

Danish cuisine



Frikadeller (meat ball, the Danish national dish) with cabbage in white sauce.

Danish cuisine features the products suited to its cool and moist northern climate: barley, potatoes, rye, beetroot, greens, berries, and mushrooms are locally grown, and dairy products are one of its specialties. Since it shares its climate and agricultural practices with the other Scandinavian countries, and some of Central and Eastern Europe, Danish cuisine has much in common with them. Nevertheless, it has its own distinguishing features, which were formed by a variety of influences during the country's long and difficult history.

Before the widespread industrialization of Denmark (ca. 1860), small family-based agriculture formed the vast majority of Danish society. As in most agrarian societies, people lived practically self-sufficiently, and made do with the food they could produce themselves, or what could be purchased locally. This meant reliance on locally available food products, which form the basis of the traditional diet: cereal products, dairy products, pork, seafood, apples, plums, carrots, potatoes, onions, beer, and bread.

Agriculture still plays a large role in Denmark's economy, and Danish agricultural products are generally preferred over imported items, although products from Germany, The Netherlands and the rest of Europe are gaining increasingly larger market shares in Danish supermarkets.

As in most pre-industrial societies, long winters and a lack of refrigeration meant that foods which could be stored for a long time came to predominate. This helps to explain the lack of fresh fruits and vegetables in many traditional recipes, and the emphasis placed on seasonally available foods. It also helps explain some of the traditional food preparation processes which favored smoking, pickling, and other food preservation techniques that prolong the storage life of products. Moreover, Denmark's geography, which comprises many islands meant that before industrialization and associated advances in transportation it was difficult, time-consuming, and costly to travel great distances, or to ship products. These factors have thus helped mold the traditional eating habits of the Danish people.

Good food is an important ingredient in the Danish concept of *hygge*, a word that can be best translated as a "warm, fuzzy, cozy, comfortable feeling of well-being" and may be seen as analogous to the German *Gemütlichkeit*. While the attainment of *hygge* is a near-universal goal in Danish culture, *hygge* itself is a highly personal concept, and varies significantly according to circumstances, region, and individual family traditions. Generally speaking, however, good food, good company, wine, comfortable furniture, soft easy lighting (candle lights in particular), music, etc., all contribute to the feeling of "*hygge*."

Although famously liberal with respect to social values, some older Danes are fairly conservative when it comes to food. They thus appreciate traditional cooking, and are hesitant to embrace new "different" types of food.

In the new Danish cooking style, dishes are sometimes lighter, smaller, more nutritious and generally offer more focus on fresh vegetables. This mode of cooking is increasingly international, highly influenced by French, American and Asian cuisine, especially the cuisine of Thailand. Despite this, the buttery traditional cuisine is still very popular, especially in the young generations.

Influence from abroad

France has been historically a strong influence, as a leading land of culture. The French language and culture has had a strong influence in the royal house, and in the upper classes. This has also had an influence on Danish cuisine.

Germany's proximity has also provided a long-term influence. The area now making up northern Germany was at times throughout history under Danish rule, and there are still many Danish people living in this part of Germany (Schleswig), as well as Germans living in southern Denmark (South Jutland).

Although historically the average Danish person did not travel widely, in more recent years this has begun to change. Danes are travelling more now, and to further, more distant, and exotic destinations. The food cultures of southern European countries such as France, Spain, Italy and Greece, have become well known. Another influence that brings greater focus on exotic cooking has been the growing availability of exotic food products in the supermarket, and aggressive marketing efforts to make these more acceptable in the average home. These products have become more available primarily because of the growing immigrant population (Turkish, Pakistani, Chinese, Thai, and African) in Denmark.

American culture has also influenced the Danish cuisine. American television and movies are widespread. American, but also Italian and Mexican fast-food has been adopted through American influence.

Eating out

Danes do not eat out very often, although this is also changing in recent times, especially in the bigger cities, and among younger and more affluent people, who also spend more time with immigrants. Eating out in restaurants is rather expensive. The expense is due in part to the country's high taxes, which are included in the cost of restaurant meals. Also included in the price are service tips and the good wages paid to staff, who are well-educated in their jobs. Because service tips are included, and wages paid to staff are good, it is not expected that one leaves an extra tip at the table, unless service is exceptionally noteworthy.

Therefore the average Dane saves eating out at restaurants for special occasions. When one does go out to a restaurant it is usually a lengthy, relaxed affair, consisting of many courses and drinks. Danish people will come typically to a restaurant at 6.00 p.m., and stay until 11.00 p.m. or later.

