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Nordic Food Culture

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Nordic Food Culture(s) – Thoughts and perspectives by way of introduction

A special issue about Nordic Food Culture(s)

- 1 The interest for the cultures of food in Nordic countries has become visible in culinary settings, in journalistic milieus, and through scientific studies over the last twenty years. The aim of this special issue of *Anthropology of Food* is to explore, to discuss, and to better understand the concept and the framework of Nordic Food Culture(s). This issue is based on two exploratory workshops initiated by the Joint Committee for the Nordic Research Councils for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NOS-HS). The workshops, held in Copenhagen and Oslo in 2010, had a multidisciplinary approach and gathered expertise on eating patterns, food ethnography, food history, food geography, food sociology, food anthropology, restaurants studies, nutrition and cultural studies in order to explore the developments and changes of the place of food and the culture of food in the Nordic countries. (The full program from the two workshops, with titles for papers and participants, can be found in the dessert menu of this issue.)

Food and culture in Nordic countries

A diachronic overview of the construction of national identities in the Nordic region - “Where is the food?”

- 2 Food traditions and culinary habits were never prominent aspects in the social, political and symbolic construction of national identities in the Nordic countries. The construction of national identities in the North European region did not arise in isolation but was interwoven with cultural flows in Europe at the time including even a European attention and scrutiny of the Nordic region, its people, and its nature (Witoszek, 1998:25). The turn of the 19th century marks a significant change of the European representations of the Nordic. The voices of Voltaire and Montesquieu had already expressed images of “the Nordic” as a place of freedom and as the material example of philosophical ideals of liberty and equity of the Enlightenment (*ibid.*).
- 3 The ideas of the national-romantic era made a great impact on nations like Norway and Denmark. In Norway¹, emphasis was put on appraising the rocky landscape as true beauty in poems and paintings and portraying the Norwegian as someone who is physically strong, enduring, ascetic, and brave (Christensen, 1993: 47-53). At the beginning of the 19th century polar adventurers like Amundsen and Nansen were appraised as national heroes and outdoor recreation such as skiing became established as a national symbol and identity of Norwegians. Rural values were also central in Norwegian national identity where peasant lifestyle, folktales, and dialects became a major cultural reference (Amilien, 1996: 26-29).
- 4 Denmark saw a devastating loss of land during the Napoleonic wars and in the wars with Germany over Schleswig-Holstein. The national identity therefore took a more popular turn, away from the former grandeur of the State, towards the shared language and history of the Danes. The life of regular men and women, and in particular the peasantry, was highlighted and seen as the core of the Danish nation (Glenthøj, 2012).
- 5 Finnish identity was “naturally” shaped by the reign of Russia and Sweden in periods throughout Finland’s history. The epic poem *Kalevala* held an important position in the construction of Finnish identity and is attributed a role in the process of detachment from Russia in 1917.
- 6 Aspects of Swedish identity concern the story of a country working itself out of poverty and hunger towards industrialization and modernization with strong industrial brands and with a renowned social model (Lifvendal, 2012).

An overview of the construction of Nordic Food as a “natural / cultural” concept - « Here is the food!»

