

Common Dishes in Tornedal

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The potatoes were the most important staple food. They were usually boiled, unpeeled, but we also had mashed potatoes and potato salad. Sometimes Father used to give us a washed, unpeeled potato and we would roast it on the embers of the wood stove.

We ate porridge often. Oatmeal was cooked quite often, and semolina pudding. For my own part, as a child I was always afraid that the porridge would boil long enough to be too soft for my taste. To my delight, I was always allowed to serve myself when I thought it was just right. We ate porridge with cinnamon and sugar and all liked it, but it was almost even tastier if you fried up the porridge on the day after. Quite often Mother cooked rice meal porridge that was eaten, for example, when the children came home from school. We often had oatmeal gruel and warm chocolate in the morning.

There was rice pudding for special occasions. For the most part we ate rice pudding at supper, especially after the sauna on Saturdays. Before World War II broke out in earnest, we bought a whole bag of rice. The rice was washed thoroughly, and we children had good eyes, so we could see that there was not junk in the rice.

Since it was cooked in whole milk for some time, I remember that Mother would a towel around her hand so that it would not burn, for she stirred the rice pudding all the time with a wooden spoon as it boiled on the iron stove. The rag made it easy to move the pot, if it tended to boil too violently.

Since we generally bred a pig a year, we almost always had access to pork, which was salted and stored in barrels in the shed. Pork with potatoes was a common meal.

One time I remember that a friend in Hedenäset smoked a whole ham for us and it became something extra good, the fried ham with onion especially.

Usually we ate homemade bread. Only for Christmas we bought bread in large cartons.

Grandma baked bread, really dark syrup bread, and sometimes *rieska* -- unfermented barley flour bread. In addition, we had homemade thinbread. Real butter on bread we had very sporadically. For the most part we used margarine on the crisp bread.

During my early childhood, our milk was sold to the railway officials all the way in Kiruna. Some of the older girls (there were no boys in the family yet) took two or three-liter buckets on a bicycle handlebar and cycled off to the station, where there were buckets on hand from the conductor. We had regular customers who paid monthly. When the service ended, around 1937, we began to ship milk to a dairy in Hedenäset. Bönderna in the village took turns to drive the milk there. Such small-time vehicles eventually became the trucks that drove the milk.

As we got more money for milk fat, we could not usually take the cream to

make butter for ourselves. Mother thought it was important to get well paid for milk.

We ate *långfil* (*fiili*, a northern variant of yogurt) often, good with cucumber. To make it we took a couple tablespoons of finished långfil, put it into fresh whole milk and in a couple of days we had finished långfil .

Sometimes, especially at Christmas, we had cream to eat, from a bowl and we drew with a spoon limits on how much each one had to take. Then everyone got to eat his part with his spoon from the bowl and then we ate only the cream. It was very unusual and great fun.

When Grandma churned butter she first strained the cream. When it eventually became ready, she began to churn. She sat so quietly on a chair with the churn between her knees and pulled the plunger up and down . 'Sj sj sjuu ,sj sj sjuu', it sounded . When there eventually began to be nuggets in the liquid, the churning was done. She then caught up the clumps of butter with a scoop and put them in a large bowl. Now it was time to process the butter in water. She took more water and processed the butter with a wooden spoon until all the milk was gone. Then she salted the butter and when it was time to taste -- Ooooo so good !

Buttermilk, left when the butter has been removed, was good to drink. It was particularly refreshing to have with you when cutting the hay grown on the bog beyond Lapinjänkkä, Vuomajärvivägen, or when we were harvesting hay on the islands in the Torne River.

Speaking of hay and food, I remember that once for the pig slaughtering in autumn we had a real butcher, Lindgren, to perform the job and he cut up a pig for real. By that I mean that he took the line for the chops, fillets, etc. by themselves. Then Mother got the idea that if we could preserve the meat, it would be nice for the family to have it for the haying. It was good to have prepared foods with them.

She was a bit unsure about how she should cook the meat before it was canned. She went to the neighbor's wife, Hilda, who had been a cook before she came to marry Axel. She asked if perhaps Hilda could come and roast the meat. Yes, indeed, she could.

She peppered and salted and browned the meat and let it cook with the lid on, with a little water in the bottom of the pot . When the meat was done, she took up the chops and deboned them and made a heavenly sauce and then it was just to pack the meat in the large preserving jars that were waiting.

I will tell about food preservation too. We had no specialized preservation apparatus, but Mother knew how to use the big iron pot in the barn.

The food was put in glass jars in the bottom of the pot with the lids fastened carefully. Then water was poured into the pot so that the water reached about three quarters up the sides. Then they started a fire under the pot, but very carefully and slowly. As I remember, the pot boiled about an hour and then they let it cool the next day. The next step was to set the jars in the basement that was in the winter house. A very good cellar it was.

