

WORKSHOP SUMMARY

FOOD AND MEALS IN THE COMMUNICATION OF COASTAL CULTURE & HISTORY

OSLO, NORWAY, 30 - 31 OCTOBER 2012



FOTO: TJUVHOLMEN SJØMAGASIN

On the 30 and 31 October 2012, the New Nordic Food programme brought together representatives from a number of coastal museums and maritime attractions in the Nordic countries for a fellow workshop. The workshop, which had sprung from discussions during The Coastal Culture conference in Bergen earlier in the year, had its focus on how to use food and meals as a tool when communicating coastal culture and history.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the workshop was twofold.

- To share knowledge, exchange experiences and to network.
- To discuss how food and food traditions in coastal areas can be a vital part of an engaging communications strategy within the coastal museums.

METHOD

In most coastal museums and maritime attractions food and meals have scarcely been used as a tool for communication. Therefore, the methods used in the workshop were designed to inspire in order to get participants engaged by the idea of increasing food communication in their everyday work. Thanks to the informal approach the workshop was inspiring and created new ideas as well as a strong Nordic network.

SUMMARY

The workshop was held at Tjuvholmens Sjømagasin at Tjuvholmen, a location chosen to harmonize with the theme of the conference.

Day One:

To inspire and to get the participants in the right mood, the workshop started with a lecture on “storytelling through food”. Each participant introduced him/herself by using a food item which they had chosen and had brought along to the conference. This presentation technique was much appreciated since it differed from traditional presentations and therefore (hopefully) triggered the memory.

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After a Norwegian salmon lunch, the afternoon started with an introduction to storytelling by Harald Osa from Norsk Matkultur. In his presentation, he raised some important questions which later became the basis for further discussion.

Following were two presentations of Best Case Practices, Vikingskibsmuseet (the Viking ship museum) in Roskilde and Lindesnes fyrmuseum (Lindesnes lighthouse museum). These were much appreciated and served as a great inspiration to all participants.

Afterwards, each participant held a ten – minute presentation which focused on their own museum or project. In accordance with the theme for the workshop, the evening was spent at a seafood restaurant where the discussions from the day's workshop continued.

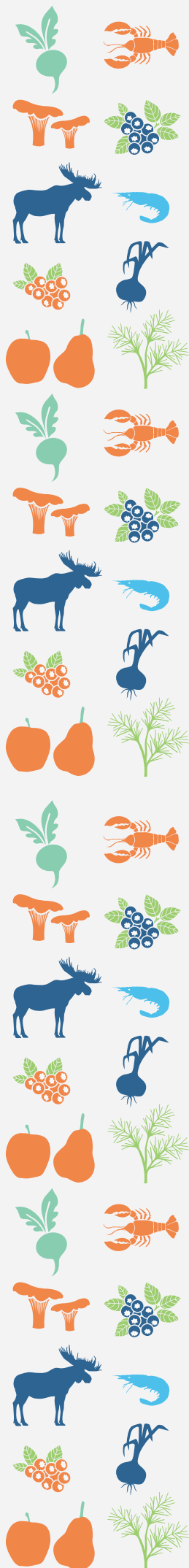
Day Two:

The morning's programme started with a summary of the previous day. Thereafter, Zonen for Madkultur presented the new house of food culture which is currently under construction on the Danish island of Bornholm. The rest of the day was spent discussing the challenges we face when using food as a tool for communication, how to involve visitors at the museums and how we can cooperate and improve communication. The day was summarized by Unn Karin from Norsk Matkultur who went through the most important aspects.

It was clear from the start that the participants' previous experiences varied according to the institution they represented. This turned out to be both positive and negative. On the plus side, New Nordic Food with this workshop opened the participants' eyes to what can be achieved. Furthermore, although inexperienced, all participants showed an interest in and a commitment to using food and meals as a tool for communication. Focusing on the negative, since the group was so diverse, some individuals found it hard to relate to and identify with some of the participants' testimonials and practices.

EVALUATION

The evaluation form was distributed on the 19 November. And although, by then, three weeks had passed since the workshop, seven out of ten participants filled in the questionnaire. The survey consisted of seven questions and Survey Monkey was used as a digital platform for the questionnaire.