- 7 In a groundbreaking report about designation of origin and protected geographical indications in Europe, Barjolle and Sylvander² noticed in 2000 that there were two ways to interpret food quality in Europe: A northern-European interpretation linking quality with technique, health, animal welfare, nutrition, and hygiene and a southern-European interpretation linking quality with culture, origin, taste, and typicity. This gives an interesting analytical starting point³ for a closer look on the interpretations and practices connected to terms of food and culture in the Nordic countries, in opposition to other traditions and discourses found in the Southern-European countries.
- 8 In Southern Europe the connection between food and cultural aspects (like origin, culinary features or typicity) has become implicit and the concept of food is seldom explicitly related to culture⁴. In Northern Europe, food has for a long time been associated with nutrition and health: this gave food culture(s) a dimension other than taste and typicity and obviously created some dialectic distance with the “culture of food”. One might add that throughout history, in periods dominated by scarcity and poverty, food has been associated with necessity rather than abundance and pleasure. This is partly due to the vulnerability associated with short seasons, but also affected by puritan Lutheran ethos (as pointed out by Fürst, 1991). This might have contributed to a strong symbolic bond between nature and food in Nordic food culture(s), as manifested in the widespread and important leisure activities of hunting and angling or in the fact that eating outdoors represents important cultural values and practices.
- 9 The publication of cookbooks and literature on food and gastronomy might serve as an example to underpin our point: In the middle of the 19th century, the French Brillat-Savarin writes philosophically on taste in his *Physiology of taste* [La physiologie du goût] (Brillat-Savarin, 1825), where he quotes Grimod de La Reynière who was considered the “*father of gastronomy*” with his *Gourmands’ Almanach* published between 1803 and 1810. Some years later, the Norwegian author Hanna Winsnes published a cookbook entitled *For the poor housewives* (For fattige husmødre, 1857) while the famous scientist and folktales specialist Per Christen Asbjørnsen⁵ wrote *Rational Cookery (Fornuftigt madstel. En tidsmæssig Koge- og Husholdningsbog)* a cookbook “for the people”. (Winsnes (1857), Bonifacius (1864)). These examples underline how food writing was infused with philosophy and gastronomy by the French writers and contrastingly characterised by necessity and rational cookery by the two Norwegian authors. The different types of publications on food in this period are reminiscent of Barjolle and Sylvander’s dichotomised perspective (2000); it highlights how the approaches to food in northern and southern Europe vary in core values and premises and how it affects both the mentality and the place of food in public discourse.
- 10 Moreover, the words and language used to describe and discuss food are formative to the role and place of food in a cultural space. This insight is well recognised by gastronomic approaches to food and is also the motivation behind several ongoing Nordic food projects. For example “*Nordisk menyspråk*” [Nordic menu language] is a project initiated by Norwegian chef Harald Osa in 2007⁶ aiming at giving a clearer Nordic identity to menus. The idea is that to replace advanced French cooking terminology by a familiar, everyday vocabulary will make both chefs and guests more aware of the distinct qualities, origins, and tastes of a product or a dish. This viewpoint leads us to the construction of the “new” Nordic food at the dawn of the 21st century.

“New” Nordic food between politics and market

- 11 The debate over food and culture eventually emerged in contemporary Nordic construction of identity, in the beginning of the 90’s. This debate has changed immensely over the course of the last generation. It has increased in scope, intensity, and precision and has become more prominent and popular, especially through the concept of “food culture” that emerged in this Nordic context. Food cultures have always existed and progressively evolved with time. But the cultural aspect of food has become more visible, perhaps because several Nordic experts

and politicians actually asked questions about its existence, as the Norwegian food historian Henry Notaker did in 2000 when he launched a debate asking “do we have a national food culture?” (Notaker, 2000).

12 Furthermore, the role of food in the process of construction of today’s national/ regional identities has become more conspicuous as can be seen in the program of Nordic Food Diplomacy:

13 “Nordic Food Diplomacy is a tool for communication of values through Nordic food and food design. It is used to enhance other cultural expressions and messages; in the planning process of political gatherings, official dinners, export drives, concerts, art exhibitions, lectures and other cultural events.”⁷

14 The exchange and serving of food is probably one of the oldest ways of diplomatic communication, and “Nordic Food Diplomacy” can be seen as yet another way of deliberately using food as a means of communication and expression of “who we are” (or “who we would like to be” if we consider the differences between everyday food and the food promoted through Nordic Food Diplomacy)

15 Central to the new Nordic food cultural values, is *New Nordic Kitchen* (well described here in Josh Evan’s self-interview and in Mark Emil Tholstrup Hermansen’s article on creating terroir). The concept consists of four parts: A manifesto launched in 2004, the New Nordic diet, the Nordic terroir and the principles of Good Flavour.⁸ A key idea in the *New Nordic Kitchen* is to “cook on raw materials in which the characteristics are especially excellent in our climate, landscape, and waters” (*New Nordic Kitchen Manifesto*), with links to nutrition, health, sustainability, and animal welfare, among other things. The manifesto has in many ways stimulated the creation of a “new” cuisine, by highlighting “purity, freshness, simplicity and ethics [...] associated with our region” (*ibid.*). It has influenced the menus of restaurants - with NOMA in Copenhagen, Fäviken near Åre, Sweden and Maaemo in Oslo as prime examples-, it is the foundation of the TV-series *New Scandinavian Cooking*⁹ and it is subject to widespread attention at the policy-level as guidelines and inspiration for the Nordic Councils commitment to New Nordic Food.¹⁰ Hence, the idea and concept of “nature” becomes relevant to understand the development of *New Nordic Kitchen* based on intrinsic “natural” aspects of Nordic people, landscapes, products, climate, and food production but also mixed with references to the establishment of the Southern European food mentality of origin and taste¹¹.

