

FOOD FOR HEALTH

Finnish Nutrition Policy in Action

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FOREWORD

This book is an introduction to the nutrition policy in Finland. We hope it will give readers a good insight on how this policy works in practice and how it has affected the whole nation.

The government of Finland launched development guidelines for physical activity and nutrition in 2008 to highlight the importance of both in enhancing the nation's health. As widely acknowledged today, a healthy diet combined with exercise reduces the risk of diet-related diseases, such as cardiovascular diseases, osteoporosis, obesity and diabetes.

One of the main actors in implementing the nutrition policy is the National Nutrition Council. Its members, appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, consist of stakeholders related to health and nutritional policy, food safety, research, health promotion,

food production, trade, consumers and catering services.

The Council issues nutritional recommendations, which are used as official guidelines on what constitutes a good, healthy and nutritionally balanced diet. These recommendations have been published four times since 1981. The current guidelines encourage people to increase consumption of vegetables, fruit, berries, potatoes, whole-grain cereal products, low-fat or fat-free milk products, fish and lean meat. The recommendations aim at limiting the consumption of saturated fats, salt and salty foods as well as sugar and sugar-rich

foods. The Council members also participate in formulation of the Nordic nutritional recommendations and the latest is expected to be published in 2013.

The Council co-ordinates and follows up on the government resolution regarding development physical activity and nutrition. From time to time, groups of experts are invited to form a task force to strategize on how a particular nutritional problem affecting the population at large can be solved (*Government resolution on development guidelines for health-enhancing physical activity and nutrition 2008, by the Ministry for Social Affairs and Health*).

In Finland's rise from economically modest country into a modern welfare state originates from the progress in education and giving equal opportunities and healthy food to everyone regardless of their socioeconomic background. Teachers and researchers have always been highly appreciated in Finland and for decades Finns also carefully listened to the health education messages.

Before the Second World War, the Finnish diet was fairly similar in the whole country, as Finns had not yet been exposed to international influences in their diet. The economy was based on forestry and agriculture, international travel was not common and there were no celebrity chefs on television. After the war Finland experienced a rapid industrialisation and urbanisation, which also had an impact on the nation's diet.

From early on, prevention through improving access to healthy food as well as information and education was thought to be a better long term investment into national health than building yet another new hospital. Many problems affecting the whole country were detected through nationwide surveys. For example, already in 1950s the national surveys showed high serum cholesterol levels, which explained why Finland was leading the world's mortality statistics in cardiovascular diseases.

In this book we would like to introduce some of the people who are involved in making nutritional policies a reality: cooks and caterers. The mass-catering system in Finland has been one of the most efficient ways of getting the whole population involved in nutritional issues. All Finns benefit from free or subsidised mass-catering at some point in their lives. We have also included some delicious Finnish recipes, where most of the ingredients are domestic produce.

Enjoy!

The nutritional policy in Finland relies on a regular, nationwide health monitoring system and epidemiological studies, which have helped to understand the correlation between bad dietary habits and health problems. Based on this knowledge, it has been possible to formulate an effective, functioning policy where actors from various sectors work together, creating a healthy environment for all.

THE PLATE MODEL

The “plate model” is a well known concept in Finland which is assisting people to compose the healthy and balanced meal. The model is based on recommendations by the National Nutrition Council. There will be new revised recommendations by the end of year 2013.

One example meal will provide about 400 kilocalories. Components of the plate model meal:

- half of the plate filled with veggies and greens
with oil-based dressing
- quarter of the plate filled with potatoes, pasta or rice
- quarter of the plate filled with meat, fish or legumes
- to drink skim milk or sour milk
- rye bread and margarine
- fruit or berries as dessert





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INFLUENCING THE CHOICES WE MAKE FROM BIRTH TO OLD AGE

In Finland nutrition is taken into account in public policy decisions concerning health, agriculture and policies directed to consumers. The overriding principle is that healthy environment helps people to live healthier lives. Highlighting nutritional awareness as one of the key components in the general health and well-being helps to catch the population at every stage of their lives, from birth to old age.



Today we live longer than any generation before us. Finnish men can confidently expect to live up until 76 years and women even longer, up to 83 years. A girl child born in 2013 in Finland is predicted to have a life span up to 100 years. Mortality into coronary heart diseases, the biggest population killer in Finland, has declined from 1970's.

Economic and social development, including the development of functioning public health care system where majority of people have access to, have contributed to the general wellbeing of the nation. The battle against many life threatening diseases, such

as diphtheria and tuberculosis, is firmly in the past. Vaccination programmes reach practically the whole population. Maternity deaths are rare. Dental care has improved. Finland has also changed from being mainly an agricultural based economy to a modern, industrialised and technologically savvy nation.

Guidelines to guide all service providers

These days Finns are also much more aware of the connection between nutrition, health and life style choices than in the past. Nutritional recommendations, on what the daily meals

Food for Health: The Finnish Nutrition Policy

should contain, are issued in Finland regularly by the National Nutritional Council, which has representatives from several ministries, academia, organisations and private sector. Nutritional guidelines are generally aimed at the whole population but there are more specific recommendations for different groups such as children, students, expecting mothers, elderly people and others. Even though these recommendations cannot be enforced by law, they are used as official dietary guidelines by decision makers from municipalities to government departments.

In Finland, majority of the population will have experienced these guidelines in action. Since 1948 by law, every child in Finland can expect to have at least one warm, nutritionally balanced meal at school per day. Apart from schools, organised meals are offered in day care centres for toddlers, in work places, universities and vocational institutes, hospitals and care homes for the elderly.

Approximately 34 % of all Finns have one of their main meals outside home every day. Most meals are served at schools (27 %), cafés (22 %), restaurants (16 %), office canteens (10 %), care homes for the elderly (10 %) and hospitals (10 %). Nutritional guidelines are also taken into account in government run institutions, such as prisons and the army. Therefore, mass catering has been one of the most effective ways of spreading the message on nutritionally balanced food and diminishing the nutritional differences between population groups.

Research has shown that in less affluent families with smaller amount of disposable income, nutrition is more likely to take a back seat compared to higher income families. Large scale catering services, especially for children and youth, are designed to even out the gap between those who can afford to make choices of what they eat and those who cannot easily do so because of financial reasons.

The emphasis is on prevention. People will change their behaviour if they have access to healthy and tasty food. Those who need information concerning their health should also easily find it. With healthy life style choices many serious problems, such as coronary heart diseases, obesity, cancer and type 2 diabetes, can potentially be avoided and the cost of health care to society reduced. Therefore, the government is determined to change the environment to one where people can have a healthier life and where nutritional messages are designed to reach all, regardless of their income or position in society. It is also designed to encourage people to take responsibility of their own health.

Approximately 34 % of all Finns have one of their main meals outside home every day. Complying with the nutritional quality criteria can help catering companies to win when tendering for mass catering services. See more about the nutritional quality criteria in pages 32-33.

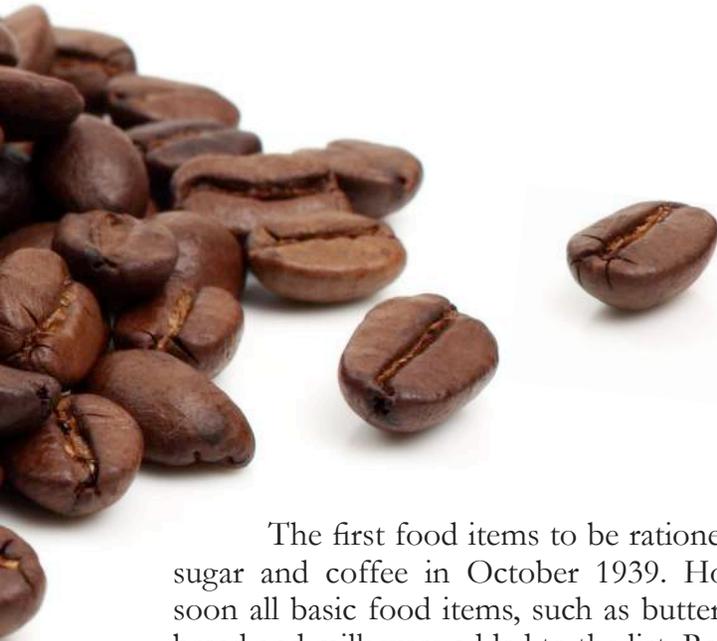


Potatoes are a basic element in Finnish traditional kitchen



FROM WAR YEARS TO THE LAND OF PLENTY

Food shortages during the Second World War (1939-1943) resulted in rationing since Finland did not have vast quantities of basic food items in store at the beginning of the war. When it ended Finns took a full advantage of the improved standard of living. Still, the overall health of the nation left a lot to be desired.



The first food items to be rationed were sugar and coffee in October 1939. However, soon all basic food items, such as butter, meat, bread and milk were added to the list. Rationing was controlled by the ministry responsible for emergency aid and it was organised by distributing coupons to households.

Rationing was based on what type of work a person was engaged in. In 1940, someone doing light physical work was entitled to 200 ml of milk a day, 50 ml of cream and 25 g of butter. Children were allowed to have more milk than adults. In order to increase vitamin A in the cows' milk, the cattle feed was enriched with extra nutrients during winter months.

Agricultural production was greatly reduced, and importing necessary ingredients from abroad was difficult. There was an exceptionally cold winter in 1941-42: shiploads

of grain could not get delivered to Finnish harbours as the sea was frozen rock solid. In the beginning of January 1942, there was 300 million kilos less potatoes and cereal than what was needed to feed the nation.

The ministry responsible for rationing encouraged people to use their imagination and also to utilise whatever was available to supplement their meagre daily meals. Mushrooms and berries were picked from the forests. Growing your own vegetables was popular too.