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The result shows that the case presentation from the Vikingskibs museum in Roskilde got the highest rating (7,86 out of 10), followed by “exploring the question of communication” (7,43), “exploring the question of cooperation” (7,14) and “general knowledge sharing” (6,14). “General networking” and “exploring the question of involvement of the guests” got an equal score of; 6,00.

In their answers to question two, the participants indicated how inspired they were by the different sessions of the workshop.

Again, the case presentation from Roskilde got the highest score, followed by the case presentation from Lindesnes lighthouse. “Exploring the question of communications” is ranked as the third most inspiring part of the workshop.

In question three we wanted to know whether the participants thought they would use the network from the workshop in the future. Six out of seven replied “to some degree”, one answer stated “to a very high degree”.

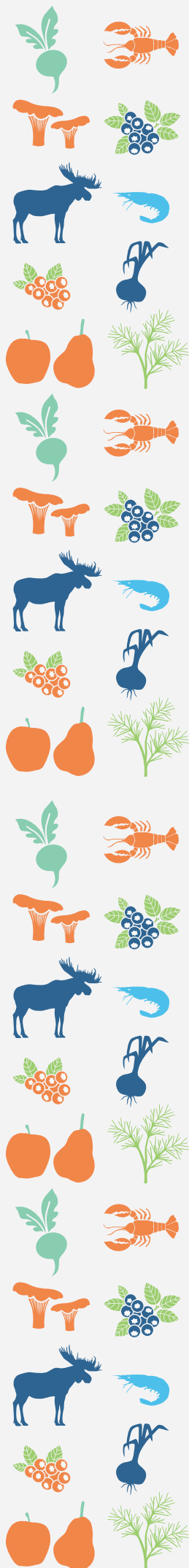
In question four we asked the participants to rate their return of investment, as in the time and money they had spent in order to participate in the workshop:

Five out of seven answered that they believed that they, to a high degree got a good return on their investment, two answered that they thought so to a very high degree.

In question five, the participants were asked to rate the work of the workshop organisers. Six thought the job was “good”, one person wrote “excellent”.

In question six we wanted the participants to suggest what the next step for the group should be. Three alternatives were given.

1. Hands on-workshop on developing food communication concepts. (0 answers)
2. Setting up a Nordic network for museums/attractions using/or having an ambition to use food as a tool for communication. (2 answers)
3. A Nordic pilot project focusing on developing food as a tool for communication within museums/attractions.(5 answers)



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In the last question we opened up for comments. We got three personal comments:

- The initial focus on museums and food got lost during the workshop
- It was hard to communicate in English
- Although all three alternatives in question six are worth following up, a Nordic pilot project would probably produce the most useful results for all involved.

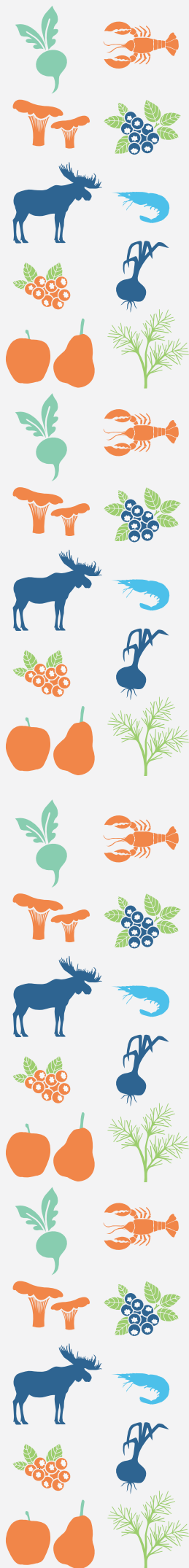
The evaluation shows that the overall opinion was that return of investment in time and money was good. However, the answers may be tainted by the fact that the workshop itself was free of charge. At the same time it indicates that the meeting and the workshop content was highly appreciated. Most valued of all was the case story from Roskilde, followed by the group discussions on communication and cooperation. Roskilde Viking museum was clearly the most inspiring example, although other case presentations served as a great inspiration to those present, as did “communication through food”.

However, only one of the participants thought that the network would be useful to a very high degree. A majority are more moderate and state that they will probably use it “to some degree”.

