

Columns

Try these recipes for Norwegian soup and meatballs

Don't look too closely at me you just might see a pale shade of green; you know like "green with envy" but just a bit. One of my girl friends is flying off to Norway this week and the green eyed monster is threatening to rear its ugly head.

I am thrilled for her; she is a world traveler whose wings have been clipped (like everyone's) due to the pandemic travel ban but rules are beginning to finely change and apparently Norway is somewhere she has not visited.

This is also one of the first trips in which she has booked her own itinerary as opposed to using tour companies. Hubby and I had always wanted to visit Norway as he has Norwegian and Scottish ancestry in his family. Without even knowing his ancestry one of his main traits was the love of Scandinavian craftsmanship and the Scottish Highland games.

In the early years of our marriage, when it was time to begin buying our first nice furniture, it was all I could do to keep him from buying Scandinavian style furniture. We had a major culture clash; I prefer Victorian furniture which is more ornate with fabrics like brocade and velvet and dark wood and he preferred simple minimalist styles, clean lines and blond wood. Sadly, for us, we could not afford the real thing in either style; thus began our somewhat eclectic style of combining pieces of both types. We both liked most architecture with the exception of modern furniture so we made sure to have each room a different style and we were both satisfied.

Norway is a country of about four million people and

Memories and Musings

By Cheri Sims



is located across the North Sea from the United Kingdom and nestled on the western border of Sweden. Norway is famous for its varied landscapes, coastal fjords, Vikings, renowned ski resorts, the Northern Lights and is called "the land of the midnight sun."

The country has an amazing variety of things to do and see from reindeer farms which feature sledding, one can enjoy an authentic bear meat dinner after a horseback excursion, she can visit the world's largest underwater restaurant, ski in one of many ski resorts or take a cruise along the many coastal fjords. Wow, it sounds amazing and I can't wait to hear her stories and see the pictures.

I certainly hope she likes, lamb, flatbread, salt water fish and meatballs because these have been staples in Norway for centuries. Lamb and cabbage can apparently be found at most restaurants as can Norwegian meatballs.

The main difference between Swedish meatballs and Norwegian meatballs is the size, Swedish meatballs are round and Norwegian meatballs are flattened. Beef and pork are traditional meats for Swedish meatballs and veal is added to Norwegian recipes; both countries serve them with gravy but Swedish meat-

balls usually contain, ginger, allspice and nutmeg, I have found Norwegian meatball recipes, some of which contain these spices and some eliminate them. In the United States our meatballs are usually served with red sauce and most of my friends use garlic, basil and oregano. Oh dear, I am getting really hungry for meatballs but I can't decide which recipe to make.

In my research I also found a recipe of which I have never heard; it is Norwegian sweet soup and it sounds delicious and just what we need to spice up our cold winter's nights. In Norway it is served warm in the winter and chilled in the summer and contains nothing but fruit and tapioca.

As usual I found this recipe on one of my favorite food sites "The Spruce Eats" and I expect it to be as delicious as every other recipe I have tried from this site. As stated on the site if you allow the liquid to reduce too much it would be called compote but in Norway they allow enough liquid to serve it as a soup. Genius idea, I have never seen this recipe in any of my food research.

Back here at home I will be enjoying such exotic experiences as feeding the stray cats and if it is warm enough (above 25) I will sit out on one of their heated cat pads and

hold and pet them. Perhaps, if the weather allows, I might just venture outside and pick up sticks from the last winter storm or take down a few more outside Christmas lights. Think warm!

Norwegian Sweet Soup

5 cups water
1/2 cup dried apples
1/2 cup raisins
1/2 cup dried apricots
1/2 cup pitted prunes, finely chopped
1 heaping tablespoon pearl tapioca
1 stick cinnamon stick
1 star anise
1 cup fruit juice

Gather the ingredients.

Bring 5 cups of water to a steady boil. Stir in dried apples, raisins or currants, dried apricots, dried prunes, pearl tapioca, cinnamon stick,

and star anise, if using. Reduce heat to medium, and maintain at a low simmer for 25 minutes. Stir in fruit juice and heat for a final 5 minutes. Remove cinnamon and star anise.

