

Preparatory action on EU plant and animal genetic resources

Nordic Food – use of GR in haute cuisine

Overview

1. Objectives

Nordic Food is an example of successfully branding the food and cuisine of the northern countries which is seasonal and healthy. The objective of this case study is to explore the role of the chefs of the haute cuisine restaurants, understand the success factors of the New Nordic Food program and describe how GR have taken advantage of the developments. The focus is on Denmark for projects and examples. Can this kind of branding be applied in other situations?

2. Description of the case

The Nordic food movement seems to have started with the New Nordic Food Manifesto that was framed by famous chefs from the northern countries in 2004. The Danish chef who was involved in this was Rene Redzepi, who founded restaurant Noma a year later together with Claus Meyer. It was the Nordic Council of Ministers¹ that supported the Nordic Cuisine Symposium where the manifesto was drafted. A year after the Manifesto, the Council of Ministers came with the Århus Declaration, 'showing that they were keenly aware of the growing movement around food and stated that this had strong links to important political issues such as health, rural development, export, tourism and the general growth of the experience industry². So the chefs' role was closely orchestrated by the Northern Council of Ministers.

The declaration led to the establishment of the **Steering Group for New Nordic Food** in 2005 and in which all northern countries were represented. The programme of the Steering Group regards the Nordic kitchen's significant traits, 'i.e. cooking with pure and healthy ingredients from the land and the sea. It cultivates our common food culture and builds on

¹ More specifically the steering group was set up under the Nordic Council of Ministers for Fisheries and Aquaculture, Agriculture, Foodstuffs and Forestry (MR-FJLS). Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden have been members of the Nordic Council of Ministers since 1971. Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Åland also have representation Nordic Council of Ministers.

² The emergence of a new Nordic Food Culture, Final report from the program New Nordic Food II, 2010–2014, <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:854695/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

the qualities of our region: pure, simple and safe food, produced to a high ethical standard'³. At the same time the ambition of the programme is 'to strengthen the region's competitive edge on the increasingly aggressive global food market.'

The first term of the programme lasted three years, from 2007 to 2010. The budget was a little less than 1 million EUR per year and was used to develop the idea of New Nordic Food, define Nordic gastronomy and turn ideas into activities. A programme manager was appointed. At that time the representatives of the group consisted more of practitioners than policy makers. The Danish representative was culinary entrepreneur Claus Meyer. Thirty different projects were implemented. Restaurants and finer cuisines were prominent contributors. As a Steering Group member summarised: 'A lot of activities were organised at that time, but without a clear strategy', (interview, Mads F. Fischer-Møller)⁴

In the second term of the programme (2010-2014) the strategy became to focus on how Nordic food can improve children's health, how public meals can be lifted to a new level and how Nordic cuisine can be used more actively in export promotion. Cooperation with other sectors and Nordic programmes was a priority, as well as an increase in small-scale production of Nordic foods. Representatives were selected from a wider range of sectors, from the business as well as the political sector, the gastronomic world, food producers, consumers and the tourist industry.

Since 2015, the Steering Group has been operating without a programme manager and the budget is around 150,000 EUR per year. The aim is to further integrate the ideas of New Nordic Food in the existing policy. There will be no longer be inherent funding possibilities in the new programme. Most likely, themes like the branding of Nordic Food, food in the public institutional kitchens and SMEs will continue to be the focus.

Analysis

3. Funding and support

The New Nordic Food programme is fully supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The Manifesto, though it was drawn up by a group of Nordic chefs, was basically done so by invitation from the Nordic Council of Ministers. Funding projects was possible during the first two terms of the programme, but this part of the programme has now been phased out, so it will continue through the activities and policies that have been established in the previous years.

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New

Nordic

cuisine,

http://nynordiskmad.org/fileadmin/webmasterfiles/PDF/Ny_Nordisk_Mad_Low.pdf

⁴ See full interview report in Annex 3

4. Positioning at local or regional level

There has been a strong international orientation in the branding of New Nordic Food, not only because the Nordic concept concerns different Nordic countries, but also because these countries wanted to show the potential of (haute) cuisine rooted in their region to the rest of the world. International in its branding, the New Nordic Food programme has been very much focused on the diversification of the food chain and supporting local, small scale producers. The report of the second term of the programme says⁵: 'In food production we can become better in sustainable food production and getting even more flavour from products from the area in which they are produced; terroir'. To quote the Swedish chef Mattias Dahlgren from the same report; 'We must adapt our agriculture to other parameters, such as making the world's best, most interesting and healthy food. We will never be able to produce the world's cheapest food, which is probably not very interesting anyway'.

