

# FLAGGAN

To preserve, teach and celebrate Swedish heritage.

Winter 2020

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## MISSION STATEMENT

*Through its arts and educational programs and its permanent collection, the Swedish American Museum interprets the immigrant experience for children and adults and promotes an appreciation of contemporary Swedish-American culture.*

### FLAGGAN

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## Dear members,

This year we celebrated Lucia with a very small group in our own courtyard. Although we did not have the crowds of prior years, it felt like Lucia and we sang the regular songs together. Special thanks to the girls and boy who participated. We also had a special visit from *Tomten* (Santa) on Zoom. Since breakfast with *Tomten* moved online people were able to sign up for one on one time on Zoom after enjoying the Swedish pancake breakfast at home.

Here at the Museum the Swedish holiday items are all set up in the gallery space and the store is stocked with our regular items including the special foods that we all want for Christmas, including frozen *lutfisk*. We are adding items to the fridge and freezer almost on a daily basis so that all of you can get the meats, cheeses, and herring you all want to have on your *julbord* (Christmas table).

This year especially it feels like we all want to have the traditional items and decorate a little more than usual since we are spending more time at home. Personally, I am looking forward to baking *pepparkakor* (gingerbread cookies). I use my *mormors* (grandmother's) recipe that my mom made when we were growing up. I also bake *lussekatter* (saffron buns) and try to coordinate so I can do it with Kathryn via Zoom as she is spending the holidays in Austin, TX where she lives. We have been baking *pepparkakor* together since she was a little girl and the tradition is very important to both of us.

Dan and I will be here in Chicago and connecting and celebrating with our families in the U.S. and Sweden via Zoom, just like many of you are. We plan to have all the regular items on our *julbord* for Christmas Eve, light many candles and be thankful that we are healthy.

I hope that at the end of next year we will be talking about the many trips we took during 2021 to be together with our family members and friends and to explore new places. Feels like we are all ready for new adventures.

Throughout this year, I have been very fortunate to be part of the Swedish American Museum community and the support we have received from all of you. You are all very special and all of us at the Museum are very appreciative of your encouragement.

God Jul och Gott Nytt År

*Karin M. Abercrombie*



# Annual Appeal

## Swedish American Museum

### 2020 finding new ways...

## The year started out strong.



In 2020, we introduced new regular events such as book club and knitting club. We celebrated Sami National Day, ate herring and enjoyed a concert by Jaerv. The popular pop-up cafes continued and days before the lockdown we had a visit from Swedish hip-hop artist Timbuktu who presented his new biography.

Behind the scenes the outdoor space is getting ready for visitors and openings to the buildings are under way. The Andersonville exhibit is starting to take form on the second floor.

This year saw some beautiful exhibits in the main gallery:

Natural Scenics by Jack Carlson was a photography exhibit with themes in nature. We welcomed nine Swedish weavers who work with double-weave, a disappearing art. Three of the weavers accompanied the exhibit to Chicago and were able to demonstrate this artform. Swedish Dads by Johan Bävman was a photography exhibit that explores paternity leave in Sweden.

The Raul Wallenberg gallery is currently used as a space to digitalize our collections, but before it turned into a temporary work space we were able to show the Lost houses of Lyndale Street by Matt Bergstrom. An exhibit exploring the passing of time in housing. To celebrate Pippi Longstocking's 75th birthday we displayed an exhibit portraying the life of author Astrid Lindgren.

## Then we mostly moved online.



Then came Covid-19 and the stay at home order in Illinois. Many of our already scheduled programs moved online, such as book talks, classes and lectures. New programs were started so people could connect during the lock down. Some of these were game nights, fika Fridays and speaking Swedish. We even managed to enjoy two online concerts this summer. This year saw a special online Gala and for the first time we held our silent auction online.

The pop-up cafe has been replaced with freshly baked goods for pick-up every Friday. Cinnamon buns are on the menu every week together with other Swedish classics that are appreciated by all.

This year the Museum introduced its very first Holiday catalog. The Store has been offering curbside pickup as well as personal shopping experiences online. This has not only helped the Museum Store stay open as in person shopping has been limited but it has helped our customers who live outside the Chicago area to have access to Swedish items they might not otherwise be able to get hold of.