Sweet soup can be served either warm or cold, as a dessert or snack or breakfast selection.

Norwegian Meatballs

1lb ground sirloin
1/2 - 1medium onion
1egg
1/3cup Italian style breadcrumbs
1/4teaspoon allspice
1/4teaspoon nutmeg
2teaspoons paprika
1/4teaspoon pepper
1teaspoon salt
2teaspoons baking powder
2 -3tablespoons milk
1/4cup butter
2(1 ounce) packages beef gravy

(or home made gravy made from pan drippings)

Chop the onions in a food processor.

Add all the other ingredients, except the butter and gravy. Pulse until mixed together. You can also do this by hand.

Shape 12-14 meatballs and fry them in a frying pan in 1/2 stick of butter over medium heat.

Make the gravy according to package directions. I use McCormick Brown Gravy, Mushroom Gravy or Onion Gravy.

When the meatballs are nice and brown, add them to the gravy and simmer for 30 minutes.

Serve with boiled potatoes and vegetables

<https://www.food.com/recipe/norske-kj-ttkaker-norwegian-meatballs-228156>

Comet ZTF reaching max brightness

Last week we told you about Comet ZTF. The images coming in from amateur telescopes and cameras are impressive. But it seems it was cloudy here for most of January!! Tonight, the comet is predicted to reach maximum brightness.

Comets are very unpredictable and could fade or brighten as they wish. But if predictions hold true you might see the comet with just your eyes and it should be easy with binoculars, though the waxing gibbous Moon won't help matters.

Look in the northeast, not too far from the horizon, for the familiar Big Dipper. Look higher above the Big Dipper's bowl about five fists held at arm's length in altitude. The comet will change its posi-

In the night sky

By David Leake



tion quite a bit from night to night.

The brightest star in the northeast is Capella, part of the constellation Auriga. The comet will appear to pass just above the star on Sunday night. The Moon just happens to be full on the Sunday and naturally the Full Moon brightens the sky, so try soon after sunset before the Moon gets too high in the sky.

If you're an early riser, Mercury was separated from its maximum distance from the brightness of the Sun yesterday, meaning you can catch it in the southeast before sunrise.

David Leake is retired Planetarium Director of Staerkel Planetarium at Parkland College and co-founder of the Champaign-Urbana Astronomical Society, Inc.

The saga of the airplane bathroom

I recently had the pleasure of taking a trip on an airplane. It had been a while since my last flight and I noticed that airplane bathrooms have gotten much smaller than they used to be... or maybe I'm just fatter than I used to be.

But seriously, these airplane bathrooms are really tiny and have less room to maneuver than a phone booth, if you can recall what a phone booth looked like. This bathroom was so small, that I could have dropped a Kleenex on the floor and had wall-to-wall carpeting. I mean, this bathroom was so little that I didn't have room to change my mind. (Sorry, I couldn't help myself with that last joke.)

In any event, I learned of the size of this bathroom when

So there I was

By Pete Buckley



the urge to relieve myself occurred while we were flying at 10,000 feet. I unwrapped myself from my seat and waddled down the narrow aisle of the plane toward one of the two lavatories this particular airplane had.

While moving down the aisle, I have to turn sideways frequently to avoid hip-checking passengers who have seats adjacent to the aisle. When I fi-

nally make it to the back of the aircraft, I stand in a line with two other passengers while we wait for the "occupied" light to change to "unoccupied." I am in line for a long time and I entertain the flight attendants by doing the "I-have-to-go-to-the-bathroom-bad" dance in that little area in front of the bathroom door.

When my turn finally arrives, I push the collapsible

door inward and quickly discover that it is impossible to fit into this broom-closet-sized room without hitting your head on the ceiling. I duck my cranium downward after striking the ceiling and plant my face into the mirror. I use a few expletive-deleted words before getting down to the business at hand.

I take a moment to observe my surroundings and see that the facility I am about to use is quite dirty and I attribute this problem to previous male passengers with poor aim... probably due to flight turbulence. While attending to my duty, I have time to look around the coffin-like restroom and notice small, secretive places located throughout.