After the war, when rationing ended and living conditions improved, people took full advantage of a better life. Smoking increased and became very common. Young people looked forward to a new life in towns and preferred to work in offices and factories, rather than spending their life doing physical, heavy work in the fields and farms. Coffee was rationed until 1954 and when it was finally available, Finns developed the habit of having several cups of day. The nation's love for salt, sugar and saturated fats was born at that time.

“Finns just could not get enough of butter and sugar.”

Obesity became common, but it was not viewed as a problem. On the contrary, success was associated with being fat.

However, based on international research results, nutritionists were already aware of the harmful effects of obesity.

Food for Health: The Finnish Nutrition Policy

1950s saw the rise of one particularly popular food item: sausages in all shape and form. At that time a typical breakfast was white bread with butter and a thinly cut cold, cooked sausage. Boiled or mashed potatoes were eaten for dinner together with a brown sauce and meat. Soups and oven baked dishes were popular too.

Academic interest in nutrition and its impact on health picked up soon after the war, in 1940s, when nutrition was established as an academic subject at Finnish universities. Finnish research institutes and scientists had now better access to international nutritional research results and communication with the international research community improved.

From 1940s onwards Finland was experiencing worrying trends of worsening health of the population. Lack of vitamins A and D, combined with lack of iron were causing serious health problems for the whole nation: anaemia, rickets and goitre were common. Cardiovascular diseases were on the increase and equally significant as a cause of death as tuberculosis towards the end of 1940s. According to research done by Auli Suojanen (PhD), cholesterol levels or high blood pressure was not actively measured at that time. Thanks to improved health monitoring system in 1950s, high serum cholesterol levels were detected and it explained why cardiovascular disease was the leading cause of death among Finnish men in working age in 1957. At the time Finland topped the world statistics and was dubbed as the “sick man of Europe.”

In 1960s the family dynamics changed. In cities it was common for both parents to work. Food was still cooked and eaten at home every day, but there was less time to make it. The food industry introduced new innovations such as frozen food and ready-made-meals. Electricity was widely available in cities and technology developed too. Fridges became more reliable and even though it was still an expensive household item, the cost was not prohibitive.

Finns started to realise the dangers of obesity and being slim became fashionable. Fat and sugar were declared bad for health. Shops started selling fat free milk. The general public was advised to reduce the risk of cancer by eating more fruit, vegetables, fibre and fish.

“Vegetables became more popular from 1960s onwards and new varieties, such as red pepper, arrived to shops.”

However, some attitudes were hard to change. Men were particularly reluctant to add vegetables in their diet and old people, who had experienced the full force of rationing, thought that vegetables were for poor people. Life style changes were slower in the rural areas than in the cities.



Teach a child to be curious and she will continue learning for the rest of her life



NORTH KARELIA: WHERE MEAT, SALT AND BUTTER RULED

One particular corner of Finland was shining in bad statistics: men in North Karelia were especially prone to problems with high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease and heart attacks. As this was a serious cause for concern, it was decided that North Karelia should be singled out for a special project, where the population would be actively encouraged to change their eating habits and life style permanently.

People living in North Karelia were used to having full fat milk, butter and saturated dairy fats in general. The more the better. The most popular meal was meat and potatoes, heavily seasoned with salt. Other than potatoes, vegetables were not used in large quantities at homes. Smoking was common. The target group of the project were men in working age. Large scale health advice and information campaigns were launched in work places, social clubs and schools.

“The project was started in 1972 and it received wide support from the government, the WHO and non-governmental organisations. The results of the project paved way to a nationwide approach to health.”

Participants were encouraged to use less fat, sugar and salt and also taught how to cook healthier food at home. Since fruit and vegetables were initially difficult to get in Finland as most had to be imported, the government started to promote domestic production of berries and vegetables. Initially, the dairy industry was especially suspicious about the North Karelia project. Later milk products which contained less fat were actively promoted by the industry.

Even though the project was initially

expected to last only for a 5-year period, the results were so encouraging that it was decided that the policies should be extended to the whole population of Finland. There was a good reason to do so. Alarm bells were ringing in 1974, when research into life style and eating habits revealed that on average Finns ate 12 g salt and 80 grams of vegetables per day. There was debate about fat levels in milk and heated discussions about the pros and cons of eating butter vs margarine. Or if vitamins should be added to flour used for baking. The price of sugar was under constant review and committees were established to get the consumption of sugar to decrease.

The North Karelia project lasted for 20 years and was declared a success, as deaths caused by cardiovascular disease amongst men were significantly reduced in the area but also elsewhere in Finland. From 1969 to 2006 the annual mortality rate in cardiovascular diseases was reduced by 80 % among males of working age (35-64 years) in general and 85 % in North Karelia.

There was a change in other areas too. For example, 90 % of Finns used butter on bread in 1972, but the tide had turned significantly by 2009, when only 5 % were still doing it. In 1970 using vegetable oil in cooking was practically unheard of, but by 2009 50 % of households had started using rapeseed oil.

Puska, P & Ståhl, T: Health in All Policies - the Finnish Initiative: Background, Principles and Current Issues. Annual Review of Public Health 2010. 31:315-28



THE BIG SALT DEBATE

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“Is there more salt?” is a common question at any dinner table. In the 1970’s it became necessary to raise publicly the issue of excess use of salt in households and this work is still continuing today. So far, the results have been encouraging, but recently there has been some signs that salt consumption is on the increase again. The food industry has responded to consumer demand by voluntarily developing less salty products. But still more could be done.

Today, the harmful effects of too much salt in our daily food are well known. The connection between high salt intake and high blood pressure has been clinically proved as well as the fact that salt can also increase the risk of cardiovascular disease and other serious illnesses.

Finns were particularly fond of salt in the 1970s. Research results revealed the shocking

truth: on average Finns got 12-13 grams of salt per day from their food. This was way beyond of 1.3 grams, which is known to be the physiological need of salt per day. Furthermore, high salt intake was one of the reasons why Finland was leading the stroke statistics in Western Europe in 1970s. At that time, bread, cold meats, cheese and shop bought products, such as meat and

fish casseroles, spice mixtures and instant soups were some of the sources of excess salt in the Finnish diet.

The Finnish authorities started to warn consumers about the danger of excess salt in food through the media. Also, the health care personnel were actively engaged to inform the general public about dangers of excess salt.

However, old habits die hard. When some bakeries around the country started to reduce the amount of salt added to bread and marked it as “low salt” it did not sell. Even though initially

there was some such setbacks, the food industry wanted to promote less salty products as they realised that this is a trend to stay.

Gradually, thanks to nationwide work in various sectors the salt content of food products and consumption started to go down during the late 1980’s. In the beginning of 20th century the consumption of salt in Finland was in average 30g per day. Consumers became more aware of alternatives to salt and the possibility to use spices more imaginatively. Legislation also helped consumers to make healthier choices.

Intake of salt in working age men and women

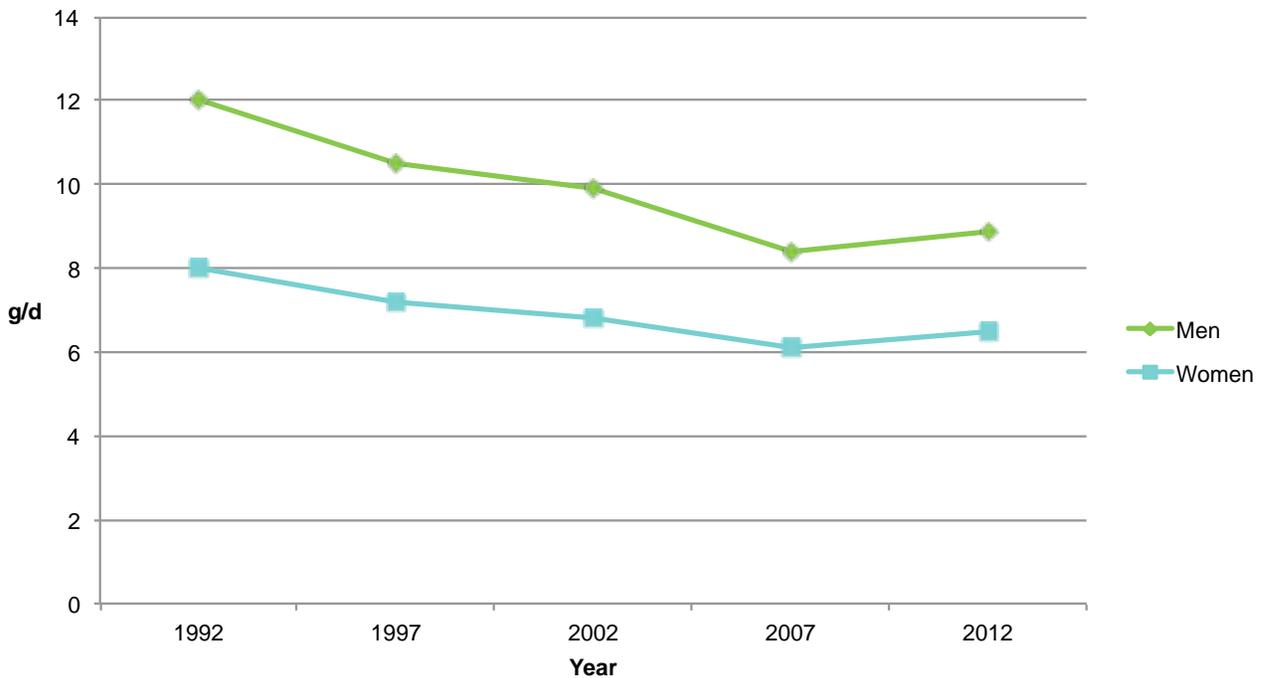


Figure 1. Salt intake in Finland 1992 – 2012, National Institute for Health and Welfare

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By law, it is now compulsory to state salt levels in bread, packaged cheese, sausages and other meat products, fish products, broths, soups and sauces, -regardless if they are in powder form or concentrates - and mixed spices containing table salt. Furthermore, it is compulsory to state “highly salted” on the package if the limits for salt contents are exceeded in a product (see Table 1). Over the years, limits could have been tightened and more products introduced.

