

# Abstracts

## **Photographer's Breakfast – The theme of food in Finnish art photography**

By Sofia Lahti

Food makes for both excellent material and interesting art. The possibilities just widen with time: you can dress yourself in food (Heidi Romo), bathe in it (Salong 3+, Heli Rekula), observe it rotting (Saara Ekström), let the light shine through it (Saku Paasilahti), abstract it (Timothy Persons), refuse it (Salla Tykkä, Elina Brotherus) or just document or portray it (J-P Laakio, Wladimir Schohin, Anne Hämäläinen, Kristoffer Albrecht), giving it an endless amount of meanings. In Finnish art photography, all that has been done. The food theme in art photography reflects both the joys and the problems associated with eating. It also shows the changes in our habits and attitudes towards food, as well as those we hold towards our body. Nowadays food often finds itself associated with the controversies of beauty ideals and gender roles. Furthermore, it is still interesting as an object in the genre of still life. The variety of approaches can be seen, for instance, in the breakfast theme. A pioneer of colour photography in the early 1900s, Wladimir Schohin, made an idyllic and harmonious Breakfast still life with bread, milk, and eggs. The contemporary art photographer's breakfasts range from Elina Brotherus's desolate self-portrait Fundamental Loneliness to Timothy Persons's abstract composition with it's drops of different breakfast ingredients, Morning Flavours.

An exhibition on food in Finnish photography, Disgustingly Delicious, is arranged 15.9.2006 – 7.1.2007 at the Finnish Museum of Photography and the Hotel and Restaurant Museum in Helsinki.

## **Here, experiences are just packed. A cultural analysis of ecological vegetables and their place in the experiential economy**

By Mine Sylow

Recently, there has been much talk of 'the experience economy' in books dealing with marketing theory. In this theory, experiences are understood as goods that may be shared and sought after.

A large number of food producers have put this marketing concept into action. The aim of this article is to provide a cultural understanding of the phenomenon, which is often analysed in economic or marketing terms. The article will focus on the Danish internet company Aarstiderne. Aarstiderne sells organic fruit and vegetables to 35.000 customers. Crates containing the organic products, mostly fruit and vegetables, are delivered direct to the consumer's door via an internet based subscription.

The thesis of this article is that Aarstiderne is not just selling organic vegetables etc., but that the real product is the meaning ascribed to these products. By analysing written and verbal communication from and about Aarstiderne, the article will examine the following questions: Which values does Aarstiderne stand for? Which experiences and narratives do they employ when marketing their products?

One of the article's conclusions is that Aarstiderne's values are based on two overriding topics: 'The cultivation of land' and 'the meal'. In both topics the company shows a very pronounced attitude towards 'the right way' and 'the good life'. With regard to both of them, Aarstiderne has a very pronounced attitude towards 'the right way' and 'the good life'. Ecology and organic production are not explicitly dealt with, rather an unspoken premise concerning attitudes being communicated to the costumers instead. More pronounced are attitudes regarding the organic products further journey along the food chain, therefore meals or the mealtime is a central element.

Stories in Aarstiderne's newsletter create a dream world through mental imagery, conveying the message that organic products delivered by Aarstiderne guarantee special taste, sense and sight experiences. This article shows how Aarstiderne's vegetables become something "unique" and how they are injected with values, attitudes and the promises of experience. Therefore, customers have already been conditioned by such experiences ahead of time, and are thus equipped with an appropriate set of behavioural suitable patterns. Newsletters are used to instil new senses and influence customer attitudes in a certain direction. Storytelling is used to create mental imagery, amplifying taste (the experience of taste), even before the products have made it to the kitchen. Thus, it can be concluded that Aarstiderne, along the same lines as the experience economy mantra, seems to be selling their products, through communicating the nonmaterial dimension of their products instead of focusing on the fruits and vegetables themselves.

In addition, this article examines the 'material's position in relation to it's focus on the 'nonmaterial', and in summary will discuss why this economic phenomenon is interesting for ethnologists and how the sale of nonmaterial experiences and dreams is understood by the

## **Food Tales - Narratives of Food, Culture and Identity in Denmark.**

By Helene Goldberg

consumer.

Is pizza Danish food? Or how about roast pork? Is it possible to achieve cultural understanding through eating? What is a food culture and who draws its boundaries? Using a two-month educational course on “cooking and food tales” at a day-time folk school as her empirical foundation, the author explores how food may be used as a catalyst for cultural exchange within the educational system as well as in projects of integration.

