

## 011011 Dining with the Danes

Last Sunday, Tove (my landlord) invited me to lunch with her family to celebrate her mother's 78th birthday. Tove wanted me to go to meet most of her children as well as her mother. I was excited to go to finally meet her family after hearing so much about each and also to try some traditional Danish food. The lunch was held at a museum about 20km from Lyngby, where I live. Tove and I were picked up by her son who has just returned from London where he lived with his wife and daughter for the past two years. Also present at the lunch were Tove's eldest daughter who is a US citizen, several kids and other relatives as well.

I was warned by Tove and by other people that a Danish dinner is a several hour long process. They were true to their word, but it was a lot of fun. We started by touring the museum and then proceeding to a restaurant on the museum grounds which were beautiful. We sat at a long table in the little restaurant and since we were a large group, we had a set menu. But first, let me just talk about some things on the table.

First of all, salt and pepper shakers were absent. Instead, there were nice, little glass jars from which you could take a pinch of spice to add to your food. Also, the Danes like others all over Europe and Argentina eat using both their fork and their knife at the same time. The fork is in your left hand, the knife in your right and both are constantly in motion. I pointed this out at dinner and demonstrated how the knife is constantly being put down in the US. The others found it amusing and I was called the entertainment for the dinner as I tried to use both utensils. However, as a friend pointed out, take away our knife and the people in the US would still be able to eat. I am not sure what they would do in Denmark. :) The others also told me the stereotype that people from the US are thought to shovel the hamburgers into their mouths. As I have mentioned before, misconceptions are not limited to one side of the world.

The meal started with bread and butter on the table. I thought that the bread was just for bread and butter, but I was mistaken. Next came some pickled herring on a plate with capers, onions and lettuce. I started to eat each, but once I saw what the others were doing, I realized that I was in error. The way to eat the food is to first butter a piece of the rye or French bread. The bread is then placed on the plate and heaped with the onions, capers and fish. You then cut the open sandwich with your knife to eat it in pieces. The food was excellent and the capers really complimented the herring.

Next was a plate with salmon and a HUGE chunk of whipped butter (picture something the size of three butter packets) with salmon eggs on it. The eggs were actually quite good. Of course, the salmon, eggs and butter were eaten on the bread. Also served was bøf med brun sauce which is just beef with brown sauce and sautéed onions. I will let you guess how it was eaten. Also on the plate were chunks of brie and blue cheese that were very good on bread.

Lastly we had our choice of desserts. I chose a blueberry soufflé over chocolate cake or æbler kage (apple cake). The dessert was great. The dessert came with coffee. When

ever you order coffee here in Copenhagen and it is not by the glass, you will be given your own French press. Actually, I even have a French press at my flat for coffee the morning. Drip coffee makers are around, but the idea of getting your own press is nice.

I really had a great time at the dinner and I was honored to have been invited.

Travels!

I have a Scanpass, a train reservation and even a hotel reservation in Oslo, so I am definitely leaving tomorrow! For those of you playing from home, I am traveling first to Oslo via Malmo, Sweden (across the channel from Copenhagen). The train ride is 10.5 hours so we will spend Saturday checking out Oslo before heading off to Bergen on Sunday. The plan is to stop along the way to hike in the mountains, take ferry rides through the fjords and to check out the little towns along the way. Plans may also include going up to Trondheim, but I am not sure.

I am going with what is now a group which has grown. My companions are:

Karin from Austria  
Kat from Australia  
Alzbeta from the Czech Republic  
Micah from the US  
Tobi from Germany  
Uli also from Germany  
Luca from Italy  
Thomas from Switzerland

At the end of next week, I am heading down to Frankfurt, Germany to visit my friend, Michele Bockwinkel who I knew from St. Louis. It should be a whirlwind trip that will end on Sunday, just in time for me to go to visit my sponsor on another island on Monday. The trip is 4 hours each way by train. I think that I will be tired when this is all over. :)

Have a great weekend and a great week! I will be out of touch for the next week. I so need a vacation after the stress of the past two weeks. I am still enjoying this, but it has turned into a lot of work. So, if I have not responded to your email right away, please be patient. I have about 130 emails sitting in my in box that I want to respond to, but I have not yet had a chance. I have read them all, but I don't like to write while I am stressed out in the lab since I will hardly be present as I type.

Take care,

Jeff

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