The food industry has actively participated in efforts to reduce salt intake in Finland. New products with less salt were developed as early as in the 1980s in response to heightened consumer awareness. There has been a good collaboration amongst stakeholders, which has contributed to the success in salt reduction. However, the food industry could do even more as there are only a limited number of low salt alternatives in the

market and industrially prepared food is one the biggest sources of sodium.

This is not necessarily an easy task, as salt is an important ingredient in food production. Firstly, there are commercial reasons for using salt: it can be used to enhance food at a very low cost. Taste is the most important factor when new products are being developed or old ones revamped, which means that the salt levels can easily be on a collision course with health considerations. Secondly, safety, production processes and profit are all factors which also have to be taken into account in order to achieve a positive balance. For this reason, the food industry could benefit from research results which can be utilised in the process of developing new, less salty products (typically reduced by 25 %) and encouraging the industry to actively seek alternatives.

	before 1992	1992-2009	Currently “highly salted” (since 1.1.2008),
Bread	1,7	1,3	1,2
Hard bread (crisps etc.)	no limit	1,7	1,6
Breakfast cereals	2,5	1,7	1,6
Sausages	2,2	1,8	1,7
Cheese	no limit	1,4	1,3
Soup, sauces, broths	no limit	no limit	0,9
Other semi-prepared foods (e.g spiced raw meat and fish)	no limit	no limit	1,1

Table 1. Finnish strategy: Changing limits of highly salted food products (NaCl/100g)

The Finnish Heart Association's and Finnish Diabetes Association's campaign in labelling packaged food with a heart symbol is now instantly recognised as "this is good for you". It is an efficient way to encourage people to make better choices in terms of salt and fat content. Currently almost 1000 products have been awarded the heart symbol. Simultaneously, consumer awareness has prompted the food industry to develop new products including less salt and saturated fat to comply with the criteria for the coveted heart symbol (please see page 55).

The current WHO recommended level of 5 g of salt per day has not yet been achieved and salt consumption is on the increase again. It is difficult to say what may be the reason to this back clash, but one can only wonder if, for example, the numerous cookery programmes with celebrity chefs using salt generously might

be setting a new standard. Also, people might have forgotten the health benefits of moderate use of salt. Salt needs to be consistently raised as an issue with the general public. The food industry should be encouraged to develop more products that are low in salt, without sacrificing taste, as this is very important to consumers. Consumer awareness of salt levels in food has already been achieved with the "Heart Symbol" printed into packages, but there is room for even more products to be added to this list both for retailers and wholesale trade. In addition, meals eaten outside home are a major source of salt. Especially, catering services for day care and schools need to take care of salt contents of meals since preference for salt is learned in childhood. It is of great importance that nutritional quality, including salt contents, is one of the criteria for acquiring institutional catering services (see procurement criteria p. 32-33).

Salt in nutrition recommendations	
Finnish nutrition recommendations (2005)	Maximum salt 6 grams for women, 7 g for men, to be further to 5-6 grams. Children max 0,5 g Na/MJ
Children's day care centers (2004)	Limit intake of salty foods, instructions in recipies.
Schools (2008)	Max 0,5 % salt/MJ, recommendations for individual products.
Hospitals (2010)	Upper limits and recommendations for salt in foods. Some suggested maximum levels: cheese 1,3%, bread 0,9%, cereals 1%, soups 0,5%, sauces 0,8%, casseroles, risottos and salads 0,6%, fat spreads 0,9%

MUNICIPALITIES IN THE DRIVING SEAT FOR IMPLEMENTING THE HEALTH AND NUTRITION POLICIES

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“In recent years, health has become more prominent on global and national agendas. This is partly because of increasing understanding that health problems such as communicable diseases can be regarded as security issues; partly because health services and technologies are expected to provide potentially growing markets in the context of declining traditional industries in industrialized countries. Globalization has increased the mobility of not only things and capital but also people, enabling communicable diseases to spread rapidly across national borders. (1)

Health in All Policies (HiAP) was established in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty which stated that “health protection requirements should form a constituent part of the Community’s policies”.

In 2006, during Finland’s EU presidency Health in All Policies (HiAP) was the main theme. HiAP refers to the importance of taking equitable health policy decisions across public policy sectors so that those decisions and their implementation will protect and improve health equity.

In Finland the multi-sectoral approach for promoting health and well-being has developed over several decades. This approach was further strengthened at the municipality level by the requirements in the Health Act (enacted in 2010) according to which the municipalities are required to prepare and discuss reports on their population groups’ well-being and health as well as the reduction of inequalities. The inter-sectoral Advisory Board for Public Health is developing the strategies for municipalities in implementation.

1 “Health in All Policies: Seizing opportunities, implementing policies”. This book was launched in May 2013 at the World Health Assembly and we hope it would enrich the discussions in the 8th WHO Global Conference on Health Promotion in Helsinki, June 10-14 in 2013.





WORLD'S HEALTHIEST BABIES ARE BORN IN FINLAND

Good nutrition is especially important during pregnancy. For the baby, this is a crucial time as good nutrients received already in the womb means healthier life later on.

As soon as pregnancy is confirmed, an expectant mother will usually start going to regular health examinations in the nearest maternity clinic, where both the mother's and baby's health and the well-being of the whole family will be monitored all the way to delivery. Couples are also very likely to attend antenatal classes, where all participants receive advice and support in the transition to parenthood as well as practical advice on how to take care of the newborn baby, including breast feeding technique. This is especially valuable for first-time mothers and fathers.

When the mother registers herself with the clinic, she is entitled to receive a maternity package full of essential items such as clothing. Alternatively, this benefit can also be received in cash, but most mothers choose to have the package as the cash received (€140) is less than the value of the contents of the package.

Good nutrition during pregnancy is crucial for the growth and development of the fetus as well as helping the mother to recover quickly after delivery so that she can start breast feeding. The need for several nutrients grows higher during pregnancy, but energy requirements only very little.

The “plate model” is recommended as a nutritional guide for expectant mothers and a daily dose of 10 micrograms of vitamin D is also suggested. In Finland taking vitamin D is essential since there is not enough sunlight during the winter months. For this reason, mothers are also encouraged to give all infants

up to two years a daily vitamin D supplement of 10 micrograms all year round.

Mothers get nutritional information from many different sources: at maternity clinics during midwife's or doctor's consultation, at hospitals, where food is seen as part of recovery and model to take home with, and later at the child health clinics. Some of these clinics have web pages where families can send questions and learn about cooking healthy meals for the whole family.

In general, pregnant women in Finland have healthy food habits. However, research has revealed that only 25 % of them eat the recommended amounts of fruit and vegetables, only 50 % use fat-free milk products daily and have fish once a week as recommended. Almost 80 % of mothers take iron supplements, 40 % take vitamin D and folic acid as well. Vitamin A supplement is not recommended during pregnancy but one third of pregnant women still take it.





MOTHERS-TO-BE EAT FOR TWO IN HELSINKI

Hospital food - bland and tasteless? Wrong. Kätilöopisto in Helsinki is one of the busiest maternity hospitals in Finland. At the maternity ward mothers-to-be often feel constantly hungry and they take the opportunity to eat for two.

“Mothers-to-be are keen followers of new trends and nutritional advice. For most women, being here is a very positive experience. We make a big effort to make sure that all meals are full of flavor,” say Pirjo Hakala-Lahtinen, the CEO of Ravioli the food services company responsible for both the patients’, staff’s and

visitors’ food services as well as to a large extent for dietician services in Helsinki area and Anneli Joutsiniemi, a chef, both with decades of experience.

Hospital food is often viewed with suspicion, even laughed at. But according to Hakala-Lahtinen, the reputation of hospital

food being tasteless mush is a myth. She says that there is a simple explanation:

“This perception is due to the fact that when we fall ill or feel weak, we lose our appetite”. In other words: nothing tastes good when you are not hundred percent.

At the maternity ward it is a different story, though, since the majority of pregnant women have very healthy appetites indeed. The ward has its daily routines. Breakfast is served at 7.30 am, lunch at 11.30 am, supper at 4.30 pm followed by an evening snack at 8.00 pm. For many, the highlight of the day is the afternoon coffee or tea at 2.00 pm. Joutsiniemi says:

“The ladies come to chat with each other, even

if they don't feel like eating or drinking anything. If someone gets hungry in the middle of the night, we always have something to serve.”

Champagne glasses ready

When a baby has been delivered, the family is served some coffee, juice, yoghurt and sandwiches. The pink or baby blue napkins are on full display.

“We even have champagne glasses ready if somebody brings a bottle to toast the newborn. It is important to make the whole family feel comfortable. Family rooms are available for the partner and possible siblings, just in case they

Food for Health: Mothers and Babies

want to spend the night here”, Hakala-Lahtinen says.

“It is crucial to keep the mothers in good health and that is why we follow the national nutritional guidelines carefully. But the food must taste good too. There is no point in removing all fat and salt”, she explains.

“We serve lots of vegetables and whole wheat bread which provides fibre. We also use vegetable oils in cooking.”

Joutsiniemi has noticed a new trend amongst the mothers-to-be: there are not many strict vegetarians anymore. Fish dishes are getting more and more popular too. It is also more common nowadays that people want to know where the food is coming from.

