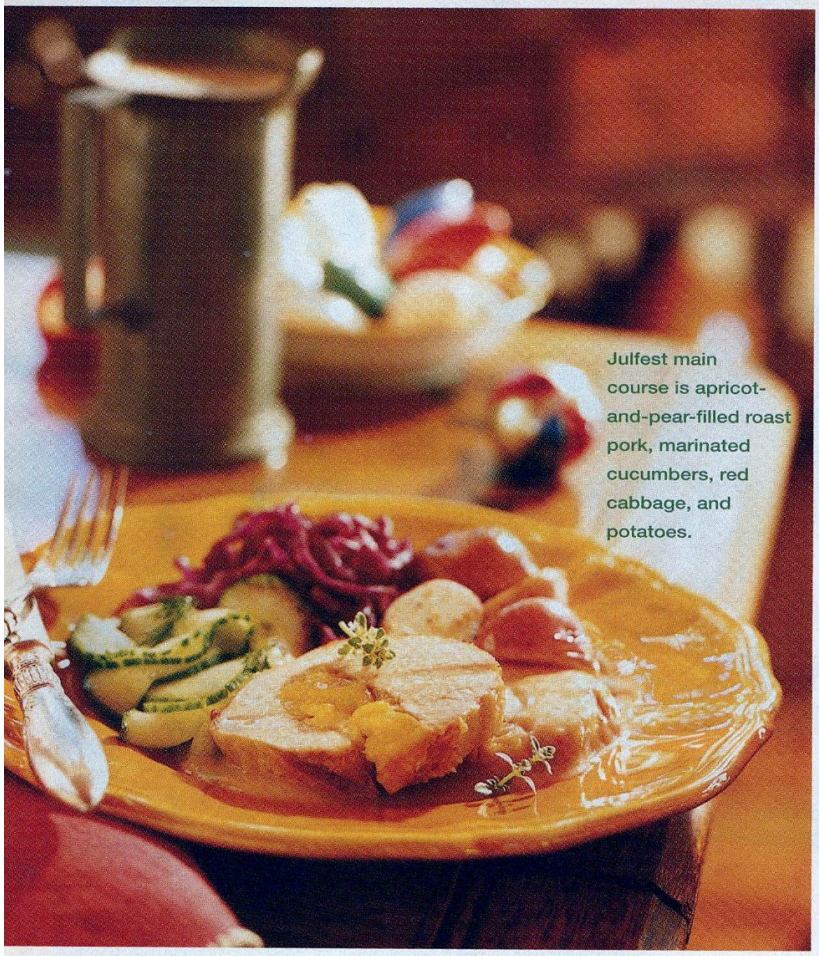


Julfest main course is apricot-and-pear-filled roast pork, marinated cucumbers, red cabbage, and potatoes.

Scandinavian Julfest

As a small boy, Chuck Fowler loved the yearly Swedish Christmas celebration (*Julfest*) at his grandparents' big house. They would feast on a traditional smörgåsbord, sing sacred and silly songs, and thoroughly enjoy each other's company. In 1976, Chuck and his wife, Karla, restored this cherished tradition at their home in Olympia, Washington. With recipes out of Karla's Danish and Norwegian ancestry, their Julfest now encompasses all of Scandinavia.

The Fowlers' lavish buffet starts with a series of smörgåsbord courses: cheeses, salads and relishes, fish and meat, and breads. These are cleared, and a hot entrée is brought out—in their case usually a fruit-filled pork loin with red cabbage and boiled potatoes rather than the more traditional lutefisk. Many of the foods are purchased; look in a Scandinavian delicatessen or well-stocked supermarket for the cold and hot specialties without an asterisk on our menu. Various family members bring the other dishes, making this a remarkably easy feast.

For 10 to 12 people, choose one to three items each from the cheese, salad and relish, fish and meat, and bread categories. Allow at least 2 ounces of cheese, 2 ounces of bread, and ¼ pound of fish and/or meat per person.