Below we give two examples in the boxes of how the attention for New Nordic Food has supported the market development of products based on GR. The grain sector in particular shows remarkable market successes. For example, before, only two kinds of flour were available on the shelves of the supermarket, whereas nowadays there are eight or ten, including Danish wheat of bread baking quality (box 1).

In the vegetable, potato and bean sector the market and accompanying supply chains have not been as developed nor professionalised. The growing of special plant varieties is still merely in the hands of the hobby growers/ farmers and supply networks collecting small (wild) supplies have just started to emerge.

Also, there is hardly any rise in the use of products of special animal breeds. For livestock the development of a market seems to be more difficult, because competition with the regular products is very fierce, e.g. the price difference with the regular meat is very high. See box 2 for the milk of the Red Danish Dairy Cows.

Box 1. New products and chains: the story of Øland wheat⁶

Per Grupe is the co-founder of Grupe & Meyer⁷, but three years ago he started working for himself again, while Claus Meyer took over his share. He is still delivering Øland wheat to Grupe & Meyer. Presently he is building his own mill; 90% of the construction work is finished. Six years ago he started to be involved in flour making. His interest has been to improve the quality of the wheat and still produce locally. The conventional wheat has high yields, but low quality. He finally found wheat that he was satisfied with, but he could not convince conventional mills to buy it and bring it to the market: the higher costs of the flour would not sell in the supermarket they said. A miller in Sweden was interested to mill his wheat. Grupe & Meyer produces flour for six Meyer's bakeries and Delis, restaurants like Restaurant Julian and Relae, and the supermarket COOP (such as 1 kg consumer

⁵ The emergence of a new Nordic Food Culture, Final report from the program New Nordic Food II, 2010–2014, <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:854695/FULLTEXT01.pdf>.

⁶ The information in this box is based on the interview with Per Grupe, see Annex 3 for the full interview report.

⁷ Grupe & Meyer is a company that produces organic wheat and rye flour and Danish, organic flour (Øland wheat). <http://www.grupemeyer.dk/>. See also details in section 6 of the Annex to the interview report of Mads F. Fischer-Møller.

packages of Øland wheat flour). 'We reap three to four tons of wheat per hectare, so the yield is lower and the price per kg therefore higher. But the difference in the price of the finished bread is small. Taste, nutrition and baking pleasure of the bread is also higher.' Per Grupe's Øland wheat is a mix of old and new varieties. He tested over 500 of them that he obtained from the Nordic Genebank. This testing was supported by the Steering Group for New Nordic Food. Nearly all could grow, but some varieties were very tall and sensitive to the wind. Some had very good qualities but very low yields which would have made them too expensive. The idea of working on his own is that he can supply a few bakeries directly. Through a close cooperation throughout this short supply chain, including growing and milling activities (by Per himself) and the baking process (artisanal baker) he hopes to even further improve the quality and the variety on the shelves. Cf. pictures 1-3.

Box 2. Thorshøjgaard with support of the chefs⁸

Thorshøjgaard has been a biodynamic farm for 40 years and is run by Niels Stokholm and his wife Rita Hansen. The farm delivers potatoes, vegetables, milk and meat directly to individuals and restaurants like Noma and Restaurant Julian. Niels is milking Red Danish Dairy cows. In 1950 there were still 1.5 million cows of this breed in Denmark, whereas today, there are only 200. He has a herd of 120 cows. The other 80 cows are kept on what Niels calls 'industrial farms', in a programme supported by the genetic research centre in Aarhus. Niels' point of view is that to keep the breed, the animals need to be kept in relationship with the environment and with the farm: 'They should have the possibility to develop their own instincts.' On Thorshøjgaard, bulls can show natural behaviour. Calves stay with their mothers for 6 months, so cows take care of their calves. They are very healthy and hardly receive any treatment. They are only fed hay, the whole plant. They are not dehorned. Therefore, their sense of smell is much better (the scent goes right up in the horn). If cows are kept on industrial farms as hobby animals, they get high protein rich feed suitable for industrial cows. If they are inseminated, they do not receive it, because they have grown too fat. The genetic research centre in Aarhus is not very much aware of this and therefore their programme is not very helpful for him, as Niels explains.

Niels: 'I am not idealistic, but realistic. I'm doing a full scale test on 70 ha'. Now researchers come and compare his farm with the conventional ones. His animals show no stress, and a more natural behaviour than those on conventional farms. His holistic approach has resulted in the highest biodiversity of plants per square metre in Denmark. Farming like this is feasible. Also economically: 'For milk we get 15 DKK per litre, which is about two EUR. It is more than five times the amount of what the industrial farms get.'

