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The big crawl: peak season for shellfish in Sweden

Once again it will soon be time for crayfish in Sweden: the "Kräftskiva". The season of the crayfish party starts in early August and lasts through until September. As with most things, there´s a bit of a story behind all this: until 1994, crayfish fishing was only allowed from August to October. The fishermen eagerly awaited the starting signal on the first Wednesday in August and celebrated the fresh catch with a Kräftskiva (literally "crayfish table"). Today, this regulation no longer exists, but the tradition runs so deep that the Swedes continue to adhere to it. Then again, any excuse for a party during the last warm summer evenings?

It is mainly freshwater crayfish that are served at a crayfish party: crayfish/crawfish ("Flodkräfta") and signal crayfish ("Signalkräfta"), which occur in lakes and rivers throughout Sweden. But on the west coast of Sweden, which is rich in seafood, you also eat Norway lobster from the sea ("Havskräfta"). All these crustaceans are originally dark brown – perfectly camouflaged on the river and seabed – only take on their unmistakable red colour when cooked.

This red hue sets the tone for a crayfish party where blushing is a part of the experience for the guests, because afterall, a Kräftskiva is funny: The prescribed dress code is paper hats and bibs with crayfish motifs, and according to the motto "a crayfish, a schnapps, a song", every glass of Aquavit is accompanied by a drinking song.

In contrast to midsummer, where entire villages dance around a central pole, the Kräftskiva is celebrated in a small circle, around a table. For holidaymakers, restaurants and hotels in the south of the country have crayfish specials. In western Sweden , for example, Slipens Hotel, the Weather Islands and the Hotel Norrqvarn on the Göta Canal are good destinations for curious gourmets. In the popular region of Småland you can not only enjoy the shellfish but also help catch them.

Even the capital Stockholm offers visitors culinary crayfish highlights. The Hotel Royal Park , in collaboration with Michelin-starred chef Niklas Ekstedt, promises an unforgettable crayfish party in Hagapark. And in the centrally located Hotel Hobo , tradition meets Far Eastern influences.

Further information: https://visitsweden.com/what-to-do/culture-history-and-art/swedish-traditions/more-traditions/crayfish-party/

New restaurant ÄNG serves flavours from (and under) the meadow

Probably one of the year's biggest restaurant ventures in the Nordics, where guests will not only experience a Scandinavian tasting menu, but also Swedish organic wine grown a stone's throw from the restaurant.

The new Restaurant ÄNG at Ästad Vineyard, Halland, Sweden has once again opened its doors to guests. The new glass house on the meadow will be the start of a 4.5-hour tasting experience that takes the guest on a journey through the earth's layers.

On April 30th, ÄNG closed the doors to the former restaurant to invest everything in new premises. Now, about a hundred meters out in the middle of a meadow sits the new restaurant built together with Ästad Vingård and Norm Architects.

Guests are greeted by a path that winds its way across the meadow's undulating landscape, up to the impressive clean lines of the new glass house, waiting all alone. And so the first scene of the evening´s dining experience can begin.

Ästad Vingård financed and helped develop the new ÄNG dining experience, together with Filip Gemzell and Ann-Catrine Johansson. They in turn have had the support of Copenhagen-based Norm Architects and Japanese-Scandinavian Karimoku Case Study. In addition to giving the restaurant a better foundation from which to take the next step, the ambition has been to create a calm and peaceful place that surprises guests while the evening unfolds.

- “During longer fine-dining sessions, you need to change the environment or be exposed to something new. It means that you maintain focus and can better enjoy the coming courses”, says Daniel Carlsson, CEO of Ästad Vingård and ÄNG.

In addition to the collaboration with Ästad Vineyard, the new ÄNG has also expanded its wine cellar. Ästad Vineyard regularly produces new cuvées for the restaurant´s cellar master Emma Ziemann (winning Sommelier-Swedish Championships 2022) who has been entrusted with building the wine cellar.

In addition to Emma Ziemann, executive director Filip Gemzell and general manager Ann-Catrine Johansson also have doubled the team with new members from all over the world.