There can be found many fine restaurants in the larger cities, such as Copenhagen and Århus. In addition some of Denmark's finest restaurants can be found throughout the country, as well as throughout the countryside, in hotels and lodges (kro). The kro (roughly equivalent to an inn, but held in higher social regard) provides lodging as well as meals and drinks, and has a long role in Denmark, especially the royal privileged lodges.

In the big cities, and in shopping districts, there are many more reasonably priced eating places, including such chain fast food possibilities as McDonald's, Burger King, Kentucky Fried Chicken and 7-Eleven.

The most common quick food restaurant is the "burger bar" or "grill bar" which typically features hamburgers, pizza, hot dogs and a wide variety of other fast food staples. These can be found in every town in the country, large or small. In the larger cities, Turkish people often own these restaurants.

Among the other fast food items can be found Turkish and Middle East food specialties such as falafel, shish-kabob and spit-roasted meat (most often shawarma) with salad in pita bread, or wrapped in durum wheat based flatbread.

Pølsevogn



A pølsevogn in the city center of Kolding (Jutland).

Another common quick food alternative, the "original" fast food outlet in Denmark, is the pølsevogn (sausage wagon), where one can eat a variety of different sausages, including Denmark's very famous red sausages, røde pølser. These hot dog-like sausages are long (ca. 12 inch long), thin (about the diameter of an index finger) and bright red. They are

traditionally served on a small, rectangular paper plate along with a side order of bread (similar to a hot dog bun, but without a slice in it), and a serving of both ketchup, Danish remoulade sauce, which is a type of pickle relish, and mustard. The sausage is hand held, dipped into the sauce and eaten. The bread is eaten alternately, also dipped into the sauce.

When the sausage is served in a traditional hot dog bun, it is called a "hot dog". It is commonly served with remoulade, ketchup, mustard, onion (either raw or toasted, i.e. ristede) and thin sliced pickles on top. Ristede onions are similar in taste to French-fried onion rings. Another variety is the French hot dog (Fransk hotdog) which is a sausage stuffed into a special long roll. The roll has a hole in the end, in which the hot dog is slipped into, after the requested condiment has been squirted in (ketchup, mustard, different kinds of dressing).

The simplest sausage wagons are portable and very temporary, but most are more permanent. They are typically a metal wagon with an open window to the street, and a counter where one can stand and eat the sausage. More advanced wagons may be built in and include limited seating, usually both inside and outside.

Café

Another reasonable place to eat is at a café. These are plentiful, especially in the bigger cities, and usually offer soups, sandwiches, salads, cakes, pastries, and other light foods, in addition to the expected coffee, tea, beer and other beverages. Increasingly international café chains have become dominant in the capital Copenhagen. These currently include two Starbucks at the International Airport and several of UK Caffè Ritazza, which can be found at Copenhagen Airport, Magasin Torv by the Magasin Du Nord department store, and at Copenhagen Central Station. The Danish coffee bar Baresso Coffee, which serves mainly coffee and tea related products like Starbucks, is present in Copenhagen, Odense, Aarhus, Aalborg, Hellerup, and the Faroe Islands as well as Copenhagen Airport and MS Crown of Scandinavia.

Daily meals

Breakfast (*Morgenmad*)

A traditional breakfast is buttered bread, Danish skæreost (sliced cheese), a buttery creamy white cheese (often Danish havarti, Danbo or Danish tilsit), strawberry jam and a lot of coffee. Sometimes traditional cold cuts, like rullepølse, kødpølse and Danish salami, are also eaten. Today most Danes eat different types of cereal with milk for breakfast or ymer or A38 which are yoghurt-like milk products (similar to junket) with cereal or crumbled bread on top. Another traditional breakfast, especially among the elders and children, are oatmeal porridge and bread-and-beer-soup (øllebrød).

Bread takes many forms: at breakfast it is most often a white bread known as franskbrød (French bread), rolls (boller, birkes, rundstykker) or croissants. The "Danish pastry", which is also eaten at breakfast (although mainly in the weekends and at corporate breakfasts on Fridays), is called wienerbrød (Viennese bread) and it comes in many varieties. A festive breakfast calls for a shot or two of Gammel Dansk, a Danish stomach bitter.

Eating breakfast out of the house is not common, although hotel restaurants serve breakfast for their guests. In the cities it is becoming more common to eat brunch out in restaurants during weekends.

