

## A TASTE OF THE GONZO SCIENTIST

## A Linnean Feast

If you haven't heard the news yet, this year marks the 300th birthday of Carl Linnaeus. I can report that his fellow Swedes are keenly aware. On a recent visit to Uppsala, I took part in a Linnaeus celebration organized by a group of Swedish scholars and chefs. It was called *Culina Mutata*, the changing kitchen, and it was the most unusual birthday party I have ever attended.

Linnaeus is best known as the inventor of modern taxonomy, the system of Latin names that divide all organisms into species based on shared traits. The innovation helped pave the way for Darwinism a century later. But like a rock star who is only remembered

For a full account see [www.sciencemag.org/sciext/gonzoscientist](http://www.sciencemag.org/sciext/gonzoscientist)

for that one catchy song, Linnaeus's other contributions are appreciated only by the groupies.

Less well-known is his passion for food. Toward the end of an illustrious career, Linnaeus laid the foundation for modern food science. Many of the questions he posed remain at the forefront of food science research today. Which foods are necessary for development, and which should be avoided? To what extent can diet promote or inhibit disease? Is there an ideal diet for each person, or indeed for each genome?

So for three days, a diverse medley of academics—biochemists, historians, agricultural scientists, psychologists—expounded on the science of food, both in the time of Linnaeus and today. The lectures were punctuated by a series of 18th-century meals, starting with a peasant's lunch and ending with a royal banquet. And for entertain-

ment? The conference organizers performed a play—in handmade period costumes, no less—about one extraordinary day in the life of Linnaeus. We were then exposed to the dance craze of the time, the minuet. (Imagine *Saturday Night Fever*, but with Mozart.)

If you missed the party, don't worry. The year is not yet done. Why not throw a Linnaeus 300th birthday party of your own? Use the following protocol to prepare a winter feast in true Linnaeus style.

[The recipes (below) are from Gunnar Broberg and Gunilla Lindell's *Till livs med Linné* (Atlantis, Stockholm, 2007).]

First, find a fish. The winter months are best for the ruthlessly predatory but delicious pike (*Esox lucius*). They lurk beneath the lake ice. For a dinner party of four, catch two pike, if you can.

While your lines dangle, head into the forest to find a bird. An ideal quarry is the capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*),

also known as the wood grouse. But beware, they are intelligent and agile creatures. You will need a widely dispersing shotgun, if not an automatic weapon. Check what local laws apply.

On your way back to the lake with birds in hand, march to the swamp to gather cranberries (*Oxycoccus palustris*). You will find them in low depressions beneath the snow. If your feet get wet, build a fire. Better to ruin a dinner than lose a toe to the frost. —JOHN BOHANNON

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## Fried capercaillie

1 capercaillie  
1 thin slice of lard  
30 g fresh butter  
salt and white pepper  
Gravy:  
45 g butter  
20 g flour  
350 ml cup cream  
15 g tablespoon currant jelly  
salt  
white pepper

Pluck and gut the bird. Coat it with alcohol and set alight to singe the feather stubs. Rinse with water. Lightly coat the inside with salt. Bind the legs and fasten the sheet of lard over the breast with skewers. Sprinkle generously with salt and pepper. Put the bird on a spit and fry it with a blazing fire. Gather the fat as it falls, basting the bird frequently to prevent drying. (Do not underestimate this job. A kitchenboy is required.) For the

gravy, gather the excess fat and stir in flour before adding the cream and jelly. Cook in a saucepan for some minutes until it tastes right. If you managed to find cranberries, they would make a nice accompanying jelly.

## Ice pike

2 pike, about 1.5 kg each  
60 ml melted fresh butter  
30 g grated horseradish salt

Gut and rinse the fish but do not scale them. Place in boiling salted water until tender and serve with melted butter and grated horseradish. The dressing can be enlivened with a touch of vinegar and sugar. The fish should be presented first, along with drinking water, beer, barley bread, and the tale of how you caught them.

## Winter cabbage

1 head red cabbage  
3 apples  
80 g goosefat (or butter)  
1 onion  
1 rind of pork  
350 ml cup water  
30 ml molasses or honey  
15 ml vinegar  
10 g salt  
2.5 g white pepper

Melt the fat and cook shredded cabbage and sliced onion until lightly brown. Add peeled, sliced apples, the pork rind and some water. Simmer covered until the cabbage is tender. Add more water occasionally. Season carefully. The dish should have a mild and pleasant sour-sweet taste. Allow 2 hours for this.

Recipes adapted from Gunnar Broberg and Gunilla Lindell's *Till livs med Linné* (Atlantis, Stockholm, 2007).

## Egg cheesecake with raisins

5 eggs  
475 ml milk  
115 g raisins  
2.5 g teaspoon salt  
honey to taste  
5 ml teaspoon lemon juice

Rinse the raisins, dry them, and place in a cake pan. Meanwhile, thoroughly mix eggs and milk, followed by honey, salt, and lemon juice. Heat slowly. Remove from heat when it starts to curdle and beat slowly for a few minutes. Pour the mixture over the raisins and place the pan in a cool place. When the cake has thickened, serve with blueberry jam. You will be sleepy after this. Mind the candles. Do not burn down the house.