The article discusses the experiences drawn from a number of methods used during the course, such as one-on-one interviews with students, handing out cameras, presentations on food culture, along with a small exhibition. Here students were given the opportunity to exhibit their food tales on wall sheets, using recipes, pictures and quotes from the interviews.

During class and in connection to the presentation on food cultural subjects, discussions between students exposed multiple ways of dealing with individual differences. The students demonstrated how food cultures are flexible entities that are continuously maintained, challenged, negotiated and reshaped. This is exemplified by the students’ plan to recreate a traditional Danish dish, meat loaf [forloren hare], as a halal meat loaf, i.e. using ground beef and no bacon for the sake of a Muslim classmate – hence making it possible for all the students to participate in the “food community”. The students’ initiative makes a clean break with the Danish ideal and culture of sameness, where difference is perceived per definition as an insurmountable problem and a barrier for participation in the community. The students’ ability to create communities in spite of differences, stands in contrast to previous Danish research, where for example a Jew asking for kosher food would automatically exclude him- or herself from the majority of society.

Hence the study suggests that the younger generation, despite internal ethnic differences, is able to create new communities and also that food is an obvious starting point for this creation, as well as for dialogue and exchange. The positive experiences with this project points towards some advantages in the usage of food, cooking and eating as a focal point in future projects of integration.

## **The word made flesh - communicating manor house life**

By Inge Mette Petersen

The Open Air Museum at Sorgenfri outside of Copenhagen has since 1999 been offering an educational class in “Cookery on a Stove”. In the article, the author seeks to account for the reflections laying at the foundations of the course. Also, the article discusses the possibilities of turning written sources into life. The author reflects on whether, and if it is the case, then how, both personal accounts as well as actual recipes and instructions from popular cookbooks of the time, might be transformed into a course focusing on the experience of lived life.

The educational opportunity at the Open Air Museum is aimed at fifth graders and above, taking place in the museums’ small manor house of Østergård from Fjellerup in Eastern Jutland.

Throughout the course, the children are given the opportunity to discover and partake in the life and work of a smaller manor house kitchen set around 1910. The course is made possible by furnishing chosen for the reconstruction of the main building. The apartments of the Justesens', the tenant family, were furnished as regular museum interiors, while the kitchen section was adapted so as to render it fully interactive: making such things as lightening the stove, eating at the table in the servants' hall and heating the water in the scullery coppers possible for visitors. Throughout the course, the pupils are thus introduced to a specific historical period, by being presented with both the cooking methods and the available ingredients of the time. Also, the everyday life of both staff and tenant family is transmitted, just as recounted in the book *Herregårdsliv (Manor House Life)*.

The main focus of the course is preparing dinner for both staff and the master family, making sure that both simple and more refined dishes. Are necessary on time is stressed, along with fulfilling all relevant tasks within a given timeframe. In that way, the pupils return home with a real idea of the practicalities of turn-of-the-century kitchen work. According to the author, this lived experience enables the pupils to better understand social structures and living conditions of a manor house at around 1910.

### **Dried fish: An inquiry into the methods for drying fish, 1500-2006**

By Maibritt Bager og Anne Dorte Holm

Preservation of fresh fish was a fundamental part of the fishing industry in most coastal communities prior to 1900. The preservation process changed the role of fish in the pre-industrial coastal economy from being mainly a household source of protein, to becoming a fixed item at stores and a commodity for long distance trade. The fish was dried, salted or smoked. The preservation methods could also be combined in various ways. Drying was common in the Danish North Sea region. Lean fish such as cod, ling, haddock and plaice was dried every year in large quantities, but herring and other fat fish species were also dried occasionally. One particularly important source of information regarding the production of dried fish in Denmark in pre-industrial time, is the testimony of the Skagen customer Olaus Olavius from 1787, who described the production of *stokfisk* - dried cod and haddock, *ludflynder* - dried plaice, and *lageflynder* - salted and dried plaice. The examination of numerous historical sources shows how drying was a conservative preservation method and that the process did not change between 17th and the late 19th century. A further evaluation of the production of dried fish as it took place in Denmark, was carried out by combining the testimony of historical sources and the experience acquired by an experimental study. The experiment was conducted at Skagen By og Egnsmuseum in 2005. The results support the idea that dried fish produced at the Danish North Sea coast could obtain the same high quality as Norwegian stockfish. The traditional processing of dried fish was maintained until the late 19th century, when developments in infrastructure changed the market for fish and fishing products. In the 20th century, drying became a preservation method as well as the identity of the coastal household.