Pickled herring and liver off the menu

According to Hakala-Lahtinen, many people are strongly influenced by the media when it comes to the new food and diet trends. She says:

“We have the front row seat here, as mothers are the most avid followers of nutritional news. The minute that a food item is condemned in the media, we start getting phone calls.”

Joutsiniemi still remembers how salt was frowned upon in the 1970s. The hospital had to remove the daily plates of pickled herring, which had been a staple side dish for decades. Around that time, the North Karelia Project was in full swing and people became more aware of

high intake of salt and fat as the main villains causing cardiovascular diseases.

The reputation of liver was literally shattered overnight.

“In the 9 o’clock evening television news it was reported that vitamin A levels in liver are too high for a fetus, and bam – the next morning we had to make sure that there was no liver insight!” says Hakala-Lahtinen and continues:

“We even carried 10 kilos of liver pâté to another hospital department. The mothers would suspiciously pick on every meat dish with their forks and ask whether there was liver in it. Since we prepare almost all food served at the hospital here in the premises, we also know exactly what goes in the food, so fortunately we were able to answer all their questions.”

Hakala-Lahtinen has been working at the hospital since the 1980’s. She says:

“It has been interesting to follow how both food trends and society evolve together. For example, we are currently involved in a waste-to-energy project where our biowaste is collected in order to be converted into heating. A lot of changes take place, but food has a tendency to be an anchor in a constantly shaking world.”

Top 3 foods:

Pasta

Chicken dishes

Porridge with sweet berry soup



The maternity wards kitchen is packed with versatile foods and positive energy





OVEN BAKED BARLEY PORRIDGE- *UUNIOHRAPUURO*

200 ml water
150 ml whole-grain barley
1 litre milk
1 tsp salt

Oil a baking dish. Boil water, add barley and let the mixture soak in the water. Add milk and salt. Pour the barley mixture into the baking dish.

Bake in the oven for 2 hours at 180 C.

SWEET BERRY SOUP *MARJAKEITTO*

1 litre sugar-free juice, diluted with water
4 tbsp potato flour
**300 ml frozen strawberries, blueberries, currents
or raspberries**

Add juice and flour into a pot with a heavy bottom. Heat up slowly, constantly stirring, until the mixture thickens and starts to bubble.

Add the frozen berries, mix carefully and pour the sauce into a bowl. Sprinkle caster sugar on the top.

Criteria for nutritional quality

To cook healthy food for masses is not an easy task unless there is a set criteria for the kitchen. Catering provider can already during the procurement process determine the nutritional quality of the meals by taking into account the amounts fat, hard fat, saturated fatty acids, salt and dietary fiber (1) in the recipes and foods on display. In fact, nutritional quality can override price in awarding catering contracts.

In Finland municipalities have the duty to provide information on healthy life-style

as well as arrange meal services at nurseries, schools, cares homes for the elderly and in the hospitals. The advocacy function literally covers the whole lifespan of a person. In practice the ability of municipalities to incorporate nutrition as a cross-sector policy issue varies a great deal and is affected by financial constraints.

Municipalities, institutions and government offices can either organize meal services themselves (in this book we introduce three kitchens from the city of Helsinki-owned

Nutritional quality criteria for components of meals, upper limits for fat, hard fat, salt and fiber

	Fat, g/100g	Hard fat, % of total fat	Salt (NaCl), g/100g	Dietary fiber, g/100g
Bread	-		soft: max. 0,7 hard: max. 1,2	min. 6
Fat for bread	-	max. 33 %	max. 1	-
Milk or sour milk	max. 0,5%	-	-	-
Fresh vegetables Cooked vegetables	- no added fat -max.2 vegetable fat	-	-no added salt -no added salt	
Salad dressing		max. 20 %	max. 1	

Palmia; a day-care center for toddlers, a school and an elderly people’s food service) or engage private sector to do it for them.

To inform their customers many catering providers have chosen the ‘Heart Symbol for

better choice’ to mark a healthy meal. People are guided through the pictures or a model plate how to compose a healthy meal. Of course people can choose different, whatever they wish, but healthy choice is made simple.

Nutritional quality criteria for main meals and side dishes, upper limits for fat, SAFA, salt and dietary fiber per 100g

Dish type	Fat,g	SAFA, g	Salt (NaCl), g	Dietary fibre (dry wt.), g
Soups and porridges ¹	3(5)	1(1,5)	0,5	
Casseroles, risottos, pasta dishes, sallads ² , pizza	5 (7)	2 (2)	0,6	
Steaks, rolls, pancakes, chicken	8 (12)	3 (3,5)	0,8	
Dish with sauce; e.g. minced meat sauce	9 (11)	3,5 (3,5)	0,8	
Pasta as side dish	max. 2	0,7	max. 0,3	min. 6
Rice, barley, rice-rye mixtures etc.	max. 2	0,7	max. 0,3	min. 6
Boiled potatoes as side dish	No added fat		No added salt	
Other potato dishes such as mashed and baked potatoes etc.	max. 2	0,7	max. 0,3	

Values in parentheses are for meals with fish

1 Cereal in porridges has to contain at least 6g dietary fibre per 100 g

2 Sallads have to contain at least 150g vegetables

1 Developing mass catering services in Finland: Guidelines by the working group to monitor and develop catering services. Evaluation of the Ministry for Social Affairs and Health 2010:11



MEALS AROUND THE CLOCK AT THE "TAKATASKU" NURSERY

Takatasku nursery in the Malmi district of Helsinki is open 24/7. There is a constant influx of children, parents and nursery staff, going in and out of the centre. They all have to be fed, regardless of the time of day.

The biggest challenge for the kitchen staff is to prepare meals for varying numbers of children for the day and night shifts, including weekends, bearing in mind that many of the children have special diets. Kitchen manager

Terttu Kojimo explains:

“We cook all the meals in our own kitchen and feed all children from small babies to six-year-olds. Before starting to cook, we check the list of names of the children and if

they have any special dietary requirements. This way we always know who is in the house and who we are cooking for.”

There are 25-80 children at the nursery every day. Many of them suffer from intolerances or allergies and this has to be taken into account in meal planning. One of the most common problem is lactose intolerance. In Finland the food industry has responded to this trend by producing special milk products.

Kojimo says:

“Small children tend to have more different requirements than older ones. We offer milk with every meal but normally this means that we have to have five different types of milk in the cold room in order to make sure that every child gets the right one. Naturally, we have to think about other food allergies too.”

“We make a special effort to make sure that the ingredients used in our meals are nutritionally healthy for the children. In practice this means that meals are low in salt and sugar. We also try to use as much organic produce as possible, according to parents’ wishes.”

The quality of food is strictly controlled and monitored every day.

“We pay a lot of attention to the quality of products we order from outside suppliers. They have to apply to the same high quality standards as us. We take samples from the ingredients several times a day. The results are recorded and samples are stored for a few weeks for safety reasons.”

“We never offer the same food twice a

day, our ingredients change every day and the menu rotates in every six to twelve weeks”.

Once a week there is a day dedicated to vegetarian food. The staff tries to do their best to use what is in season and be as inventive as they can with different themes.

“ It is great to see how the kids eat everything. It is very gratifying for the chef.”



Terttu Kojimo runs the show in Takatasku nursery





SAUSAGE SOUP *SISKONMAKKARAKEITTO*

- 1 litre water
- 1 low-salt vegetable stockcube
- 2 carrots
- Small piece of turnip
- 5-6 potatoes
- 1 small leak
- 300 g pork sausages (English style)
- Fresh parsley

Wash and peel carrots, turnip and potatoes. Cut in cubes. Add carrots and turnip to the boiling water. Cook for 10 minutes.

Add the cubed potatoes. Rinse the leak in running cold water, dry and slice in small circles.

When the vegetables are done, take the pork sausages and squeeze the meat out, little by little. Add to the soup together with leak. Let the soup simmer about 5 minutes. Bring fresh parsley in a bowl to the table where it can be added to the hot soup, if desired.



A DAILY ENERGY FIX AT SCHOOL

Every child is entitled to have a meal at school in Finland. It provides approximately one third of the daily nutrients and energy. The meal break is not just about food, but also about eating together.

In 1930s hunger was not unknown in Finnish homes. Children were especially vulnerable and teachers noticed at schools that studying on an empty stomach was a real struggle for many. A new law in 1943 made it possible

for school children to have at least one hot meal for free at school. It was very modest looking plate in today's standards, mainly porridge, but it was a start.

Today, meals are offered for all pre-



school, primary, secondary and vocational school students, a total of 900 000 people. Furthermore, a snack is served for 55 000 children who are taking part in morning or afternoon activities. The aim is to promote students' wellbeing and physical development.

School meals are covered by special nutritional recommendations. Lunch has to provide one third of the daily energy requirement and depending on the age of the student this is 550-860 kcal per meal. Recommended proportions of energy nutrients include 30 % fat (max 10 % saturated fat), 15 % protein and 55 % carbohydrates. Special emphasis is on the quality of fat used in food preparation and the amount of salt. Finland participates in the EU

school milk programme: municipalities benefit from subsidies if they offer low fat (max 1% fat) milk as part of the school lunch.

Fish once a week, fruit instead of sweets

The menu changes on regular basis, depending on the municipality. Fish has to be offered at least once a week. Special dietary requirements are taken into account (lactose intolerance, celiac disease, diabetes, allergies). The school lunch must include a main course, bread with high fibre content – for example, crispy rye bread – soft margarine, fat free milk or sour milk, fresh vegetables and oil based salad dressing, fruit or berries.

