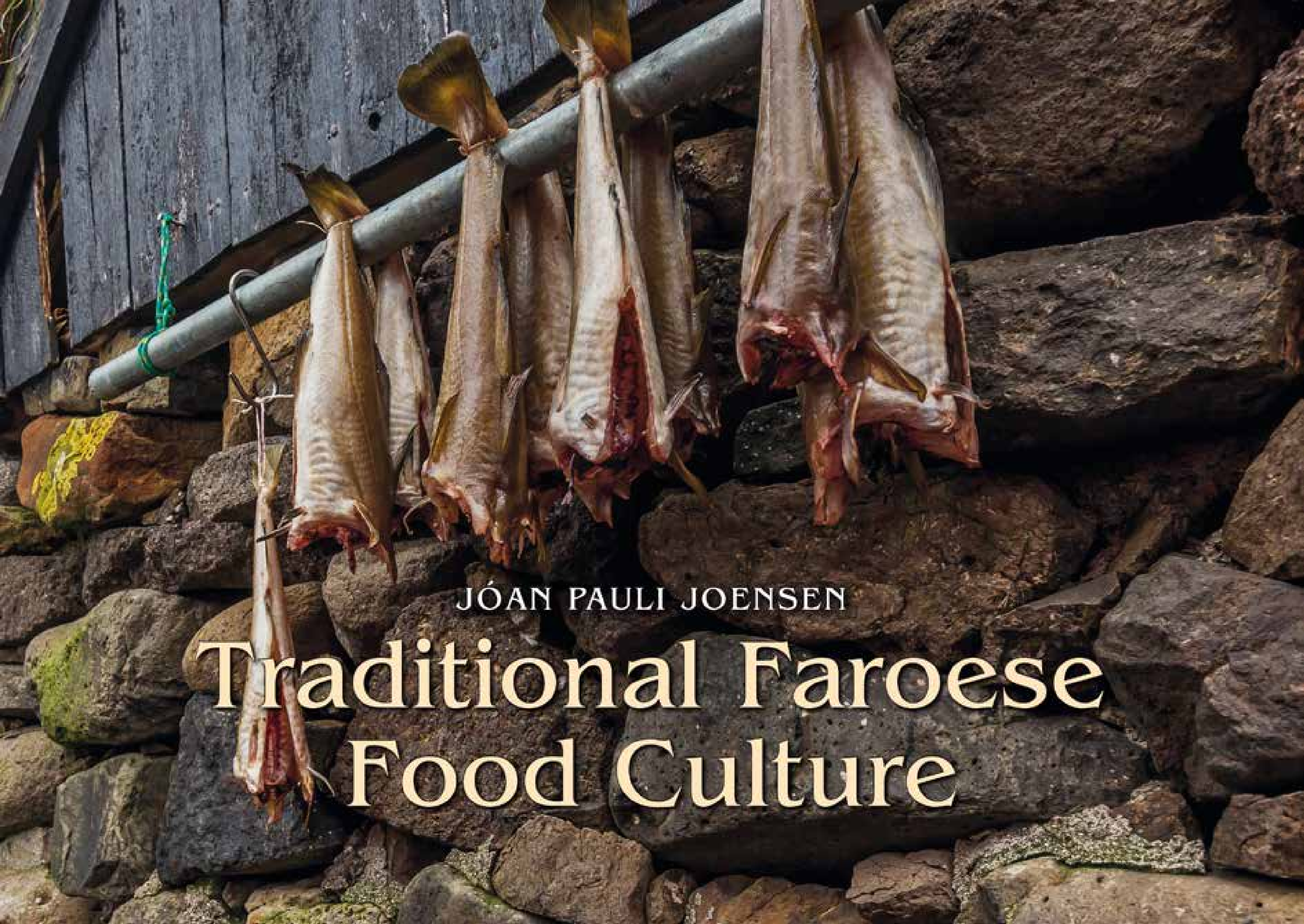

JÓAN PAULI JOENSEN

Traditional Faroese Food Culture

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Jóan Pauli Joensen

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PREFACE

This booklet is a revised English edition of a summary of the two-volume work, *Bót og biti: Matarhald í Føroyum* (Vol. 1 and 2), published in April 2015.[1] The volumes contain a comprehensive bibliography, as well as other documented source material and an extensive photographic collection and other illustrations.

A few new illustrations are added. Otherwise, the illustrations in this booklet are selected from the original work.

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[1] Jóan Pauli Joensen: *Bót og biti. Matarhald í Føroyum 1 og 2*. Fróðskapur – Faroe University Press, Tórshavn. ISBN 987-99918-65-70-6 and ISBN 987-99918-65-70-3

INTRODUCTION

In the two *Bót og biti* volumes, an attempt was made to analyse Faroese food culture within a wider historical and cultural context, based on a broad variety of available sources. The main objective was to emphasize the data from the sources, more or less letting the facts speak for themselves in a manner reminiscent of what anthropologists call *thick description*. The Introduction discusses the literary, oral and direct evidence gathered from informants around the Faroe Islands. Some of these data were gathered as part of previous projects. The purpose of the study was to present a detailed analysis of Faroese food and food customs within traditional Faroese society, and to explore the influence of the 19th century modern era on the Faroe Islands, continuing up through the 1960s, when, what sociologists term, post-modernism begins.

The ultimate theoretical inspiration for the study reflects a confluence of many paths, especially, more or less, the concept of eclectic cultural analysis, which the author believes affords a freer hand to describe ongoing developments and to evoke the cultural and historical context within which Faroese food customs are best analysed, without being too theoretically constrained.

Dried mutton.

The village of Gásadalur with infields and outfields.

FOOD RESOURCES

Turnips and swede from Lítla Dímun.

The most important agricultural crop to ensure the production of food was the cultivated grass of the “infields” (destined to be harvested as hay to serve as winter fodder for cattle) and the wild vegetation (predominately hardy grasses) of the “outfields” (the open pasture land beyond the stone fences marking the boundary between the “infields” and the “outfields”), which afforded pasturage for sheep, cattle, horses and geese.

Oats were once cultivated in the Faroe Islands, but during recorded history the main type of cultivated grain was barley or *Faroese ‘corn’*. Eventually, root crops were introduced. The oldest are the so-called ‘*Faroese roots’ (a variety of Brassica)*, which adapted well to the Faroese environment. Later, Norwegian root crops were imported as seed. There were also angelica gardens. Potatoes became very important in the 19th century, but it took time for people to get used to the taste and to appreciate the nutritional value of potatoes. Eventually potatoes became one of the most important staple foods of every household.

Unknowingly, the Faroese also ate certain plants that provided them a supply of required vitamins. As regards fruit, only a few sorts of berries grew in the Faroe Islands. People ate angelica, both home-grown and wild, as well as sorrel. Rhubarb and berry shrubs in gardens were introduced by the (mostly Danish) ministers of the Lutheran Church and government officials of the Danish Crown. Early on, they cultivated gardens with such plants.

Rhubarbs in a garden in the village of Sandur.

Flagvelta. Detail. This type of potato field was invented in Miðvágur, Faroe Islands about 1925.

Flagvelta. Potato field with turf covering over the seed potatoes and fertiliser.

Sheep have been in the Faroe Islands from ancient times, as have cattle. Pigs were also raised, but the practice ended about 1200. Subsequently, pigs were only raised in small numbers by Danish government officials who were accustomed to eating pork in their native country. Recently, a few people have bred pigs, for example at the agricultural research station at *Traðardalur* on Sandoy. One commercial pig farm operated for a time at *Froðba*, but it was later discontinued for veterinary and environmental reasons.

From ancient times, sheep have grazed outdoors throughout the year. Sheep provided the population with both meat and wool. Sheep farming has changed but little over the centuries. People raised cattle mostly for the milk. Dairy products were particularly important food sources in the summer months, as the cows calved mostly in springtime.