MENU

CHEESES:
- Havarti, Jarlsberg, and Swedish Farmer's Cheese

SALADS AND RELISHES:
- Cucumbers with Dill*
- Shredded Carrot and Apple Salad
- Pickled Beets
- Carrot and Celery Sticks with Dill Dip
- Lingonberries

FISH AND MEAT:
- Pickled Herring in Sour Cream or Curry Sauce
- Cold Cooked Shrimp with Seafood or Cocktail Sauce
- Kippered Salmon
- Smoked Salmon Dip
- Swedish Meatballs

BREADS:
- Onion-Rye and Onion-Dill Bread
- Rye Crackerbread
- Lefse (Flatbread)
- Butter

MAIN COURSE:
- Roast Pork with Apricots and Pear*
- Boiled Tiny Red Potatoes with Dill
- Sweet-and-Sour Red Cabbage*

DESSERTS:
- *Spritsar* (Spritz Cookies)*, *Sandbakelser* (Sand Tarts)*, and *Kringlor* (Twists)*
- Rice Pudding

BEVERAGES:
- *Glögg* (Hot Spiced Wine), Beer, Apple Cider, and Coffee

*recipe provided

Cucumbers with Dill

PREP TIME: About 15 minutes, plus at least 1¼ hours to marinate and chill

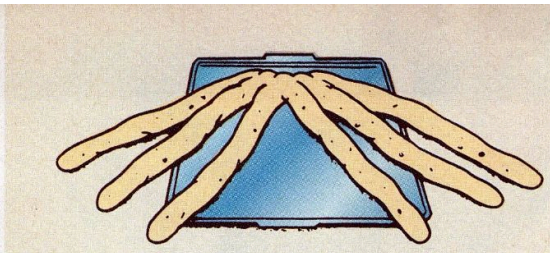
NOTES: Prepare through step 2 up to 1 day ahead; cover and chill.

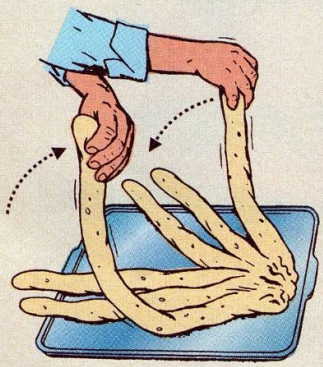
MAKES: 10 to 12 servings

- 3 **cucumbers** (¾ lb. each)
- 1½ tablespoons **salt**
- 1 cup **white wine vinegar**
- 1½ tablespoons **sugar**
- 3 tablespoons chopped **fresh dill**

1. Rinse cucumbers; with a sharp-tined fork, score sides of cucumbers lengthwise. Trim and discard ends; thinly slice cucumbers crosswise and place in a bowl. Add salt and mix. Cover and chill at least 30 minutes or up to 2 hours. Rinse well in a colander under cold running water; drain. Return to bowl.

2. Add vinegar and sugar; mix. Cover and chill, stirring occasionally, until cold, at least 45 minutes or up to 1 day.





Six-strand maneuver: Pinch ends of dough ropes together, fan ropes out over edges of pan, (above) then lift outer strands over inner ropes to cross snugly (left). Six-braid loaf puffs to golden, sugar-speckled perfection in the oven.

ILLUSTRATIONS: ERIC LARSEN

Gram's Pecan Rolls

PREP AND COOK TIME: About 1 hour, plus at least 2 hours to rise and cool

NOTES: Ruth Silvian's recipe for *schnecken,* Yiddish for "little snails," is shared by her granddaughter Lisa Taggart of Mountain View, California. If making up to 1 day ahead (through step 6), let cool, cover airtight, and store at room temperature; freeze to store longer. To reheat rolls in pan, sealed in foil and thawed, bake in a 325° oven until warm in the center, about 15 minutes; remove from pan (step 7).

MAKES: 24 rolls

1. Follow directions for **almond-apricot holiday wreath** (page 140) through step 4. Omit vanilla, almond extract, almond paste, apricots, raisins, 1 egg (for brushing on dough), and orange glaze.

2. While dough rises, in a 1- to 2-quart pan combine ⅔ cup *each* firmly packed **brown sugar** and **light corn syrup** with ⅓ cup (⅙ lb.) **butter** or margarine. Stir over medium-high heat until boiling. Pour into a 12- by 17-inch pan and tilt to coat evenly. Sprinkle evenly with 2 cups **pecan halves.** In the unwashed pan used for the sugar mixture, melt ½ cup (¼ lb.) butter or margarine over medium heat.

3. In a small bowl, mix 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar and 1 tablespoon **ground cinnamon.**

4. On a lightly floured board, roll dough to form a 10- by 36-inch rectangle. Brush evenly with ½ the melted butter. Pat brown sugar–cinnamon mixture evenly over dough to within ½ inch of each long side. Starting from 1 long edge, roll dough snugly to form a rope. Pinch long outer edge tightly against rope to seal. With a floured sharp knife, cut rope crosswise into 24 equal slices (about 1½ in. wide). Lay slices, a cut side down and evenly spaced apart, in syrup-coated pan. Brush roll tops with remaining melted butter.

5. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place until slightly puffy, about 25 minutes. Uncover.