The cost of the school meals is covered by taxes. It is the duty of the municipalities to organise mass catering for schools in their area. The financial and practical resources differ. The municipalities can organise catering the way they want either by doing it themselves or the food preparation is outsourced through a tender process to a private catering company. National nutritional recommendations are considered as one of the deciding factors, when contracts are awarded based on a tender process.

On average, the cost of one meal is €2.61 per person (2011). Normally lunch is served between 10.45 am to 1 PM. It is recommended that the lunch break should be at least 30 minutes and a break for 15 minutes for outdoor activities should follow soon afterwards.

Food for Health: School Meals

Some worrying trends

Since 1995 students' wellbeing has been monitored by annual School Health Surveys. 15 to 18 year olds reply anonymously to questions relating to their health. These questions cover issues such as smoking, alcohol and drug use, exercise, eating habits but also issues relating to how the students use their free time (screen time). Questions relating to the students' attitudes, behaviour in the school canteen and opinions about the school meals are all included in the survey.

Based on the results, there is cause for concern. Since school meals are offered a "buffet style", many students might skip some parts of the meal. On average, about 90 % of all students eat the main meal at school, but some 10 % of students may decide to eat just once or twice a week or not at all during the school day. Vegetables are the least favourite part of the meal by far amongst boys, but majority of girls do eat them and 80 % of students eat bread. Commercially sold milk and other liquid milk-products are fortified with vitamin D in Finland. It is recommended that both children and adults should drink 3 glasses of milk every day in order to get the required level of vitamin D and other nutrients like calcium. Therefore, children not drinking milk at school meals is a cause for concern.

Thanks to the School Health Survey, researchers have a good idea why some

students are skipping meals. Smoking, alcohol use, snacks during school hours and not eating meals regularly with the whole family in the evening are the main contributing factors. Not eating school lunch may also be an indication for being overweight or that the student does not like school or is being bullied.

The National Board of Education and the National Institute for Health and Welfare recommended in 2007 that schools should not have vending machines selling sweets, soft drinks or sugary juices. In the school premises, only healthy snacks should be allowed.

LIST OF FOODS NOT OFFERED IN THE SCHOOL MENU:

Hamburgers

French fries

Fried food in general

Tinned spaghetti or meatballs

Crisps

On a nice sunny summer day, children can carry on playing on playgrounds owned by the City of Helsinki. All children at the playground can have a free meal, providing that they bring their own plate, cup and utensils. Children can have an uninterrupted playtime from morning till late afternoon – no reason to go home in between!



Healthy eating habits and an interest in food and cooking are taught to children at school

SCHOOL PUPILS HAVE THEIR SAY

At Ylä-Malmi school in Helsinki a total of 400 people have lunch every day at the school canteen. Pupils are invited to express their views on what they would like to see on the lunch menu in the Restaurant Committee. Food and nutrition is also tackled during home economy classes, where pupils are taught how to prepare home cooked, delicious food with freshly prepared ingredients.

All meals served at Ylä-Malmi school are cooked in a central kitchen outside the school by Palmia catering company. Once transported to the school, meals are heated up on the premises. According to the school's catering manager Marjo Alanne, this system gives the students and staff a wider choice of meals to choose from. According to Alanne two different main courses and a vegetarian option is offered on a daily basis.

The daily menu is built around one main ingredient: meat, poultry, vegetables or fish. The

main course can also be a tasty soup. The menus change every six weeks and recipes are alternated every 12 weeks. Holidays and festive seasons are observed with food to match. Special dietary requirements and food allergies are also catered for.

Girls can be picky with food

According to Alanne, it is sometimes hard to get teenagers, especially girls, to eat a



proper meal.

“It is impossible to please everybody all the time but I always try to tell the kids to eat even a little bit to make it through the day. Sometimes it works and the pupils even come to boast afterwards how well they have been eating lately!”

The pupils take turns in clearing up the canteen after meals. Alanne explains:

“We get little extra help from the pupils in the kitchen. Each week two pupils come to help us with serving and cleaning the canteen. Some like it more than others but overall it is a good way to show the pupils where their meals come from, so they don’t take it for granted.”

Home economy classes are another way to teach pupils the value of a good meal. Pupils are introduced to the art of basic home cooking, how to cook from fresh ingredients and how

Food for Health: School Meals

to calculate the right amount of ingredients needed for a family meal. Recycling bio waste is also talked about during these lessons.

Wholemeal sandwiches, fruit and yogurt

Snacks are offered to pupils at extra cost. Pupils having longer days or afternoon activities after lessons need something extra to keep them going. Usually snacks are sandwiches made out of whole-meal bread, filled with cheese, tuna, tomato or salad. Fruit and yogurt are also on the menu.

“The school has no snack vending machines and pupils are not allowed to leave the school area during the day, so it is even more important that we can offer some sustenance after lunch.”, says Alanne

Tasting new flavours

A new pilot scheme at Ylä-Malmi school, the Restaurant Committee, is encouraging pupils to participate in planning the school lunch menus. The Restaurant Committee is a forum consisting of members of the kitchen staff, teachers and 3-4 students. The committee meets couple of times during an academic year. Alanne says:

“We want to demonstrate to the pupils that it not only up to the adults to decide what is eaten at school. They can take responsibility too. In these meetings we taste different foods, pupils can ask questions and together we try to find ways to make the lunch and snack breaks

more calm and enjoyable for all of us.”

“The Restaurant Committee encourages pupils to participate in menu planning.”

“We also had a survey at the school where we asked the pupils to tell us what they thought about our meals and services so we get new ideas how to go forward.”

Alanne tries to ensure that the message about healthy eating gets through:

“Couple of times a year I am invited to speak to the pupils, mainly during the physical exercise classes, about the importance of healthy diets and nutrition. Overall, I think we are giving the pupils a good opportunity to eat well and also basic knowledge about the importance of well balanced meals.”

Top 3 foods:

Fishfingers

Makaroni casserole

Lasagne



Ylä-Malmi school's catering manager Marjo Alanne ready to prepare healthy meals for pupils

Food for Health: School Meals





SMOKED SALMON SOUP SAVULOHISOPPA

- 1 – 1 ½ litres of fish stock
- 3 tbsp chives or dill, finely cut
- 5-7 potatoes
- Couple of carrots
- 5 cm piece of leek
- 400 g smoked salmon fillet

Peel and cut the potatoes and carrots in cubes. Cook the potatoes and carrots in the fish stock for 10 minutes. Put a lid on the pot. Prepare the fish fillet; take off the skin and bones. Add the piece of leek into the pot. Cook for 5 minutes.

Add the salmon pieces and heat up the soup. Check seasoning. Sprinkle chives and dill on top of the soup as desired.



STUDENT CAFÉ LET THEM EAT VEGETABLES

When Finnish Academy of Fine Arts wanted to revamp the student cafe, they first did a survey asking students what would they prefer to have on the menu. The result was an overwhelming “yes” to vegetarian food and the academy then decided to make the student cafe totally vegetarian.

This was very good news for Tuija Ruuska and Anni Brotherus who won the tender to run the cafe. They are thrilled to be able to serve food which they feel passionate about.



“We have been cooking and serving vegetarian food since the 1990’s. I guess you could call us the grand old ladies of veggie lunches in Finland. When there was a bid to start running the Academy’s lunch canteen, we were instantly thrilled. This was right up on our street!”

Ruuska and Brotherus get their inspiration from around the world. Memories of travels to far corners of the world are transformed into tasty dishes in the cafe back home. Says Ruuska:

“From the Caribbean, we have some fruity sauces and nutmeg. India is an all time food favorite, with plenty of inspiration. The

students love curries, coconut milk and our own mixtures used for seasoning. Many parts of Asia have strongly influenced us. We serve world cuisine two or three times a week”.

Meat replaced with veggies

Cooking vegetarian food is often about adapting dishes where meat is the original main ingredient.

“There are amazing sauces and flavours in the Slavic cuisine. Many of the traditional dishes in that area are not vegetarian, but we can replace meat with vegetables and still have the

Food for Health: Students

same result in taste. For example, a stroganoff can be made with beetroot. We try things out, we test the recipe and see if it works”, Brotherus says.

For these two ladies cooking is about passion and discoveries. But they also understand that people love home cooked comfort food too.

“Mashed potatoes with a hearty brown sauce made of soy is always popular”, Ruuska admits.

“We make everything from scratch here in the kitchen. No additives! That was also the Academy’s wish. Every day, there are two cooks working in the kitchen. In general we are very good at estimating how many people come in and what they like to eat. We have become better in preventing food wastage. If something runs out, it’s not a problem to quickly cook up a little more”, Brotherus says.

Big plate of goodness with very little money

In this particular cafe, the daily lunch costs 2.60 € per meal, which does not leave much room for luxuries. The cafe is open for outside visitors too, but they pay the full price and will not benefit from the government subsidy.

“We are able to make good food on a very small budget. The full price of a meal is not very much, so we have to be very creative. But we manage to hold on to our principles of good, healthy food. Half of the student visitors are from the Academy, and the other half of our

customers come from all over the city. A lot of young people living in the area come by, as well as office workers.”

“Grand old ladies of veggie lunches in Finland.”

The cafe is required to stick to the official national nutrition recommendations.

“The students must get a balanced meal for their money. Obviously our plate looks a bit different than at most places since we don’t serve meat or fish. Every meal includes lots of fresh greens as well as sufficient protein. We use a lot of whole grain, lentils, beans and other legumes, sometimes also tofu and other soy products.”

Leading a healthy and environmentally conscious lifestyle is important to many people. University students seem to be on the forefront of thinking these issues and applying them to their own lives.

“Even the ones that are not so used to vegetarian food are surprised at how filling and rich it can be. Being vegetarian doesn’t mean you are on a diet.” Ruuska says.