Food culture – understanding and defining the concept

16 The concept of food culture is formed by the words “food” and “culture”. “Food” refers both to concrete products, which are grown, produced, sold, prepared and eaten, but also to the social elements which surround the concrete products. At the same time, “culture” is built on the sum of an individual’s knowledge and the social, artistic, and ethical knowledge of a particular group¹² (with a distinction, or complementarity, to other groups, which is highly relevant in the food issue). This tension between the individual on the one hand, and the group on the other, is much of the impetus behind what Norbert Elias calls *the civilizing process*, a process stemming from the cultural need to “create political and spiritual borders” (Elias 1976: 14). In the book *Difference & repetition*, Gilles Deleuze describes culture as an educational process which influences a “memory, and then a thought” in order to, referencing Nietzsche, “train a ‘nation of thinkers’ or to ‘provide a training for the mind’” (Deleuze, 1994:166). Both references underline the process of constructing a national, or regional, identity. In this case culture must be understood holistically, where thoughts and mentalities are structured by the social values of a given society. We will hence consider that food culture acts as the bearer of social values, while simultaneously embracing social change.

17 But although food culture is influenced by diverse political and economical interests, social changes are based on interdependency and exchanges between individuals. Food culture transforms through processes based on relation, adaptation, exclusion and incorporation as underlined by Fredrik Barth (1969). This perspective is fundamental while studying food culture, which is not only a bearer of social values but also a bearer of meaning and identity, and which is not only built on traditional pillars but in constant evolution.

18 Food culture will then be regarded as the food traditions and culinary habits of individuals in their collective context, including a variety of dimensions such as identity, morality, politics, economy, the market, or language. More specifically, it involves knowledge of food placed inside a social frame of norms and societal structures connected to identity building, tradition, and group affiliation and characterized by political challenges and ethical and economic shifts in society. In *The Sociology of Food*, the authors define “culinary culture” as a concept that implies people’s attitudes and tastes in relation to food and cooking (Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo 1992:20).¹³ In this special issue of *Anthropology of Food* (or *AoFood*) we will elaborate on this approach but focus more generally on “food” and claim that Nordic food culture consists of the sum of food knowledge and food experience in the Nordic countries in their respective contexts. Not only does it include the norms, values, beliefs, habits, and actual foods and dishes, but also the entire food system, from production to consumption.

Nordic Food Culture or Nordic Food Cultures?

19 There is nevertheless a question whether we can speak of *a* Nordic Food Culture or instead should refer to Nordic Food Cultures? In line with a cultural historical tradition¹⁴, we have chosen to see food culture in a wholly cultural perspective.

20 Everyone eats food, and food culture is something that everybody can understand and which everyone can use in specific social situations. “Knowledge of which cultural forms can be used in which social situations constitutes a part of our food culture competency” (Eriksen and Selberg, 2006:18). This aspect covers a “social food space”, the Nordic one in this issue, which could be primarily illustrated by providing a multidisciplinary cultural analysis of how the relation to and knowledge of food is realised, actualised, adapted, or transferred in the Nordic countries¹⁵.

21 Given that food culture is a) a set of values that are continually evolving, b) that members of a society are especially aware of these values, c) that people build their identities¹⁶ around them, and d) that those values are expressed in words and language, this special issue and the future development of “New Nordic Kitchen” could possibly help us to better understand whether there is a single Nordic Food Culture or several Nordic Food Cultures.

The Nordic dimension of Nordic food culture

22 Formally, the Nordic region consists of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland and the self-governed Danish areas of Greenland, the Faeroe Islands and the Finnish self-governed isles of Åland. Altogether it is an area of 3,5 million km² (where Greenland makes up about 62 % of the total area) with a total of 25 million inhabitants.

23 In this issue however we have included the western part of Russia, the Baltic nations, and even Belarus to enrich our approach of Nordic Food culture. There are several historical evidences of the widespread communication and cultural relationship between the people of this extended Nordic sphere. Moreover, the topic of food and culture cannot easily be constrained to demarcated geographical regions, as it is generally the result of cultural meetings and exchange. The contributions from Olga Gromasheva and Alexander Belyi and Antanas Astrauskas will shed new light and widen the scope on relevant food cultural questions.