6. Bake in a 350° oven (325° in a convection oven) until rolls are well browned, about 30 minutes (25 minutes in a convection oven). Run a knife between pan sides and rolls.

7. Invert a large rimmed platter onto pan. Holding pan and platter together with pot holders, invert and let stand 1 or 2 minutes. Lift off pan and scrape any sauce and nuts onto rolls. Serve rolls hot, warm, or cool.

Per roll: 377 cal., 45% (171 cal.) from fat; 4.4 g protein; 19 g fat (8.4 g sat.); 49 g carbo (1.4 g fiber); 224 mg sodium; 52 mg chol.

Six-Braid Cardamom Bread

PREP AND COOK TIME: About 50 minutes, plus at least 3¼ hours to rise and cool

NOTES: For many generations, bread baking has been a passion in Greg Mistell's family. He grew up making yeast breads with his father. In fact, he enjoyed the craft so much, he turned it into a career. He is owner, and frequently the head baker, of Delphina's and Pearl bakeries in Portland. This rich cardamom loaf, sold at Delphina's, is also a favorite that Mistell makes at home with his 10-year-old daughter, Alisen. "Shaping a six-strand braid is fun, and the results are prettier than a standard braid," Mistell notes.

Candied orange peel can be ordered from King Arthur Flour ($3.50 for 6 oz.; 800/827-6836 or www.kingarthurflour.com). Look for coarse sugar with baking ingredients in supermarkets or specialty food stores.

If making up to 1 day ahead, cool loaf, wrap airtight, and store at room temperature; freeze to store longer. Reheat, sealed in foil and thawed, in a 325° oven until warm, 10 to 15 minutes.

MAKES: 1 loaf (3 lb.); 16 servings

- 1 envelope **active dry yeast**
- 1½ teaspoons **cardamom seed**
- ¾ teaspoon **salt**
- ½ cup granulated **sugar**
- ¾ cup chopped **candied orange peel** (5 oz.)
- 1 cup **milk**
- About ⅓ cup (⅙ lb.) cool melted **butter** or margarine
- 2 **large egg** yolks
- 5 to 5¼ cups **all-purpose flour**
- 1 **large egg**
- 1 tablespoon **coarse** (optional, see notes) or granulated **sugar**

1. In a large bowl, sprinkle yeast over ½ cup warm (110°) water. Let stand until

yeast is soft, about 5 minutes. Crush cardamom seed on a hard surface with a flat-bottom glass. Add cardamom to bowl along with salt, ½ cup granulated sugar, orange peel, milk, ⅓ cup melted butter, and egg yolks; mix to blend. Add 5 cups flour and stir until moistened.

2. *To knead with a dough hook,* beat on medium speed until dough no longer feels sticky and pulls cleanly from bowl, 8 to 10 minutes. If dough is still sticky, beat in more flour, 1 tablespoon at a time.

To knead by hand, scrape dough onto a lightly floured board and knead until smooth and no longer sticky, 10 to 15 minutes; add flour as required to prevent sticking. Return dough to bowl.

3. Cover bowl with plastic wrap and let dough rise in a warm place until at least doubled in volume, 2 to 2½ hours. Mix with dough hook or knead briefly on a lightly floured board to expel air.

4. Divide dough into 6 equal pieces. Shape each piece into a smooth ball, set slightly apart on a floured board, and cover loosely with plastic wrap. Let rest 15 minutes.

5. On an unfloured board, roll each ball under your palms to form a 16-inch rope. Place ropes parallel and slightly apart on a buttered 14- by 17-inch baking sheet. At 1 end, pinch ropes together. Gently lift each rope up and off the center of the baking sheet, laying ends parallel and over pan edges to make an inverted V with 3 legs on each side.

6. To form braid, cross your right arm over your left, then pick up the 2 outer dough ropes. Uncross arms, and in doing so, cross the dough ropes over each other near the pinched ends, and lay ropes parallel to the inner part of the V. Repeat to lift the next 2 outer ropes, cross them just below the preceding ropes, and lay parallel to the inner part of the V. Continue braiding to the ends of the ropes. Pinch braid ends together.

7. Cover braid loosely with plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place until slightly puffy, 35 to 45 minutes. In a small bowl, beat egg to blend. Uncover braid and brush lightly with egg; save extra for other uses or discard. Sprinkle braid evenly with coarse sugar.

8. Bake in a 325° oven (300° in a convection oven) until bread is deep golden brown, 45 to 50 minutes.

9. Slide a wide spatula under bread to release from pan, then gently slide loaf onto a rack. Let cool at least 45 minutes. Slice to serve warm or cool.

