



# winter light

From my earliest childhood in Wisconsin, a state with large settlements of Scandinavians, my life centered on foods that had been carried to the New World by immigrants including my Danish great-grandparents.

My mother, and other good cooks in our town, opened us up to our heritage at the dinner table, serving *plättar* (Swedish pancakes), rosettes (Norwegian fried pastries), *lefse* (Norwegian potato flatbread), *aebleskiver* (Danish apple fritters), *limpa* bread (a Swedish rye bread) and other dishes irresistible to children. I grew up loving Scandinavian cooking and believing it to be always festive and comforting.

By Lisa Cherkasky  
Food Photography by Renée Comet  
Styling by Lisa Cherkasky

PHOTO BY TERLIE RAKKE/GETTY IMAGES



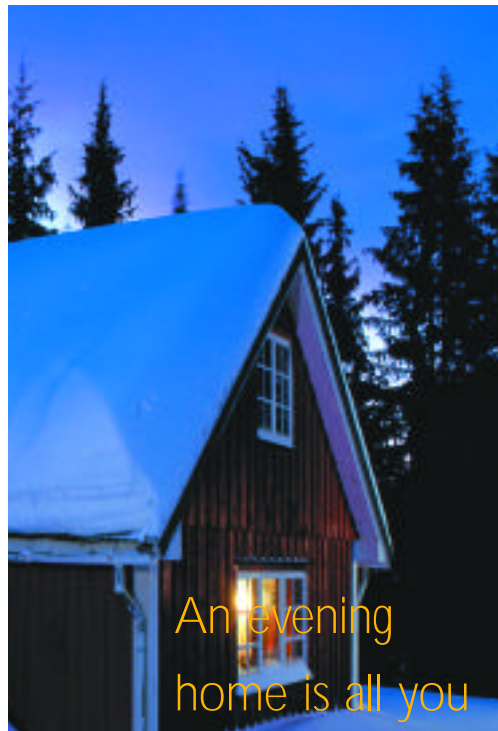
LINGER OVER THIS SEASONAL SCANDINAVIAN BRUNCH

## menu

GLÖGG | DANISH EGG CAKE

WINTER FRUIT SALAD | FINNISH MARMALADE MUFFINS

SWEDISH PANCAKES | RED FRUIT PUDDING with CREAM



An evening home is all you need to warrant simmering a pot of glögg



At the top is a photo of my great-grandfather, Niels Christensen, father of Elsie Christensen Schroeder and Jessie Christensen and grandfather of Shirley Schroeder Cherkasky. He lived from 1856 to 1937. The lower photo shows my great-grandmother, Inge Christensen, who was Niels' wife and part of the community of Scandinavian cooks who passed on her cooking heritage. She lived from 1867 to 1920.

Scandinavian cooking is founded on fresh and varied dairy foods, fragile berries in all shapes and colors, sturdy winter vegetables, excellent sweet and savory baked goods in a panoply of guises and delicate summer greens and herbs.

Cold winter mornings warrant plenty of strong coffee and warming food. So Europe's northerners—the people of Norway, Finland, Sweden and Denmark—are no strangers to cozy spaces filled with the aromas of baking and wholesome cooking—on weekends at least. Although I like to fantasize that there are parts of the world where people relax at the breakfast table right on past their third cup of coffee, I know that I am kidding myself. Modern Scandinavians, who seem to know the value of long, leisurely meals, are as busy as Americans are, rushing off in the morning, bread in hand. Nevertheless, sometimes we all need to pretend that we live another life—a life where we linger at the breakfast table, settling in long enough for our appetites to wane and wax and wane again.

For the proposed menu for your *hugli* winter weekend morning meal, I have taken the liberty of suggesting some recipes that would not typically be served at breakfast. Rather than adhere strictly to tradition, I have chosen dishes that complement one another in taste, texture and variety and that should be pleasing on an American table.

Start with a crisp fruit compote, a recipe that began with a traditional Norwegian fruit soup—one that I have adapted to be more appropriate on the breakfast table. Then spread your buffet with a batch of remarkably moist almond muffins laced with cardamom, Swedish pancakes topped with ruby-red berries, and fresh bread and toppings.

While I realize that dessert at breakfast seems silly, a raspberry pudding so pure, simple and luscious as something with the tongue-twisting name of *Rød Grød med Fløde* finishes any meal with a flourish, not to mention keeping you longer at the table for coffee-fueled—or *glögg*-fueled—conversation. My menu suggests *glögg*, a hot wine punch typically drunk in the evening, for obvious reasons. Yet brunch often becomes a tipsy affair, and a hot drink is so convivial in the winter. *Glögg* seems a welcome change from mimosas and Bloody Marys, particularly when there is a chill in the air.

*Plättar*, very thin and buttery Swedish pancakes, are traditionally eaten with sweet butter and lingonberries, which are garnet-colored and bittersweet. These delicate berries are rarely found fresh outside of Scandinavia, but you may substitute lingonberry preserves, available at Scandinavian or international markets or online. Another yummy topping is sour cream and brown sugar, which is not traditional but is one of my favorite

combinations anyway. Besides, these are two things that are nearly always on hand in our house.