From the age of settlement [ca. 825], and for some time thereafter, the Faroese tended cattle in the summer

6. Old potato fields in Sørvágur.

Sheep in the outfields of Mykines.

pasturage, which became part of the cultural heritage. However, by the Middle Ages, the summer pasture tradition and all that it entailed had faded away. After that, all agricultural efforts centred around the original 85 or so ancient settlement villages known as '*markatalsbygd*'. The cattle were driven into the outfields in the morning and back into the cowshed in the evening, except in summer when the milkmaids tended the cattle during the day in the outfields. In some villages, this custom continued well up until the mid-1960s. Tending and milking the cattle this way was an exclusively female occupation.

Geese have been in the Faroe Islands since ancient times as well. First and foremost, they were a source of meat, while chickens and ducks provided eggs. In traditional Faroese society, chicken and ducks were not eaten. Why the Faroese did not like eating chicken and duck is not quite clear from the available sources; one possible explanation is that they ate faeces. It is also not clear when chickens and ducks first arrived in the Faroe Islands. Not until more recent times did these animals become human food in the Faroe Islands, which is no doubt linked to the recent importation of frozen products.

However, wild seabird fowling has ancient roots in the Faroe Islands and is part of the country's Norse heritage. So-called "bird-cliff hunting" has great cultural importance. The Faroese caught cliff-breeding species of seabirds with

„Neytakona”. Woman on her way to milk cows in the outfield.

Fulmars.

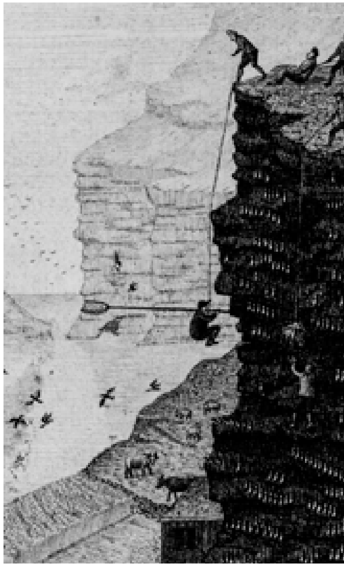
Back from hare hunting.

nets, plucked them from their nesting holes and collected eggs from the ledges along the precipitous bird cliffs. The fulmar is a relatively new seabird in the Faroe Islands and attained major importance during the 20th century. The Faroese developed their own fowling techniques and methods, adapted to local conditions.

In general, the Faroese have considered most birds as suitable for consumption, except for some species of birds of prey and carrion. Both birds and eggs have served as food; eggs were especially important in the early summer months when food was scarce. In the 20th century, attitudes toward birds as part of the Faroese food tradition

A good catch of halibut.

Horse mussel.



Fowling about 1790.

changed, as the Faroese in general adopted a new mantra: *leave small birds and wild birds in peace*, which flows from an altogether different attitude toward nature.

The hare was not imported to the Faroe Islands until the middle of the 19th century and thus was not a part of the ancient food tradition or culture. Today, hare is locally consumed by the many shotgun-bearing hunters who annually seek out the wild hares for sport in the mountainous outfields.

Lump sucker. Lump sucker is very useful as a parasite-eater in sea farming.

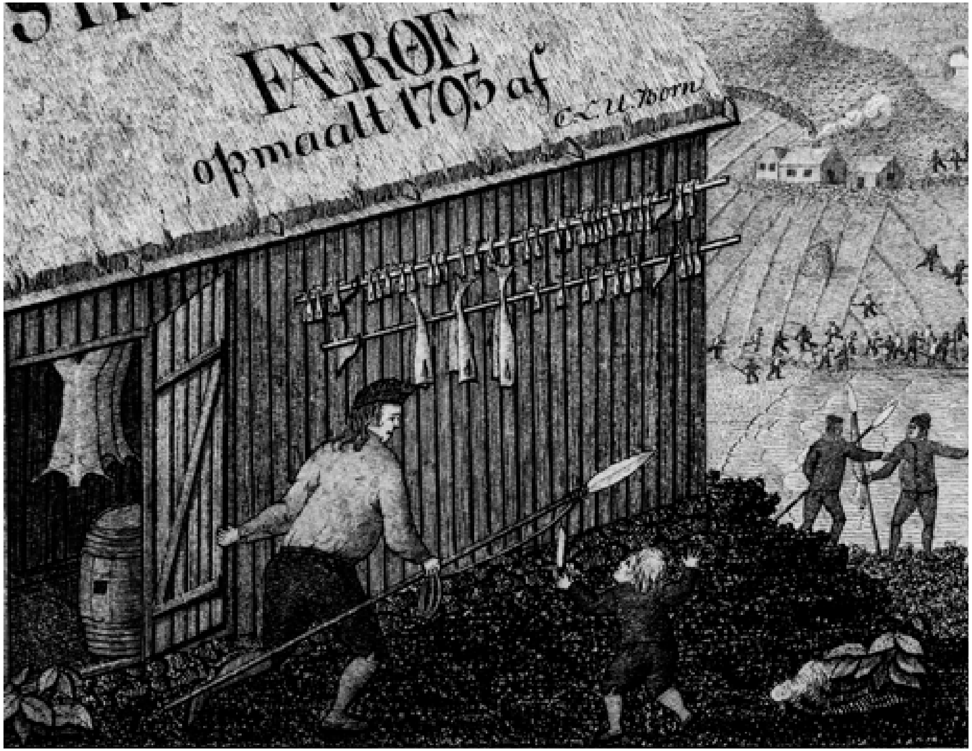
The Faroese have killed pilot whales since the islands were first settled, and pilot whale meat and blubber have been a vital food source. The fact that the gathering of the pilot whales was, and is, such a well-organized hunt also serves as proof of a tradition with ancient roots. Pilot whale meat was thought of as fish and therefore could be eaten during Lent. Seal hunting was also of great importance, but, in contrast to pilot whales, seals were eaten less and less beginning early in the 19th century, except in certain villages. Harpooning big whales was a more recent industry, dating from the construction of the Norwegian whaling stations around the turn of the 20th century and continued until well after the Second World War when the stations were ultimately abandoned.

Faroese men fished from traditional open row boats for domestic consumption and later for sale to the village merchant, but in earlier times each family wind-cured their own fish. Most fish species, with few exceptions, served as food. Coalfish or saithe [*Pollachius virens*] was likely the most important food fish for Faroese households, whether caught trolling by boat, with a rod and reel from the rocky shore, or later with nets cast from the shore. Trout in streams, estuaries and lakes were also important. The same applied to shellfish gathered along the foreshore.

All the gathering and division of raw materials for food, including fish, were based on the ownership of land among the different settlements. Even though the purpose of all the various catches was to ultimately provide food for one's family, there are many more intriguing accounts of hunting, fishing and catching, than the actual processing of the catch into food for the family. Usually, much less was told about the preparation of food than about the excitement men experienced when fishing, hunting or catching the raw materials for food. Bringing food into the home was the task of both men and women, however, women alone prepared it for consumption.

STOREHOUSE AND LARDER

„Hjallur". Storehouse from 1790.



In days of old, food remained fresh only for a limited time in the Faroe Islands, thus means had to be developed to preserve and store food for later consumption. In the main, food was stored in a '*hjallur*', an open-slated wooden shed that allowed the wind to pass easily through the slats. Originally of Norse design, it evolved into a uniquely Faroese outbuilding associated with nearly every household. Similar food storehouses were common in neighbouring countries, *e.g.,* Shetland. Food was stored in a *hjallur*, either hanging to be wind-cured, or salted. Generally, wind-curing was the most common traditional means of preserving food, as salting did not become common until after the 1800s.

The indoor larder or '*kovi*' was equally as important as the *hjallur*. Located inside the farmhouse proper, the Faroese stored food in the *kovi* that was consumed daily, such as milk and other dairy products. Traditionally, it was said that the husband held the keys to the *hjallur*, while the wife was in charge of the *kovi*.

Carcase of sheep slaughtered in the traditional way.

„Garnatálg"/good tallow. Mesentery of sheep hung up for drying.

Various food preservation methods existed in the Nordic countries, but in the Faroe Islands they were but little used. In the Faroes, the predominant way to preserve food was through outdoor aging or fermentation and the wind-drying of meat and fish. The Faroese have many words for the taste of traditional foods. The most important "taste" in this regard has to do with the uniquely pungent taste of wind-dried and aged meat and fish, known as '*ræstur*', reflecting a special characteristic of traditional Faroese food preservation culture. As a consequence, the *hjallur* still

Bread of „garnatálg" – good tallow.

remains an important element of any housing construction, even in today's modern homes, and is often accessed directly from the kitchen.

