Visit Sweden News Room

Sweden's Smelliest Season: Surströmming and Crayfish Craze

Sweden in August, the air is rich with tradition, laughter, and... well, a very distinct smell. If you've ever chuckled at a 'stinky fish challenge' on social media, brace yourself for the real deal: Sweden's fermented herring, or 'surströmming'. This savory delicacy isn't just about the odor; it's a beloved tradition sure to make your trip unforgettable.

Surströmming: A smelly sensation
Surströmming, a small Baltic herring fermented to perfection, is celebrated every year starting on the third Thursday of August. The world's largest surströmming festival will kick off on August 17, 2024, in Alfta, Hälsingland. Picture this: cans of fermented herring, bulging with fermentation, being opened amidst much ordeal. The aroma might knock you back, but the taste? Pure umami bliss.

For the best experience, visit Ulvön island on the High Coast in northern Sweden, where the tradition of surströmming has been kept alive for over a century. In Stockholm, restaurants such as Tennstopet, Sturehof, and Knut also serve this seasonal delicacy. If DIY, grab a can from local grocery stores and join the locals in a surströmming party ('surströmmingsskiva').

Top Tip: Open the can underwater to avoid an unexpected geyser of fermented fish juice. Then, wrap the fish in buttered 'tunnbröd' with almond potatoes and onions, and wash it down with beer and snaps. Bon appétit!

Can't get enough of the stinky stuff? Visit the Disgusting Food Museum in Malmö, open year-round, or the world's first surströmming museum at Skeppsmalen on the High Coast. Here, you can sniff, listen, and even learn how to eat surströmming properly. It's a smelly yet fascinating cultural deep dive.

Crayfish craze: A party you can’t miss
Not sure if surströmming is your thing? Fret not! August also heralds the crayfish party season, or 'kräftskiva,' another delightful Swedish tradition. Starting in early August and running through September, these parties celebrate the last of the summer days with friends, family, and lots of crayfish. According to a recent study by Kantar Sifo, 40% of Swedes look forward to the overall experience of good company, food, and drink, while only 7% are primarily excited about the crayfish itself.

Crayfish, whether the freshwater 'signalkräfta' or the sea-dwelling langoustine, 'havskräfta,' are caught in Sweden's lakes, rivers, and the sea along the west coast. To join in the fun, look for crayfish at supermarkets and fishmongers. For a more immersive experience, you can even book a fishing trip for your own catch, with Småland being a popular spot. In West Sweden, you can join seafood safaris in search of the langoustine – the favorite among Swedes.

These shellfish are then cooked in a flavorful broth of water, salt, sugar, and crown dill and served cold. Don your novelty paper hat and prepare to slurp, crack, and devour these succulent creatures. It's messy, it's fun, and it's a feast for the senses. Swedes are skilled at eating crayfish, with 23% enjoying the whole crayfish, including the crayfish butter.

Press images to download from Image Bank Sweden.

Visit Sweden *has an official assignment from the Swedish government to market Sweden as a destination. Our vision is that Sweden by 2030 is the world's most sustainable and attractive destination built on innovation. Now more than ever, purposeful travel needs to be meaningful, conscious and creating lasting value with regard to our guests, the local community and our planet. Welcome to Sweden, a destination of a different nature.*

Additional assets available online: Photos (1)

https://press.visitsweden.com/2024-08-17-Swedens-Smelliest-Season-Surstromming-and-Crayfish-Craze