I find a place where the

toilet paper and Kleenex are hiding and where the soap dispenser rests. However, I cannot find where the paper towels are stored, which is difficult to imagine in such a small room.

After completing my task, I wash my hands (the water was surprisingly hot) and comb through all 36 inches of bathroom and fail to locate the paper towels. I decided to dry my hands with Kleenex which was probably not a wise decision. The Kleenex tears apart in my wet hands and pieces of tissue stick to me fingers like glue. I try to shake off the tissue remnants, but only succeed in splattering the tiny mirror in the bathroom with drops of water from my hands.

By now, I have been inside

this claustrophobic space for a lengthy period of time, and the other passengers who had been waiting in line are getting restless and a bit concerned. I hear a gentle knock on the door and the words, "Hey buddy, are you alright?"

In my rush to alleviate their worries, I push the folding doors when I should have pulled... or maybe I pulled when I should have pushed. Needless to say, I was momentarily stuck inside the bathroom before the concerned passengers assisted in correctly opening the door. These passengers were greeted with a red-faced (embarrassed) man with wet hands and pieces of tissue clinging to them. I think I'll just hold it in next flight.

Better politics, smarter government: Inviting students to help revive our democracy

Editor's Note: This op-ed was distributed by Capitol News Illinois on behalf of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute. The opinions expressed in this article are the author's own.

By JOHN T. SHAW

Senator Paul Simon was keenly aware of the endless challenge and enduring opportunity to revitalize our democracy and strengthen our communities.

He believed that democracy can be sustained and enhanced when citizens respect values such as tolerance and responsibility and take practical steps to make the world better. In his book, "Fifty-Two Simple Ways to Make a Difference," Senator Si-

mon outlined dozens of specific things we all can do to become better citizens who build better communities.

Inspired by his vision and commitment, the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute will soon accept applications for the inaugural Paul Simon Democracy Prize.

The Institute will award \$5,000 prizes to three current Illinois college or university students for the design - and implementation - of projects to strengthen democracy in their communities. Proposals could involve hosting public discussions or debates, registering voters, funding school newspapers to cover local issues, creating a speaker series

on community matters, developing a program to recruit and train poll watchers, or an entirely new idea.

To enter the competition, students must submit a video proposal by April 1, 2023, to the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute. Winners will be announced on April 17. We are looking for proposals that are persuasive, imaginative, optimistic, and can plausibly be implemented within six months. Videos should be between 3 and 5 minutes and will be assessed on the quality of the proposal, not the video itself. However, creative and well-produced videos will get our attention!

The three winning videos will be posted on the Insti-

tute's website and YouTube channel. Prize recipients will be invited to a celebratory reception at the Institute in the fall of 2023 and asked to describe how their proposals are being implemented.

Complete details of the Paul Simon Democracy Prize will soon be available on our website, <https://paulsimoninstitute.siu.edu/>.

The Simon Institute recently hosted a conversation with Rachel Kleinfeld, a democracy expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Dr. Kleinfeld described the many challenges confronting our democracy but warned against despair. She urged America's colleges and universities to en-

courage students to renew and reimagine our democracy.

This challenge resonated with me and it's in that spirit that the Institute is creating the Paul Simon Democracy Prize. It complements two ongoing Institute programs focused on "Better politics and Smarter government" in our state: the Renewing Illinois Summit for Illinois college and university students and the Paul Simon-Jim Edgar Award to acknowledge and celebrate statesmanship in state and local government in Illinois.

When Senator Simon announced his candidacy for president in May of 1987, he offered both inspiration and a challenge. "You and I are on

this planet but a short time," he said. "Let us seize this time and opportunity to build a better tomorrow so that generations to come will look back upon us and say, These were people of uncommon compassion and vision and courage."

The Democracy Prize, along with the Renewing Illinois student summit and the Simon-Edgar statesmanship award, embody Paul Simon's highest values and aspirations.

John T. Shaw is the director of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Shaw's monthly column explores how Illinois can work toward better politics and smarter government.