Niels' work has been very much supported by the fact that Noma's chef Redzipe referred to him as one of his high quality supplier. The farm also receives financial support from Copenhagen Streetfood. The documentary 'Good Things Await' that is shown at the IDFA festival 2015 will make Thorshøjgaard even more famous. Cf. pictures 4 -6.

⁸ The information in this box is based on the interview with Niels Stokholm and his wife Rita Hansen, see Annex 3 for the full interview report. Information about the farm: <http://www.landbruger-thorshoejgaard.dk/>

Thorshøjgaard has a short supply chain selling milk and meat directly to users. The story of Per Grupe shows the inflexibility of a bulk processor on handling smaller scale supply. By contrast Brewery Carlsberg as bulk processor adapted to the demand for local specialties and niche products. The brewery created the Jacobsen microbrewery for small scale produce. Claus Meyer remarks: 'that's one of the most successful examples of how to turn the Nordic Cuisine phenomenon into industrial food production'⁹. This is also a success story for the grain sector.

The examples in this section show the different pace in which the ideas of New Nordic Food were implemented in the different sectors, but also the variety of ways in which existing chain actors may respond.

5. Partnerships and networking

Creating networking and partnerships has been one of the basic elements of the New Nordic Food programme. Internationally, because the programme itself is a cooperation between the northern countries itself, but also nationally. The programme created networks of competence, like between expertise centres and small-scale producers from all the Nordic countries. Eldrimner¹⁰ in Sweden is a good example of an expertise centre for a small-scale food business, where entrepreneurs can improve their skills. Within Denmark, the Copenhagen House of Food¹¹ was established with the aim to provide knowledge on how to serve more locally grown food, available in the season in the public institutional kitchens, such as schools and elderly homes.

Also within the supply chain, new partnerships emerge. In the vegetable sector some wholesalers have started to coordinate small-scale producers for the supply of local and seasonal produce to restaurants. Ingwersen Frugt & Grønt¹², which started to do so for Restaurant Julian is an example. The programme also indirectly endorsed partnerships between suppliers and restaurants, and even suppliers and consumers (box 2), like in the case of Copenhagen Street Food, where its initiating chef Jesper Møller, decided that 5 DKK (i.e. 0.70 EUR) of the water sold there was to fund the farm of Niels Stokholm. In September 2014 they gave 400,000 DKK (i.e. 53,600 EUR) to the foundation.

Grain grower Per Grupe keeps in touch with other wheat growers in Germany, Switzerland and Sweden. This is a network of knowledge among professionals, but the network is not very professionalised. 'We exchange ideas and help each other. We are all small and financial possibilities are limited. It would be good to have some 'boxes' where you could get some support to develop ideas. Big breeders are not interested in this, because they think the Danish market (or any local market) is too small' (interview, Per Grupe).

6. Communication

⁹ See the full interview in Annex 3.

¹⁰ www.eldrimner.com/, See also section 5 of the Annex to the interview report of Mads F. Fischer-Møller

¹¹ <http://en.kbhmadhus.dk>, See also section 4 of the Annex to the interview report of Mads F. Fischer-Møller

¹² Company's website: www.ingwersen.dk

Communication has been the core business of the Programme on New Nordic Food promoting Nordic food culture and its different aspects both in the region and internationally. During the second term of the programme, in order to strengthen its international profile, 70 ambassadors had an introduction to New Nordic Food at the Swedish Embassy in Copenhagen. Five Nordic chefs travelled to Tokyo in October to participate in an event called Nordic Star Chefs in Japan. The Programme improved its web presence and enhanced the news flow on New Nordic Food. Within the region itself, restaurants, canteens and bakeries explained the idea of New Nordic to customers. Cf. box 3.

Box 3. The job to teach people local and seasonal¹³

Daniel Christensen, chef and manager of the Restaurant Julian in the National Museum, Tolboden and Copenhagen Streetfood has the mission to be 'green'. That is his reason to choose less meat, local and in the season, not because it is 'New Nordic'. This mission started when the Danish Minister for Environment asked to make a climate friendly Christmas lunch in December 2008 and make the carbon footprint as low as possible. Christmas lunches in Denmark usually contain a lot of meat and poultry. Restaurant Julian managed to reduce the carbon footprint by 45% and still make a successful lunch.