24 As noted by Henry Notaker, Unni Kjærnes and Richard Tellström, when discussing Nordic, Norwegian, and Swedish food research respectively, in the interviews opening our 20-course meal, there is an exciting ambivalence in the Nordic dimension. On the one hand, the Nordic region shares many characteristics. In this sense one can speak of a common food culture of the Nordic countries (as described by Notaker with the examples of the “Nordic meatballs”). On the other hand we can be struck by the enormous differences between the different Nordic regions. Living on the North Atlantic shore in Lofoten or in the Swedish inland in Kiruna- both north of the Polar circle- is quite different from living in cities like Copenhagen or Malmö. The paradox lies in the fact that despite these differences in climate, lifestyles, languages, nationalities, and food culture, it is possible to speak of a sense of community and a sense of something particularly Nordic. This is developed in several texts of this issue and it is

the subject of analyses in Mark Emil Tholstrup Hermansen's article "Creating Terroir". An interesting parallel to the ideas of a Nordic identity and its relation to food can be found in the construction of what has been called 'The Mediterranean Diet', as underlined by Henry Notaker in the first "appetizer" of our menu. The Mediterranean Diet is not necessarily a historically correct description of the diversity of food habits of the Mediterranean region, and it probably gives a rather distorted image of the reality. Alexander Belyi and Antanas Astrauskas turn the question into another fascinating direction in the last "dessert" of our menu, a short text concerning "180 years of Greater Lithuanian culinary discourse: Disintegration or striving for the lost unity?" Does the same apply to a critical assessment of a "Nordic food culture"? We hope the diversity of the articles in this issue will give arguments for both critics and adherents to this concept.

The cultural dimension of Nordic food culture

25 The idea that the concept of "food culture" is a Nordic specificity (*matkultur* is a common term in Nordic languages) was one of the main points at the NOS-HS workshop series about Nordic food Culture. As underlined in the interview with Johanna Mäkelä (one of the appetizers of our menu) there is now an official reconnaissance of food culture as a scientific field in Finland.

Food culture as an "emic" ¹⁷ concept

26 In Nordic countries the term "food culture" has been emphasized mainly through mass media communication or official discourses, such as white papers or ministry reports. "Nordic food culture" is definitively worth studying. It expresses, and underlines, a political interest and a change in agricultural policy; a fashionable food mentality embedded in market and industrial concerns; a culinary experience and a gastronomic awareness; the construction, or revival, of a cultural identity at local, regional, national, and Nordic levels; and last, but not least, an incredible gap between eating practices and public discourses.

27 This gap between routine everyday practices and challenges of eating healthy on the one hand and the public discourse and high-end gastronomy on the other appears in different ways. In this issue, an overview of Nordic meal patterns is provided by Lotte Holm et al., while Tenna Jensens' article shows how fats are socially distributed among the different social strata. Gun Roos and Anita Borchs' article explores the connection between different European "welfare state regimes" while Lisa Koustrup et.al give an in-depth description of an obese child's experiences with a dietary intervention program. Silje Skuland and Siv Elin Ånestad's article investigates the reasons behind the intake of sports nutrition, and its path towards the mainstreaming and normalisation of everyday eating habits. Atle Hegnes and Mark Emil Tholstrup Hermansen's articles focus on changes and adaptations to a "new" food approach in Nordic countries, respectively. Several "appetizers" and "desserts", such as Sigurd Bergflødt's interview of professor Tobias Nygren on hospitality and aesthetics and the short text on the arctic cuisine by Anders Holst Markussen also underline this idea. Taken together, these articles may provide a glimpse into different aspects of everyday eating habits, and in particular, the structures shaping them.

28 In her lecture on "European food culture", held at the *2005 Norwegian food culture seminar* in Ås, Professor Anne Murcott emphasized this ambivalence between the ideals found in the public discourse and everyday eating practices of the majority of the population. She claimed that the concept of food culture was neither academic nor contributing any special understanding or additional value to the study of food and culture. Nevertheless, food culture as an empirical concept has aroused researchers' curiosity and received noticeable support from Nordic food scientists instead of, or at the cost of, other concepts which are more widespread outside the region (for example, in European research milieus where food habits and food patterns are more common, food culture is studied in more discipline-oriented perspectives, such as food sociology, food history or food anthropology etc.). We consider here this concept with a Nordic touch. But do these "food research" concepts cover the same dimensions? "Sociology of food" or "anthropology of food" have been previously defined (Mennell et al. 1992 for example), but what is "food culture" about?

