business models of companies that produce meat replacement products.

"Great examples of meat replacement products are Finnish brands like "Nyhtökaura", which translates into pulled oats, "Härkis" made of horse beans, "Muru Kaurajauhis" made of oats and "Jalotofu" made of soybeans. Consumers can use these products and cook with their favourite old recipes that used to include meat. If we want people to eat

less animal protein, we should make it as easy as possible."

Even if we should all eat responsibly, we cannot be expected to compromise on the taste of food.

"Actually, plant protein products are delicious! I rather drink oat milk than cow's milk, because I like the taste. And I'm not alone," Granholm says.

These innovations are often created through cooperation between consumers, big and small companies and research communities. Granholm believes that sustainability will play an increasing role in future product development.

Finland's main culinary exports are cheese, alcoholic beverages, butter, pork and chocolate, but new plant protein products are becoming big hits on the Finnish export market. Nordic food enjoys an excellent reputation because it is pure and needs fewer pesticides to grow. Finnish food is also very safe and easily traceable. Finnish organic food and functional food products are in high demand, especially in Europe and Asia.

Janina Granholm's blog:  
[coupleoffinndiners.blogi.net](http://coupleoffinndiners.blogi.net)  
[foodfromfinland.fi](http://foodfromfinland.fi)



## Cases

### BERRIES IN POWDERED FORM

Finnish wild berries are especially rich in vitamins, flavonoids, minerals and antioxidants. Berry powder contains the same nutrients as wild berries.

The benefits of wild arctic berries are, therefore, not restricted only to summer.

One teaspoon of berry powder is equivalent to a handful of fresh berries. And the powder does not go off quickly!

There are as many ways to use berry powder as one can imagine. Try wild blueberry powder on top of yoghurt or porridge, lingonberry powder in baking or sea buckthorn powder in a smoothie – and enjoy!



### HAPPY COWS AND A TOUCH OF PINE

Finns eat on average 14 litres of ice cream per person a year – more than any other nation in Europe. Research has shown that Finns think it is important that their ice cream is domestic. The Finnish ice cream Jymy is a handmade, local delicacy. The secret of Jymy ice cream is that everything is organic. The small ice cream factory of Suomisen Maito is located near an organic farm where they get fresh milk.

When Finland celebrated one hundred years of independence in 2017, Suomisen Maito honoured the jubilee year by creating a new Jymy ice cream with a pine flavour from Finnish nature. The tree is typical for the Finnish landscape.

The shoots collected from young pines give the ice cream an extraordinary, sweet yet fresh taste.



### DELICIOUS WITHOUT GLUTEN

It is not difficult to be on a gluten-free diet in Finland. Grocery stores offer a large amount of gluten-free products. Try pastas with a different twist, for example beans, lentils, buckwheat chickpeas or broad bean.

Baking is also easy with gluten-free flour. A bread with buckwheat flour, rose hip flour or corn flour is worth tasting.

Luckily, one can also enjoy gluten-free Finnish specialities like Karelian pasties or black liquorice. Gluten-free Finnish beer is also available.

Most restaurants and cafes have gluten-free options on their menus. The letter G after the portion means it is a safe choice.



### FOOD WITHOUT LAND

Climate change is forcing us to find new solutions for food production. The Finnish company Solar Foods has developed models that sound really exciting.

The company produces protein using only air and electricity as the main resources.

Solar Foods' concept is thus not dependent on agriculture, the weather or the climate. They aim to start commercial protein production in 2021.

Proteins are also needed in space flights. Solar Foods is developing a system to produce proteins for space flights to Mars. The method requires carbon dioxide, water and electricity, combined with a small amount of trace elements. The proteins are produced in a bioreactor tank.

## Old & new favourites



### TRADITIONAL, YET EASY TO PREPARE

Delicious oven-baked casseroles are part of the western food heritage of Finland. The casseroles bake slowly in the oven, but are relatively quick to prepare.

The most common casseroles nowadays are macaroni casserole and liver casserole. Macaroni casserole is made with pasta and minced meat. It is the favourite dish of many children. Liver casserole is made with liver, rice, syrup and raisins.

Christmas is the high season for casseroles: Christmas meals include ham or turkey that is served with swede casserole, potato casserole and carrot casserole.

The casseroles are available in ready-to-eat portions. Liver casserole is the most popular ready-to-eat food product in Finland!

### PLATE MODEL HELPS YOU TO EAT IN A HEALTHY WAY

Finns know how to construct a meal. "The plate model" is the official recommendation of the National Nutrition Council. It tells you what to eat so that all the necessary vitamins and trace elements are included. Knowing the right proportions of food to eat also helps in weight control.