Per serving: 260 cal., 20% (53 cal.) from fat; 5.6 g protein; 5.9 g fat (3.2 g sat.); 46 g carbo (1.2 g fiber); 163 mg sodium; 53 mg chol.

Lucia Buns

PREP AND COOK TIME: About 40 minutes, plus at least 2 hours to rise

NOTES: Though the Scandinavian tradition is to serve these buns on St. Lucia Day, December 13, the Fowler family of Olympia, Washington, also presents them at their holiday buffet (page 108). The girl in the family who has most recently turned 12 or 13 years old, wearing a white dress and a crown with candles, offers the buns to guests. The buns are also fine at breakfast with raspberry jam.

If making buns up to 1 day ahead, cool, wrap airtight, and store at room temperature; freeze to store longer. Reheat, sealed in foil and thawed, in a 350° oven until warm, about 10 minutes.

MAKES: 20 buns

1. In a blender or food processor, whirl ⅓ cup **slivered almonds** until finely ground. Follow directions for **six-braid cardamom bread** (page 142) through step 3, but omit candied orange peel and add the ground almonds. Also omit coarse sugar.

2. Divide dough into 20 equal pieces (about ¼-cup size) and shape each into a smooth ball. On an unfloured board, roll 1 ball at a time under your palms to make a 16-inch rope. Cut the rope in half crosswise. On a buttered 14- by 17-inch baking sheet (you'll need 2), lay 1 cut rope across the other to form an X. Roll each cut end to the center, forming a bun composed of 4 coils. Repeat to shape other buns, spacing them about 1½ inches apart. Firmly press 1 **raisin** deep into the center of each coil (you'll need 4 raisins for each bun, about ¼ cup total).

3. Cover buns loosely with plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place until slightly puffy, 20 to 25 minutes; the first pan will be ready to bake before the second. In a small bowl, beat 1 **large egg** to blend. Uncover buns and brush lightly with the egg; save extra for other uses or discard.

4. Bake in a 350° oven (325° in a convection oven) until buns are medium golden brown, about 15 minutes. If using 1 oven, switch pan positions when the first buns have baked 7 or 8 minutes. With a wide spatula, transfer buns to a rack. Serve hot, warm, or cool.

Per bun: 205 cal., 27% (55 cal.) from fat; 5.3 g protein; 6.1 g fat (2.7 g sat.); 32 g carbo (1.1 g fiber); 134 mg sodium; 53 mg chol.

Sheridan School Nut Bread

PREP AND COOK TIME: About 1 hour

NOTES: "In 1939, we made this nut bread in cooking class at Sheridan Junior High School in Minneapolis," says Amelia Lubansky of Ventura, California. "It was one of the very simple recipes the teacher started with." The bread was an immediate—and lasting—hit: Four generations of Lubansky's family have baked it. To make up to 1 day ahead, let cool, wrap airtight, and store at room temperature. If baking at mile-high, increase all-purpose flour to 1¾ cups, reduce brown sugar to ¾ cup, and also reduce baking soda to ¾ teaspoon.

MAKES: 1 loaf (about 1½ lb.) or 2 loaves (about ¾ lb. each); 8 to 10 servings

- ¾ cup **walnut halves**
- 1 **large egg**
- 1 cup **buttermilk**
- About 2 tablespoons melted **butter** or margarine
- 1½ cups **all-purpose flour**
- 1 cup firmly packed **brown sugar**
- 1 teaspoon **baking soda**
- ¼ teaspoon **salt**

1. Coarsely chop ½ cup walnuts.

2. In a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed, beat to blend egg, buttermilk, and 2 tablespoons butter. Add chopped walnuts, flour, brown sugar, baking soda, and salt; stir just until evenly moistened.

3. Scrape batter into a buttered 4½- by 8½-inch loaf pan (about 6½-cup capacity) or equally into 2 buttered loaf pans, each 3½ by 7¼ inches (about 3-cup capacity). Arrange remaining ¼ cup walnut halves evenly on top of batter.

4. Bake in a 350° oven until bread is darker brown and begins to pull from pan sides, 45 to 50 minutes for 6½-cup pan (35 to 40 minutes in a convection oven) and 30 to 35 minutes for 3-cup pans. Let bread cool in pan on a rack, about 10 minutes. Run a thin-bladed knife between bread and pan sides, then invert to release bread. Turn loaf rounded side up on rack. Let cool about 10 minutes. Slice to serve warm or at room temperature.