Mutton, whether fresh, aged (fermented) or dried, was the most highly esteemed food of the Faroese. This is evident from the way the Faroese slaughtered their sheep and the age-old way of partitioning the carcass into 20 portions – each the size of a man's daily ration. The slaughtering of sheep could be deemed almost a ritual with its rules regarding right and wrong techniques. Also, when it came to the treatment of offal and the intestines, there were clear procedures as to how to proceed and how to utilize every bit of the sheep. The most important part of the sheep was the highly-valued fat, especially the rendered fat that was turned into tallow [‘*tálg*’], so-called good tallow [‘*garnatálg*’] and drippings [‘*fløt*’] for cooking. Drippings could be stored for a long time and used not only as soup stock, for example, but also served in combination with various foods. In addition to storing drippings in the *hjallur*, in ancient times it was stored in the ground.

During the slaughter the „sperðil" (sparl or rectum) is filled with certain intestinal parts.

Pieces of „Sperðil".

Some of the mutton was eaten fresh, but very little. As the year went by, most of the mutton was eaten as wind-dried-aged and ultimately as just dried meat. After it was more than a year old, the mutton was called *'skerpikjøt'*, which was dried hard on the outside. People who owned much land used to keep a year's supply in storage in case the annual harvest of sheep failed.

The wind-curing of mutton is not exclusively a Faroese custom, but was also done in Shetland and other places. The Shetlanders, however, abandoned the custom late in the 18th century when the landed farmers began selling their mutton to the British mainland. At about the same time, they ceased building their traditional '*skeos*', or wind-curing sheds. Once the traditional *skeos* disappeared, the old food culture died out as well. The Faroese, on the other hand, never exported sheep or mutton, which helped ensure that traditional sheep farming and the food culture surrounding sheep endured right up to the present day.

The Faroese have used salt from time immemorial, though not so much for food preservation as to add a spicy taste to their food, especially their mutton. What people called '*saltskerpa*' was not salted mutton, but rather hard-dried, crusted mutton with a special salty taste from having had salt spread on it.

A common way of preserving mutton was by cooking it first and then rubbing salt on it. All parts of the carcass could be salted, but it was mainly done to particularly fatty ribs and sides. *'Skinsakjøt'* – salted, fresh mutton – was cooked prior to being hung in the *hjallur*. Some are of the opinion that the meat should be cooked first and not salted until after cooking. Others say that the mutton should be salted both before – some say in brine – and after it has been cooked and hung up. On this, obviously, opinions differ.

Early on, the Faroese salted pilot whale blubber and perhaps other food as well. But salt was an expensive commodity, and it was difficult to get enough salt. So the salting of meat, mutton, beef and pilot whale meat, as the

Traditional Faroese black pudding.

Faroese know it today, is a more recent phenomenon and only became common after 1800. At that time, salt became much more abundant and cheaper and was used for the salting of fish. Before then, people burnt seaweed and used the salty calcined ash residue, which was called *'svartasalt'* or black salt. The Faroese also processed salt along the shoreline where they flooded seawater into shallow ponds to facilitate evaporation. There are several place names that bear witness to this salt collection process, so-called *'salthella'*.

When it comes to other food products from mutton, it seems that people made seven different kinds of suet from a sheep's offal (*e.g.*, *'sláturmør'*, *'ketilsmør'*, *et al.*), which were salted or dried. They also made sausages, combining portions of meat and the offal. Later, they made meat sausage and rolled sausage out of the belly-flap and the sides. The meat and rolled sausages, however, were only eaten on special occasions because few were made, and in fact these types of sausages are of a more recent origin. 16

In addition to mutton, beef and veal were also eaten. It was not common to breed cattle exclusively for slaughter, except for a few oxen in some villages where they had special grazing rights for cattle, *e.g.*, on Mykineshólmur. These cattle were sold. Beef was also hung up to be aged and wind-cured and dried similar to mutton. The young calves were usually slaughtered shortly after being calved and eaten fresh, often cold.

Faroese geese.

Most of a sheep's carcass was rendered into stock for soup. Stews and soups of various types made up a substantial part of the Faroese diet, and it was not always easy to distinguish between the stews and soups and the various porridges and gruels that were also a part of the diet, because often flour was added to a soup and meat stock was added to porridges and gruels. Both for taste and nutrition, it was important to start with a good stock for soup. Aged meat and other ingredients were used, and it was not without good reason that the "good tallow" was also called *'bót'*, *i.e.*, "food" stock, because "good tallow" was also used for soup stock, as were aged drippings.

Back from fowling in the village of Sandavágur.

In addition to the traditional soup, which was eaten with a spoon, the Faroese also consumed a thin broth or bullion drink [‘*drekkasúpan*’, literally, “drinking soup”], customarily drunk from a bowl. This so-called drinking-soup was customary fare before coffee and tea became the norm. The Faroese did not start to make soup out of fish stock until much more recently. Historically, cows were fed the water in which fish had been boiled.

The annual catch of pilot whales varied greatly and there was a time when sightings were very far and few between. But, on the whole, pilot whale meat and blubber were very important to the Faroese household and played a major role in the household diet. A dearth of pilot whale meat did not go unnoticed. Generally, pilot whale meat was cooked fresh, or hung up to wind-cure and age, but a sizable amount was hung up for longer periods to completely dry. Slices of blubber were often combined with fish, but were also eaten alone layered on a slice of bread. In days of old, pilot whale blubber was used as a soup stock, but this practice eventually was abandoned by the Faroese, as most people did not truly savour soup with the distinct pungent taste of fish oil.

Historical sources seem to indicate that the Danish government officials and clergy were better at getting more out of Faroese raw materials than most Faroese. There were many instances where they seemed to have made tastier dishes than the local Faroese. For one thing, they used more vegetables and herbs than most common Faroese.

By the mid-1800s, seals had lost their importance as a food source, but seal-hunting long continued in the village of Dalur on Sandoy. Seal meat was eaten fresh or salted; it was also hung up to cure, and dry-aged seal ribs were eaten like the ribs of sheep.

The most common whale meat after 1900 actually came from large whales, and was cheaply and abundantly available from the Norwegian whaling stations established in the Faroe Islands. This whale meat was an extremely important food source until the mid-20th century. It was eaten fresh, boiled or fried, and was also salted and stored in barrels and kept for winter food. Fried whale steak with brown gravy and pan-fried onions were common Sunday fare in many homes.

Goose was a favourite domesticated bird that many bred for their meat and related offal. Goose could be eaten fresh and early on it provided Christmas dinner in many villages. Everything was utilized – the blood, giblets, liver and the dense leaf fat. It was also common to dry the goose carcass and eat slices of the meat on bread. Recently, it has also become common to bake aged goose in the oven. In addition, new food customs regarding geese have begun to appear in the Faroe Islands, having been adopted from the local customs and cuisine found in neighbouring countries.

People kept chickens and ducks for their eggs. With few exceptions, the Faroese did not eat chicken or duck. That changed in the 20th century, however, when import-

Dry fish on the outside of a „hjallur" or storehouse.

ed frozen chicken became common daily fare and duck customary Christmas dinner.

Waterfowl taken from the bird cliffs were eaten fresh or salted and stored in barrels for winter food. These seabirds were also hung up to wind-cure, age and dry. Usually, the birds were boiled in water. A special Faroese dish still popular today is stuffed puffin, which is boiled in water. The stuffing is cake dough with raisins. The Faroese used both fresh puffins and salted puffin, which had been soaked in water, for the stuffed-puffin delicacy. Formerly, seabirds were grilled on a spit over an open fire, and later broiled in ovens, once ovens were introduced into the Faroe Islands. Bird's heads and neck bones were boiled and eaten. The eggs were generally eaten when taken, but were also preserved in sodium silicate, so-called "waterglass" or salted so they would keep longer.

One seabird, which gained importance in the Faroe Islands once it became non-migratory, is the fulmar,

Faroese lobster.