All participants want to follow up the ideas that were discussed during the workshop, and the idea of a Nordic pilot project seems to have been the most attractive.

From the organisers’ point of view, we rate the event, according to the answers of the questionnaire, as a success. However, since only ten museums were represented at the workshop, the impact of the workshop is somewhat limited.

Already when planning the event, we had got a clear indication from quite a few museums that, although they showed an interest in the idea and subject of the workshop, were prohibited to come due to lack of both time and funding. To get a greater number of participants, there is clearly a need for more information, and possibly by e-mail, directed to the directors of the museums.



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Topics that came up for discussion during the workshop:

- Awareness of food now and then
- Knowledge through demonstrations
- Practical work/workshops for visitors
- Use of the senses
- Storytelling
- Words and menu language
- Consistency
- Hosting
- Food memories

IN DETAIL

The workshop focused on the following questions:

- What are the challenges we face when working with food and drink?
- In what ways can food increase involvement and engage visitors?
- How can you cooperate to improve and extend the use of food in museum activities?
- What are the possibilities of communicating through food?

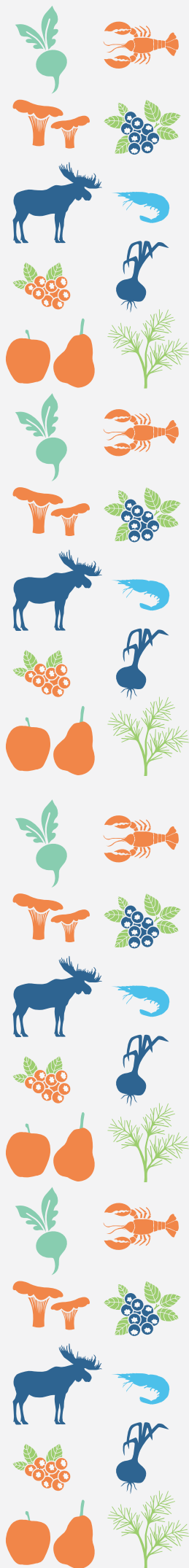
CHALLENGES

- Regulations, food legislation
- Lack of qualified staff
- The museum has to operate commercially

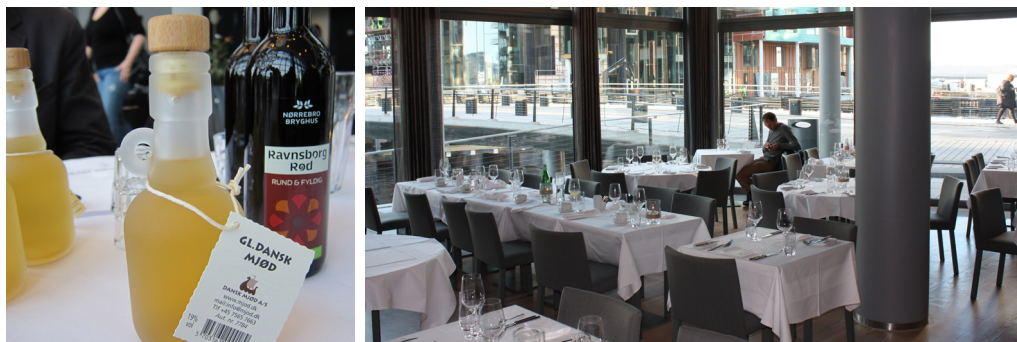
There is a need for adequate and sustainable business models to make money.

Idea: Put exhibitions and learning into the café/restaurant

- Changes are complex
- Establishing a larger vision
- Ownership within the whole organization
- Interdisciplinary work
- Networking – sharing knowledge – creative inspiration
- Visibility on a crowded market
- How to cooperate with the producers in order to tell the stories behind the product.
- The food story must be interesting enough for the guests to actually visit the restaurant/café
- Lack of appropriate facilities (kitchen etc)
- High season – low season, the need for an adaptable concept
- The guest



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INVOLVEMENT OF VISITORS

- activate guests – let them smell, taste, touch, cook e.g.
- integrate food and exhibitions
- customer must relate to the concept
- use of raw produce, whole animals
- fra fjord til bord – from sea to table
- traditional cooking methods
- food in society
- food and the meal as a social arena
- concepts - for families and other groups
- traditional food but using modern presentation techniques
- guided local tasting sessions for groups
- Nordic food names and expressions, communicating through menus, dishes etc