According to the model, half of a plate should be filled with vegetables, a quarter with the main course (which can be meat, fish or vegetarian) and a quarter with potatoes, rice or pasta.



### THURSDAY IS PEA SOUP DAY

Every Thursday, Finns eat pea soup. According to legend, the tradition began already in the 12th century. Friday used to be a day for fasting and people had to eat well on Thursday to have enough strength on Friday.

Thick and nourishing pea soup tastes especially good in the cold season. The soup is made of peas, of course, and usually also includes meat. Vegan versions of the soup are available as well. The meat is then replaced with root vegetables.

The soup is often followed by a delicious dessert, a pancake with jam and whipped cream.



The meal should be accompanied by a piece of whole grain bread. It is recommended that water, fat-free milk or sour milk be consumed with the meal.



### CRICKETS ON THE MENU

Finland is a forerunner in promoting insect food culture in Europe. Innovations utilising insects are being developed, among others, in a research project at the Turku University in cooperation with ten big Finnish food companies. At the same time, the amount of insect farms in the country is growing rapidly.

Researchers see a lot of potential in insects. Cricket powder, for instance, contains 60–70% protein, the same amount of calcium as milk and plenty of iron.

Finnish grocery shops already stock various insect foods such as bread, pasta, muesli or meat-substitute products that contain cricket powder and whole crickets.



### KILOMETRES OF GREEN JELLY BALLS

Big, round, pear-flavoured marmalade balls are a Finnish delicacy enjoyed especially at Christmas. Altogether, Finns eat up to 25 million green jelly balls a year. If they were lined up, they would form a line hundreds of kilometres long, for instance, from Helsinki to Tampere.

Green jelly balls are traditional candies that have been manufactured since 1929.



### FINNS AS COFFEE DRINKERS

Finns consume more coffee per capita than any other nation in the world. They have coffee several times a day.

Coffee adds rhythm to life. Most people start their mornings with coffee. The legal breaks during the working day are called coffee breaks.

Having coffee is a social activity in Finland. If you visit someone, you will be served coffee, probably with a bun.

While filtered light roast is still dominant, recent years have seen an upsurge in popular cafés where skilled *baristas* serve espresso-based drinks.



Flow Festival in Helsinki is a world leading music and arts boutique festival with 40 restaurants and 20 bars offering an impressive selection of culinary treats.

## Food brings people together

Today, Finns eat out more than previous generations did. The urban food scene is vibrant and trendy. For special occasions, there are stunning top chefs that offer fine dining experiences. Simple white fish, rye, root vegetables and berries are turned into gourmet dishes. These delicacies produce enthusiastic conversations around the table.

There are many ethnic restaurants in Finland. Finnish chefs have also incorporated some foreign influences in their own cuisine and have introduced fusion cuisine specialities like barley risotto, sapas (Finnish tapas), reindeer carpaccio, and rye burgers.

In recent years, there has been an influx of food events in Finland. Smaku Porvoo, is an event where visitors try taste-size portions from excellent restaurants in the city of Porvoo. The biggest restaurant festival in Finland, Tamperrada in Tampere, also offers small portions. It allows visitors to visit many restaurants and experience different styles of cooking. These events bring people together





and encourage conversation and the sharing of experiences.

These days, many people enjoy cooking as a hobby and cooking parties at home are quite common. Everyone brings some ingredients and the meal is prepared and enjoyed together.

Finns like to invite their friends over for coffee and buns. It is easier to start a conversation when you have a cup of coffee in your hand. This tradition unites different generations, since both the older and the younger generations love coffee.

Most Finns like to get together for two warm meals a day, at lunch and dinner. Schoolchildren are given a free, warm lunch, which they enjoy with their friends in the canteen. At many workplaces, there is a canteen or a cafeteria where the employees like to sit down with their colleagues for a proper meal and have a relaxing chat to break up the workday.

In the early evening, around six o'clock, many Finnish families have dinner. This is the time of day they sit around a table, talk about their day, and share their experiences.

The favourite place for many Finns to enjoy their meals is in nature: in the forest or by a lake or the sea. Just a humble piece of rye bread and coffee from a thermos flask with your family, or a full-blown meal cooked by the campfire and enjoyed with friends, it just tastes better outdoors.



## A piece of bread

### **RUISLEIPÄ – RYE BREAD**

Rye bread is something really Finnish. Finns have also voted rye bread as the Finnish national food. The dark bread is made from sourdough. It is baked with starter dough or with yeast. Rye bread is rich in fibre.

