MADE BY KIDS IN 6TH. GRADE IN BREKKUSKÓLA, AKUREYRI

Christmas Food



SMOKED LAMB

Smoked lamb is one of the popular christmas food in Iceland. To make smoked lamb you need one lamb leg. Put the lamb in a big pot and set cold water over it and wait until the water starts to bubble

Some prefer to stiffen their pudding with some gelatin. To do that, dissolve 4 teaspoons gelatin in a little hot water, stir into the still warm pudding along with almonds, sugar, and sherry, and fold in the whipped cream before the pudding begins to stiffen. Refrigerate for a few hours or overnight.

APRICOT SAUCE
APRÍKÓSUSÓSA

MAKES ½ CUP

This sauce can be served with ris a l'amande (page xx) and other puddings, or with ice cream. The same recipe can be used for other fruit. Fresh berries, for instance, need only be cooked for a few minutes.

½ cup chopped dried apricots
¼ cup sugar, or to taste
1 teaspoon potato starch or cornstarch

Soak the apricots in 2 cups water for a couple of hours. Turn them into a saucepan with the soaking water and cook them gently until tender. Press them through a sieve and pour them back into the saucepan. Stir in sugar to taste and bring to a boil again.

Dissolve the potato starch or cornstarch in a little cold water, remove the saucepan from the heat and immediately stir in the starch mixture. Stir until slightly thickened. Cool and serve.

RICE À L'AMANDE
RIS A L'AMANDE
SERVES 6

This delicious rice pudding is a popular Christmas dessert all over Scandinavia. It usually retains its French name (in Sweden it is known as ris à la Malta) and it has been served on Christmas Eve in many Icelandic homes for over a century.

1 tablespoon butter
3 cups milk
1 vanilla bean
½ cup pudding rice (short-grain)
½ teaspoon salt
¼ cup chopped almonds
2 tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon sherry (optional)
1 ½ cups whipping cream



Grease a saucepan with the butter before pouring the milk into it. Bring to a boil. Split the vanilla bean, scrape out the seeds into the milk, and add the split bean. Gradually stir in the rice.
Simmer, covered, for 45 minutes at very low heat. Stir occasionally and add a little more milk if needed. Remove from heat, take out the vanilla bean, salt the rice pudding, and let it cool, covered, preferably overnight.

Stir almonds, sugar, and sherry, if using, into the cold rice pudding. Whip the cream until stiff and fold it in carefully.

Refrigerate and serve with a fruit sauce, such as the apricot sauce in the following recipe, or canned fruit.

FRIED LEAF BREAD

Laufabrauð is the icelandic word for this. To make it you need special tools to roll it in the bread to make the patterns. This is very good with butter and a littlebit of smoked lamb



RJÚPA

Rjúpa is an a icelandic bird that is often for dinner in christmas eve.
The bird is hunted by a man with a gun.
It is very good.



8 ptarmigans, skinned and cleaned
2 tablespoons oil
Freshly ground pepper
Salt
2 bay leaves
1 medium carrot, chopped
4 tablespoons butter
Pinch of thyme
2 tablespoons flour
1 cup heavy cream
2 tablespoons red currant jelly, or to taste
1 tablespoon blue cheese



Cut the breasts and breastbone from the birds (each breast should be left whole, not cut into halves). Chop the rest of the birds up roughly along with the giblets.

Heat the oil in a large skillet and sauté the cut-up birds at high heat until well browned on all sides. Season with pepper and salt and add water to cover. Bring to a boil, skim well, add the bay leaves and chopped carrot, and simmer for 1 hour, adding more water if needed.

Strain the stock through a sieve. Melt 2 tablespoons of the butter in the skillet, season the ptarmigan breasts with salt, pepper, and a little thyme, and brown them in the butter. Pour the hot stock over them, cover, and simmer for 45 minutes.

Remove the breasts from the pan and keep them hot. Mix the remaining 2 tablespoons butter with the flour and stir half of it into the stock, adding the rest if the sauce is very thin, but it shouldn’t be thick.

Cook for 5 minutes, add cream, red currant jelly and blue cheese, and stir until combined. Cook for 5 minutes more, adjust seasonings, and serve with the ptarmigan breasts.

Christmas Ptarmigan
Jólarjúpa
Serves 4 to 6

After smoked lamb, ptarmigan can be considered as the most typical Icelandic Christmas dish, even though smoked and salted pork is far more common. But it didn't begin to gain popularity until the 1920s. Before that, the only people who served it at Christmas were those who were so poor they couldn't afford lamb but managed to snare or shoot a couple of birds.