We have learned a lot this year as we were forced to make some changes. We hope to be able to build on this as we move forward and will remain accessible to people all over the country and the world. During this time we are also grateful for all the help we have received. When we had to close our doors a number of people stepped up and donated money to help the Museum make it through the year as many expenses do not disappear as revenue goes down. Together we are moving forward and look at 2021 with great hope and renewed strength.

***Thank you for being a part of the Museum community!  
We are grateful for your support.  
Donate today and help us end 2020 strong.  
God Jul och Gott Nytt År!***

# Swedish-American Recipes

By Catherine Selen

Growing up in a Swedish-American household is the recipe for a varied and rich food tradition. Many of the things on our holiday table came from my father's Swedish background. My dad may play by some rules from *Rutiga Kokboken* (the checkered cookbook), but he has always been a rebel of sorts. This is likely an even more controversial addition for some than whether or not the onions should be cooked or raw before baking the dish, but it's a must try for any anchovy lover - cheese on your *Janssons fresetelse* (Jansson's temptation)! While maintaining a mostly traditional method of preparing this quintessential Christmas dish, my dad also likes to add a crunchy crust of caramelized parmesan to the top which adds an unforgettable sharpness and texture. I don't think I even knew that the original recipe didn't have cheese until I was in college!



# Jansson's temptation

## Ingredients

4-5 medium potatoes

2 medium onions (not too small)

4 tbsp butter

1 cup cream (milk or half & half is also fine)

1 Tin of "Anchovy Style Sprats" (typically around 4.4 oz. Abbas Ansjovis is great for this and can be found in the Museum Store)

Optional Topping (last 10 minutes of baking): 4 tbsp (1/4 cup) grated Parmesan cheese mixed with 2 tbsp (1/8 cup) plain breadcrumbs.

## Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 440 F. Grease a small (about 2 quart) casserole dish.
2. Peel the onions, cut in half lengthwise, then slice thin. Do the same with the potatoes.
3. Saute the sliced onions in half the butter until they are soft.
4. Spread half of the sliced potatoes evenly over the bottom of the casserole dish.
5. Spread the cooked onions evenly over the potatoes.
6. Spread the anchovy fillets evenly over the onions.
7. Spread the remaining potatoes over the anchovies and onions. Cut the remaining 2 tbsp of butter into pieces and put on top of the potatoes.
8. Bake uncovered on center rack for a total of about 50 minutes.
  - At the 10 minute mark, pour on half of the cream.
  - At the 20 minute mark, pour on the rest of the cream.
  - At the 40 minute mark, sprinkle on the optional topping.

# The Swedish Christmas Table

By Angelica Farzaneh-Far

*Julbord* (the Swedish Christmas table) is the ultimate *smörgåsbord*. Just a few generations ago Sweden was still a fairly poor farming country. Many farmers did not own their land but farmed for a landowner. The combination of farming and meager resources is the foundation of a surprisingly extravagant Christmas table. For people with little money, sugar and spices were saved for Christmas. A number of traditions come from saving the exotic and luxurious ingredients for special occasions. Swedes now have gingerbread cookies and saffron buns, caramel with almonds and coconut fudge. Rice porridge made with milk and cinnamon topped with a dollop of butter was a step-up from the oats made with water that was usually served for breakfast.



On the Swedish Christmas table, the ham takes center stage. Pigs used to be very common because they could be fed a cheap diet of food scraps. Pigs were usually slaughtered in the fall and then salted so that the meat could be enjoyed the whole year. One pig was always saved as close as possible to Christmas and was slaughtered on Dec. 13 or St. Lucia Day. Christmas was therefore one of the few times fresh meat was enjoyed. Every part of the pig was used. Today, the Swedish Christmas *smörgåsbord* holds everything from *leverpastej* (liver pâté), *blodkorv* (blood sausage), *prinskorv* (mini sausages) and *sylta* (jellied or pickled meat). *Köttbullar* (Swedish meatballs) are also a mix of pork and beef. Many of these dishes use more exotic spices, such as allspice and clove, rather than those traditionally grown in Sweden.

You can also learn about different kinds of Swedish food that are preserved and result in food on the Swedish Christmas table. For example, *gravlax*, *lutfisk*, and *sill* are three of the most common fish on the table. One is salted (*gravlax*), one is dried (*lutfisk*) and one pickled (*sill* or herring). In addition to the methods to preserve fish for the Swedish Christmas table, *knäckebröd* (dry bread) ensured bread through the winter. The Swedish dry bread or *knäckebröd* were also a way to preserve the bread through the winter. This is always served with a variety of Swedish cheeses such as *Prästost* and *Herrgårdssost* that can both be found in the Museum Store.