In the first half of the 19th century salted dry cod was the most important Faroese export.

which subsequently could also be netted during the winter. However, it is the '*náti*', or young fulmar, that the Faroese today know best. Many are the dishes made from fulmars, according to both old and new traditions. They are both salted and then boiled, and eaten fresh, broiled in the oven. Seabird meat was at times ground up and made into meatballs or rissole.

In general, many species of fish have been the mainstay

Sea farming rings at Sørvágur.

of Faroese cuisine in most all the villages. Fish has always been eaten fresh, wind-cured and aged or dried. It was always deemed advisable to have sufficient dried fish on hand, especially dried coalfish. When the men sold the fish, they kept the heads, which were eaten fresh, wind-cured and aged or especially fermented, creating the delicacy, '*grunningshøvd*' – "fermented head".

The Faroese share with their Nordic neighbours in the North Atlantic the custom of drying fish. Species such as halibut, skate and Atlantic wolffish were dried. Wind-dried strips of halibut are well-known in the Nordic countries.

Fish livers were eaten as is, but were also made into a type of pâté or liver dough, where flour and spices were added to the liver. Fish liver dough is widely known, and the Faroese word '*kams*' is also found in, e.g., Finnish. In the Faroe Islands, liver pâté was only made from fish livers. Elsewhere, it is also made of other fatty meats. Fish roe was also harvested, either eaten in its natural form or kneaded and rolled into roe balls or into unleavened bread dough, but this particular dish does not seem to be very old. Fish were also ground up and added to mutton suet, for example. The Faroese have started making fish balls and fish rissole. Fish balls, however, seem to be of recent origin and rissole even more recent.

Food gathered along the nearshore, such as various types of seaweed [*e.g.*, *Alaria esculenta* and from the *Laminaria*

Behind the curtains a new Faroese production of cheese is maturing.

and *Fucus* families], was, without a doubt, much more important in earlier times than later. This particular type of food perhaps was not consumed in great quantities, but it did help diversify the daily menu at times during the year. The same may be said of various varieties of shellfish, which held great importance in days of old, but steady fell from grace as they were used more and more for bait.

There was a time in the Middle Ages and later when the Faroese dried fish for export, as did Norway and other countries around the northern seas. In the 19th century, the Faroese also started processing salted and dried fish, so-called saltfish, for export. This was the same branded salted dried cod that was well-known both in Europe and America, which, like other exported fish, fit well into already existing markets.

Apart from the years during the Second World War (when Faroese fishermen sailed with fresh, iced fish to Great Britain, supplying no less than a quarter of Britain's fresh fish), salted fish and dried saltfish dominated Faroese fish production and export from the second half of the 19th century until the late 1960s. In the 1950s and 1960s, significant amounts of herring were caught with driftnets and brine-salted in barrels. Later, herring and other pelagic species were caught with purse seine nets and pelagic trawls. From the 1960s, bottom fish species, especially cod, haddock and coalfish were processed into fillets in factories onshore and sold frozen on the world markets. This production became possible after the Faroe Islands was electrified in the late 1950s.

In connection with the rise of commercial fishing, it is interesting to note that the Faroese word '*gramsa*' [literally, to be out for all one can get], which has its etymological roots in the customary underground economy of subsistence farming, was also practiced on board the new commercial fishing vessels, where the traditional economy co-existed side-by-side with the emerging new money-based, market economy.

In the spring and summer, milk was a particularly important food. Historically, the Faroese never had enough surplus milk to warrant commercial dairy production. Some butter was churned and kept for special occasions, but, in the main, butter and cheese remained luxuries that the Faroese ate now and again as delicacies shortly after being made, especially cheese. Other dairy products as well could not be kept for very long. What was available consisted mainly of sour or rennet-curdled milk of various types, such as boiled curdled milk, sweetened junket, etc., mostly made in the summer. Milk pudding and gruel were the most popular milk-based foods. Compared to the dairy foods found in the kitchens in many countries surrounding the Faroe Islands, the variety of milk products in the Faroe Islands was extremely limited and simple. During the winter season, most households in days of old would '*sita svartur*', meaning they would sit and drink their coffee or tea black ('*svartur*'), *i.e.*, without milk, and they would welcome their visitors with a warm cup of coffee or tea and collectively they would share the little milk they might have to brighten the evening.

It would appear that traditional milk production was insufficient to stimulate the development of uniquely Faroese commercial dairy products. What is commercially produced today in the Faroe Islands is mostly modelled after foreign products. Today, the Faroese import a multitude of dairy products and the original Faroese dishes prepared from milk have long ago vanished into history.

The Faroese dairy company MBM is starting a cheese production. The cheese are matured in traditional Faroese storehouses on the island of Koltur. The cheese are not ready for the market yet.

HOUSES AND HOUSEKEEPING

The framework encircling and supporting Faroese domestic life and food preparation was and is the single-family home and its associated outbuildings. The Faroese home is a reflection of Faroese society and changes as society changes. The most important room in the old traditional Faroese home was the '*roykstova*', literally the 'smoke room', with its central fire pit or hearth. The cooking utensils were simple and many were made of wood or sheep horn. Each *roykstova* had at least two pots, one for fishy and oily food and one for other uses. People did not eat at the same table, but had the food brought to them on a tray or in a vessel where they were sitting, except when they were eating around a communal tray or from the same plate. There were few stoneware or porcelain items such as mugs, cups or plates, except in the homes of the Lutheran clergy and some rich, landed farmers. There is evidence suggesting that large tables for special festive occasions were also kept in the *roykstova* in the early days.

By the mid-19th century, changes in society at large began to be reflected domestically. Some homes began to be built with an additional kitchen adjacent to a new, so-called '*glasstova*', *i.e.*, the "window room", and a '*prestakamar*', or "priest bedroom", where the itinerant minister would stay when visiting the village. This additional kitchen was not used much for cooking, but it did have a fireplace, and a double or jamb stove that could be used to either heat the *glasstova* or the *prestakamar*, which did double duty as the family's guest room.

A cellar under the house was long the exception. But by around 1900, a new type of house design emerged that included a cellar. Much of what had taken place in the *roykstova* was moved down into the cellar, *e.g.*, the slaughtering of sheep or the gutting of coalfish. A few households had a kitchen in the cellar, so the kitchen upstairs became more of a showpiece.

Toward the end of the 19th century, more and more people bought a cook stove for the *roykstova*, and at the turn of the century plumbing for indoor, running water

A selection of home-made sausages made from sheep meat.

primo
primo

One of the pioneers in Faroese gastronomi Johan Mortensen with a selection of Faroese mushrooms.

began to be installed. When the open fire pit vanished, replaced by a cook stove, and when a ceiling and wooden flooring were added, the *roykstova* came to be known simply as the '*køkur*' or "kitchen". These changes enabled the old traditional homes to reflect the values that, from the very beginning, accompanied the lay-out of the more modern home design. The new home design followed and reflected the distinct changes in society that were occurring in which the traditional communal culture competed against the new, bourgeois middle-class culture that was emerging in the Faroe Islands. Tables where one sat down and ate came about simultaneously as it became customary to eat with a knife and fork, and to carve at the table the food laid before visiting guests.

The industrialization of Europe enabled people – in addition to a stove – to purchase lamps that burned paraffin instead of whale oil. It is also about this time that people began to think more earnestly about cleanliness and indoor comfort, and to acquire window curtains and flowerpots, and generally to tidy up inside and outside the home. There was more light indoors and the home became more refined, and the changes in society overall began to affect the domestic habits of the Faroese. At this stage in the evolution of Faroese society, people acquired kitchen utensils of stoneware, china and glass and, not least, knives and forks of good quality, and learned how to eat with this cutlery.

These new domestic customs and the changing attitudes they reflected, and what became associated with them, such as kitchen aprons and more sophisticated kitchen equipment, also influenced cooking procedures and methods, which also inspired new cuisine and food prepared with sweet and savoury ingredients.

Now, the Faroese began to think of food in a much broader context and to see food and the eating of it as more than just filling their stomachs. Even though new foods were added and became commonly accepted, much of the traditional food did not completely disappear. In fact, some of the more traditional Faroese foods grew in value and prestige, while other traditional dishes fell by the wayside.