COOPERATION

- create business models involving the museum(director) and the restaurant (chef)
- including a lunch at the museum restaurant in the price of the ticket – (serving local foods and dishes)
- increase networking among the museums – promote each other
- create packages for tour operators (Nordic or other)
- cooperate with:
 - local businesses
 - schools/non - profit organisations
 - local organisations
 - local authorities
 - local restaurants serving thematic meals related to exhibitions at the museum
 - festival participation – communication and activities in a wider context and on a bigger scale

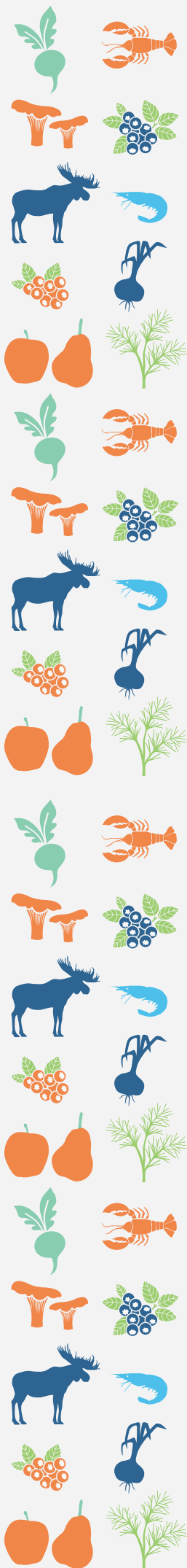


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COMMUNICATION

- let the visitors use all senses: taste, smell, touch and cook
- demonstrations of traditional preservation methods, i.e. smoking fish, pit-cooking etc.
- demonstrations of traditional cooking and baking methods – find the people who know how
- look out for local storytellers – fishermen and others
- use food in the story of daily life in a defined period of our history
- utilizing of the right food elements can underline and strengthen the message
- follow a time line for a defined raw produce or product, describe its development
- the use of food in different social layers – show differences and similarities in dishes and in the use of raw produce.
- food as the medium, engine or fuel of story telling
- fishing equipment, kitchen utensils, and household tools – how were they used?
- use demos that involve smelling and tasting – our senses bring back memories and increase learning.

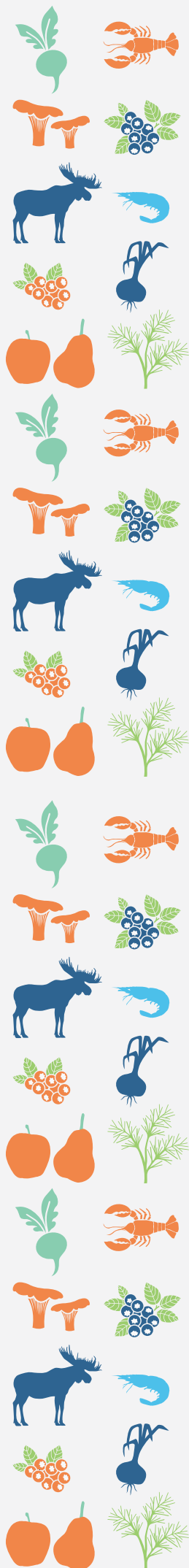
PARTICIPANTS' WORKSHOP SUMMARY

AHA – here's a chance for cooperation:

- Roskilde, Lofoten, Island
- Use the network to exchange knowledge and guests (visibility)
- kystreise.no
- Bergen Fiskeriforum
- Zonen for madkultur
- Måltidsriket-Lindesnes
- Roskilde-Åland

This inspired me:

- Roskilde – “we are modern people looking back on our history”
Lindesnes fyr
Harald Osa
- “Matminner” – food souvenirs, local produce for sale
- Food concept at Vikingeskibsmuseet
- kystreise.no



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Thank you for the tip:

- Baking bread (Lindesnes), local foods for events/arenas
- Breaking the waves – bottles
- “Fyrhagen” – the sea garden
- “Matminner” – food souvenirs, local produce for sale

JOKER

- Cold cat (introducing fish in a bun as a snack)
- Madzonen.dk