



SAMPLING THE CITY *of* SPIRES

In addition to being the capital of the world's happiest country, Copenhagen is also the globe's newest culinary mecca.

BY SANDRA MACGREGOR

Copenhagen, a city once best known for its pickled herring and frigid winters, has in the past few years come to claim its rightful spot beside London, Paris and Milan as one of the world's most enthralling culinary capitals. With an ever-growing list of Michelin-starred restaurants and menus that feature one-of-a-kind ingredients like fried reindeer moss and sea buckthorn, Copenhagen's Nordic offerings continue to attract in-the-know foodies looking to sate their appetites with innovative, exquisite cuisine.

First Course

Few would argue that the country—and Scandinavia itself—owes much of its ascension to the height of haute cuisine to chef René Redzepi and restaurateur Claus Meyer. The two men co-founded Noma, Copenhagen's most famous and award-winning restaurant, and it was Meyer who, in 2004, unveiled his revolutionary "Manifesto for the New Nordic Kitchen." The manifesto, which calls for a regional, seasonal and sustainable relationship with food, would ignite a passion in chefs, food producers and

foodies across Scandinavia to reevaluate their approach to Nordic fare.

In less than a decade after the publication of Meyer's testament to taste, Noma would be recognized three times in a row as the best restaurant in the world by the prestigious Restaurant magazine, as well as achieve two coveted Michelin stars.

Those lucky enough to get a table at Noma (plan to book a reservation at least three months in advance) will find a menu true to Meyer's manifesto and filled with singular specialties like

JOSE MORAN MOYA



Noma's herb toast and smoked cod roe combines earthy, acidic and seafood flavors.



A local oyster prepared with seaweed oil at Noma restaurant

Icelandic skyr (a yogurt-like product), Swedish truffles and musk ox. Both Meyer and Redzepi insist that all food selections at Noma not only celebrate food's taste, but also honor its unique history, geography and culture. At Noma, as with many of Denmark's best restaurants, the preparation and presentation of food aim to engage diners' minds as much as their taste buds.

"The new Nordic cuisine manifesto ... has produced a lot of restaurants, bakeries and small-scale food producers who serve or sell food that is intimately linked to our landscapes and have rather unique flavor profiles," Meyer explains. "Thus, they can be replaced by nothing else in the world."

Meyer passionately practices what he preaches. Bolstered by the popularity of the Nordic food movement and the success of Noma, in October 2013 he opened The Standard, a multilevel complex that features three restaurants, a jazz club and two bars, and has already generated an onslaught of favorable buzz.

A Full Plate

Copenhagen's culinary cache reaches far beyond Noma, Redzepi and Meyer. The city is currently home to 13 restaurants boasting a total of 15 Michelin stars, as well as a culinary cornucopia of eateries and drinking establishments whose primary aim is to show off the extraordinary influence a cold clime can have on warming your appetite and spirit.

Another restaurant garnering rave reviews—and a Michelin star—is Relac. Co-owned by former Noma chef Christian Puglisi, the restaurant boasts a more casual setting than that of

Noma, but the food and dining experience are equally as memorable. In fact, the restaurant, located on Jaegersborggade, a small street in the city's Norrebro district, is largely credited with breathing new life into the formerly rough and run-down area.

Jaegersborggade is now one of the hippest neighborhoods in the city and features a bevy of cafes, clothing stores, and jewelry and design

shops. The Inge Vincent ceramics shop is one of the area's treasures; the shop's paper-thin, airy pieces are a testament to the city's reputation as a design hot spot. The thoroughfare also offers a unique micro-view of just how Copenhagen's food movement has trickled down to influence and encourage ingenuity and talent in all forms. The street is home to a local favorite, Manfreds & Vin restaurant; Ro Chokolade, which supplies



THOMAS IBSEN

Noma was named the best restaurant in the world in 2010, 2011 and 2012 by Restaurant Magazine.



Unripe strawberries, cress and buttermilk from Relae, a restaurant credited with the revitalization of Copenhagen's Norrebro district



Relae's caramelized onion, poached with elderberries and served with sorrel leaves, tapioca and onion puree

singular handmade chocolates; and The Coffee Collective, a specialty coffee roaster that's garnered a cult following.

Die-hard gourmands will not be able to resist comparing Noma to the city's other two Michelin-starred establishment, Geranium. Whereas Noma's design is sparse and understated, Geranium favors a sleek, cultivated atmosphere—and the menu is just as refined. But, as many local and international food connoisseurs will attest, the only way to really know which restaurant stands supreme is to experience both and let one's palate decide.