Food culture as an “etic”¹⁸ and analytical concept - Norway as a case study¹⁹

29 The concept of food culture was first introduced in Norwegian academic circles by Elisabeth Fürst in 1985 when the Norwegian National Institute for Consumer Research (SIFO) published a series of reports concerning work and culture:

“Food culture is therefore something we are introduced to beginning in childhood, primarily through our mothers. It comprises a set of attitudes, habits, knowledge, and skills in relation to food.” (Fürst and al., 1985 : 37)

“Food culture can be defined as distinct habits and consumer patterns in relation to food, which have established themselves over generations, such that they compose an entire tradition which is often different from region to region, from village to city.” (Fürst and al., 1985 : 43)

30 In 1995, Marianne Lien suggested three pillars of Norwegian food culture based on food preparation and cooking, food products, and meals as social encounters (Lien 1995). In 2000 the concept was generalized through a debate in the *Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift* [New Norwegian Journal]²⁰ as mentioned previously in this introduction. The same year the government launched “The Action Plan on Food Culture”, a public document, which gauged the place of food culture in Norwegian society²¹. Vestlandske Kulturakademi [Voss Cultural Academy] and a branch of Bergen College University were the first to launch a teaching course on food and food culture (with Eldbjørg Fossgård and Astri Riddervold as prominent figures), inspiring other university colleges throughout the country.

31 For the last ten years, food researchers at SIFO actively contributed to an ongoing debate on the relationship between food and market, politics, regulations, and culture (Lien 1989, Døving 2003, Jacobsen et al. (eds.) 2003, Bugge 2006, Amilien et al. (eds.) 2007, Kjærnes 2009). Since Norwegian researchers introduced the concept more than 20 years ago²², food culture has become an established concept increasingly used by Norwegian media and public authorities. Despite the fact that the use of the concept has gradually increased, even in daily media coverage, it is difficult to find a common platform, particularly between public and academic discourses²³. Food culture is a pluralistic word with different meanings and dimensions, which we will now look into more closely.

32 Association between food and culture had become more common ever since the canonical works of Levi Strauss, Margaret Mead, Mary Douglas, or Roland Barthes in the 1950-60’s. These works have been followed by many European scientific publications on the cultural aspects of food. But in Nordic countries, it seems that the English version of Fürst’s previously quoted study called “The cultural significance of food”, published in 1988, was the first Nordic article highlighting the social relationships and the cultural practices linked to food in Norwegian families. Not long after came the Nordic anthology entitled *Palatable worlds* (Fürst et al., 1991). Twenty years later Johanna Mäkelä, who contributed to the anthology as a young researcher, was appointed as the first Professor in Food Culture at the University of Helsinki, Finland (see interview 2 in “appetizers”). This special issue of *AoFood* will then also focus on the “present” generation of food researchers.

This special issue of *AoFood*

Two Nordic workshops

33 Two workshops were planned within the frame of the Joint committee for the Nordic Research Councils for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NOS-HS). The first workshop (6-7th September 2010, Copenhagen), was called “Nordic food culture – a multidisciplinary perspective” and aimed at creating a new multidisciplinary Nordic research force on food culture. This network has been concretised through the creation/revitalisation of multidisciplinary groups at national levels (Iceland, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark

as well as Belarus/ Lithuania and Estonia) within the International Commission on the Anthropology of Food and Nutrition (ICAF)²⁴.

34 The second workshop, named “Traditional food between the global and the local” (22-23 November 2010, Oslo) focused on food culture and culinary systems and emphasized cultural dynamics and the importance of political and economic dimensions on traditional food habits. Eventually the dissemination of results is done through this special issue of *AoFood* and its special “menu”.

The menu of this issue

35 This special issue is composed as a gastronomic menu and structured as a three-course dinner. The “appetizer” section is meant to arouse the curiosity of the reader through interviews with individuals representing vital academic research on Nordic food culture, albeit from different disciplines and positions. Among the five interviews we can hear Laufey Steingrimsdottir speaking about Icelandic food culture and Josh Evans describing his experience at the Nordic Food Lab in Copenhagen.

36 The “main course” section is made up of eight scientific articles from different countries, disciplines, and approaches that eventually end with a conclusion in two parts, opening towards new reflections on Nordic Food culture(s). Finally, the dessert section will give this issue a note of sweetness with three exotic and exciting short texts about Lithuania, Sweden, and Denmark, diverse pictures and a short film about “Sakrisøy seafood” in Lofoten.

The main courses

First course: The modernization of Nordic eating: Studying changes and stabilities in eating patterns.