Top 3 foods:

Thai veggie coconut curry

Spaghetti Bolognese from soy

Beetroot patties with mashed potatoes



Tuija Ruuska and Anni Brotherus offer a vegetarian lunch alternative for students





ROOT VEGETABLE PATTIES *JUURESPIHVIT*

Fresh sweet corn kernels
2 carrots and 1 small zucchini
1 tbsp chives
2 eggs
100 ml flour
Salt, white pepper

Grate the carrots and zucchini. Mix all ingredients in a bowl. Heat oil in a pancake pan (or in a small frying pan) and add a spoonful of the mixture to form patties. Gently brown from both sides in a moderate heat.

LEMON BEETROOT

4 raw beetroot
Juice of 1 lemon and 1 tsp honey, salt
Approx. 200 ml water to boil

Peel the beetroot and put them in the pot.
Add just enough water to cover the beetroot.
Put a lid on and let the beetroot steam in the water until done. When ready, cut the beetroot in cubes, add lemon juice, honey and salt according to taste.

IT MATTERS WHAT IS ON THE PLATE

Poster campaigns and “better choice” labels

Poster campaigns encouraging people to eat according to the “pyramid model” was launched in 1977. On top of the pyramid was fish, meat, chicken and eggs. On the second level were vegetables and fruit. The largest section on the bottom was reserved to milk, bread, cheese and potatoes. “Eat something from each of these groups. Something from the bottom, a lot from the middle of the pyramid and only a little bit food items from the top”, the poster declared. Another poster campaign promoting healthy breakfasts encouraged everyone to eat eggs before going to work.

The Finnish Heart Association and Finnish Diabetes Association started to promote healthier alternatives with food labelling in 2000. The idea was to guide consumers to make better, more informed choices of what they eat and buy. A symbol of a red heart is added to the packaging of some food items sold in shops as an endorsement of being “a better choice”. Food companies can apply for the right to use the symbol for products that comply with the defined food category based criteria. In a similar way, on application catering companies can use the Heart Symbol to sign better choices

on buffet and menus. Before agreeing to give the cavorted symbol, the Association checks nutritional contents of recipes for main dish and that all other meal components fulfil the set criteria (see details for criteria pages 32-33). Many catering providers have chosen the Heart Symbol to mark a healthy meal, and they often include pictures as well to indicate where the nutritional quality criterion is specifically met.

Nutritional advice have changed with times. In Finland, the pyramid has been accompanied by a “plate model”. People are encouraged to choose plenty of vegetables and berries. Whole grain products should be included on every meal. Skimmed milk is recommended as well as eating fish 2-3 times a week. Meat should contain as little fat as possible. Use of rape seed oil and spreads including the oil are recommended.

The recommendations for the general public are not giving exact amounts anymore on how much salt, sugar or vitamins should be consumed daily. Instead, meals should be varied, menus should be rotated, everything should be eaten in moderation and food should taste good.



Heart symbol for better choice

Meal marked with heart symbol should contain:

- 1/3 of daily energy, for instance 600 kcal
- amount of fat should be max 35 % of energy content, for example 23 g/600 kcal meal
- saturated fats max 1/3 of total fat content, for example 8 g/600 kcal meal
- salt max 2 g, equal to 40 % daily recommended amount of salt, 5 grams



COMPUTER GAME DEVELOPERS SAY GOODBYE TO FAST FOOD

Frozenbyte, a Helsinki based company specialising in developing computer games, made an unusual decision. They employed an in-house-chef to prepare freshly made meals every day for forty employees. When the chef, Tini Rask, walked in through the door the very first time she immediately understood why: the place was littered with empty pizza boxes.

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Tini Rask, walked in through the door the very first time she immediately understood why: the place was littered with empty pizza boxes.

Developing computer games is not a 9 to 5 job with regular meal times. Sometimes it takes



the whole night to work on a particular solution to a tricky problem, hence the pizza boxes. Says Tini:

“These guys would come and go, and sometimes forget to eat properly. I really had to remind them to take some time out for a nice meal. Set meal times also help to build a good daily rhythm.”

Tini has already had quite a few triumphs in her quest to get people to eat a healthy diet.

“Every day I bring out fresh fruit, nicely arranged. I’ll wash the apples and make it all look tempting. And they love it. Five to six kilos of bananas are consumed every week in this office, in addition to all the other fruit.”

“The best feedback I have ever got, was from a person who was able to cut down on his blood sugar medication, thanks to better eating habits.”

Breakfast is served every morning up until 10 am. Porridge is popular and so are sandwiches, which everyone can make the way they like it, washed down with tea or coffee. The lunch is kept hot for couple of hours to suit everyone’s schedules. As work does not always stop during the weekends either, Tini always leaves something to eat in the fridge.

“The belly rules the mind” is a saying his brother came up with and Tini liked it so much that she printed it in her business cards too.

Home cooked meals with chilli

Tini’s cooking style is simple, wholesome Finnish food. However, there is an additional twist, as in this international environment people have brought home something from their travels that is not typically Finnish: the love for chilli.

“They will add chilli to anything”, Tini

Food for Health: Catering at Work Places

says.

The all time favourite among the staff is perch filets grilled on a salt bed, served with new potatoes and pickled cucumbers, a very traditional Finnish dish.

“I avoid MSG and other additives. I like to buy meat from a small Helsinki-based meat merchant. They don’t put any preservatives to anything, not even in their sausages. I try to marinate meat and chicken myself instead of using ready-made sauces.”

“In-house-chef Tini Rask’s tasty home cooked meals were an instant hit”

Tini also frequently visits a fresh produce market in Helsinki, where the selection of vegetables, meat and homemade jams has impressed her. Tini says:

“It is great to cook using fresh ingredients and support the local farmers at the same time.”

A meat-free diet on the rise

Tini is getting more requests for vegetarian food these days. Being a vegetarian is more and more popular. She says:

“Our vegetarians range from near-vegans to wannabe-vegetarians, and everything in between. Some will eat white meat or fish. I have food for everyone. I also always serve a big salad buffet.”

After big holidays, such as Christmas, Tini tries to get everyone back on track by having a post-holiday healthy food season in January. In general, she tries to be as health conscious as possible by not using too much fat in cooking, for example.

“Rather than serving food fried in oil, I prefer to use the oven.”

Tini’s next big project is to establish a kitchen garden with a help of a professional gardener. She is determined to make it happen one day:

“My dream is to start growing some ingredients out in the yard, such as herbs, tomatoes and strawberries to be served here in the office.”

Food wastage is kept at minimum.

“Whatever leftovers we have, the boys can take home with them. I have even picked up some Tupperware boxes for them. At least they don’t have to think twice when it is their turn to cook for the kids at home!”

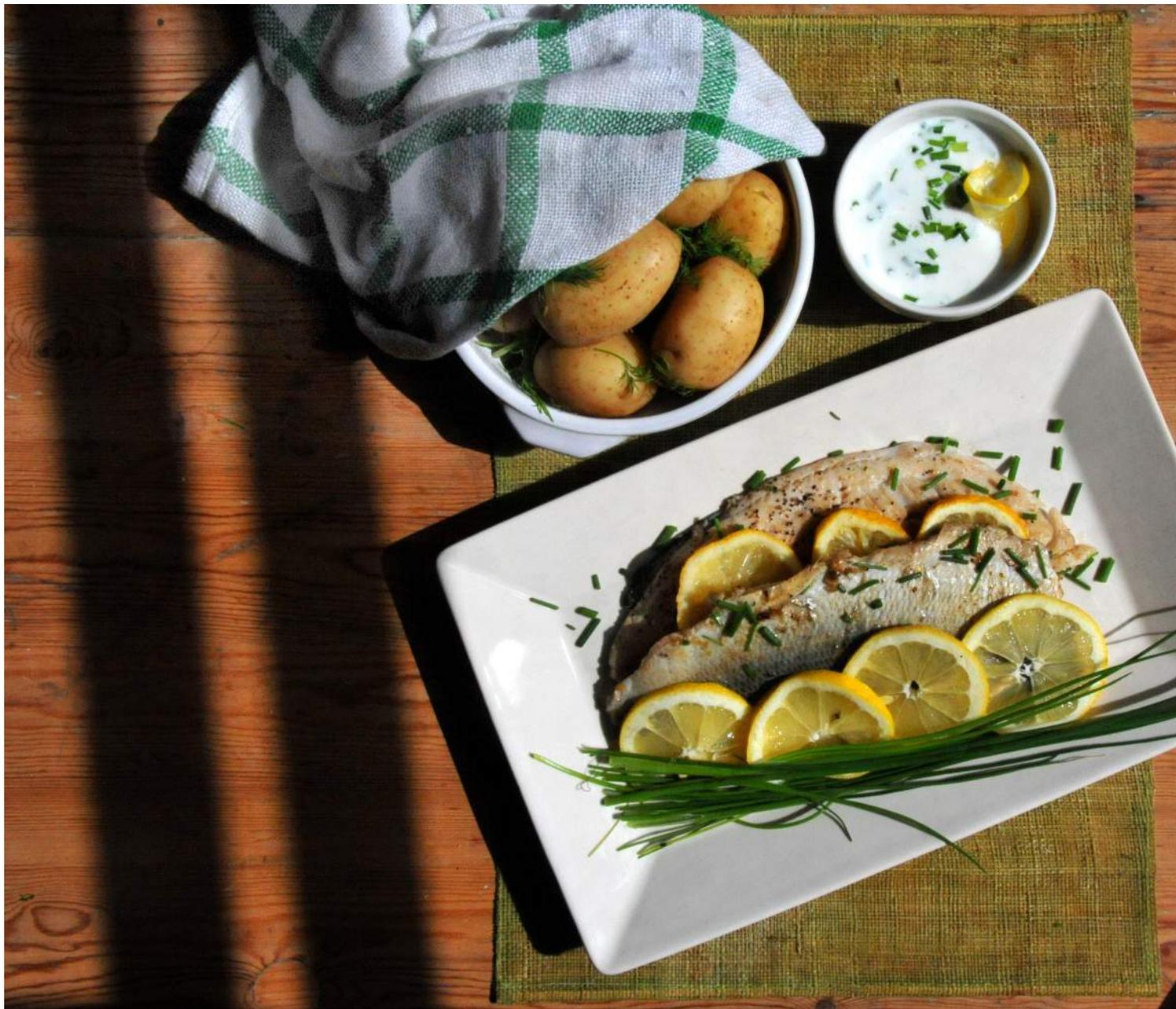
Top 3 foods:

*Fresh fish with new potatoes
Macaroni cheese with mince meat
Sausage soup*



Tini Rask is prepared for an epic battle in Frozen bytes kitchen

Food for Health: Catering at Work Places





GRILLED WHITEFISH ***UUNISIIKA***

4 fillets of common whitefish

Fresh chives

Oil

Lemon slices

Salt, white pepper

Add salt and white pepper to the fish fillets.