Similar to crêpes, *plättar* can be made large, then served folded or flat. It is easier on the cook to use a 7- or 8-inch skillet and to make the pancakes nearly as large as the pan. However, Swedish pancakes taste better to me when they are small, about silver-dollar size, allowing the opportunity to vary the toppings: just butter, lingonberries alone, lingonberries and sour cream, sour cream and brown sugar—then back to plain butter again. When making *plättar*, my mother always brought her large electric griddle to the dining table and cooked the pancakes to order, never missing any part of our conversation. Electric skillets are awkward to store, but they can be very nice for getting some of your cooking off a crowded stove or out of the kitchen altogether. Nonstick electric skillets are a godsend.

The cuisines of Scandinavia share many similarities, thanks to available ingredients. Cardamom, almond, preserves and butter all figure into the baking of Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland, so I have chosen a lovely Finnish muffin as the representative for these ubiquitous elements. “Muffin” is not quite the right name for these little cakes, but

it is the closest English word I could find to describe them. Unlike any other muffin produced in my oven, these are flat, extremely nutty and moist to the point of being almost wet with butter and syrup.

Once my family discovered *Rød Gløde med Fløde*, a benefit of my sister's junior year abroad in Denmark, we went on a bender. Smooth, slippery and tart, it is a silken berry pudding, enriched with a swirl of cold cream. We couldn't get enough. Even my young Korean-born son is a fan: He's all smiles when his chin is smeared with *Rød Grøde*, a piece of his adopted culinary heritage passed down from my Danish great-grandparents.

The recipes I have included may seem ambitious. If so, make only one or two items. And an evening at home is all you need to warrant simmering a pot of *glögg*.

Winter days in Scandinavia are short. Even in North America, where the sun does actually rise in the winter, the days feel meek. Weekday schedules tend to ignore the seasons. Perhaps an occasional cold weekend breakfast would be more in keeping with the Earth's wintry tilt. Rise slowly, stay long at the table and succor yourself and guests with the gentle flavors of the north.



My mother, Shirley Evelyn Schroeder, taken in the early 1930s.

## Glögg

SERVES 4

This bracing Swedish punch gets its kick from aquavit, a potent, potato-based liquor. The wine must steep with the spices for at least 12 hours before drinking, so begin your *glögg* a day ahead.

- 3 whole cardamom pods
- 3 whole cloves
- 1½-inch piece fresh ginger
- 1 3x1-inch piece orange peel
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 bottle medium-bodied, dry red wine
- ⅓ cup sugar
- ½ cup whole, blanched almonds
- ¼ cup aquavit, optional

1. Place cardamom pods into a heavy plastic bag, and crush them lightly with a rolling pin. Put cardamom, cloves, ginger, orange peel, cinnamon stick and wine into

a nonreactive pitcher. Stir, cover and set aside in a cool place overnight.  
2. Strain wine into a 2-quart, nonreactive saucepan, and stir in sugar. Before serving, bring it to a simmer, and stir in almonds and aquavit. Serve hot.  
PER SERVING: 310 CAL; 4G PROT; 9G TOTAL FAT (0G SAT. FAT); 23G CARB; 0MG CHOL; 10MG SOD; 2G FIBER; 17G SUGARS

## Danish Egg Cake

SERVES 4 30 MINUTES OR LESS

- 2 Tbs. butter
- 6 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 Tbs. all-purpose flour
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- ½ cup whole milk
- 3 Tbs. sliced chives

1. Heat butter over medium heat in a 10-inch nonstick skillet.  
2. Beat eggs, flour, salt, pepper and milk in

a large bowl. Pour egg mixture into skillet, and reduce heat to very low. Let eggs cook until set, about 20 minutes. Remove from heat, sprinkle with chives, cut into wedges and serve directly from skillet.  
PER SERVING: 190 CAL; 11G PROT; 15G TOTAL FAT (7G SAT. FAT); 4G CARB; 335MG CHOL; 170MG SOD; 0G FIBER; 2G SUGARS

## Wine Suggestions

For this morning spread, you can go the traditional Scandinavian route with a *glögg*—a festive brew of cloves, cardamom and red wine. Or try a European *Gewürztraminer*, perhaps a *Martin Schaezel Vin D'Alsace*, which is a light, not-too-sweet wine that goes well at brunch.

## Norwegian Winter Fruit Salad

SERVES 4

- 1 tsp. grated orange zest
- 1 cup orange juice
- ⅓ cup honey

NORWEGIAN WINTER FRUIT SALAD



FINNISH MARMALADE MUFFINS



▼  
1 lemon, scrubbed, thinly sliced and seeded  
1 cinnamon stick  
12 dried apricots, diced  
½ cup dried cherries  
1 tart apple, peeled, cored and chopped  
1½ cups fresh pineapple chunks  
Splash of brandy

1. Stir together orange zest, orange juice, honey, lemon and cinnamon stick in a non-reactive saucepan. Stir in apricots and dried cherries, and heat over medium-low heat. When mixture simmers, remove it from heat, and set it aside to cool to room temperature, about 30 minutes.