Domestic sanitation eventually became better and better, which ultimately influenced the preparation of food as well. Popular culture adapted slowly to the level expected in a modern, developed society and it was not until well after the end of the Second World War that these new domestic standards truly became generally accepted and a part of day-to-day life.

FOOD AND COOKING

In days of old, cooking was hardly the highest priority in Faroese households. So much else laid claim to people's time and effort. Apart from the food resources available to people who themselves worked the land and fished the ocean, other necessities could be bought at the monopoly trading station in Tórshavn. These goods included various spices, sugar, syrup as well as liquor, wine, beer and tobacco. In addition, people could buy cereal grains, and later also tea and coffee. With the arrival of free trade in 1856, more goods became available in the local shops, even in the villages.

What characterized the Faroese household in days of old was a recurring shortage of grain and flour, which was rarely eaten, compared to meat and particularly fish. Grain was often added to soup or cooked as porridge and gruel, or it was ground and baked into unleavened bread ('*drýlu*r') or regular bread. Both home-grown and imported grain had to be ground first in the home before it could be used as flour almost up to the early 20th century. Because the supply of grain was, in the main,

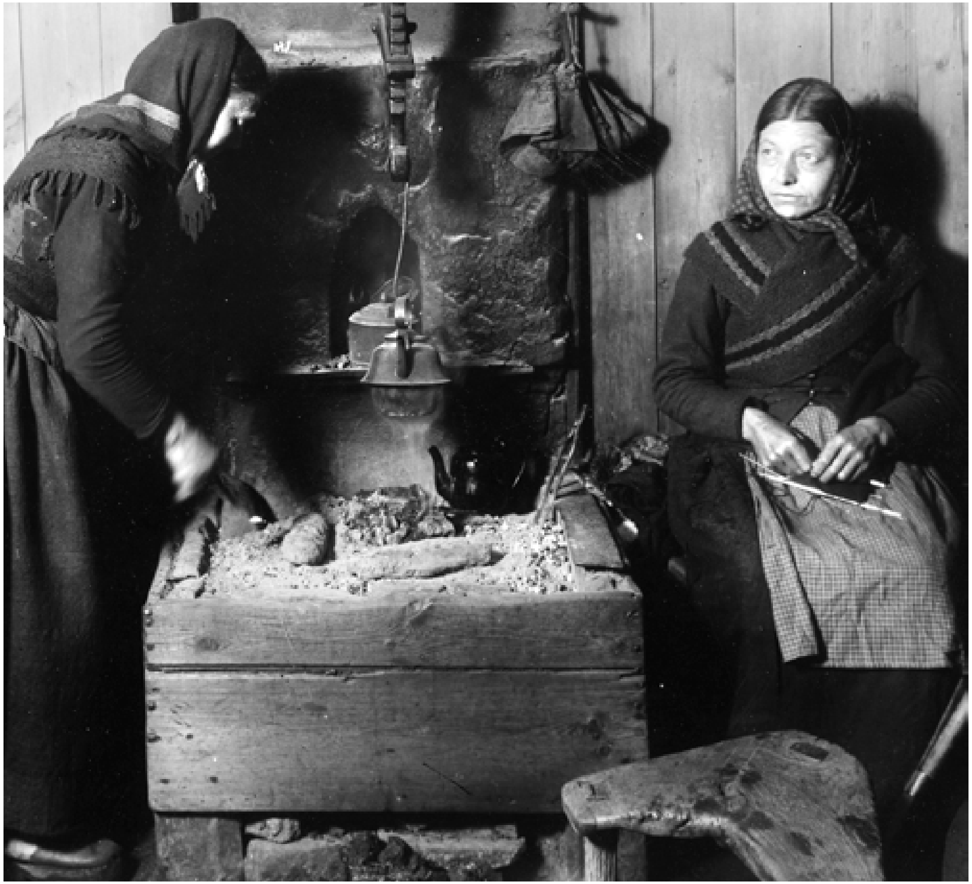
At the fireplace in an old house.

limited, the Faroese often mixed other ingredients with it.

The most common daily bread was *drýlur*, which was baked daily and mostly eaten at breakfast with a spread of some sort or other food such as tallow or liver pâté baked inside the loaf. The Danish doctor Panum didn't think highly of *drýlur*, believing it to be hard to digest. This bread was baked in the hot ashes of the fireplace or on a grill above the fire and afterwards placed in the glowing embers. People remember loaves made of Faroese barley differently, finding them to be especially coarse and tough. *Drýlur* baked from imported grain, it was believed, tasted better, and later only imported flour was used for baking.

Flat cake, which Pastor Jørgen Landt thought the least of, was made of rye and had, as the name implies, a flat shape. It was often pressed flat after having been baked on a grill over the embers. The flat cake was only baked for special occasions and was often decorated with various patterns.

Before cooking stoves and ovens made their gradual entry in the second half of the 19th century and early 20th century, there was no option to bake bread and other baked goods other than in pots and casseroles or saucepans. '*Pottabreyð*' [literally, "pot bread"] was baked in a pot. The leavened dough was put in a pot covered with a lid and placed on the hot embers to bake. Cakes were baked in



Baking „drýlur" at the fireplace.

the same manner. Pans and baking irons, whether they were ordinary pans, doughnut, waffle or girdle irons, were well-suited for baking in the embers. People customarily borrowed baking utensils from each other, even from other villages, especially big pots and girdle irons. In addition to baking over the fire in the fireplace in the *roykstova*, people often would make a fire under the drying slats of the '*sornhús*', or corn/grain-drying shed, when there was much to be baked. Outbuildings with similar functions as the *sornhús* have been used in other countries as well, but mainly as outside ovens for the drying of other plants and also as baking ovens. In the Faroe Islands, the *sornhús* never evolved into such a full-fledged ancillary bakery.

The most natural thing was to boil food. If one ignores the unique exceptions found throughout the islands, most Faroese did not have ovens for baking, broiling or roasting until stoves arrived. On the other hand, it was possible to fry or roast food in small quantities in the fireplace on a spit or other metal rod, which was often done to cook, for instance, fatty fish strips, especially of halibut or ray, fish skins, an occasional bird or even sheep ribs, although most people thought it a waste to let the valuable lard drip into the embers. Such cooking could also be done in the *sornhús*.

The Faroese of old generally did not fry meat, but people who aspired to a higher social class often did. At that point in time, meat was most likely barbecued on spits over the fire of the hearth or in the *sornhús*, if the meat had not first been boiled and then roasted in a pot to brown. This all changed when stoves with baking ovens arrived, but some time passed until everyone had a stove. During this interval, it was not unusual to ask permission to bake or roast in homes with a stove, generally the local pastor.

For a while, a baking oven heated with a primus stove underneath was widely used. This primus oven was quite handy and common up until the 1960s.

MEAL TIMES

One interesting aspect of Faroese food culture is that from the early 18th century until after the Second World War meal times changed but very little. The first meal was referred to as *'ábit'*, where people just took the odd bite or two to get going. The big mid-morning meal was known as '*morgunmatur*', literally "morning food", where *drýlur* was the main food, eaten with something either hot or cold layered on a slice of *drýlur*. This breakfast was generally between 10 and 11 AM.

The mid-day meal, known as 'døgurði', was usually a hot meal, almost always with boiled new potatoes served hot from the pot once they became a staple part of the diet. Døgurði was usually served around 2 PM. Dried fish and pilot whale blubber or other dried food or whatever might have been available of fish, meat or pilot whale meat generally accompanied the hot, boiled potatoes. The fish or meat could either be fresh, wind-cured aged or dried, but normally the dried meat was not eaten at døgurði, but sliced with bread on any number of other occasions.

The "middle meal" ['millummáli'], the equivalent of

Dried mutton.

British high tea, was enjoyed with a mug of tea, a slice of bread with some sort of spread, often brown sugar or syrup, for lack of something better. This was mainly a meal for grownups, as the children were often too busy playing outdoors to stop for more than anything but a swallow of milk and bit of bread. Some people disliked that the children ate outside, however. Some Faroese enjoyed a cup of tea between morgunmatur and døgurði as well. There is some indication that these millummáli times are not so old and are perhaps of more recent origin.