Fry the fish skin side down long enough that the fish has changed into a white colour. Turn and fry the other side for about 1 minute so that the flesh is slightly browned.

Lift the fish fillets into a serving dish, skin side down. Add pieces of lemon in between the fish pieces and sprinkle chives on top. Serve with boiled new potatoes, rye bread and butter.



WHEN AGE BECOMES AN ISSUE

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The number of elderly people is on the increase in Finland: 26 % of the population will be over 65 years old in 2030. The average life span has increased 30 years in the course of the last century.

According to the official social and welfare policy, the elderly are encouraged to stay at home as long as they possibly can in order to have an active, independent life in a familiar environment. This is often achieved with a help of a relative, who can register as the main carer. The municipality is required to organise basic health and social services for all the elderly living in that particular area, including services aimed at advocating healthy lifestyles and preventing illnesses. It is also possible to buy extra support services and home based health care services for a fee. Door-to-door food deliveries are part of

this system.

Good nutrition can contribute to a good quality of life when age becomes an issue. Meals should be eaten on a regular basis and the amount of food should not be less than normal during periods of illness. Unexpected weight loss affect especially people over 80. According to the official nutritional recommendations, the elderly are encouraged to eat visually pleasing looking meals with lots of colour and enough protein and other nutrients. A daily dose of vitamin D is also recommended.



A DAILY DELIVERY WITH A CHAT AND A SMILE

The daily food delivery is a welcome break for many elderly people living in the Helsinki area. A knock on the door and a smile from someone who can be trusted to enter the home makes a big difference for an elderly person who might otherwise feel lonely and isolated. However, it is not just about logistics and transport for the service provider either. There is an additional social aspect which cannot be ignored: building up a relationship and trust.

“Our drivers must have some understanding of the mindset of the elderly. This is often more based on intuition than specific training. The social interaction, however brief, is a big part of the service. Many clients love to

have a quick chat, “ says Mr Jarkko Henriksson, the CEO of JEL Express Oy, the company responsible for getting the meals to customers on the allotted time.

“A good driver delivers the right boxes

Food for Health: The Golden Years

to the right people, and completes the route in good time. But it is also very important to be truly present in that moment of contact. It makes such a difference.”

The decision regarding who is eligible to receive door-to-door food deliveries, are based on an assessment made by the social services of the municipality. The municipalities around the country choose the service providers based on price and quality of meals offered.

The company drivers deliver ready-made meals, freshly prepared in a central kitchen by a catering company in town, all year round to a list of subscribers in the Helsinki area. The food must reach the customers as soon as possible after being cooked and packaged, so often it is a race against the clock.

Clients can choose the dishes weeks in advance from a list and special dietary requirements are taken into account as much as possible. If a customer does not like green peppers, for example, it will not be included in any meals delivered to that particular person. The national nutrition recommendations and guidelines for the elderly are carefully followed. The manager of Palmia catering services, Ms Inkeri Korhonen, says:

“We prefer to use organic, locally produced ingredients, but as we prepare food in large quantities it is not always possible to do so. We also have to follow purchasing guidelines and sometimes it restricts the choices too.”

“In the winter time it is not even possible to find potatoes grown in Finland, even if we

would want to use them. But this is something that would be great to work on in the future: flexible ways to get organic and local produce at a reasonable price.”

Often special diets are based on medical conditions. This may mean that the food is offered in a different form than normally, i.e. “soft”, pureed or liquid form. However, all special diets have their own recipes.

Korhonen says:

“A soft food diet does not mean that we put the fish in a blender!”

Customers may also have other specific needs.

“We order protein powders and other dietary supplements from the pharmacy if the clients request them.”

Clients give feedback once a month regarding the service, quality of food and other issues. Complaints are taken seriously and acted upon.

“Mostly we get positive comments. People feel that the system works well, the staff is friendly and that they enjoy the food,” Korhonen says.

Top 3 Foods:

Fish soup

Oven sausages with mashed potatoes and gravy

Meat balls



Jarkko Henriksson and his company deliver daily meals to hundreds of satisfied elders



FINNISH SAUTEED REINDEER STEW - *PORONKÄRISTYS*

600 g frozen reindeer meat, cut in short thin slices (julienne style)

100 g of butter or bacon fat

300 ml water

Salt, black pepper

Put butter or bacon fat in a very hot pan, add the partially frozen pieces of reindeer. Add water and stew under a lid for approximately 1 ½ hours.

Check seasoning, add salt and pepper as desired. Serve with boiled potatoes from Lapland or mashed potatoes with lingonberry jam.

MASHED POTATOES

8 large potatoes

200-300 ml water

1 tsp salt

200 – 300 ml milk

Boil water. Peel and cut the potatoes in cubes, add to the boiling water and cook for about 20 minutes. Mash the potatoes (you can use an electric mixer but not a food processor), add salt and hot, boiled milk. Mix until smooth.



PRISONER'S DIET: LOW IN FAT HIGH IN VITAMINS

The number of prisoners is relatively small in Finland compared to the rest of Europe: approximately 3200 people were serving their sentences in correctional institutions in 2011. The average age of a prisoner is currently 37 years.

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The menus are centrally planned by the Criminal Sanctions Agency, therefore, all prisons around the country serve the same meals, which have to be nutritionally balanced, following the principles of national nutritional recommendations.

Three types of special diets can be offered, if necessary, and these relate lactose intolerance, and problems with digestion or illness, such as diabetes. The prison doctor can prescribe a special diet based on medical reasons, but it will only be continued as necessary, not indefinitely. If a prisoner is sensitive to a particular food item it is simply omitted from the main meal, however, alternatives will not necessarily be available. The main menu is planned in such a way that the ingredients are varied enough and

therefore, omitting one particular type of food should not affect the overall nutritional value of the meal.

Meals should be low in fat and high in vitamins, minerals and protein. The prisoners are free to eat as much bread, potatoes and vegetables as they wish. A healthy prisoner is not entitled to get extra vitamins or snacks. Wishes of the prisoners are not taken into account when menus are being decided.

One exception are religious beliefs, which require a special diet. However, the prisoner himself has to apply for this and once approved, the availability of special food items depend on how religiously committed the prisoner is and the capacity of the correctional institute in question.

GOING VEGETARIAN IN A HELSINKI PRISON

Forget about the greasy spoon. In Finnish prisons the inmates can go vegetarian if they so choose and an increasing number of them are starting to prefer lighter options on the menu.

“Good and healthy food, that is our motto,” say three chefs, Eerikka, Aitsu and Leksa, who are catering for 300 inmates in one of the prisons in Finland. Their main daily challenge is how to cater for special diets. Currently, a total of 80 people have special dietary requirements in this particular prison.

Eerikka, Aitsu and Leksa explain:

“We do our best to respect religious, ethical and health-related diets. We cater for vegetarians and Muslims. We also need to be mindful about food allergies and intolerances such as gluten sensitivity. The health and wellbeing of the prisoners is important and it is also our legal responsibility. Many of the prisoners are big men, so portion sizes are also generous”.

Some dishes do not go down so well.

“When we serve certain fish dishes such as Baltic herring, it seems that suddenly there are a lot more vegetarians in the house. Liver is another ingredient that is not too popular, but it has a high nutritional value and that is why we serve it from time to time.”

The most popular dishes stay the same year after year. These include sausage stroganoff, lasagne and macaroni cheese with mince - typical everyday food in Finland.

Porridge every morning

The prison menu has a 5 week cycle and is changed twice a year. Prisoners are given three warm meals a day.

Part of the cooking process has been automated. This is especially important when

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preparing breakfast. Eerikka, Aitsu and Leksa explain the process:

“The first cook starts his shift at 6.00 am by switching on the two automatic cookers. Porridge is served every morning, and since a large quantity is needed, the machines save a lot of time and effort. We simply throw in the cereal in the evening, water is added in the morning and the cooker does the rest. Semolina porridge is the only one which cannot be cooked in the automatic cooker. On weekends porridge is cooked with milk instead of water.”

Prisoners do not assist in the kitchen

Lunch supplies usually arrive between 7am – 8 am every day from the central kitchen, located in town, but meals are prepared and finished in the prison’s own kitchen. Out of the 300 prisoners, approximately 200 eat their meals in their cells and the remaining 100 people come to the dining hall. Dietary requirements are kept in a computerised system so that everyone gets their meals as preferred.

In some prisons inmates are allowed to assist in some kitchen duties, such as peeling potatoes and vegetables or serving food at the counter, but as a general rule, prisoners are kept out of the kitchen. In this particular prison Eerikka, Aitsu and Leksa also take care of serving food to the inmates.