It is rather common to invite guests to a morgenbord (literally: morning table) on special occasions. The types of occasions would include, but are not limited to: wedding anniversaries, confirmations and 'round' birthdays. Such a celebration typically features more of the sweet Wienerbrød, "brunsviger" (a soft dough with thick brown sugar topping) and lighter breads, foregoing the heartier breads (rugbrød) of the day-to-day breakfast.

Lunch (*Frokost*)

The majority of adult Danes work, and therefore eat their lunch at work. Many work places offer a lunchroom cafeteria, however many prefer to bring along a packed lunch--the madpakke (lunch "package"), typically carried in a madkasse (lunch box). This typically consists of a few pieces of smørrebrød (see below) from home.

Pålæg and smørrebrød (open sandwiches)

Main article: Smørrebrød



Danish open sandwich (smørrebrød) on dark rye bread (almost covered) with breaded fish, salad, cucumber, shrimps, black-colored lumpfish roe (sort stenbiderrogn) and tomato.



Open sandwich: Fried plaice with remoulade and lemon on dark rye bread. Smørrebrød (originally smør og brød, meaning "butter and bread") usually consists of a piece of buttered rye bread (rugbrød), a dense, dark brown bread. Pålæg (meaning put-on, actually "that which is laid on [the bread]"), the topping, then among others can refer to commercial or homemade cold cuts, pieces of meat or fish, cheese or spreads.

This is essentially the base on which the art of the famous Danish open sandwich, smørrebrød is created: A slice or two of pålæg is placed on the buttered bread, and then pyntet (decorated) with the right accompaniments, to create a tasty and visually appealing food item.

Some traditional examples include:

- Dyrlægens natmad (translated, Veterinarian's midnight snack) -- On a piece of dark rye bread, a layer of liver paté (leverpostej), topped with a slice of corned beef (salt kød) and a slice of meat aspic (sky). This is all decorated with raw onion rings and garden cress.
- Eel -- Smoked eel on dark rye bread, topped with scrambled eggs and sliced herbs.
- Leverpostej -- Warm rough-chopped liverpaste served on dark rye bread, topped with bacon, and sautéed mushrooms.
- Roast beef, thin sliced and served on dark rye bread, topped with a portion of remoulade, and decorated with a sprinkling of shredded horseradish and toasted (ristet) onion.
- Roast pork (Ribbensteg), thin sliced and served on dark rye bread, topped with red sweet and sour cabbage, and decorated with a slice of orange.
- Spiced meat roll (Rullepølse).
- Tartarmad, raw beef mince with salt and pepper, served on dark rye bread, topped with raw onion rings, grated horseradish and a raw egg yolk.
- Smoked salmon (laks) -- Slices of cold smoked or cured salmon (gravad laks) on white bread, topped with shrimp and decorated with a slice of lemon and fresh dill.
- Stjernesked (translated, Shooting Star) -- On a base of buttered white bread, two pieces of fish: a piece of steamed white fish on one half, a piece of fried, battered plaice or rødspætte on the other half. On top is piled a mound of shrimp, which is then decorated with a dollop of mayonnaise, red caviar, and a lemon slice.

Det kolde bord

The Danish kolde bord (translated, the cold buffet) corresponds to its Swedish counterpart, the smorgasbord (in Swedish, Smörgåsbord). It is usually served at lunch time. The cold table may be a buffet arrangement prepared away from the dining table, or more likely it will consist of the many and varied items being brought to the dining table and passed around family-style.

As a first course (or first visit to the buffet table) one will in all likelihood eat pickled herring (marinerede sild), or another herring dish. The most common herring is marinated either in a clear sweet, peppery vinegar sauce (white herring), or in a red seasoned vinegar (red herring). It may also come in a variety of sour cream-based sauces, including a curry sauce which is very popular. The white herring is typically served on buttered, black rye bread, topped with white onion rings and curry salad (a sour-cream based sauce, flavored with curry and chopped pickles), and served with hard boiled eggs and tomato slices.

Herring can also be found which is first fried, and then marinated this is called "stegte sild i eddike" (lit.: Fried herring in vinegar). On extra festive occasions a prepared silderet (herring dish) might be served in which the herring pieces are placed in a serving dish along with other ingredients. Examples might be herring, sliced potato, onions and capers topped with a dill sour cream/mayonnaise sauce, or herring, apple pieces, and horseradish topped with a curry sour-cream/mayonnaise sauce.