“Nátturði”, the equivalent of a late supper, was generally served shortly before bedtime. This late supper generally was a cooked meal consisting of soup, porridge or gruel. Soup was the most usual supper in winter, while various dishes combined with milk were eaten with a spoon in summer in homes with a cow. Often, there was a so-called “starter” before the soup, such as dried fish or roasted fish skin. Sometimes people would eat boiled coalfish and liver for supper, if someone had been out shore fishing or collectively casting a net during the day.

Eating bread with some sort of spread for *nátturði* did not become common until after the Second World War or even later. Nevertheless, even then some would enjoy

Boiled pilot whale meat for dinner.

a soup for this late supper now and again or something heated up in a pan with bread.

Traditionally, consuming liquids during a meal was unusual. Generally, people would drink after the meal. The arrival of the stove, and in particular the primus stove, made it easier to boil a kettle of water, and so a pot of tea or coffee became more common after a meal during the 20th century than before.

Before tea and coffee became common beverages, people drank water, milk or dairy drinks and gruel. After having eaten soup or porridge, people generally had had enough liquid so they did not always drink anything afterwards. In other countries, beer and wine – even liquor – were a fixed part of the meal, but this was not the case in the Faroe Islands. Alcoholic beverages were exclusively brought out as a show of hospitality or on festive occasions.

As soon as the children were old enough, people tried to give them the same fare as grownups. However, the food was mashed, or the parents chewed the food a little to make it easier for the children to swallow. Then, as now, breast milk was regarded as best for babies, but it might happen that the mother did not have milk for her baby, who then became a 'cup baby' because it was given milk out of a cup with at teat attached to it. Usually babies got cow's milk or thin gruel. It could become critical for the baby if the mother didn't have enough milk and the cow went dry at the same time. Babies were also given a "dummy" – a piece of cloth with a bite of food or something sweet in it. A "good tallow" dummy quickly accustomed babies to the taste of fermented or aged food.

In earlier times, food was associated with "house and home", but people who worked outside or away from home, whether in the fields, in the mountains or out fishing at sea either brought food with them or had it carried to them. In some cases, for instance when people were away collecting peat, they might cook their food on the peat heather. There they made fires and boiled water for a hot drink, to cook their potatoes and sometimes also something for dinner, but

Boiled sheep head and potatoes for dinner.

Sliced dry blubber.

in the main dry food was thought to be the most suitable food for eating outside. It was quite common later, when people worked away from home for wages, to carry food to them for their *millummáli* or afternoon tea.

From about the end of the 19th century, most Faroese young men left home to work on board fishing smacks for half-a-year at a time. A sailor's food was simple for cooking conditions on board were not the best, and it was limited what food supplies a sailing vessel could carry. Special regulations governed what provisions could be brought on board a ship. In the beginning, there was no bread on board. Flour was eaten in the form of hardtack, and pea soup was a fixture. They ate potatoes for as long as they lasted. The mid-day meal was either fish or meat, the latter mostly salted. They caught the fish they ate. The slices of food or other spread used to top the hardtack, or ship's biscuits, was little more than leftovers from dinner or what little each crewmember brought with him from home. The men also cooked a bit themselves, especially during the night shift, when the cook was off-duty. They used to bake certain fish such as rosefish in the oven or cook what they called "hardtack steak".

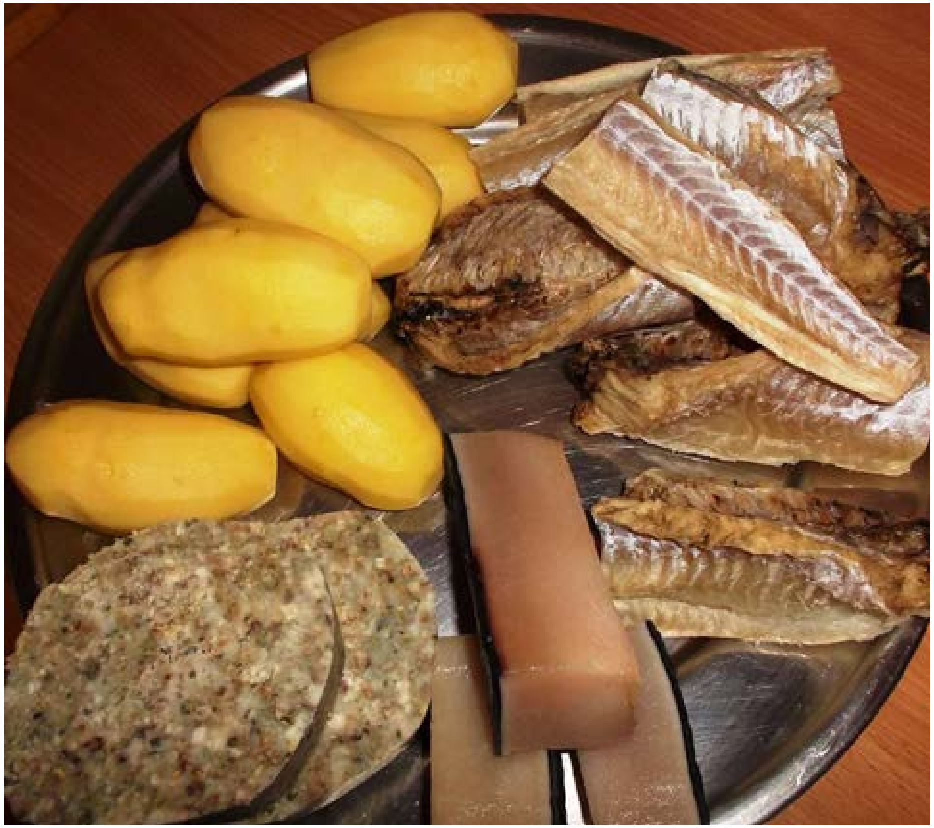
The food on board did not change much with the arrival of the trawlers, because, as on the sailing smacks, it was not possible to freeze food or store fresh food for long. The main difference between the trawlers and the smacks was the better working space and cooking conditions in the galley, and – perhaps the most important change – it became possible to bake bread daily for the crew. All this improved even more when later it became possible to freeze food and preserve it for longer periods. The cooks as well became better schooled at which point the food greatly improved and became more diverse, leading to the jocular saying that the crew on board a trawler dined as if in a fancy hotel.

Meal times started changing after the Second World War. One reason was that both working people and school children got their dinner break at 12 noon and went home to eat then instead of going home earlier to have their mid-morning morgunmatur for half an hour. Gradually, this meal time changed even further. Today, most Faroese work all day in one stretch with a short lunch break at midday for about half an hour, usually at the worksite.

This recent change has led to most people having the traditional ’døgurði’, or mid-day meal, in the early evening after coming home from work or school.

The Faroese have always observed certain eating and table manners, though they varied, of course, from time to time. From the earliest days in the Faroe Islands, the so-called upper classes usually believed that the lower classes – the “common” man, so to speak – had crude and primitive manners compared to their own. The conditions under which people ate, of course, greatly influenced their table manners.

In particular, when it came to meat, the Faroese from ancient times observed certain rules about how to cut a cooked side of salted mutton, and how to carve a leg of mutton. Historians do not know so very much about Faroese table manners in the early days, but more recently the inroads of European/Danish middle class manners have also influenced Faroese table manners, especially regarding the use of a knife and fork and to sit quietly and politely at the table, a practice all Faroese children learned early on. The right demeanour when seated at table, however, has ancient roots, and many Faroese have historically perceived eating as a holy act. Food demanded respect no matter what was eaten, and everyone was granted a measure of peace while eating.



Fermented fish, blubber, good tallow and potatoes.

HIGH FEASTS AND CELEBRATIONS

When there was a highly festive occasion, nothing was spared. Every house offered what it could and often more. Traditionally, such feasts were held at the time of year when the most food had been stored away, which was generally in the autumn and early winter. The old saying that winter time is party time still rings true, but even in days of old celebratory meals were held throughout the year even when food was in shorter supply.