The potatoes did not germinate until the month of July, so canning the potatoes came in very handy, I need hardly say.

When we were out haying, the children who were too young to work lit the fire in the pit and cooked potatoes and warmed the meat in pots. After the hard work of haying, the food tasted heavenly. There was a nice cold spring at the end of a ditch on Lapinjänkkä, so we did not have to carry water with us.

I have already said that buttermilk was a good nutritious drink to have with us and also it was already soured, so it would keep until the next day.

Also, just for haying, we made a special drink called the Bridge of Latvia. They bought small bottles of concentrate, diluted with water and took the sugar and yeast and boiled the brew, then poured it in liter bottles, well-corked, and left it in the basement a few weeks. It became some kind of small beer. It happened sometimes that a bottle was left forgotten and someone told Mother that it was probably only father who drank it. Why I never understood.

Other food then! I have talked about pork but there was also the slaughter of cattle and sometimes an infant calf. The slaughter took place preferably late in the autumn in order to have fresh meat for a while when the cold came, but most of it was salted. The salted meat is used for a meat soup with potatoes, cabbage, root vegetables and carrots.

Sometimes there was dried salted meat. We had strips of meat hanging from the barn gable with nets around it to keep away insects, crows and magpies. Meat soup was also cooked with salted dried meat, but it was not good. I believe we used it in pea soup, but usually we used pork in the soup.

If a calf was born that we could not keep, it was slaughtered soon after birth. You cut it into large pieces, salt and pepper the pieces and put them in a long baking pan with a layer of water on the bottom. The meat cooked in the big oven. When the meat was cooked we ate it as it was, without potatoes. It was very good.

Another good food was brown beans with bacon or sausage. Mother's meatballs were very good also. She did not bother to roll them so nice, but took the ground meat with a spoon and it worked just as well. As I remember it was pretty rough ground meat that you grind yourself in a meat grinder before the days when you could buy ground beef at the store. Mother chopped onion quite rough, added the milk and potato flour, and the minced meat was ready. I remember that I was told to move it carefully so the minced meat would stay together.

She browned meatballs lightly and then she poured the balls into a pan of boiling milk. When they had cooked in the pan for a while, she added a flour mixture to the sauce. In all its simplicity, it was much awaited and good.

In the fall, when we had harvested cabbage, she often made cabbage soup with meatballs. It was a fall treat. Quite often we browned cabbage with syrup and ate it with meatballs and potatoes. It was hard to keep the cabbage very long, but a way to extend that time was to hide heads of cabbage in the hay in the barn.

I have to tell you also what happened about the food in 1941. There was a war going on that winter and ration cards were talked about. Mother and father had heard that soon they would have to disclose the number of animals they had, and so it came to be.

One dark autumn afternoon, an animal was slaughtered in secret. Much of the meat was salted and because it was cold we could freeze some. Some of the meat was cut into smaller pieces and Father had been promised by a friend in Hedenäset 6 kilometers away, that he would cut it to mincemeat when Father arrived with the meat one evening.

He put on his leather overalls and loaded meat on his lightweight motorcycle and drove away. We thought he took a very long time, but eventually he arrived, tired and sweaty. The motorcycle had broken down and he had been pushing the bike for long stretches. The result of the effort was that he was very chilled and ultimately he got pulmonary edema and was admitted to the sanatorium in Sandträsk, where he stayed for several weeks. It was the story that the minced meat was frozen in the form of round "loaves" .

Sunday sweets often consisted of thin pancakes. That would be a treat, with plenty of margarine in the pan and when they were ready, they had crisp brown edges. Cloudberry jam tasted divine, and ice cold milk was perfect.

We hardly ever had time for dessert, but on the weekend we could get rosehips, or pudding made from dried fruit or pudding made from berries. Very occasionally Mother made soup of oatmeal and prunes. As I recall, she had almonds in the soup, too. The soup was strained before we ate it. Although it was not very pretty to look at, it was very good with a dollop of whipped cream.

Fish then? My father was not very keen on fishing, but it is perhaps unfair to say that, because he worked very much at his electrician job in the summer. When the salmon were running, the fishermen would lease the fishing rights in our waters and to repay it, we got a big salmon each summer.

In winter we could get frozen cod. The sexton had purchased a large quantity of frozen cod in Norway. How he came by it I do not know. He drove around with his horse and sled full of cod fish and sold it in the villages. Winters were infinitely long so we had cod for a long time. Most of the cod was cooked with potatoes and onion sauce.

I must not forget lutefisk. It was bought in large quantities and stored in large tubs. It was common winter food.

Icelandic herring were purchased in large buckets and eaten fried, pickled, or you made salad of it. We ate salt herring very often. You could boil it or grill it over coals.

Sometime in the summer it happened that a woman came cycling from Vuomajärvi with a sack full of fresh fish. A few perch and pike, I think we bought from her.