The Cocktail List

A city's culinary takeoff is often mirrored by a similarly stellar rise in its drinking establishments, and the pattern has held true in Copenhagen. An exciting array of bars and cocktail lounges has flooded the City of Spires in the past few years, most notably in the picturesque Gammel Strand area. The legendary Union bar, which is modeled after a Prohibition-era speakeasy, is located near the central square. To ensure that it is frequented by those in the know, the bar has no address or signage—loyal patrons can only identify it by a gold bell above a black door.



The Union bar is hidden down a residential street, but worth discovering for expertly executed cocktails.



Copenhagen is arguably the most bicycle-friendly city in the world.



Colorful buildings line the city's Nyhavn canal.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF 1105



Bar 1105's sophisticated, minimalist decor ensures the cocktails take center stage.

Paul Muldowney, owner of The Union, explains that one of the main driving forces behind the city's increase in innovative, luxury cocktail lounges is the culinary scene. "There are a lot of Michelin-starred restaurants here now, and high-end cuisine is very popular," he says. "When people go out, they expect a high standard of experience." It's that same quality of experience that Muldowney's exclusive bar undoubtedly delivers.

Another cocktail lounge that has become a favorite among foodies is 1105 (which is said to be a popular haunt for the Noma staff). This stylish, contemporary establishment is famed for its inventive cocktails, like the Copenhagen cocktail, an inspired blend of Heering cherry liqueur, Bols Genever, lime juice, simple syrup and Angostura bitters. The bar's manager, Hardeep Rehal, appreciates just how much the culinary movement has motivated members of the city's food and beverage scene: "What you are experiencing now in Copenhagen is new motivation, new blood—everything is new and experimental, and that is what drives us forward," he remarks.

All the Ingredients

Copenhagen's newfound status as a culinary capital adds to its already sterling reputation as one of Europe's most aesthetically inspired countries. It is, after all, the birthplace of Lego, Bang & Olufsen, Bodum and famed storyteller Hans Christian Andersen. One must simply stroll around the city's compact, charming streets to gain an appreciation for its subtle yet innovative approach to both architecture and design.

With such intriguing cuisine and a distinctly progressive culture, it's no surprise Denmark was ranked as the world's happiest country in the United Nations' World Happiness Report, and the EU's second most innovative country by the European Commission in 2013. Meanwhile, the European Commission also named Copenhagen the European Green Capital of 2014 due to the city's environmentally conscious urban planning, bicycle-friendly streets and plans to become carbon neutral by 2025. With such creative design and culinary movements intended to nourish both the spirit and stomach of its populace, there is no better time to sample Copenhagen's offerings. **M**

CELEBRATING DENMARK'S CAPITAL

Copenhagen's seasonal traditions provide an authentic glimpse into local culture. Here are some suggestions for enjoying a holiday during the city's warmer months:

QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION APRIL 16; AMALIENBORG PALACE

Denmark's monarchy dates back more than 1,000 years, making it Europe's oldest, as well as a source of pride for the country's constituents. Thousands of Danes from all over the country annually descend upon the capital to pay tribute to Queen Margrethe II on her birthday. The queen traditionally makes a rare appearance to greet the crowd from her balcony at Amalienborg Palace, a site that's worth a tour of its own any time of year. The event also affords locals and visitors alike a unique opportunity to witness a special changing of the royal guard. (dkks.dk/amalienborg-palace)

COPENHAGEN BEER FESTIVAL MAY 22-24; TAP 1

As the home of Tuborg and Carlsberg, Copenhagen has long been a beacon for beer aficionados. From May 22-24, both visitors and locals can embrace the city's malt culture at the Copenhagen Beer Festival. Held at Tap 1, the original site of Carlsberg's brewery, the event will feature a dizzying array of more than 700 beers from both large beer brands and micro-breweries. This is a unique opportunity to taste a large selection of brews, many of which aren't available in other parts of the world. (beerfestival.dk)

SANKT HANS AFTEN (ST. JOHN'S EVE) JUNE 23; CITYWIDE

It should come as no surprise that Danes, who endure below-freezing temperatures during winter, have a special appreciation for warmer months. The summer solstice is one of the biggest festivals throughout all of Scandinavia, and the celebration welcoming the sun god dates back to pagan times. Copenhagen hosts one of the most boisterous tributes on the eve of June 23, as locals toast the power of the sun with much dancing, singing and bonfires throughout their beloved city.