Part of the buffet at a confirmation feast.

Celebrations were held on the various solemn occasions in peoples' lives or at festive times of the year. Feasts were also held to celebrate work well-accomplished, as a reward to or in recognition of those who had helped or performed a service to the household on special occasions. Today, people throw big parties on important so-called "round" birthdays [30, 40, etc.] or when 14-year-olds are confirmed in the Lutheran Church. These particular celebrations were not held some 100 years ago. Then birthdays and confirmations were celebrated rather discretely and quietly. On the other hand, people threw big parties back then on certain occasions that today the Faroese do not celebrate at all.

When a woman gave birth, it was the custom that neighbours and friends would consult together and arrive at her home with good "bed food" for the new mother and her family to help her get back on her feet after resting in bed at a time when she was unable to do any of her usual work around the home. When a child was christened, a party was held for the godmothers and godfathers, who were seated at a special table in the best parlour. Usually only the next of kin took part in a christening meal or '*barsil*', but today the event is a major festive affair, known as a *'barnadópur'* ("child's christening"), with many friends and family joining together to celebrate.

In days of old, people gathered for a meal or feast as part of a funeral – an *'ervi'*. However, the timing of such a gathering was dependent on when the burial took place. If, for example, the death occurred in the autumn or early winter, the meal would often be held on the day of the funeral following the burial service. On the other hand, if a person died at another time of year, the funeral meal or feast often had to wait months until fresh food was

The bridegroom cuts the wedding cake.

Homemade dish of halibut salad.

more plentiful in the autumn or early winter. For most of the 20th century, funeral feasts were held – if at all – right after the graveside burial service. Nowadays, the funeral meal is held immediately after the burial service and is a well-established and fixed part of every funeral.

Formerly, wedding celebrations were nearly always held in the late autumn or early winter when the mutton was well-aged and the harvest safely "under the roof". Weddings varied from family to family. Some people made little ado about their weddings with only their closest relatives and friends gathered to celebrate. Others held big weddings, which might last for days with plenty of food and drink. Regardless, the wedding fare was quite similar as it was prepared according to a traditional formula. The hospitality of a major wedding began when people were invited and lasted until the last guest had departed, and it ended with a cosy "after-party" of sorts ('*kokkagildi*') to honour and thank those who had cooked and served the wedding tables. This was a fast, rigid tradition. Today, Faroese wedding celebrations have changed a bit; all the guests are now seated together in the same hall enjoying the same food. In days of old, people had to seat their guests in turn because the houses were so small there simply was not enough room for all to be seated at once. This often necessitated that wedding celebrations often took place in more than one house. Formerly, people did not celebrate their silver or golden wedding anniversaries, which is a more recent custom.

There were a variety of winter celebrations or parties. The '*bátsgildi*' (literally, "boat party or feast") was held by the foreman of a rowing boat for the crew, as this group of men was often vital to the welfare of the village. Another feast celebration was the '*stovugildi*' (literally, "room or house party") held for those who had helped build a new house. There were other work-related celebrations, many held around Christmastime and part of the overall festive season. The ‘*doktaragildi*’ (“doctors feast”) thanked the people who had ventured out from the village to fetch the doctor during times of serious illness. One celebration that in all probability emerged in the 20th century is the milkmaids party (‘*neytakonugildi*’), an exclusively female gathering held during the winter in the home of one of the milkmaids, but such a feast could also be celebrated as an outfield picnic during the summer.

Christmas is an ancient high feast, as is New Year’s, when people enjoyed food in abundance. As at the other winter feasts and weddings, the Faroese enjoyed chain dancing and ballad singing for literally hours on end at these special high-feast celebrations. The dancing season lasted until Shrove Monday, when Lent officially began, and people would walk or row from village to village in order to dance and sing at the different winter celebrations. There were specific Christmas, New Year, Twelfth Night and Kindle Mass villages, which hosted the dancing from year to year. Tables replete with an abundance of food were laid out in many homes, welcoming the visitors who had come to dance and offering them a chance to rest and eat. Quiet reigned from Lent to Easter, which, along with Whitsun, was celebrated according to ancient and prescribed customs. Because summer was at hand, Whitsun was generally a quietly celebrated occasion.

What characterizes all the old high feasts in the Faroe Islands was that the food people ate was highly traditional and bound by custom. There was little variation from one feast to another for people had but little interest in being different one from another and held to safe, familiar and time-honoured fare. At times, people might enjoy fresh meat at weddings, for example, or when they went out to fetch so-called ‘*jólaseyð*’ or Christmas sheep. But generally people ate the pungent, dry-aged mutton or side dishes made of sheep offal with bread and cake. In some villages, they ate certain food and dishes at certain times, *e.g.*, wind-cured and aged fish known as ‘*aftansfisk*’ on both *’jólaaftan’* and *’nýggjársaftan’* (Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve). On Christmas Day, however, the main meal at mid-day consisted of meat (generally mutton) or perhaps a goose in the homes that had access to such food.

While the ancient winter feasts and celebrations in their original form have faded into memory, new party gatherings have replaced them. Special Christmas parties, for example, have evolved over the last 40-50 years, mainly hosted by worksites or restaurants. These Christmas parties are quite varied with a wide choice of selections when hosted by the restaurants. Today, the Faroese eat literally tonnes of duck and goose over the Christmas and New Year season, as well as imported sweets and chocolates.

MORE THAN FOOD

Dry pilot whale meat.

In the Faroe Islands, class differences are not pronounced; luxurious living or extravagant consumption is not used to create or enhance any social distinctions. In the main, the belief that a particular food is either good or bad (high class or low class) is largely shared by all, although admittedly not everyone can afford the same fare. That said, early on in the Faroe Islands there were those who attempted to set themselves apart from others through food and certain eating customs. Some believed that they knew better than others how to get more out of a given food resource. These were the people whom Svabo referred to as "distinguished" or "sophisticated". These were the people who early on acquired better cutlery and china dinnerware and put "better" or at least less customary food on the table than the majority of the Faroese, as the Stanley Diaries from late in the 18th century testify.

Historically, these were the people who first adopted new customs. Most had roots in the Danish bourgeois culture, which invariably had the most influence on an evolving Faroese culture. They were, in the main, Danish government officials, ministers of the Lutheran Church, and, later, the new commercial middle-class that advanced socially through the economic opportunities brought about by the emergence of free trade. Most young people who were educated in Denmark came from such families, but at the same time they were well acquainted with the more common, traditional Faroese village culture.

This evolving social trend took on tense overtones when the Danish doctor, P. L. Panum, in a scientific medical report on the health situation in the Faroe Islands analysed conditions in such a way as to leave a highly unfavourable impression of the Faroese. Much of what Dr. Panum wrote may not have been far from reality, but the way he expressed himself could easily give rise to misunderstandings and shined a less than flattering light on Faroese culture. Briefly, what was happening in the Faroe Islands was similar to the blooming bourgeois cultural trend in Denmark, namely that this cultural phenomenon was gaining a foothold not only within the middle class, but also throughout the entire society. This became evident when the Faroese student, A. Jógvansson, reprimanded his countrymen regarding aspects of their traditional diet that he thought were bad in a speech in Copenhagen in 1900.

What A. Jógvansson had criticized in 1900 eventually and gradually faded away, and a more-or-less common shared culture embraced the whole nation with the limitations imposed, of course, by financial means and other circumstances. These cultural changes were also reflected in the evolving housing standards, especially after 1900, which have subsequently developed into a common Faroese cultural norm.

That this cultural evolution happened so quickly is due, in part, to the determined effort of some to persuade ordinary people to accept new ideas and traditions, both regarding food and cooking and improved housing. One of these pioneers was Súsanna Helena Patursson of Kirkjubøur and her brother, Jóannes Patursson, who promoted the new, more modern, advances, while at the same time praising the old and traditional way of life and values of the Faroese.

Social class and cultural customs tended to merge, partly in Tórshavn, but perhaps particularly at the newly-settled and fast-growing village of Tvøroyri on the southern island of Suðuroy, where a distinct fishermen and working class lived alongside a ship-owning and commercial capitalist middle class, the latter reminiscent of a continental upper class. J. F. Kjølbro, the industrial magnate from Klaksvík on the northern island of Borðoy, attained a similar financial stature, but never severed his ties with his humble cultural origins and did not become a source of social tension.