Herring is usually served with ice cold snaps, which according to Danish tradition, helps the fish swim down to the stomach. Also the high alcohol content of snaps helps dissolve the fat left in the oral cavity after eating the fish; this allows the lunch participant to more readily taste the different dishes.

As a second course one will in all likelihood eat warm foods (lune retter) served on rye bread with accompaniments. Some typical warm foods would be:

- Frikadeller -- Danish meatballs, the "national" dish
- Chopped steak patty (Hakkebøf)
- Medisterpølse -- Finely ground pork and bacon sausage
- Parisian steak, (Danish: Pariserbøf)
- Veal medallion (Kalvemedaljon)
- Liver with sautéed mushrooms and onions
- Danish-style hamburger on rye bread with fried egg on top (Dansk bøf med spejlæg og rugbrød)
- Pork tenderloin (mørbradbøf) with sautéed onions and pickle slices (surt)

Beer (in particular the Danish brands - Tuborg, Carlsberg or more local brands such as Faxe, Albani, Thy Pilsner and Ceres) is the preferred beverage during this meal, especially with lune retter, and through the rest of the cold table meal. It is also quite acceptable to have another shot or two of the Akvavit along the way. Children sometimes drink soft drinks instead.

Next comes a selection of cold cuts (pålæg) and salads, as might be found on prepared smørrebrød.

Finally one is served a variety of cheeses and fruit, along with crackers or white bread.

Christmas lunch, the *Julefrokost*



Rice pudding being served during the traditional Danish Christmas meal. It is traditionally served with hot cherry sauce.

A special variation on det kolde bord is the Christmas lunch, a festive holiday cold table or smorgasbord, served during the holiday season. A traditional julefrokost is a family event on Christmas Day or shortly after. However, during the whole of December all groups of people (coworkers, members of clubs and organizations) generally hold their own annual julefrokost on a Friday or Saturday evening. The "lunch" may include music and dancing, and usually continues into the very early hours of the morning with plentiful drinking either on the premises or in after-hour bar tours. All over Denmark trains and buses run all night during the julefrokost season and the police are on a special lookout for drunk drivers.

A very special part of, not only the julefrokost but of most festive, celebratory meals is the selskabssang (party song). These songs are very special to Denmark. They are sung to traditional tunes, and have specially written words that fit the occasion.

Similar to the julefrokost is the påskefrokost (Easter lunch) which is also widely celebrated, however not as widely as the julefrokost.

Dinner (*Aftensmad*)

For the average family, dinner is the one meal of the day where everyone can be gathered. Due to the pressures of the modern life where both parents are likely to work and the children are in school or preschool institutions, dinner preparation and eating time becomes shortened.

Danes enjoy inviting people over for dinner. These are often elaborate affairs with many courses. Special events are often celebrated with family and friends at home, and such a celebration is not complete without a sit-down dinner.

Guests are generally invited to come at 6:00 p.m. for a welcome drink before dinner. Danes can be punctual, as they expect their invited guests to arrive around the time of agreement. If they are delayed, they are also expected to call and say so.

Welcome drink

The velkomstdrik is served shortly after guests arrive, and there are usually small snacks set out, such as nuts or potato chips (franske kartofler, literally: French potatoes). Some traditional favorites include:

- Martini -- Not a dry Martini, but vermouth served either straight up in an aperitif glass, or on the rocks.
- Kir -- Champagne or white wine with blackcurrant liqueur.
- Champagne, sekt or other sparkling wine.

Cocktails are becoming increasingly more popular, especially among the young.

Appetizer

The first course is typically fish, although a wide variety of other appetizers are becoming more common.

Common traditional appetizers include:

- Shrimp cocktail (rejecocktail)
- Seafood or fish paté or terrine, served with bread

Soups

Soup is often a meal on its own, or served with bread. It can also be served before the main dish.

- Asparagus soup.
- Chicken soup with small dumplings (melboller).
- Curry soup.
- Leek and potato soup with bacon.
- Yellow split pea soup (gule ærter).

