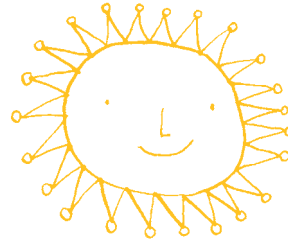


# Swede spot

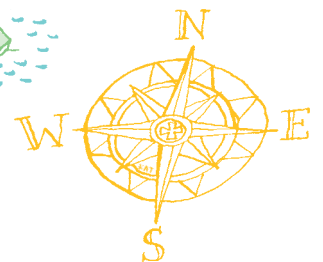


Scandinavia's largest nation is a modern cultural hotbed — and nothing says Sweden like its creative, evolving, sustainable cuisine.

WORDS MICHELLE TCHEA ILLUSTRATIONS JACQUELINE BISSETT



## SWEDEN



Photography: 4Comers Images, Alamy, Corbis, Getty Images, Morgan Ekner





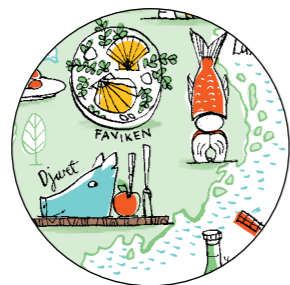
**T**he enduring modern fascination with Scandinavian cultures has provided substantial exposure for some of Sweden's best exports, especially when it comes to fashion and design. Yet, there is another stylish draw to the country's innovative and chic culture: the food. The Swedish moment consuming gourmets and food tragics has a steady and highly anticipated momentum.

The Swedes have an insatiable desire to be the new culinary destination of Europe. With alluring and daring chefs reinventing Swedish classics, Europe remains envious, curious and wanting more. But where exactly do you go to eat in one of the most expensive countries on the continent?

Demanding more than just a guidebook tour of their finest establishments, some of Sweden's best food producers, restaurateurs and chefs are sharing their secrets. With the country spread out across a giant puzzle of islands, hopping from one island to another becomes the only way to properly taste the wares of this country of nine million. But with more than 30,000 islands to sink your teeth into, Sweden's geographical layout can be difficult to navigate.

"Sweden is just one big body of land with small islands scattered across the coastline,"

says Totte Steneby of Stockholm restaurant Bakfickan Djuret (Lilla Nygatan 5; +46 8 5064 0084; [www.djuret.se](http://www.djuret.se)). "Each region [showcases] different chefs with different cuisines." The good news is, information is hardly scarce in a country that boasts a wealth of celebrated bloggers. Sweden also has a rich cafe culture known affectionately as Fika ("coffee break") — so I am thankful to venture into a country with coffee and cake on its mind.



## STOCKHOLM

The Swedes have a physical reputation the envy of most Europeans. Gorgeous model-like men and women parade around trendy and up-market shopping strips, such as Stockholm's Biblioteksgatan, making life seem unfair for mere brunettes who can't pull off tweed jackets and fluoro knitwear.

Stockholm sets the bar high, with design, innovation and creativity filling the air thanks to brands such as Absolut Vodka and fashion houses Sandqvist and Acne. Travellers flock to the capital with similarly high expectations, given the talk about the new Nordic cuisine. "We are well worth our good reputation; we have many talented chefs — ambitious and renowned," says chef Henrik Norström of Lux restaurant (Primusgatan 116; +46 8 619 0190; [www.luxstockholm.com](http://www.luxstockholm.com)). "The draw of Sweden is it provides good food and world-class experiences with rural roots," he adds.

Stockholm's jigsaw of 14 islands is a true gourmet's destination. Surrounded by freshwater lakes leading to the archipelago — as well as parkland and forests within a boat ride — island-hopping is encouraged for those wanting to experience the city's culinary diversity. However, if time isn't on your side, staying in Stockholm and picking just one island to explore can be equally rewarding. To start, enjoy cocktails and regional classics in the hip Scandic Grand Central hotel — its traditional Restaurant Teaterbrasseriet (Kungsgatan 70; +46 8 5125 2000; [www.scandichotels.com](http://www.scandichotels.com)) and hearty serves puts other hotel eateries to shame — and chef Niclas Fogelberg leads the charge.



You won't find classics such as rollmops at Restaurant Jonas (Fleminggatan 39; +46 8 650 2220; [www.restaurangjonas.se](http://www.restaurangjonas.se)). Instead, old Nordic cooking techniques are used to create progressive dishes that are unmistakably Swedish; think rhubarb braised in brown butter, and finished with vanilla foam and marshmallows. A 10-minute drive south-west is the aforementioned Lux, where Norström and his team smoke, salt and demand the best of their ingredients. "Our guests take part in the whole dining experience, making the most of seasonal produce," he says.