37 “The modernization of Nordic eating: Studying changes and stabilities in eating patterns” is based on a quantitative and comparative Nordic study of “eating patterns” from 1997. Lotte Holm, Thomas Bøker Lund, Marianne Pipping Ekström, Unni Kjærnes, Jukka Gronow Johanna Mäkelä, and Mari Niva form an effective team of sociologists from Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland, respectively, who are presently working on a new study of the same kind and promise us an overview of the changes during the last 15 years. The article presented in this issue highlights results from the first Nordic study, addressing both similarities and differences. Through a well-reflected methodological approach and a broad theoretical frame, this article places food patterns between norms, everyday practices, and household routines as well as societal regulations and institutionalization that give a great overview of what we might call Nordic Food culture. The empirical exploration of issues like the meal format, eating rhythms, and the social role of food help to demystify Nordic eating patterns as either traditional and family-focused or industrial and individual-centered, offering instead a dynamic and multi-faceted understanding of modern eating in the four Nordic countries.

Second course: “Interpretation of food risks by mothers of kindergarten children in St. Petersburg, Russia, and their strategies of risk handling”

38 Olga Gromasheva describes different types of food risks and strategies of risk-handling among middle class mothers of kindergarten children in Russia. While Russian mothers voice well-known food risks also addressed by Nordic consumers (see Halkier 2004 or Kjærnes and al. 2001), their strategies of risk management are shaped by typically Russian characteristics, such as being patient. Although the majority of mothers were unsatisfied with the quality and safety of food sold in the supermarkets or served in public catering venues and kindergartens, neither resistance nor the organization of protests occurred. Instead, mothers employed individual adaptation strategies. The article provides a snapshot of a post-iron-curtain Russia in transition and of the enduring Russian national identity of valuing patience over activism and protest and

being passive in discontent instead of fighting for their rights when encountering old, modern, and post-modern food risks.

Third course: “The consumption of fats in Denmark 1900-2000, Long term changes in the intake and quality of fats in Denmark”

- 39 Tenna Jensen’s article gives an overview of the consumption of fats in Denmark over the last hundred years. The analyses are interesting in many different ways. Not only to show how the consumption of fats differs through time and how it is socially distributed, but also to show the interplay between consumption of fats and variations in lifestyle diseases. The author argues that a use of longitudinal historical data provides a certain type of insight that may prove useful to different types of academic studies in the fields of nutrition, food, and cultural studies. By examining the long term consumption of fat in a population, the patterns and connections between eating practices and the differences in the composition of fatty acids through time create a different picture than what more case-oriented, short-term studies would allow. Historical analysis can also identify factors such as income and geography (urban/rural) and show their impact on the consumption of fats. Special attention is given to the special role of margarine, a product that differs from other types of fats as its composition of fatty acids changes constantly and is dictated by the industry producing it. The author gives an interesting glimpse into margarine’s journey through time, through world wars and social change.

Fourth course: “But I’ve also tried” - Predominance of the medical and parental discourses in dietetic consultations with an obese Danish adolescent.

- 40 Lisa Koustrup and her co-authors provide an in-depth description of an obese child’s experiences with a dietary intervention program. Despite offering dietary counselling aimed at guiding, helping, and teaching obese children and adolescents to eat healthy and lose weight, Region Midtjylland’s Centre for Public Health has seen poor results amongst the adolescents partaking in such programs. Following the theoretical concepts of ‘being and becoming’ in childhood constructions (Uprichard, 2008) and Alanen’s concept of the ‘generational order’ (Alanen, 2009), the article discusses how meanings about childhood obesity are constructed in the meeting between the dietician, the obese child, and the parent. Whilst different meanings about childhood obesity are constructed in the dietetic meeting, these meanings emerge from mainly a biomedical or a parental discourse of ‘being and becoming’. The child’s perspectives were conspicuously absent. Moreover, the generational order in dietary counselling illustrates how ‘power relations’ regulate children’s agency. While the adults in the dietetic meeting have a ‘role’ to perform: the dietician gives advice, the parents controls the child’s diet at home, and the child lacks agency. Yet, the authors argue that obese children’s position and agency might be developed by giving them more opportunities in the dietetic meeting to speak about their lives in a joint discourse of ‘being and becoming’.