Main dishes (Hovedretter)

Fish, seafood and meat are prominent parts of any traditional Danish dish. Fish consumption is still high, although it has dropped in recent years. The most commonly eaten fish and seafood are:

- Cod (torsk), a common white fish in general food preparation (baked, steamed, fried). It is also dried (klipfisk). Prices have risen in recent years, making this once-favorite fish drop down the list. It has mainly been replaced by other white fish, such as haddock and ling.
- Norway lobster (jomfruummer)
- Eel (ål), smoked or fried. Smoked eel is almost exalted in some homes.
- Herring (sild), a whole section should be written about Danish herring dishes. Most involve the herring served cold after being pickled.
- Plaice (rødspætte), in the form of fried, battered fish filets or as a common white fish in general food preparation (baked, steamed, fried).
- Salmon (laks) -- smoked or gravad lox style. Cooked salmon has become much more common in recent times, and is now fairly widespread.
- Shrimp (rejer) -- Small shrimp from the north Atlantic are most common. Fjord shrimp are a rare delicacy: very small and flavorful, about the size of the smallest fingernail.
- Roe (rogn) -- Fish eggs from cod, lumpfish (stenbider) and salmon.

Fish from Bornholm, Iceland and Greenland also have a special place in the Danish cuisine. The island of Bornholm, a part of Denmark located in the Baltic Sea, to the east of Denmark, the south of Sweden, and the north of Poland, is noted for its smoked fish items. Iceland and Greenland have long shared histories with Denmark, and the fish from these North Atlantic lands is a sign of quality.

As regards meat-eating, the Danes primarily eat pork, rather than beef: salted and smoked pork, hams, pork roasts, pork tenderloin, pork cutlets and chops are all popular. Ground pork meat is used in many traditional recipes requiring ground meat. Danish Bacon is generally of good quality (in Denmark; exported Danish bacon is of exceptional quality), and available in both the striped and back varieties.

While still in first place, pork has lost ground to turkey, beef and veal in recent years. The most eaten pork is the ham, which is used mainly as pålæg after being boiled.

Beef has become more and more popular in recent decades as the standard of living and availability has gone up. Danish cattle is primarily used for dairy and Denmark has a century old tradition for dairy products. Hence, cattle bred for its meat was rare and thusly expensive. Dairy cattle rarely make good meat cattle - especially after several years as dairy cows. For that reason beef has usually been ground and cooked as patties or cooked as boiled roast or soup. Today steaks are nevertheless popular eating and can be found at the butcher and in most supermarkets.

Chicken is also popular. A tray of frozen chicken pieces ready to put into the oven, Lørdagskylling (translated, Saturday chicken) is a quick and cheap way to feed a family.

Traditional main course dishes

- Beef hash (Biksemad) served with a fried egg and ketchup.
- Black pudding, made from blood (Blodpølse).
- Goose -- Roast goose is a traditional Danish Christmas dish and also served for Morten's aften. It has generally been replaced with duck however, which is more suitable for smaller modern families.
- Duck -- Roast duck like goose is traditionally served and stuffed with baked apples and prunes.
- Finker -- A mash of liver, heart and kidney from pigs.
- Pork slices (Æbleflæsk) served with an apple-onion and bacon compote.
- Roast pork (Flæskesteg) with crackling (svær).
- Vandgrød (water porridge), usually barley porridge.
- Æggekage (egg cake) -- similar to an omelette, but made with flour so that it rises slightly.
- Øllebrød (beer bread), a pudding made of rye bread, sugar and beer.
- Millionbøf, (translated: million steak), gravy filled with tiny pieces of beef (a million tiny steaks) poured over pasta or mashed potatoes.
- Risengrød, (rice porridge), a dish that has a special relationship to Christmas. It is traditionally the favorite dish of Nisse. Usually served with butter, cinnamon sugar and nisseøl. This is also used as the basis of the Danish Christmas dessert Ris á l'amande, which is often thought to be French because the name is derived from the French language, even though the dish is actually totally unknown in France.
- Brændende Kærlighed (Burning Love) - mashed potatoes made with real butter and sødmælk (full fat milk) or cream. A well is made in the top of the mashed potatoes, into which is placed bacon cubes that have been fried along with some sliced onions.

Potato

Potato recipes are almost ubiquitous in Danish cooking. It has captured this important position in spite of its relatively short career in the Danish kitchen. The potato was first introduced into Denmark by Huguenots immigrating to Fredericia, Denmark from their native France in 1720. Around 1750 King Frederik the 5th encouraged widespread cultivation of the grasslands on the Jutland Peninsula, by enticing German immigrants to move to Denmark and cultivate potatoes.

The potato is considered an essential side dish to every warm meal. A common expression is "Jeg er en heldig kartoffel!" (I am a lucky potato!). This gives an indication of the exalted and well-loved position that the potato takes in the life of the Danish people. Especially prized are the season's early potatoes, such as those from Samsø.