Until a complete hunting ban (now lifted, but hunting is restricted) was imposed a few years ago, ptarmigan was served on Christmas Eve in 15 to 20 percent of all Icelandic homes, and those who serve it usually say they simply couldn't imagine Christmas without it. This means that in a "bad ptarmigan year", when the hunting has not been good, prices – never moderate – can go sky-high, but that doesn't stop people from buying the birds.

This is more or less the classic method to serve ptarmigan, although the birds are often cooked whole. The sauce is the traditional Icelandic ptarmigan sauce, although some versions use less red currant jelly and blue cheese, and older versions would be more likely to include brown cheese rather than blue cheese, or no cheese at all. The classic side dishes are sugar-glazed potatoes, boiled red cabbage, green peas, and a Waldorf salad or other apple salad. Sautéed vegetables like carrots and string beans are also suitable, as are baked apples or pears.

Jólaöl

Jólaöl is made of icelandic soda drink named Egils Appelsín and a drink called Malt you blend this together.



VÍNARTERTA

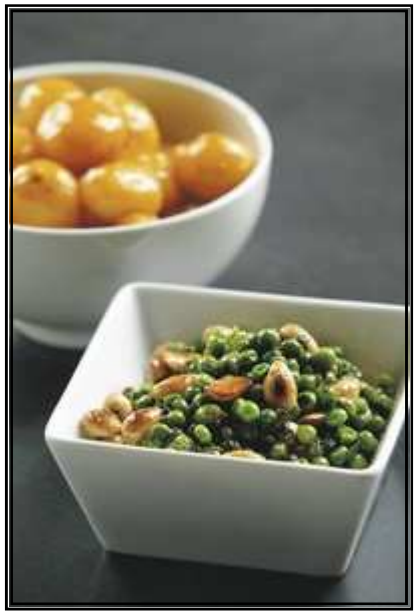
This cake is also called *Randalín* (the striped lady). The name *Vínarterta* means *Viennese Torte*, but with the English spelling which leaves out the accent above the i, it becomes *Friend's Cake.*

A variation of this cake is famous among the *Western-Icelanders* - the descendants of Icelandic immigrants in Canada and the U.S.A. For them, there is hardly anything more Icelandic than Vínarterta.
In spite of the name *Viennese Cake*, I think it probably originated in Denmark. The *Western-Icelandic* version is somewhat different from this. This is my grandmother's recipe.

Ingredients:
500 g flour
250 g sugar
250 g margarine/butter, soft
2 eggs
1 1/2 tsp. baker's ammonia (ammonium carbonate)
a pinch of baking powder
essence of cardamom or a pinch of ground cardamom

Mix together all dry ingredients. Add the margarine/butter, kneading until well mixed. Cool in the refrigerator for 12-24 hours. Roll out into a thickness of approx. 1 to 1 1/2 cm (1/2 inch). You

Boil the potatoes until tender, drain them, and peel them when they have cooled enough to handle (or peel them before boiling them). Cut them into even-size pieces, unless they are very small.
Sprinkle the sugar evenly on a heavy frying pan and heat it. Watch the sugar carefully; it should melt and begin to brown but it must not burn. Stir in the butter when it is melted and cook for a minute or two.
Add the potatoes and stir until they are covered in the caramel and heated through.



GLAZED POTATOES
BRÚNAÐAR KARTÖFLUR
SERVES 6

Caramelized or sugar-glazed potatoes are certainly not an Icelandic innovation. We learned from the Danes to make them, but they became immensely popular and used to be served with most roasted lamb and pork dishes, and often with pan-fried meat as well.

They are still popular but not as common as they used to be. I once heard a story about an Italian who was working here on an assignment and had to make a two-week tour around the island and eat at village hotels and restaurants. He was half-starving when he came back and said: “The potatoes were horrible everywhere – I just can’t imagine what they had done to them – it was as if they had been rolled in melted sugar.” No one had the heart to tell him that this was just what had been done to the potatoes.

It has to be said that while glazed potatoes can be really good, they can also be pretty dreary, especially if they have been sitting around for some time and have gotten soggy and fluffy. But I’ve known children who sat down to a sumptuous Christmas dinner and decided that the only thing they wanted was a heaped plate of glazed potatoes.

I sometimes replace half the sugar with honey – I feel this version is easier to manage. Another version replaces the butter with ¼ cup of cream and some people simply add a little hot water to the sugar when it has caramelized.

2 pounds potatoes
6 tablespoons sugar
3 tablespoons butter

can divide the dough now or after baking, into as many parts as you want layers (3-5 is the usual). Try to keep each portion the same shape, size and thickness as the others. My grandmother bakes it all in one large piece and cuts it up after baking. Bake in the centre of the oven at 200°C, until golden in colour and done through. Remove from the oven and allow to cool. When the cake is almost cold, spread prune jam (see recipe below) on top of all layers except one and sandwich the layers together.