Daniel: 'It is our job to give our guests the restaurant experience and teach people not to make the safe choice. But it can be hard to make the guests understand why it costs more to use local ingredients and be sustainable, and that we would rather use a tiny local apple than one big and shiny one from South America that is cheaper.' In all three locations they can have big groups of up to 700 people for dinner parties. Bigger companies want to present themselves as green and are especially interested in having dinners at one of the Restaurants. Their turnover grew from 7 million seven years ago to 19 million today. Cf. pictures 7-11.

7. Outputs and added value

The Council of Ministers, through the New Nordic Food Programme, has succeeded in the aim to make people more aware of the Nordic cuisine and to put the region on the gastronomic map of the world. The success was more than what was hoped for. In addition, the programme changed government, which began to support projects on food culture. The programme also had an effect on the food business. The past years have shown an increased number of small, local producers. Their products can now be found on the shelves of the supermarkets. Consumers are much more interested in local products than 10 years ago. Above all, the restaurant sector has grown. Mads Fischer-Møller said: 'Copenhagen was quite boring 15 years ago. Now we have top restaurants as well as those that are more affordable, that are inspired by the ideas of New Nordic Food. There is an economic component here too, because even during the crisis, 8,000 new jobs were created in restaurants in Denmark.' The example in the boxes 1 and 2 show that some products based on GR gained from the developments and their added value is clearly higher compared to regular products.

8. Sustainability

¹³ The information in this box is based on the interview with Daniel Christensen. See Annex 3 for the full interview report.

Even though the New Nordic Food programme has no additional funds anymore, the attention for New Nordic Food will continue because it has affected many people, it has been internalised in government policies and has started to change the food business and the restaurant sector. The institutional kitchens are still the focus of the current programme, bringing the ideas of New Nordic Food to the next generations.

Especially in the grain sector new products have been developed based on old Danish varieties and the market (beer, bread, flour) is still growing. In the beginning there were problems bringing new seeds and grains to the market, because the Danish authorities did not allow for their certification. This relates to the EU Directive on the marketing of vegetable seeds which has been interpreted differently in different Member States. There seems to be on-going discussions regarding a potential amendment of the legislative act transposing the EU Directive in Denmark which would decrease these problems¹⁴. How New Nordic Food will work out in the vegetable sector is unclear. The Danish vegetable sector is growing again after years of decline. This is promising but at the moment it is not very clear what the implications are for GR in vegetables. The sector is still scattered and dominated by hobby growers/ farmers. Meat and dairy products from special breeds still have a tiny share. If the breeds are to be kept in a natural way to keep the GR as suggested by Niels Stokholm, support is needed to preserve the GR that way. Therefore, more attention should be given to this issue.

The New Nordic Food programme has been an incentive for small entrepreneurs to professionalise, has inspired new shops and restaurants to open their doors, has brought new products to the market and is still implementing the ideas of New Nordic Food to institutional kitchens. The New Nordic Food programme is entering its third term, but even if there were no programme at all, these changes would last. However, as noted above in section 5 on partnerships, the knowledge exchange on specific GR varieties, their characteristics and potential for use and in the market among growers or growers and the chefs could be still described as a hobby activity. It is done through passion and moral conviction, but at the same time it makes this knowledge network fragile.

9. Upscaling and out-scaling

Instead of upscaling the New Nordic Food programme is in the process of downscaling. It was able to do so because its ideas have been adopted in several places. Besides, the ideas of New Nordic Food are being integrated into the existing policy. But, as explained in section 4, the success of the grain sector cannot be easily copied to the other sectors. The GR vegetable sector is still growing, the GR meat sector is small and the knowledge exchange in the GR resource and its use in the market still depends on volunteers.

Regarding out-scaling the ideas of New Nordic Food to other situations, it can be said that the ideology is very imprecise and the idea of food with less meat, local, pure and in season can be translated to very different circumstances. It is proven by the fact that Claus Meyer

14

See:

<http://www.froesamlerne.dk/sites/default/files/Bytte%20og%20salg%20af%20frø%20på%20ikke-kommercielt%20plan.pdf>.

has developed New Bolivian Food together with Bolivian actors. But there is no guarantee that in another context the success would be as great as that of New Nordic Food in the Nordic countries, because there the movement, manifesto and programme created 'the perfect storm that put a label on a sensation and some trends at the right time' (interview, Mads F. Fischer-Møller).