Fifth course: “The mainstreaming of sports nutrition consumption in the Norwegian food culture”

- 41 In 1961, Roland Barthes associated energy-giving nutrition products with working life and well-disciplined managers who liked control: “Energy giving and light food is experienced at the very sign of [...] participation in modern life.” (Barthes, 1961, p. 985). Fifty years later Silje Skuland & Siv Elin Ånestad see nutrition products in a Norwegian food cultural perspective and argue that sports nutrition consumption has become legitimate and mainstream. In a cultural climate where a healthy lifestyle is highly important, and where individuals are increasingly held responsible for their own health, food is increasingly valued for its nutritional components. The authors explore, through in-depth interviews with consumers, the motives and purposes of consuming sport nutrition products and how and why this kind of products has gained status as normal and mainstream. New body ideals of the slim, fit, tanned, and healthy body, coupled with the general trust in authorities and commercial actors, such as gyms, seem

to have paved way for normalization and mainstreaming of the consumption of sports nutrition products among Norwegians.

Sixth course: “Public Private Partnerships fighting obesity in Europe – Does the Nordic region represent a special case?”

- 42 Anita Borch & Gun Roos’s article reports the main results of an analysis of 165 Public Private Partnerships (PPP) aimed at combating obesity in 28 European countries. What are their characteristics, and is there a variation in the objectives and work of PPPs between Nordic and other European countries? The authors argue that there is a close relationship between obesity and (food) culture, and that PPPs should acknowledge and integrate this aspect to a greater extent.
- 43 Gösta Esping Andersen’s classical theory of different welfare-state regimes provides the platform for the analysis. The basic assumption is that the different ways of tackling obesity is dependent on the differences in the view of individual responsibility in the respective welfare state regimes. The theory distinguishes not only between typically Scandinavian, state centered regimes and liberal, market oriented regimes, but identifies even a third, continental and South European regime protecting the private spheres of the family and the church from state as well as market influences.

Seventh course: “Turning to protected quality through translations of meaning and transformations of materiality – Introducing and practicing PDO and PGI in Norway”

- 44 In his article, Atle Wehn Hegnes discusses the processes of implementing the Norwegian scheme for Protected Designations of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) in Norway. We can read that in 2002 the Norwegian government established the schemas of PDO and PGI in accordance with EU regulations. However, since such schemas are primarily based on the initiatives of governmental authorities, rather than producers and consumers, and because Norwegian food culture lacks a concept of terroir, Hegnes argues that their introduction and implementation is characterized by a food Cultural Adaptation Work (CAW). CAW consists of translations of meaning and the transformation of material properties, which are necessary processes of adaptation. The article is based on empirical examples: the application and the assignation of products of origin such as the “Ringerikspotet fra Ringerike” (Ringerik potatoes from Ringerike), ”Gulløye fra Nord-Norge” (Golden-eye from the northern part of Norway) and ”Fjellmandel fra Oppdal” (Mountain almond potatoes from Oppdal). Translating the European schemas into a Norwegian context was not the only strategy employed by the different actors. Norwegian producers also had to adapt the material properties of their products. Following Hegnes, the introduction of PDO and PGI systems in Norway has brought about a number of consequences and paradoxes. On the one hand it contributes to greater food diversity and a new understanding of food, but on the other hand it contributes to standardisation, innovation, and alienation in Norwegian food and food culture.

Eighth course: “Creating terroir. An Anthropological Perspective on New Nordic Cuisine as an Expression of Nordic Identity”

- 45 Mar Emil Tholstrup Hermansen explores the linkages between the concept of a New Nordic Kitchen, the creation of a certain “Nordic terroir”, and whether this can be said to express a common Nordic Identity. The author explores further how a range of social, historical and political factors, along with the use of particular produce, consumption, and eating practices work together to create a platform for an “imagined community”. The notion of “The Nordic landscape” comprises qualities such as “freshness”, “simplicity”, and even a certain “ethic”. The article captures the present attention to *New Nordic Kitchen* and shows how the terroir, the connection between taste and place, is another starting point for a common, shared understanding and a sense of “Nordic Identity”.
- 46 Bon appétit!