- “We start from our location in Halland and handpick the raw materials as close as possible, but we are looking for new techniques, methods and inspiration from across the world's cuisines. With the new ÄNG, we are taking a big step forward”, says Filip Gemzell.

Press Images: Martin Rynvik martin@astadvingard.se

Further information:

New ÄNG is open Monday to Friday.

Read more at www.restaurangang.se

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Stay like a VIP: celebrity rooms in Swedish hotels

The Hotel Haymarket by Scandic in Sweden's capital Stockholm celebrated the premiere of the new "Elvis" film with a glamorous themed suite. Although this was only bookable until 15 July, the hotel is still filled with cinematic flair: the graceful design in Art Deco style takes guests back to the Roaring Twenties and is reminiscent of the actress Greta Garbo (1905-1990). The icon of Swedish film worked in the same building at a young age, when it was still a department store.

Häringe Castle on the Baltic Sea coast south of Stockholm also honours the screen legend and other celebrities: film stars, industrial magnates and eccentric personalities came and went with the host Axel Wenner-Gren, the founder of Electrolux. They celebrated, feasted and enjoyed many frivolous escapades. A round room was built especially for Greta Garbo, and other guest rooms are dedicated to Josephine Baker, Zarah Leander and Elizabeth Taylor.

Can it get more glamourous? The Grand Hôtel in Stockholm has rooms for very special occasions – including an Ingrid Bergman suite with a portrait of the "Casablanca" actress, a walk-in closet and decorative elements from the world of film.

The ice hotel in Swedish Lapland also promises superlative accommodation experiences. While some rooms there melt away in spring, "Icehotel 365" offers cool overnight accommodation all year round. The design suite "A Midsummer Night's Dream" was designed by none other than the Swedish Prince Carl Philip. With frozen flowers, he captures the clash of summer and winter in a uniquely poetic way. By the way, situated north of the Arctic Circle, it records its first sunset in several weeks on July 17. But, even in mid-August, it is still light for 17 hours a day in the far north – almost three hours more than in London.

Further information: https://visitsweden.com/search/?query=Hotel

Species protection for polka piggies: EU seal of approval for Sweden's famous candy canes

The traditional ones are red and white striped, have a peppermint flavour and stick, without paper protection, like hell to anything else nearby. Of course, other colours and flavours have been added over the years. Since 1859, Sweden's famous polkargrisar, colourful candy canes, which have now received the GGA seal for protected geographical indication from the EU, have been produced in the small town of Gränna on the eastern shore of Lake Vättern. The real Gränna polka pigs – the translated name – may therefore only be produced with certain ingredients in the Gränna region at the extreme northernmost tip of the Småland region, in Sweden.

The creator of the now internationally recognised snack was a 35-year-old single widow who, as a baker, needed an additional source of income and tried to produce and sell candy canes. We´ll never know for sure where the "polka piggy" got its name, but the polka was the most popular dance in many parts of Europe at that time in the middle of the 19th century. Her exuberance and work with sugar were welcome distractions from an often barren life at the time. A tribute to the history of the sugar-sweet pig is the dance festival that takes place every June in Gränna, where the polka is of course the focus of the lively celebrations. The longest polka pig made it into the Guinness Book of Records at 287 meters long: it has yet to be beaten.

Visitors to the pretty and romantic town opposite the island of Visingsö who not only want to buy the colourful sweet can also make it themselves, learning the necessary skills under instruction in the Wonka-esque factories ofFranssons polkagriskokeri, Polkarpojkarna, Polkaprinsen, Grenna Polkagriskokeri and Gränna för gott. This is great fun for families with children; kneading, rolling and pulling the slug-like mass is great fun! A sugar-free version is available upon request.

Further information: https://www.visitsmaland.se/en/experiences/kids-and-family/candy

Into autumn in style: Stockholm's major cultural highlights

Even if we don't want to admit it at the moment, every summer comes to an end. Good to know then that there are already some highlights to look forward to after the lazy days of sunshine. What better way to sweeten autumn than with a city trip? As Swedes return to the capital in mid-August, relaxed after a summer spent at their summer cottage, the city´s cultural calendar is already peppered with highlights.