Some favorites:

- Au gratin potatoes
- Baked potatoes with crème fraiche
- Boiled new potatoes
- Boiled potatoes smothered in butter with fresh dill or chives
- Caramelized browned potatoes (brune kartofler)
- Cold sliced potatoes arranged on buttered rye bread and decorated with mayonnaise and chive

- Mashed potatoes covered with a meat stew
- Pomfritter (french fries)
- Potato salad (kartoffelsalat)
- Potato wedges

The potato's flexibility is almost limitless.

Pasta and rice have made great inroads into the Danish diet, especially among the younger population.

Vegetables, salads

Although the potato is the central vegetable in traditional Danish cooking, it is by no means the only vegetable associated with Danish cuisine. Those other vegetables that play an important role often had to be preserved for long periods of time in cold rooms, or were pickled or marinated for storage.

Cauliflower, carrots and a variety of cabbages were often a part of the daily meal, especially when in season, in the days prior to widespread refrigeration.

- Beans (bønner).
- Peas (ærter) -- Danes can be almost obsessive during fresh pea season. Peas are a popular snack. They are bought by the bagful, and eaten raw as one walks along..
- Brussels sprouts (rosenkål).
- Cabbage (kål).
- Carrots (gulerødder).
- Creamed kale (grønlangkål), spinach or white cabbage.
- Cauliflower (blomkål).
- Cucumber salad (agurkesalat).
- Italian salad (italiensk salat), a mixture of vegetables in a mayonnaise dressing, served on ham and other cold cuts.
- Onion (løg).
- Pickled red beet slices (rødbeder).
- Pickles, a mixture of pickled vegetables in a yellow gelatinous sauce, served with corned beef.
- Russian salad (russisk salat), a red beet salad.
- Sweet and sour red cabbage (rødkål).

Sauces and condiments

Sauces and condiments are an important part of the Danish meal:

- Béarnaise sauce, served with steaks.
- Brown sauce (Danish: brun sovs), served with just about anything and everything. Variations include mushroom sauce, onion sauce and herbed brown sauce.
- Horseradish sauce (peberrodssovs), a cream sauce served with roast beef or prime rib. Sometimes frozen into individual servings for placement on hot roast beef.
- Ketchup, a must with red sausages, along with mustard.

- Mayonnaise, used in food preparation, and as a condiment with pomfritter or pommes frites (french fries). A generous dollop of mayonnaise is generally placed on top of shrimp.
- Mustard (sennep). A wide variety of mustards are available. Traditional mustard is a sharp flavored, dark golden brown, but many other types are widely available and used, including dijon, honey-mustard and other specialty flavored variants. Prepared salad mustard (yellow mustard) is generally eaten with red sausage or hot dogs. A special sweet, dilled mustard is eaten with smoked salmon (lox).
- Parsley sauce (persillesovs), a white sauce which is generously flavored with parsley.
- Pepper sauce, served with steaks.
- Remoulade, a very commonly used condiment. A popular dipping sauce for pommes frites (french fries).
- Whiskey sauce, served with steaks.
- White sauce, often used with vegetables as a binding sauce (peas, peas and carrots, spinach, shredded cabbage).

Cheese

While the traditional, commonly-eaten cheese (skæreost) in Denmark is mild, there are also stronger cheeses associated with Danish cuisine. Some of these are very pungent. Blue cheese can be quite strong, and Danish cheese manufacturers produce molded cheeses that span the range from the mildest and creamiest to the intense blue-veined cheese internationally associated with Denmark.

Another strong cheese is Gamle Ole ("Old Ole"- Ole is a man's name), a pungent aged cheese that has matured for a longer period of time. It can be bitingly strong. It is often served in combination with sliced onion and aspic (sky) on Danish rugbrød spread with lard.

Strong cheeses are an acquired taste for Danes too. Danes who find the smell offensive might joke about Gamle Ole's smelling up a whole house, just by being in a sealed plastic container in the refrigerator. One might also refer to Gamle Ole's pungency when talking about things that are not quite right, i.e. "they stink". Here one might say that something stinks or smells of Gamle Ole.

Denmark lost a long legal battle with Greece, to use the term "feta" for a Danish cheese produced using artificially blanched cow's milk. Since July 2002, feta has been a protected designation of origin (PDO), which limits the term within the European Union to feta made exclusively of sheep's/goat's milk in Greece.

Other Danish cheeses include Danish tilsit and Havarti (a semi-soft Danish cow's milk cheese named after the experimental farm on which it was first made in the mid 1800s).