Conclusions

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>Haute cuisine chefs generated international attention and were facilitated in this mission through the NNF-programme;</p> <p>Chefs support local suppliers, and GR related products;</p> <p>Public-private cooperation in the NNF-programme: initial public support for developing new chains, bakeries, restaurants. Culinary entrepreneurs a.o. Meyer, realising marketing possibilities;</p> <p>Second term of NNF programme focused on institutional kitchens directly involving the next generation in NNF;</p> <p>Flexibility in the ideology: there are different ways of implementation;</p> <p>Matured, new and popular chains in GR related grain products (flour, beer, bread) were created.</p>	<p>The involvement of haute cuisine chefs can unintentionally make people feel that they were not part of the process;</p> <p>More complex supply chains of GR (vegetables, other plant products) still to be developed, e.g. new logistics for seasonal small streams of supply to be developed;</p> <p>Exchange of knowledge about GR for product development is no longer supported, the small or hobby producers involved have limited financial possibilities. While bulk processors are not yet interested.</p>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>For New Nordic Food: Right label (name) created the 'storm' at the right moment;</p> <p>For new food movements: they link with the Green movement, lowering carbon foot print in food. Larger companies being interested.</p>	<p>Attention and financial support for produce based on animal GR breeds is still needed, but can diminish.</p>

Private parties and the public sector have worked closely in the programme, especially during the first period. A momentum was created through the Manifesto on New Nordic Food by the chefs. The making of the programme was closely orchestrated by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The chefs became the international centre piece of the movement, bringing both a lot of (international) attention and giving good examples of what New Nordic Food could look like. There was much support from the NNF programme to do so. At national level, the chefs established their network of local high quality suppliers and paid attention to them. Suppliers benefited from the growing demand from other parties.

The other side of the international image that haute cuisine chefs are highly involved is that people - including chefs from affordable restaurants that are not affiliated with Noma - may feel that they cannot take part in NNF. Restaurants that are green, reduce their footprint, source locally and in season are very similar in the type of ingredients they choose.

The NNF programme is now being downscaled, meaning that it has to work through existing policies. One of them is focusing on the institutional kitchens, which get the opportunity to learn to serve food based on the ideas of NNF to children and elderly people.

Over the last few years, new and popular supply chains for GR related grain products (flour, beer, bread) were created. More complex chains of GR (vegetables, other plant products) are still to be developed, e.g. new logistics for seasonal small streams of supply. The market based on animal GR is still small, and productions need attention, maybe even financial support. However, people's interest in local animal produce is growing. Knowledge exchange on GR related varieties and their potential to bring them to the market still very much depends on the voluntary work of professionals.

Though the principles of NNF can be translated in different countries, there is no guarantee that it will be as successful in these countries as in the Nordic countries. Maybe there the storm was created at the right moment. Linking the ideas of any New Food movement (healthy, seasonal and local) with the ideas of 'green' can possibly strengthen both lines of thinking. 'Green' is particularly interesting for the bigger industries that want to show that they care about the environment.

Figures



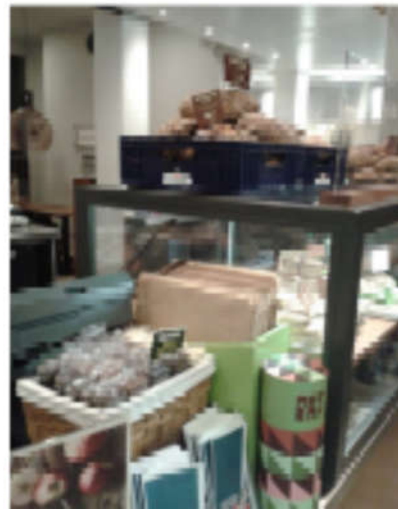
1. Per Grube in front of Mirabelle bakery/restaurant.



4. Niels Stockholm and Rita Hansen in Meyers Dell.



2. High demand for the for the bread.



5. Meyers Dell, restaurant and selling fine foods.



3. Other loaves of bread based on Grube's flour.



6. Also books are available.

Annex 1 – List of interviewees

- Per Grupe, Grupe&Meyer
- Daniel Christensen, Restaurant Julian
- Niels Stokholm/ Rita Hansen, Thorshøjgaard
- Mads F. Fischer-Møller, Chairman of the Steering Group for New Nordic Food (Nordic Council of Ministers)
- Arni Bragason, Genresurscenter

Annex 2 – List of references

Declarations:

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- <http://newnordicfood.org/about-nnf-ii/new-nordic-kitchen-manifesto/>

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- <http://nordicway.org/2015/03/clus-meyer/#.Vfgg1U3smWk>, Interview with Claus Meyer, March 2015.