There is a large selection of rye bread in grocery stores: loaves, round bread and ready cut pieces.

### **KARJALANPIIRAKKA – KARELIAN PASTY**

In Karelian pasties, rice is baked inside a very thin rye crust. The art of making Karelian pasties is highly valued as it is not the easiest task. Luckily, bakeries and grocery stores sell delicious Karelian pasties as well!

The pasties come from Eastern Finland. They can also be filled with mashed potatoes or carrots.

### **SAARISTOLAISLEIPÄ – ISLANDER'S BREAD**

This black, sweet loaf is typical in coastal areas in the south and on the Åland Islands. The sweet taste comes from syrup and malt. The bread is best when consumed 1-2 days after baking.

Perfect with slices of gravad salmon, some dill and a few drops of fresh lemon juice.

### **RIESKA – UNLEAVENED BREAD**

Rieska is unleavened, usually barley-based, soft and flat bread. It is often served warm and buttered. The barley rieska is a local speciality in the northern and north-western areas of Finland. The other common type of *rieska* is made of mashed potatoes.

### **KORVAPUUSTI – CINNAMON BUN**

It is hard to resist the scent of a freshly baked cinnamon bun. It is a bun filled with or rolled in cinnamon, sugar and butter. In Finland, cinnamon buns are a common part of everyday life and festive occasions. The Finnish name for a cinnamon bun, *korvapuusti*, translates into 'slapped ears'.





### A NICE CUP OF COFFEE AT THE MARKET PLACE WITH FRIENDS

Having a cup of coffee at a market place café is something special for Finns. It is a sign of summer.

The cafés are usually tent-styled stalls. There is shelter in case of rain, but people mostly tend to sit outdoors.

The atmosphere at market place cafés is uncomplicated and relaxed. Everyone goes there: Business people in suits, workers, pensioners, students, tourists, and parents with children. It is highly recommended to have a chat with someone next to you.

During the summer holidays, the market places are very lively. If you visit a market place café in a small town, it is worth trying the local delicacies. A bun or a doughnut is also always a good choice with coffee.



### FINNISH YOUR DINNER

Each summer, on a specific day, Finnish people are invited to have dinner with friends or with unknown people outdoors, under the night sky.

This wonderful tradition began in 2013 in Helsinki. Long tables with white cloths were set up in the heart of Helsinki in order to give people an opportunity to eat together outdoors.

The event was a huge success. It is nowadays held everywhere in Finland. Each group sets up their own table. The event is also organised abroad and is called "Finnish your dinner".

Finnish your dinner is organised by Yhteismaa ('Common land'), a small public benefit association.

### RESTAURANT DAY

A Finnish food culture innovation – Restaurant Day was launched in 2011. During the first five years Restaurant Day was celebrated four times a year. The idea is simple, really. On Restaurant Day, anyone can set up a restaurant, anywhere. In 2015, one-day restaurants popped up in 72 different countries.

Since May 2016, every day has been Restaurant Day and pop-up restaurants can be opened and local food carnivals can happen anytime and anywhere: at your home, on a street corner, in your garden, in a park, or on the beach – your imagination is the only limit. This means a whole lot of fun and food plus wonderful, tasty memories.



### CRAYFISH PARTIES

When the light summer nights start becoming darker bit by bit, it is time to enjoy crayfish. The end of summer is the season for crayfish parties in Finland.

There are several traditions that are associated with crayfish parties.

The crayfish are served with toast, butter and dill. The guests drink snaps, beer, white wine or water. You need a special knife to cut the crayfish shell.

The dominant colour of table decorations is red, matching the crayfish.

Cheerful drinking songs are an essential part of crayfish parties.

The most important thing, however, is having a good time with friends and family.



### SMALL, TRENDY BREWERIES

Beer tasting has become very trendy in Finland recently. Beer is not just beer anymore. New tastes and brands have been created with the rapid expansion in the amount of small local breweries over the last ten years.

Ruosniemen panimo in Pori, in Western Finland, is one of these interesting local breweries. Their Musta Lomittaja beer was crowned the best smoke flavoured beer in the world in 2017.

Many small breweries organise guided tours and tastings which is a nice way to become acquainted with brewing and possibly discovering a new favourite beer.



## Did you know?

Can bread be too white and coffee too dark? Yes, they definitely can. Many Finns at least think so when travelling abroad. Dark bread is the thing that Finns miss most when abroad. A package of rye bread in a suitcase helps, as well as some light roast coffee. It is not a bad idea either to take along a little bit of salty liquorice. In many countries, this unique candy is completely unknown.

The views expressed herein are solely those of the authors.

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