Notes:
-This cake freezes well and thaws quickly, and is liked by almost everyone.

-**Brown Vínarterta:** Add some cocoa to the recipe and use vanilla butter icing instead of jam, or alternate layers of icing and jam

To make prune jam:
Take one kilo (approx. 2 lbs.) prunes with pits, or equivalent in pitted prunes. Soak the prunes inwater to soften and remove the pits. Mince the prunes and cook on low for 30 minutes with 650 g. sugar. Cool before spreading on cake.



SMOKED LAMB (HANGIKJÖT)

Smoked Leg of Lamb
Hangilæri
Serves 8 to 10

Smoked leg of lamb is a very popular feast dish in Iceland and it is one of the least bothersome meals possible, since the meat is usually served cold. It is cooked a day or two in advance and only has to be sliced. The traditional side dishes are also easy: boiled potatoes in white sauce, canned marrowfat peas (probably very hard to find outside Iceland, so other green peas can be substituted), boiled carrots, sometimes boiled red cabbage.

Since few people own a pan large enough to boil a whole leg of lamb on the bone, the leg is often cut into two or three large chunks before cooking. This should be avoided, however, as the meat tends to dry out too much. Even a large leg of lamb can easily be poached in a large covered roasting pan on top of the stove, or in the oven. The following instructions are for stovetop cooking.

1 smoked leg of lamb on the bone (5 to 6 pounds)
1 tablespoon sugar (optional)

Place the leg of lamb in a large roasting pan (unless you have a stockpot large enough to accommodate the whole leg) and add cold water; it doesn't have to cover the meat completely.

Cut the cabbage into thin strips and place it in a medium saucepan. Peel, core, and cube the apple and add it to the cabbage with the rest of the ingredients. Bring to a boil, cover, and simmer for about 1 hour, stirring occasionally. Remove the cover for the last 10 to 15 minutes of the cooking time, if there is still a lot of liquid in the pan. Season to taste with sugar and salt. Serve hot or cold.



BOILED RED CABBAGE
SOÐIÐ RAUÐKÁL
SERVES 8

Red cabbage is a very common accompaniment to roasted and fried meat and poultry in Iceland. An old-fashioned Sunday roast is almost always served with red cabbage, as is a pork roast, roasted goose or duck, and other such dishes. Pan-fried lamb or pork chops are often served with red cabbage, and it often accompanies sausages and meatballs.

For everyday occasions, people will probably just buy canned red cabbage, but many prefer to cook their own for Christmas and other festive occasions. There are many versions; some include apples, currants, and spices, others are very plain.

1 red cabbage, around 2 pounds
1 apple
1 cup red currant or black currant juice
2 to 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
3 to 4 whole cloves
1 to 2 teaspoons sugar
Salt to taste

Add the sugar, if using, place the roasting pan on two burners on the stove, and heat slowly; it may take 30 to 45 minutes to bring the water to boiling point. Simmer for 10 to 15 minutes, then turn off the heat and let cool in the cooking water for several hours. Remove to a tray, cover and refrigerate until serving time.

If you want to serve the meat hot, you should let it simmer for 20 to 30 minutes before the heat is turned off. Let it cool for 15 to 20 minutes in the cooking water, then remove, cut into thick slices and serve.



POTATOES IN A WHITE SAUCE

Kartöfluuppstúf

Serves 6

There is a well-known scene in an Icelandic movie where an old woman, in a conversation with her daughter, talks about boiling potatoes twice a day for fifty years. She is not exaggerating. For the greater part of the twentieth century, most Icelanders ate potatoes twice a day, 365 days of the year, and they knew four ways to serve them, all involving potatoes boiled in their skins: Plain boiled potatoes, sugar-glazed potatoes, mashed potatoes, and potatoes in a white sauce. There were other recipes, of course, but these are the variations familiar to everyone.

Each variety was served with certain types of dishes. Potatoes in a white sauce were – and still are – served with salted and smoked lamb and horsemeat, smoked sausages and a few other similar dishes, and they are commonly eaten with the smoked leg of lamb on Christmas Day. The sauce is a simple béchamel sauce but a pinch of sugar is often added to it.

2 pounds medium potatoes
1½ cup milk
2 tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons flour
Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg (optional)
Pinch of sugar (optional)
Freshly ground white pepper
Salt

Cook the potatoes until tender. Drain them and let them cool until they can be handled, then peel them and cut them up if they are large. Warm the milk in a small saucepan.
Melt the butter in another saucepan, stir in the flour and cook for 1 to 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Gradually stir in the milk and bring the sauce to a boil. Season with nutmeg, sugar, pepper and salt, add the potatoes and simmer for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Serve hot.