Seasonings and herbs

Fresh herbs are very popular, and a wide variety are readily available at supermarkets or local produce stands. Many people grow fresh herbs either in the kitchen window, in window boxes or outside, weather permitting. Most common in Danish cooking:

- Chives.
- Cress.
- Curry powder.
- Dill.
- Garlic.

- Parsley.
- Rosemary.
- Thyme.

Fruit

Similarly to vegetables, fruit had to withstand long storage during the winter to become a part of the traditional cuisine. Fruit is generally eaten in smaller portions, often as an accompaniment to cheese, or as decoration with desserts.

Fruit that is traditionally associated with Danish cuisine:

- Apples (Æbler) Popular in traditional dishes as 'winter apples' store well. Can be fried and served with Flæsk (thick bacon).
- Blackcurrant (Solbær), literally 'sun berries'.
- Cherries (Kirsebær) When in season eaten fresh. But famously cooked into cherry sauce, traditionally served over rice pudding (risalamande) at Christmas. Also used in making Heering, a famous cherry liqueur, produced in Denmark.
- Gooseberry (Stikkelsbær) literally 'thorny berries'. Used for stewed gooseberries (stikkelsbærgrød).
- Pears (Pærer).
- Plums (Blommer).
- Raspberries (Hindbær).
- Redcurrants (Ribs) Made to jelly or simply mixed raw with sugar as (Rysteribs), served to roast.
- Strawberries (Jordbær), literally 'earth berries'.

A combination of strawberries, red currants, black currants, blueberries and mulberries is known as "forest fruits" (skovbær) and is a common component in tarts and marmalades. A popular dessert is made from boiling down one or more berries (and/or rhubarbs) into 'rødgrød (red porridge) med fløde (with cream)'. Cream is poured on top, but may be substituted by milk.

Rødgrød med fløde is often jokingly used by Danes as a shibboleth, as it contains several voiced dental fricatives, or "soft d's", which most foreigners find painstakingly difficult to pronounce.

Drinks

- Akvavit -- a clear, high proof spirit made from potatoes but, unlike vodka, always herbed (dilled, etc.).
- Beer -- Carlsberg, Tuborg, local. Drinking a "pilsner" is a favored activity of many Danish people after work or when relaxing. The pilsner type is the dominant beer type in Denmark.
- Bitters -- the most popular bitter is "Gammel Dansk" (translated, Old Danish).
- Coffee -- black filter coffee, often taken throughout the day and evening, and always in the morning.
- Elderflower cordial -- hyldeblomstsft -- Concentrated and sweetened juice with elderflower intended for mixing with water. Often served hot in the Winter but also often cold.
- Fruit wines -- Cherry wine, black currant wine, elderberry wine.
- Gløgg -- hot punch made with red wine, brandy and sherry with raisins and almonds. Obligatory around Christmas. Similar to Mulled wine.
- Hot chocolate -- Varm kakao; often served to children and an essential part of family hygge.

- Mead -- Mjød -- made legendary by the Vikings.
- Mineral water Danskvand, translated Danish water, often with citrus.
- Tea -- growing in popularity are herbal teas.

Desserts

- Ice cream (Is) -- Very common.
- Pancakes (Pandekager) -- Thin, crepe-like pancakes, rolled up, often sprinkled with confectioner's sugar, and served with strawberry jam.
- Rice pudding (Risalamande) -- Commonly eaten at Christmas-night, served with hot cherry-sauce. It is not eaten often, other than in Christmastime, even though it is getting increasingly popular.
- Rødgrød med fløde -- Stewed, thickened red fruit (usually strawberries) with cream.
- Apple charlotte (Æblekage)-- Stewed apple topped with bread crumbs and crushed almond flavored meringue.

Baked goods

- Breads.
- Cookies.
- Danish pastries— known in Denmark (and Sweden) as wienerbrød (Vienna bread).
- Kransekage (translated, ringcake) — an almond cake consisting of increasingly smaller and smaller rings stacked one on top of each other, creating an upside down cone form. The cake rings are decorated with white icing, and the cake is decorated with red-and-white Danish flags made of paper. On extra special occasions they will cover a bottle of champagne. Kransekage is typically served with champagne on New Year's and to celebrate such extra special occasions such as weddings, "round" birthdays and wedding anniversaries.
- Kringle— a pretzel-shaped (oval in Racine) cake, especially associated with Denmark in the United States.
- Layer cakes.
- Pebernødder— pepper nuts, a small, spice cookie associated with Christmas.
- Æbleskiver— made in a special pan, these round, pancake-like dough balls are traditionally eaten with jam and powdered sugar at Christmas.