There was a time when most thought and effort went into putting enough food in the stomach without people knowing much about food value or nutrition. Even when people were full, they might still suffer from deficiencies and a lack of vitamins. This lack of awareness of nutrition became less prevalent during the 19th century and especially after 1900. Nevertheless, even during the interval between the world wars, there were certain deficiency illnesses,

Homemade modern Faroese open sandwiches.

Lamb dish.

which the health authorities tried to combat following a country-wide nutritional survey. The research showed that there was a significant difference between the food consumed in towns and that in the villages. Those that fared best were the villagers who continued to nurture the underground economy of traditional subsistence farming and shared the bounty of land and sea.

After the Second World War, many things changed, and people's health improved steadily in the years following as people earned more money and more food became available in the shops.

The traditional Faroese housewife of old rarely benefited from a recipe, but rather prepared her family's food like her mother taught her. As time went by, people learned to read, contact between the Faroe Islands and Denmark improved, and cookbooks became more readily available. Even if not all women used the newly-available cookbooks, the recipes quickly spread from friend to friend and many a housewife soon learned how to make new and different dishes. Eventually, the Faroese adapted many of these new Danish dishes, utilizing the ingredients available in the Faroe Islands. Also a greater variety of sweets and cakes appeared in Faroese homes. Better stoves made baking and cooking easier.

The waterfront Vágsbotn in Tórshavn.

Around 1800, there were no inns or guesthouses to accommodate visitors. Visiting Lutheran ministers and government officials stayed with the wealthier people in a village, whose homes offered an especially fine room or living area known as a '*prestastova*' (literally, "priest room") and a '*prestadyr*', (literally, "priest door" that opened directly to the outside). Other people stayed with relatives or friends, if they happened to be passing through for one reason or another.

In the latter part of the 19th century, guesthouses began to appear in Tórshavn, and as the 20th century begins guesthouses could be found in some of the larger villages beyond Tórshavn. Gradually, Tórshavn began to acquire more and more guesthouses and pensions, where, for instance, students at the Maritime School and others could get room and board for limited periods, and those who, for one reason or other, could not eat at home could get a meal.

It took a long, long time before ordinary people began to go out to eat just for the fun of it. Businesses and public institutions might offer their staff an evening out for some reason. But eating out was not at all common until at least the last twenty years or so, when the number of restaurants and cafés began to grow, especially after the liquor laws changed in 1992, at which time it became legal to serve alcoholic beverages in public. Official dinners and royal visits were important incentives that helped improve the culinary offerings of the various restaurants, especially the major hotels.

When it comes to restaurant food, much has happened over the past twenty years, and the Faroe Islands is making its distinctive mark in the ongoing development of Nordic cuisine. Today, Faroese chefs do not limit themselves to replicating Danish food, but seek out new inspiration and ingredients from their native soil. They are so creative and inventive in their use of domestic food resources that they have managed to compete and excel within the highest circles of international gastronomy. These latest developments have indeed placed the Faroe Islands on the international food map.

This emergence of high cuisine in the Faroe Islands has taken place against a backdrop of an increasing demand for mass-produced, international fast food. The selection of food in the supermarkets has steadily multiplied over the last few years and the interest in good and nutritious food has grown by leaps and bounds. Meanwhile, however, in the individual home there is less and less time to do any cooking.

A modern form of „hjallur" also used as a mobile restaurant.

CONCLUSION

The books from which this summary is compiled provide general summaries and conclusions at the end of each chapter. It was not, however, the goal of this synopsis to offer any particular conclusions, but rather to offer a broad overview of Faroese cuisine from an historical and cultural perspective.

From times of old, food and cooking in the Faroe Islands have been dependent on the food resources available from the sea and the land. Much can be traced to the ancient Norse food culture, which the Faroe Islands more or less has shared with other coastal communities in the Nordic region. Conditions, of course, have varied from place to place over time.

It was always necessary to preserve food for later consumption. In the Faroe Islands, this was mainly done by drying the food, but the food being preserved was also eaten at various stages throughout the drying process. Over time, this enabled the Faroese to acquire a taste for fermented or aged foods. All in all, cooking was quite simple, and the wind-drying and aging process in the salt-laden air itself added the most highly appreciated and popular spice.

Meat and fish have been the most popular staple foods, together with some grain added to soup and gruel or baked as *drýlur*, the traditional unleavened bread. Other kinds of bread and baked goods have been mostly reserved for holidays and feasts.

Faroese popular culture was fully documented by the many Danish Lutheran ministers who resided in the Faroe Islands, as well as others, well into the 19th century. No record from the so-called common people, however, is extant. The people who documented Faroese culture had their roots in the upper social strata of their Danish culture, which from early on was modified and honed by their lives in the Faroes. Their respective food culture slowly influenced the local Faroese food culture, while they also adopted some of the Faroese food culture that surrounded them.

The 19th century brought with it many cultural and economic changes, which became visible in the home and

The gourmet restaurant KOKS in Kirkjubø. Fabulous food with an unrivalled view.

in how people lived. By then, the middle class had grown and was becoming a culturally significant and powerful force. As the 20th century drew nearer it became more and more apparent that a new era had dawned in the Faroe Islands and that the old, traditional ways were facing strong competition from the attitudes and mores of a growing and literate middle class that could easily disseminate its cultural message via newspapers and other means, bringing about what sociologists like to call the "modernization" of society.

Some of the older traditions began to disappear, for instance, the ancient festivals and feasts that formed an integral part of village community life, while others remained and began to be incorporated into the new food culture that was slowly evolving. By the 1900s, Faroese food culture had shifted into a pattern that would remain unchanged until well after the close of the Second World War, at which point newer customs and cuisine were introduced in the Faroe Islands that helped shape the modern era of Faroese food culture.

The study ends by drawing attention to the ongoing cultural changes in the Faroe Islands and their influence on the popular lifestyle of the Faroese brought about by the changing values and attitudes of society as a whole and reflected both in home construction and the social interactions prevalent among the Faroese and the food they eat. These changes essentially created a new society, one which came, much more than before, to revolve around a money market economy and less on the underground subsistence farming economy that had existed for centuries. This new society was a result of ongoing industrialisation especially in the fishing industry and in that regard reflected what was occurring around the world. Nevertheless, subsistence farming and the traditional subsistence economy continued to play a major role in village life until well after the end of the Second World War, especially in the more remote villages.

A wider, more general knowledge of food promoted another perception of nutrition and health. Faroese housewives gained access to Danish cookbooks to guide the preparation of food and the women who had been to domestic science colleges in Denmark came home with new visions and attitudes, which spread through society like rings in water.

Inns and guesthouses, restaurants and cafés were almost unknown in the Faroe Islands until after 1900, their emergence necessitated by simple practical considerations and expanding travel both locally and internationally. A distinct restaurant culture did not develop in the islands, however, until more recently after Faroese restaurants metaphorically had distanced themselves more or less from Danish cuisine and were legally permitted to serve alcohol. This led to pioneering new ways to prepare traditional Faroese food, leading, in turn, to the development of a new Faroese food culture. Local and Continental cuisine have merged into a new and uniquely Faroese restaurant culture, which has gained worldwide attention. For the present, this is where we are.

Traditional Faroese Food Culture gives an insight into food culture in the Faroe Islands from the early days until today. It describes the circumstances that have affected and formed the food culture. The distinctive feature from the old days is the fermenting process used to preserve fish and meat. Growing influence from the outside world first affected the upper classes, but gradually the food traditions have changed in all levels of society, moving towards a common modern Faroese food culture.

In recent years, Faroese restaurants have developed and gained new ground based on traditional Faroese food culture. The Faroe Islands are today seen as interesting and innovative in an international gastronomic perspective.

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This booklet is a short and revised English edition of the two-volume work, Bót og biti: Matarhald í Føroyum (Vol. 1 and 2), published in April 2015 on Jóan Pauli Joensen's 70th birthday.

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