## **Food housekeeping seen through togetherness and social differences in the 1950s and 60s**

By Laura Lotta Andersson

This article is based on questionnaires collected on the subject ethnology at Åbo Akademi, questionnaires gathering information on eating habits of the 1950s and 60s. I have searched for answers about how food was a factor of togetherness for the family and if social differences can be traced through the role it played.

Flavour and taste are very conservative and differences between the two decades are slight. The same plain food was prepared in the home. The biggest difference can be seen in the mechanization of the kitchens. By the 60s most homes had refrigerators and the women didn't have to go to shops everyday. The economical growth began in earnest; in the 60s even poorer people could afford some extravagances.

During both decades, it was important for the whole family to gather and eat dinner together; breakfast and lunch were eaten together if there was enough time. Adults and children didn't have recreational activities to the same extent, which would have made eating together impossible. By eating at the same time, children learned their position in the family and how to behave at dinner.

Social differences are hard to trace, while economic questions can be very sensitive. I was still able, however, to find some differences between upper-middle class families and working class families. But one thing was shared by all, and that was the need to be grateful after the shortage during the Second World War, for having food at all.

## **The risk society of fast food. A cultural analysis of the new McDonald's**

By Marek Stefaniak

Fast-food chains such as McDonald's have lately become associated with a number of health risks, not the least in connection with the growing problems of overweight in the Western world. In Sweden this resulted in McDonald's carrying out a number of changes in their marketing and range of selection during 2004. McDonald's new concept deals with persuading their customers to begin living a more healthy life especially by getting more exercise and by eating more beneficial food. Generally speaking, our consumption and our habits have undergone an individualisation in which the individual in this case is encouraged to take control of its body and thus control even of its identity. McDonald's have also introduced food products with less fat and sugar content on their menu while continuing to sell less healthy fast food. McDonald's would like to see us balance these different types of food. This illustrates how contemporary food-stuffs are characterised by a paradoxal ideal in which we first are encouraged to eat healthy and retain control of our bodies, but also to eat less healthy and give expression to feelings with our bodies. By using an emotional rhetoric in marketing the healthy food, McDonald's attempts to give us the impression of eating healthfully and still give expression to feelings or enjoyment with a less jeopardised conscience. The health risks in fast food also involve the fact that McDonald's production line is global and thus difficult for consumers to assess. This results

in a certain lack of trust in McDonald's. In order to increase our trust in McDonald's, the concern have become more candid about their production line, at the same time as they emphasise their very strict quality control. McDonald's have in addition begun cooperating with a number of national experts in order to provide us with both vital advice and the impression that a global McDonald's can communicate with us in the context of our own lives. In the final analysis, the new fast-food culture involves an increased reflexivity; partly concerning McDonald's who have changed their concept and partly concerning us consumers who are increasingly forced to consider our own life styles and to accept responsibility for them. Fast food has long been associated with rationalism due to its efficient production and consumption. Now this rationalism has become a matter of eating healthy and safely.

## **A topographic approach to studies of sports and integration**

By Sine Agergaard

This article aims to develop a topographic approach to study the ways in which integration takes place in connection with sports and spare time activities. Research in sport and integration in Denmark has focused on sports clubs in established facilities as the locations where integration takes place. It is therefore relevant to extend the perspective on integration to also cover the so-called unorganised social and physical activities that take place outside of the established sports facilities. To be more precise, the topographic method operates through handing out maps of a local area or parts of a city to a group of informants (for instance youngsters with foreign origin). The informants are asked to mark their daily movements and the places where they engage in social and physical activities together with others (with Danish or foreign origin) on the map. A comparison of the maps will locate possible centres of integration, which can be studied closer by means of observations and interviews.

The topographic method is supported by Anthony Giddens' concept of social integration, which is defined as the reciprocity that is present or develops through face to face interaction. The assumption in this article is that integration is successful when for instance youngsters of different ethnicities meet and participate in physical activities that develop their reciprocal understanding. The possibilities and hindrances of integration through physical activity are further analysed with key concepts from theories on the phenomenology of the body.

A discussion of the topographic method is delivered with Tim Ingold's distinction between a lived socio-cultural landscape and cartographic mapping. The living conditions in a specific landscape cannot be extracted from the maps of the informants, but we can gain an insight into a landscape of integration that differs from official maps and political strategies of integration. The material produced with the topographic method can point at tendencies to segregate or disperse ethnic groups in a given area. Generally speaking, the topographic method provides an opportunity to understand the significance of space for social integration.