“We don’t want to waste food. Yesterday’s leftovers are often served the next day alongside the day’s menu. During Christmas, Easter and

Midsummer holidays we celebrate with seasonal dishes.”

The great pancake drama

According to all three chefs, a prison kitchen can be a nice environment to work in and new members of staff are often pleasantly surprised how little fuss and complaints they get compared to other mass catering facilities.

“Generally speaking, the prisoners are a very well-behaving bunch. They say please and thank you, and enjoy the food that is served to them. They also appreciate that their special diets are respected,” say Eerikka, Aitsu and Leksa.

Sometimes things can go wrong though. Once an inmate threw a fit when he did not like the way a piece of pancake was served to him and he had to be put in a solitary confinement to calm down. This escalated into a big pancake drama as the poor cook had to explain to his superiors what happened. All three chefs agree that this was a rare exception:

“This was obviously an over the top reaction. Apart from that, things have been very peaceful here!”

Top 3 foods:

Pasta bake with mince meat

Soup with sausages

Pan fried fresh water fish



Leksa makes sure that no one has to serve their time with an empty stomach





FINNISH PANCAKE - *PANNUKAKKU*

3 eggs
800 ml milk
350 ml flour
Pinch of salt
50 ml vegetable oil

Break the eggs and whisk slightly in a bowl. Add half the milk and all flour, then add rest of the milk and whisk again to make a smooth batter. Let stand for ½ hour. Oil a large, deep baking pan. Pour in the batter. Bake in 225 C for 15-20 minutes. Serve with a berry compote or jam.

NEW TRENDS AND DEBATES

Finns want to know where their food is coming from, who produced it and how. Locally grown, organic produce is an increasingly popular choice. Consumers are saying no to additives.

Organic food, city gardeners and food circles

The government of Finland decided in May 2013 to support and encourage efforts to increase domestic organic food production. Small production volumes, combined with distribution and marketing problems are some of the reasons why organic food products do not reach consumers efficiently at the moment. However, with targeted agricultural policy measures it will be possible to help organic food producers to prosper.

The organic food movement has sparked a new interest in domestic vegetable gardening. A new generation of Finns are learning how to grow their greens and in the largest cities in Finland - Helsinki, Turku and Tampere – urban gardening clubs are thriving.

If getting muddy boots is not your thing, being part of a food circle is a good alternative: a group of people simply get together and pay rent for a piece of unused land to the city or municipality. They then hire a professional gardener to do the work and share the produce between members of the club.

Diets and exotic flavours

Food is a hot topic in Finland. The latest scientific research results concerning nutrition are followed with keen interest and widely reported in the media.

The humble potato has been a staple in the Finnish diet for decades. Today, many people are questioning if it is good for them anymore as supporters of the low-carbohydrate diet are advocating against potato, bread, pasta and rice. It is just one example of many debates of current nutritional issues.

Finns have become far more willing to experiment with new exotic ingredients than before. There are now more immigrants in Finland, introducing their own traditions with exciting new flavours. Only time will tell, how they will influence the current food culture in Finland and vice versa.



Organic food from private city gardens are a great way to develop a natural relationship with environment



NO TO BUREAUCRACY IN POP UP RESTAURANTS

What if it would be possible to run a restaurant for a day without worrying about the paperwork or regulations? How about setting up without the need to think about a long term financial commitment or big investment in a real restaurant business? Only for one day?

These were the thoughts of a small group of friends in May 2011, who decided to challenge all rules and regulations. They wanted to test the idea by inviting friends via Facebook

to set up temporary restaurants all over Helsinki. They called it the “Restaurant Day” and it was an instant success. 45 pop-up restaurants served hundreds of enthusiastic and supportive

customers.

What nobody could anticipate was that wanna-be restaurant keepers have continued to have similar events and that this has now become an international phenomenon. In May 2013 the Restaurant Day was featuring almost 1700 restaurants in 27 countries. For the first it was also organised in the yard of senior citizens' care center.

According to one of the activists, Kirsti Tuominen, the Restaurant Day is now a well established event which has changed peoples' attitudes to their own community. People want to be active citizens and they want to know their neighbours and share things with them.

Non-commercial event run by volunteers

“Our small team is doing this on a voluntary basis. We maintain the website, handle press relations and most importantly, spread the love. We want to keep everything non-commercial. You can combine music or art or any other interest to your restaurant. People want to do things with other people,” Tuominen says. She explains how it all grew into something much bigger:

“Restaurant Day has evolved very organically. News first travelled by word-of-mouth, then the event was picked up by the media, and finally noted by city officials and decision-makers. It's a good example of a grassroots movement flowing from the bottom up. Now the mayor of Helsinki is addressing this

as an example of an idea redefining our future”. Some technical problems emerged early on. Says Tuominen:

“In the beginning we would edit dozens of restaurant entries by hand and put them up on a Facebook event page. When the number of restaurants hit hundreds, we had to find new technical solutions.”

Soon a friend offered to develop a website dedicated to the Restaurant Day, so that listing of all the pop-up places became much easier. Later on, a group of 20 volunteers built a Restaurant Day smart phone application from scratch – all in one weekend.

“It's amazing to see people pitching up with their skills and energy. And this isn't just for trendy city folks. Restaurants are popping up all over the place and attracting people of all ages. Technology has also played an important role in making this grow”, says Tuominen.

“Food is a good way to bring people together. Everyone can relate to it. It's crucial to hold on to a positive attitude. “

Powerful positive activism

However, there is a more serious reason behind the Restaurant Day. It is a protest movement against strict business and sanitary regulations. According to Kirsti Tuominen rules and regulations are not serving people, they have become means of their own.

“Positive activism can be more powerful than the aggressive kind. We have been able to

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prove that doing things in a relaxed and flexible manner brings immense feelings of joy to huge masses of people. And the authorities have been supportive. Things do change!” says Tuominen.

So far, there have been approximately 5000 restaurants in all the events organised around the world. These have included a restaurant for pets, a bistro in a hot air balloon, fine dining using intestines as the main ingredient, a porridge bar, a wartime canteen and Michelin-star chefs flipping free burgers in the park. According to Tuominen many are attracted to the idea for various reasons:

“A food carnival when anyone can open a restaurant for a day”

“People want to do something out of the ordinary and have fun after a hard week of work. Most participants put a lot of hours and energy into their restaurant concepts. It’s not about making money,” Tuominen says.

The next step for the Restaurant Day is an outreach program.

“There are many groups of marginalised and/or lonely people. It would be great if they could experience the warmth of the Restaurant Day. Establishing a pop-up restaurant for a day in a care centre for the elderly brings together people that wouldn’t otherwise meet. There is a lot that can be achieved with food and doing things together,” Tuominen believes.

Top 3 favourite restaurants:

- 1. Chiaroscuro – a cosy Italian style restaurant in a home. The food has been amazing and so has the atmosphere! Everyone always eats around the same table so you get to meet new people while treating your tastebuds to something heavenly.*
- 2. Porridge Bar*
- 3. Fine Dining from Intestines*

Photo: Roy Bäckström



Kirsti Tuominen is a Restaurant Day activist



Restaurant Day is an opportunity for everyone to enjoy tasty food in good company

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HERRING WITH LIQUORICE OR BALSAMICO SALMIAKKISILLI

**150 ml of liquorice flavoured mixture from the
pharmacy or balsamico**

150 ml water

50 ml golden syrup

1 herring

2 red onions

Make a sauce reduction from the first three ingredients. This will take about half an hour.

Wash and clean the herring. Cut in pieces. Peel and cut the red onions in small circles.

Put the pieces of fish into a serving dish. Pour the salty liquorice or balsamico on top and add the onions. Serve with boiled potatoes and rye bread.

pieces of lemon in between the fish pieces and sprinkle chives on top. Serve with boiled new potatoes, rye bread and butter.

THE NORDIC DIET

EVERYTHING IN MODERATION

There are plenty similarities in the diets of people living in Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark, so much so, that we can actually talk about a Nordic diet. The triangle below illustrates the current thinking in all Nordic countries regarding nutritional recommendations and what constitutes a well balanced meal.

The triangle is divided into three sectors according to how often each food group should be consumed. Food items at the bottom and in the middle of the triangle, in the widest section, should be eaten regularly and in generous quantities. The food group just above these two consists of food items which should be eaten moderately. The very top is reserved for food consumed very rarely or not at all. This way all the necessary building blocks of a healthy diet are present, including carbohydrates, fibre and protein together with good sources for fat.

At the bottom are vegetables, fruit and berries. All of these should be eaten daily in salads, grated and raw. They are perfect ingredients for hot side dishes or tasty main courses. Minerals, antioxidants and vitamins are an added bonus. Whole wheat products, such as bread and porridge, should be added to this foundation. Potatoes, pasta, rice, barley and oats can be added to be eaten with the main course.

Fat-free dairy products (yoghurts, milk and sour milk) are part of the daily diet, but should be used moderately. All of them are also excellent sources for calcium, B 2 vitamin as well as protein.

In recent years, fat has been under special scrutiny and therefore, a new category of good sources of fat has been created. These include fish, margarine and canola oil. For a healthy heart, fish should be used 2-3 times a week.

Meat and chicken are fine as part of the main course. Cold meats, such as thinly sliced ham, or cheese, can be used on top of bread in moderate quantities.

However, fatty hard cheese, salty crackers and sausages, sugary treats as well as sweets should be eaten rarely.

No particular food item is totally forbidden. However, people are encouraged to use local produce as much as possible and most important of all – to think what they eat.



The Baltic Sea food triangle is created by nutrition experts from the Diabetes Association, the Finnish Heart Association and the University of Eastern Finland