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Notes

- 1 In Mediterranean and Central-European thoughts during the 15th and the 16th century, Norway, in particular, was viewed as a rocky, hostile, cold and icy landscape and with people as savage and uncivilized as in other countries outside European borders (Christensen, 1993: 42).
- 2 Barjolle and Sylvander (2000), p.26
- 3 This should not be interpreted as a rating of Northern- and Southern –European countries, where cultural aspects related to food are restricted to the southern countries, whereas the northern-European countries have a “lack of food culture”, but is meant to stress the point that different food cultures build on different dimensions.
- 4 “Food is culture” is, moreover, the title of Massimo Montanari’s book from 2006: Let’s note that there is no question mark in the title. (Montanari, 2006)
- 5 Food was obviously not an acceptable or notorious scientific aim at that time: If a woman could possibly write a book on food, both Brillat-Savarin and Asbjørnsen did not dare to publish under their real names: *La physiologie du goût* was first launched anonymously, and *Fornuftigt Madstel* was published under the pseudonym of Clemens Bonifacius.
- 6 www.norskmatkultur.no
- 7 www.nfd.nynordiskmad.org
- 8 http://www.clausmeyer.dk/en/the_new_nordic_cuisine_.html
- 9 www.newscancook.com
- 10 <http://nynordiskmad.org>
- 11 The development and implementation of criteria for Protected Designations of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), analysed in Atle Wehn Hegne’s article in this issue, is reflecting these changes.
- 12 Based on the duality between *bildung* and *kultur* in German.
- 13 “Culinary culture” is a shorthand term for “the ensemble of attitudes and tastes people bring to cooking and eating” (Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo 1992: 20).
- 14 Cultural studies came to being when ethnologists and historians saw the need to study popular culture and its expression in the middle of the last century.
- 15 A concrete and fascinating example is given in this issue by Atle Hegnes, with an article using designation of origin as a case study to illustrate those cultural translation processes.
- 16 The approach to the concept of food culture refers to publication previously quoted, such as Fürst 1985, Lien 1995, Notaker 2000, and is heavily based on the introduction chapter in Amilien and al. 2007.
- 17 “Emic” concepts are in anthropology concepts that exist within, or familiar to members within, a culture. It is opposed to “etic” concepts that are understood as generalizations made by one who does not participate in the culture being studied.
- 18 Cf. footnote 17.

19 To focus properly on the etic perspective of the concept, we would here use only one Nordic Country, Norway, as a case study, although we believe that almost similar changes could have been described in Iceland, Denmark, Sweden or Finland, but with different steps and actors.

20 The debate was launched by H. Notaker asking whether a Norwegian food culture existed, it continued with: “Norwegian food culture - a gift to humanity”, a reply by G.B. Nilsson in *Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift* [the New Norwegian Journal] 1/2001, 96-100, and another response from H. Notaker in n2/2001, 205.

21 Parts of the document was published in a separate SIFO note, see Amilien and al. 2000.

22 For example Fürst E. 1985.

23 Presentation at the Norwegian Food culture seminar, 2005, Ås, Norway

24 A common webpage is also soon available at: <http://www.sifo.no/nordicfoodculture/>.

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Abstracts

This paper is focusing on the framework, the challenges and the specific content of this special issue about Nordic Food Culture(s). The three co-editors first indicate how this issue is based on two exploratory workshops, held in 2012 and initiated by the Joint Committee for the Nordic Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences (NOS-HS). After providing a short overview of the construction of national identities in the Nordic region, the authors deal with the role of food and its cultural meaning in Nordic cultures. This leads to deeper insight into the central concepts of Nordic culture and food culture, questioning the possible meanings, roles and significances of “Nordic food culture(s)” in an academic context. This paper eventually presents the contents of this issue, in the form of a “menu”, which includes starters, main courses (peer-reviewed articles) and desserts.

Culture(s) de l'alimentation nordique(s) – Pensées et perspectives en guise d'introduction

Cet article discute le contexte, les défis, le cadre scientifique ainsi que les textes présentés dans ce numéro spécial sur la/ les culture(s) de l'alimentation nordique(s). Les trois co-rédacteurs rappellent tout d'abord que ce numéro spécial d'*AoFood* est issu d'une série de séminaires, tenus en 2010 et initiés par le Conseil de la Recherche Nordique en Sciences Humaines et Sociales (NOS-HS). Après un rapide aperçu concernant la construction des identités nationales dans la région nordique, les auteurs examinent le rôle de l'alimentation

et sa valeur culturelle dans les cultures nordiques. Cela conduit à une réflexion sur les concepts, fondamentaux dans ce numéro, de culture nordique et particulièrement de culture de l'alimentation, stimulant le lecteur quant aux sens, à l'importance et aux significations de la/les « culture(s) de l'alimentation nordique(s) » dans le cadre de la recherche scientifique. Cet article s'achève sur une présentation détaillée du contenu du numéro, sous la forme d'un « menu », constitué d'entrées, de plats de résistance (articles scientifiques évalués par des relecteurs) et de desserts.

Index terms

Mots-clés : culture de l'alimentation, sociologie de l'alimentation, anthropologie de l'alimentation, culture nordique, Nouvelle Cuisine Nordique

Keywords : food culture, culture of food, food sociology, food anthropology, Nordic culture, New Nordic Kitchen