Denmark and Bread

Rugbrød

Bread is a very important part of the Danish table. It is usually enjoyed at home, in the workplace or in Danish restaurants and is usually based primarily on rugbrød, which is sour-dough rye bread. It is a dark, heavy bread which is sometimes bought pre-sliced, in varieties from light-coloured rye, to very dark, and refined to whole grain. It forms the basis of smørrebrød, which is closely related to the Swedish smörgås, literally 'spread bread' (smør is butter). Traditional toppings include sild, which are pickled herrings (marinerede - plain, krydder - spiced, or karry - curried), slightly sweeter than Dutch or German herrings; thinly-sliced cheese in many varieties; sliced cucumber, tomato and boiled eggs; leverpostej, which is

pork liver-paste; dozens of types of cured or processed meat in thin slices, or smoked fish such as salmon; mackerel in tomato sauce; pickled cucumber; boiled egg, and rings of red onion. Mayonnaise mixed with peas, sliced boiled asparagus and diced carrot, called italiensk salat (lit. Italian salad), remoulade or other thick sauces often top the layered open sandwich, which is usually eaten with utensils. It is custom to pass the dish of sliced breads around the table, and then to pass around each dish of toppings, and people help themselves. Hundreds of combinations and varieties of smørrebord are available.

A famous and very old restaurant in Copenhagen's historic Nyhavn harbor, Ida Davidsen, serves up many imaginative combinations, and the fridge in a typical Danish home will often be stocked with toppings for rugbrødsmeal, or "rye bread meal," which is a way of saying "a plain normal lunch." Denmark has strong traditions of special types of food eaten at particular times of the year, such as smoked eel with slices of a sort of scrambled-egg loaf eaten on rye bread at New Year, accompanied by beer. Other types of bread are sold in supermarkets and in bakeries, which are important shops in every town and shopping centre.

Many people still bake at home, particularly boller, which are small bread rolls, and often the traditional kringle, which is a long cooked dough with currants and a brown sugar and butter paste. Home-baked bread uses moist yeast, the major brand Malteserkors being a division of Carlsberg Brewery. In the great trucking strikes of 1998, yeast was one of the first products to be sold out in shops, indicating the importance of home baking in Denmark. Sliced white bread is known in Denmark as franskbrød, literally "French bread", and is not as common as it is in many other western countries. People often eat jam with cheese on crusty white bread for breakfast, and also very thin slices of chocolate, called pålægschokolade.

Another popular way of consuming bread in Denmark is as tiny buns for long hotdogs, made out of white bread, which are available in small kiosks everywhere and in pølsevogne ("sausage-vans") that move about in the cities.

Confections

- Chocolate.
- Liquorice Sometimes salty licorice, made with salmiak. Denmark produces some of the strongest liquorice in the world.
- Marzipan.
- Wine gums - while similar looking and often similar branded as in other European countries, Danish wine gums are much less sweet and have more texture.

There also exists a vast amount of other types of sweets and candy, ranging from gum drops and dragée to mints and caramel sweets. Bland selv slik (lit: mix yourself candy) is common in Danish supermarkets and kiosks, and consists of an amount of plastic boxes, usually between 20 and 50, each containing a different type of candy, which is then put into a paper bag with a small shovel-like object. The paper bag is then weighed, and paid for. Both Danish and imported candy are found in these box assortments, and the shape, texture and flavor differences are often extremely creative. Candy have been manufactured resembling a vast amount of objects, such as flying saucers, tennis raquets, soccer balls, butterflies, and even more strange, also teeth and toothbrushes.

New Danish cuisine

Danish cuisine continues to change and keep up with the times. It has become more health-conscious, and has drawn inspiration (fusion cuisine) not only from the traditional French and Italian kitchen, but also from many other more exotic gastronomical sources. These come often from either the travels of cooks, but also their immigration into Denmark from all over the world.

Danish cuisine has also looked inwards at the rich possibilities inherent in Danish traditional cooking, and in this way attempted to redefine itself, using local products and cooking techniques that have in the past been used in limited ways.

Older Danish food-lovers, however, stick to their old traditions, and cook as described above. It is also exceedingly common in families that mothers and fathers cook together and teach their children how to cook, as food and eating is a very important subject in family life, and a central element in the pursuit of hygge.