



According to the International Coffee Organization (ICO), about 1.4 billion cups of coffee a day are poured and enjoyed worldwide. The small Nordic nations contribute more than their fair share to these cups: Scandinavians top the world charts of coffee consumption. The Finns consume an amazing 12 kilograms (over 26 lb.!) of coffee per person per year, but the Norwegians and the Icelanders are not far behind, with 9,9 kg and 9,0 kg of coffee per person year each. The Danes drink their share of coffee as well – 8,7 kilograms – and while the Swedes lost the #5 spot to the Dutch (8.4 kg) in the latest available statistics from 2008, they still averaged an admirable 8,2 kg. (So, to all of you who read Stieg Larsson's books and wondered if it really is possible for someone to consume *that* much coffee *that* often – yes.)

Coffee came to Scandinavia at the very end of the 17th century and was first taken up by the upper- and middle-class urban Scandinavians who wanted to keep up with European trends. During the 19th century, coffee-drinking gradually started to spread to lower social classes and to more rural regions. At first, the expensive beverage was only served on holidays and special occasions, but by the turn of the 20th century people started to drink it on weekdays as well.

Nowadays coffee is the national beverage of all Nordic countries and it is served at every opportunity. If you visit someone's home, you will be served coffee; if you visit someone's office in business matters, you will be served coffee. Coffee is served at weddings, funerals and christenings. It is served with dessert after dinner and first thing in the morning; coffee breaks punctuate the work day and people meet up for coffee after work. Coffee is the beverage that accompanies a conversation and lubricates social situations.

While most of the coffee consumed is still good-ole filter coffee, specialty coffees have become popular too; today's university student will likely have filter coffee in the morning, another cup of it after lunch (in a take-away cup, to sip on while attending a lecture), but opt for a latte or a cappuccino when meeting with friends at the coffee shop in the evening. The favourite coffee of the Scandinavians continues to be light roasted type, but, dark roasted coffee is gradually growing in popularity. Instant coffee is not widely consumed – it is considered a sad, desperate substitute for the real thing – nor is

decaffeinated coffee popular. Travellers beware: if you ask for decaf, Scandinavians *will* think you're a wimp.

Pastries have always been an essential part of Nordic coffee culture: what's a cup of coffee without a little something sweet?

[recipe links here]



The history of coffee is intertwined with the history of alcohol in Scandinavia. In the early 20th century, when alcohol became more difficult to come by (either due to prohibition or simply because it got too expensive), people turned to coffee: a cup of coffee was felt to have the same warming, invigorating effect as a shot of vodka. However, when alcohol policies relaxed, coffee maintained its popularity, and women, in particular, continued to prefer their cup to the shot! Scandinavians have, of course, also found many ways to combine the two vices. One pan-Nordic phenomenon is called *kaffe med dopp* (in the Swedish-speaking islands of Finland), *prestakaffi* (in Iceland) or *karsk* (in Norway), the simple recipe for which is this:

Place a fairly large coin at the bottom of a glass.

Pour coffee into the glass until you can no longer see the coin.

Pour moonshine (or other clear spirits) until the coin appears again.

Ta-da! ☺