2. Place fruit mixture into a large bowl, and stir in apple, pineapple and brandy. Serve immediately, or chill before serving.  
PER SERVING: 270 CAL; 2G PROT; 0G TOTAL FAT (0G SAT. FAT); 63G CARB; 0MG CHOL; 0MG SOD; 4G FIBER; 53G SUGARS

### Finnish Marmalade Muffins

MAKES 18 MUFFINS

For these lush muffins, select biscuits such as the Old-Fashioned "Swedish Style" Vanilla Snaps.

1 cup unsalted butter  
1 cup sugar  
2 large eggs  
1 cup all-purpose flour

1 tsp. baking powder  
1 tsp. ground cardamom  
1 cup sweet biscuit crumbs  
1 cup (about 5 oz.) ground almonds  
1 cup whole milk  
6 Tbs. orange or apricot marmalade  
½ cup water  
½ cup sugar  
½ cup confectioners' sugar  
2 tsp. fresh lemon juice

1. Preheat oven to 375F. Butter 18 muffin cups thoroughly, and set aside.  
2. Cream butter and sugar together. Add one egg at a time, beating mixture well after each addition. Whisk together flour, baking powder, cardamom, biscuit crumbs and almonds. Add dry ingredients to

butter mixture in 3 parts, alternating with milk and beginning and ending with dry ingredients. Blend just until smooth, taking care not to overmix. Divide batter among muffin cups.

3. Bake in middle of oven for 5 minutes. Drop 1 teaspoon marmalade into center of each muffin, and bake for 12 to 13 minutes more, or until firm and golden brown.

4. Meanwhile, stir together water and sugar, and bring to a boil over medium heat, cooking for 30 seconds. Use a pastry brush to moisten muffins thoroughly with sugar syrup after muffins come from oven. Set aside to cool completely, and remove muffins from baking cups.

5. Meanwhile, stir together confectioners' sugar and lemon juice. Drizzle muffins with icing, and let dry for a few minutes before serving.

PER SERVING: 293 CAL; 7G PROT; 17G TOTAL FAT (7G SAT. FAT); 35G CARB; 53MG CHOL; 67MG SOD; 0G FIBER; 25G SUGARS

### Swedish Pancakes

SERVES 4

This batter needs to rest for at least 2 hours, so you will need to plan ahead and rise early enough to make this in time for breakfast or brunch. You may also make

the batter the night before, cover it tightly and refrigerate it until the next morning. Make the pancakes to order, or keep them warm on a covered platter in a 200F oven. Serve the pancakes with butter, lingonberries or other tart preserves, and/or sour cream—and, in the case of my family, sour cream and brown sugar. Try them with just butter at first—they are delicate and faintly sweet.

3 large eggs  
1½ cups whole milk  
1 cup all-purpose flour  
6 Tbs. unsalted butter, melted  
1 tsp. granulated sugar  
½ tsp. salt

1. Beat eggs with ½ cup milk until thoroughly blended. Add flour, and stir in completely. Stir in remaining 1 cup milk, butter, sugar and salt, blending well. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours or overnight.

2. Remove from refrigerator, and whisk batter just to recombine it before cooking pancakes.

3. Grease a flat, large heavy skillet or electric griddle lightly with butter, and heat to medium-high heat. When hot, drop in batter by 2 tablespoonfuls per pancake, spreading batter into rounds. When edges

of pancakes begin to brown, turn over and cook for 1 to 2 more minutes, or until firm. Remove from heat, and serve.

PER SERVING: 380 CAL; 11G PROT; 24G TOTAL FAT (14G SAT. FAT); 30G CARB; 215MG CHOL; 380MG SOD; <1G FIBER; 6G SUGARS

### Red Fruit Pudding with Cream

SERVES 4

If you are using fresh strawberries, rinse, hull and quarter them for this *Red Grød med Fløde*.

20 oz. fresh or frozen, thawed raspberries or strawberries, or a combination  
2 to 3 Tbs. sugar, or to taste  
2 scant Tbs. arrowroot  
3 Tbs. cold water  
½ to ½ cup heavy cream  
Fresh berries for decorating, optional

1. Put berries in blender or food processor, and purée completely. Press purée through a strainer set over a 1-quart, non-reactive saucepan. Stir in sugar, and bring mixture to a boil over medium heat. Blend together arrowroot and water. Add arrowroot mixture to berries, stirring constantly. As soon as mixture starts to simmer, remove it from heat.

2. Pour into 6 small dessert bowls, martini glasses or coupe cups. Cover tightly with plastic wrap, and refrigerate. Chill for at least 2 hours or up to 2 days.

3. To serve, pour a little cream onto top of each pudding, and decorate with fresh berries, if using.

PER SERVING: 160 CAL; 2G PROT; 7G TOTAL FAT (4.5G SAT. FAT); 23G CARB; 25MG CHOL; 10MG SOD; 2G FIBER; 14G SUGARS

### SOURCES

Kings Norsk Products  
(303) 422-3394  
www.kingsnorsk.com

Wikstrom's Gourmet Foods, Inc.  
(773) 275-6100  
www.wikstromsgourmet.com

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SWEDISH PANCAKES



RED FRUIT PUDDING with CREAM