Per serving: 240 cal., 31% (74 cal.) from fat; 4.5 g protein; 8.2 g fat (2.4 g sat.); 38 g carbo (0.9 g fiber); 252 mg sodium; 29 mg chol.

countdown

Up to 3 days ahead: Bake cookies. Purchase foods for smörgåsbord.

Up to 1 day ahead: Prepare cucumbers. Cook cabbage.

Up to 30 minutes before smörgåsbord: Finish cucumbers. Set out cheeses, salads and relishes, fish and meat, and breads.

1½ hours before main course: Roast pork loin.

30 minutes before main course: Boil potatoes.

10 minutes before main course: Reheat cabbage. Make sauce for pork.

A sweet selection of traditional, buttery Scandinavian Christmas cookies ends the Julfest: Wreath-shaped spritsar (top right), jam-filled sandbakelser (top left), and sugar-crusted kringlor (bottom front).

- ¾ cup **almonds**
- 1 cup (½ lb.) **butter** or margarine, at room temperature
- ½ cup **sugar**
- 1 **large egg**
- ½ teaspoon **almond extract**
- 2½ cups **all-purpose flour**
- About 6 tablespoons **raspberry jam**

1. Whirl almonds in a blender or food processor until finely ground.

2. In a bowl, with a mixer on high speed, beat butter and sugar until fluffy. Add egg and almond extract; beat until blended. Add ground almonds and flour; beat until blended.

3. If using tart pans (about 2 in. wide and ¾ in. deep; you'll need about 5 dozen pans total—bake in sequence if necessary), press a 1½-teaspoon portion of dough over bottom and up sides to rim of each pan (dough should be ¼ inch thick). Set tart pans slightly apart on 10- by 15-inch baking pans (recipe makes 5 panfuls; if baking in sequence, cover unused dough lightly with plastic wrap). Fill each tart with ¼ teaspoon jam.

If not using tart pans, shape 1½-teaspoon portions of dough into balls and set about 2 inches apart on 12- by 15-inch baking sheets (recipe fills 3 sheets). With the tip of your finger or the handle end of a wood spoon, make a ½-inch-wide, ½-inch-deep indentation in the center of each ball; fill each with about ¼ teaspoon jam.

4. Bake in a 350° oven until tarts are golden brown, 16 to 18 minutes (12 to 14 minutes in a 325° convection oven); if using 1 oven, switch pan positions after 8 to 9 minutes. Cool about 7 minutes on pans or sheets, then invert tart pans 1 at a time to release tarts, and set upright on racks; or, with a wide spatula, transfer jam-filled cookies from baking sheets to racks to cool. Serve warm or cool.

Per tart: 68 cal., 53% (36 cal.) from fat; 1 g protein; 4 g fat (2 g sat.); 7.3 g carbo (0.3 g fiber); 33 mg sodium; 12 mg chol.

Kringlor (Twists)

PREP AND COOK TIME: About 1½ hours

NOTES: This recipe was handed down by Mary Johnson and Anna Erickson, early Scandinavian immigrants. Look for pearl sugar in stores that sell specialty or Scandinavian foods. If making twists up to 3 days ahead, cool and store airtight at room temperature; freeze to store longer.

MAKES: About 5 dozen

- 1 cup (½ lb.) **butter** or margarine, at room temperature
- 1 cup **granulated sugar**
- 2 hard-cooked **large egg** yolks
- 1 **large egg,** separated
- 1 **large egg**
- ¼ teaspoon **salt**
- 3 cups **all-purpose flour**
- ⅓ cup **pearl** or coarse decorating **sugar**

1. In a bowl, with a mixer on high speed, beat butter and granulated sugar until fluffy. Add hard-cooked egg yolks, uncooked egg yolk, uncooked whole egg, and salt; beat on medium speed until blended. Stir in flour, then beat until well blended.

2. Shape dough into 1-inch balls; cover with plastic wrap. On a lightly floured board, roll each ball under your palm into a 6-inch-long rope. On a 12- by 15-inch baking sheet (you'll need 3 total), twist each rope into a figure eight and press ends lightly together; space twists about 1 inch apart. Beat remaining egg white to blend; lightly brush over twists. Sprinkle with pearl sugar.

3. Bake in a 350° oven until twists are golden brown, about 20 minutes (16 to 18 minutes in a 325° convection oven). If using 1 oven, switch pan positions after 10 minutes. With a wide spatula, transfer twists to racks to cool. Serve warm or cool.

Per twist: 73 cal., 44% (32 cal.) from fat; 1 g protein; 3.6 g fat (2.1 g sat.); 9.2 g carbo (0.2 g fiber); 45 mg sodium; 23 mg chol. ◆