Moving east to Stockholm's residential side, veteran chef Jürgen Grossman's GQ (Kommendörsgatan 23; +46 8 5456 7430; [www.gqrestaurang.se](http://www.gqrestaurang.se)) is where locals go for French classics with a fresh, Swedish spin, like sour-cream ice cream with raspberries, profiteroles and chocolate sauce. Just a couple of blocks away awaits a different, more contemporary dining experience. At Volt (Kommendörsgatan 16; +46 8 662 3400; [www.restaurangvolt.se](http://www.restaurangvolt.se)), three young chefs — Peter Andersson, Fredrik Johnsson and Simon Carlsson make "small-scale and locally produced" dishes inspired by their grandmothers' cooking. Expect dishes like rabbit with carrots and dandelion. ▶



(clockwise from opposite) Stockholm at sunrise; Djuret's tableware; the restaurant's kitchen; a serving at Volt; Lux restaurant's interior.







(clockwise from top left) The streets of Visby, Gotland; Gothenburg's waterfront; Visby's cafe culture.

(opposite, clockwise from top left) A cabin on a Swedish lake; harvesting birch sap at Sav; Fäviken's rustic interiors; and the restaurant's kitchen.

### GOTHENBURG & KOSTER

A hop, skip and a train ride from Stockholm is Gothenburg and, unlike other Swedish cities, it's not just a little sister to the capital. Forget the Stockholm snobs and embrace the self-described puckish, creative cafes of the second city of Sweden. Musicians, artists, designers and entrepreneurs create a vital youth culture in Gothenburg, and the vibrant, underground party scene takes a backseat during the day, when food rules comfortably as the main pull of the city.

North of Gothenburg is the small city of Strömstad, and west of that Koster Islands. They're situated on the coast, with access to the wide-open and bountiful North Sea, and are renowned for their seafood. Serene nature reserves carpet the dramatic Koster archipelago and offer an enormous variety of water adventures, such as kayaking. Stop at Koster's Trädgårdar (452 05 Sydoster; +46 526 20599; www.kosterstradgardar.se), where award-winning young chef Anna Bengtsson and the team dish up shellfish and local classics that help make this eco-based region unforgettable.

From sustainable eating to artisanal culture, Rökeriet i Strömstad (Torskholmen Rökeriet, Strömstad; +46 708 941 414; www.rokerietstromstad.se) is a slow-food spot for the travelling diner, where owner Stefan Jensen artfully dishes up plates of smoked shellfish. "We do not want the food to be too pretentious, but simple and rustic, using the best ingredients," he says, surrounded by photos of his fellow local producers.

The Swedish mantra of uniting creativity and tradition leaves food critics more or less in agreement when it comes to the sustainability credentials of the new Nordic cuisine. "Trends come and go," says chef Jonas Lundgren of his Restaurant Jonas in Stockholm, "but good food always stays." ☞

— **GETTING THERE** To book your flight to Sweden, visit [www.virginaustralia.com](http://www.virginaustralia.com) or simply call 13 67 89 (in Australia).

is a little unassuming, to say the least. An 18th-century hunting estate on 100 square kilometres is where you will find head chef Magnus Nilsson. The restaurant, like its pragmatic chef, is raw and real. "We build up our stores ahead of the dark winter months," they say. "We dry, salt, jelly, pickle and bottle." Fish from the nearby lakes and moose often feature on the menu.

Heading all the way up to Are just for dinner seems an unusual move, but is most certainly not unheard of — Noma's René Redzepi once famously said: "If I had a chance to go anywhere in the world right now, I would go to Fäviken." In its closest neighbouring city, Östersund, you will find various other local producers, such as Sav (Frösö Park, Frösön; +46 63 43550; www.sav.se) where you can taste the wines made using Viking-era techniques — such as a sparkling made from the sap of birch trees.

Coffee drinkers should visit local roasters Are Kafferosteri (Helgesjövalen 211, Järpen; +46 733 744 043; www.arekafferosteri.se) and say hello to husband-and-wife team Per and Eva — internationally awarded baristas. Chase your caffeine fix with a few local favourites from Are Chokladfabrik, or Are Chocolate Factory (Björnänge 801, Are; +46 647 15580; www.arechokladfabrik.se), where you will find handmade chocolates, pralines and gooey caramel.



### ARE & JAMTLAND

If Stockholm is paradise for shoppers, then the historical central provinces of Jämtland and Härjedalen are Sweden's playground for thrill-seekers and nature enthusiasts. Just a 45-minute flight north-west of the capital will see you at one of Europe's premier alpine treasures.

Stretch your legs with friends on a dog-sledding safari in Duved, rub shoulders in Are with the Olympic snowboarding medallists, or simply throw yourself down an off-piste slope — keeping an eye on the wild animals. Hiking trails, sailing and golf dictate the warmer months — but, for something totally different, definitely try your hand at timber rafting in Jämtland.

Inside scoop, foodies: stay ahead of the game and book yourself a table at Fäviken Magasinet (Fäviken 216, Järpen; +46 647 40177; www.favikenmagasinet.se). For the "world's most daring restaurant", Fäviken