For starters, there´s the **Stockholm Cultural Festival** (17-21 August), which returns full of energy after a two-year break. With free admission, the city offers over a hundred concerts, educational workshops, city tours, performances and many other events. Among others, the Swedish band The Hives will play on Saturday, August 20th – also for free, of course. The varied programme covers six areas in the city centre: Kungsträdgården, Skeppsbron and Norrbro, as well as sergels torg, Karl XII:s torg and Gustav Adolfs torg.

A few days later, **Stockholm Fashion Week** (31 August-2. September) under the motto "The new normal" daring fashion creations for the coming summer season. Traditionally, fashion week is attended by numerous designers and brands from Sweden, including Asket, Filippa K, Ida Sjöstedt and H&M Studio. The invitation to the fashion shows is mostly reserved for the professional audience, but the joy of fashion and the new collections in the shops spills over to the whole city.

And then **Stockholm Design Week** (5-11 September) is all about stylish furniture and sustainable living trends. More than 50 Nordic manufacturers, brands and design studios present their latest ideas in showrooms, galleries, launch parties and cocktail receptions. These events are also primarily aimed at buyers, architects, designers and journalists. From 8th to 10th September, however, a parallel programme called "Open Space" will take place, giving the public rare insights into Stockholm studios. Tickets for lectures and guided tours will be available from 15th August.

Speaking of beautiful furniture: the famous shopSvenskt Tenn proves its good taste once again when it opens a new café this autumn on the picturesque Strandvägen. "We have developed a kind of Swedish bento box," says restaurateur Petter Nilsson. "From the varied menu with many plant-based products, guests create their own meal according to their wishes and appetite."

Further Information: https://www.visitstockholm.com/see-do/attractions/upcoming-events/

Happiness in the round: Sweden celebrates Meatball Day

The Swedish culinary calendar is particularly well filled in the second half of the year: It is now that specialities such as crayfish, surströmming, cinnamon buns and the famous meatballs are dedicated their own days. "Köttbullar (Meatball) Day" is august 23rd (Sweden fans know, of course, that the word is pronounced "Schertbullar"). Whether as a break as you wander around the furniture megastore or in a trendy restaurant serving home cooking, whether classic beef or pork or even a vegetarian version: there´s always room for The hearty Nordic national dish of small balls, mashed potatoes, an irresistible cream sauce and lingonberry jam.

By the way, the first officially recorded recipe comes from a historical cookbook: Cajsa Warg's "Tools of the Household for Young Women's Rooms" from 1755. However, the tradition is likely to be much older. One theory is that the Swedish King Charles XII (1682-1718) brought the inspiration for the dish in the early 18th century from the Ottoman Empire, i.e. today's Turkey. Other nutrition historians assume that so-called "meatballs" were already served in Sweden before that. But whether self-creation or culinary import meatballs didn´t find their way to the average Swedish household of the Svenssons until the middle of the 19th century, after two essential aids were available – namely the meat grinder and wood-fired stove – in most kitchens. And of course, many regional variations have developed over time as well. One of the most popular and traditional recipes for homemade Köttbullar can be found on visitsweden.com. If you want to prepare a meatless version, you can either buy a vegan or vegetarian minced meat substitute in the supermarket or prepare a mixture of lentils, mushrooms and oatmeal yourself. Of course, this Swedish national dish tastes best in its natural habitat. Visit Sweden has some restaurant

tips from Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö.

Further Information: https://visitsweden.com/what-to-do/food-drink/swedish-kitchen/best-swedish-meatballs-and-where-get-them/

Press Images: https://imagebank.sweden.se/my-selections/a3y0bburf

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If you have questions or are interested in press trips to the above, please contact:

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Your invitation to experience our unique lifestyle, progressive culture, accessible nature, local food culture and innovative mindset. We want visiting Sweden to be about creating value, for you as our guest, for the local community and the planet.

In 2022, for the second year in a row, Sweden was listed as the most sustainable country in the world by Euromonitor International in its Sustainable Travel Index, as well as once again ranking number one in the Good Country Index, a measure of what countries contribute to the world outside their borders, and what they take away: their balance-sheet towards humanity and the planet.

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