In addition to the aforementioned preserved foods, we must not forget the traditional Swedish side dishes that typically appear on the Christmas table. Here the potato and cabbage play a big part. Historically, since there was no ready access to fresh vegetables during the winter months, cabbage (mostly red and brown) and potatoes were often stored in a dug out root cellar under the house and eaten throughout the year. To dress the cabbage up for the party, it was boiled with spices and the potato is now mostly served as a mash or *Janssons frestelse*. Last but not least, we have to mention the classic beetroot salad and lingonberry jam that tends to accompany many Swedish meats, especially meatballs.

There are, of course, a number of regional varieties to this feast and dishes not mentioned in this article. However, the most important thing to remember when you are heading over to your Swedish friend's house for a *julbord* is that it is served on Christmas Eve.

# Curator's Corner

By Emily England

In the United States, we have Burning Man, but Gävle, Sweden has the burning Christmas goat, or *julbock*. One key difference, however, is the Gävle *julbock* is not supposed to burn, though that rarely stops it. While Burning Man culminates in the burning of a massive wooden effigy of “The Man,” Gävle begins the Christmas season by constructing a large straw *julbock* on the first day of advent. An advertising consultant conceptualized the *julbock* and his brother, chief of the local fire department, constructed it in 1966, along with a group called the Southern Merchants financing the construction in later years. That very first year, the 40+ foot tall Gävle *julbock* survived well over a month until a New Year's Eve arson.

Why a straw goat? The *julbock* is an ages-old *Jul* (Christmas) tradition with pagan roots. Today's *julbock* traditions are just the latest derivatives of a mythology and tradition that possibly pre-dates even Norse mythology and carries back to ancient animal sacrifices and offerings. The goat had several roles in Norse mythology, one of which was leading Thor's chariot. Thor's chariot goats would also be slaughtered for food and reincarnate the following day. Ritual offerings at *Jul*, called the *juloffer*, mimicked this by having a person dressed as a goat symbolically slaughtered and returned to life the following day. With the introduction of Christianity to Sweden, the *julbock* was seen as a demon who would demand sacrifices on Christmas night. Later the *julbock* returned to its more innocuous roots of transportation provider, but this time to a Santa Claus-like *jultomte* delivering presents instead of Thor. Now we have straw *julbockar* decorations at Christmastime that are only sometimes sacrificed.

Ever since that first New Year's Eve arson, it has become a tradition of sorts for arsonists to set fire to the Gävle *julbock*, which while probably intended as mischievous vandalism does follow in the pagan footsteps of the *julbock* and *juloffer*. For example, the 2001 arson was instigated by an American visiting a friend in Sweden; he thought he was partaking in a legal, local tradition and was much surprised by his arrest and subsequent punishment of 18 days in jail, a 100,000 SEK fine, and the confiscation of his cigarette lighter for improper handling. Or, take the 2005 arson that was part of a larger string of arsons taking down at least four public *julbockar* across Sweden; Gävle's was festively taken down by arsonists dressed as Santa Claus and a gingerbread man by shooting flaming arrows into the hay. Fortunately, the *julbock* is still built near the fire station where the original builder was chief, so most fires are put out before damaging the wooden support structure beneath the hay or anything nearby.

Various attempts at fireproofing, security guards, volunteer vigilante brigades, and surveillance methods have been rarely successful. Ostensibly tired of seeing their hard work go up in flames, the Southern Merchants ceased funding the Gävle *julbock* in 1971. To fill the gap, another group across town started their own annual *julbock*. The Southern Merchants restarted in 1986 (coincidentally the same year Burning Man began in the United States). Today, the two groups compete back and forth for the Guinness World Record for largest *julbock*, and both are often met with the same fiery fate. Though fire hasn't been the only culprit at play – one year the *julbock* was destroyed by a car running into it, and another year, vandals offered a bribe to the security guard to let them abduct the *julbock* with a helicopter. Fortunately, or unfortunately depending on your perspective, the security guard declined the bribe and the helicopter heist did not occur.

Many locals place bets each year on how long the *julbock* will last – the Southern Merchants' fiftieth anniversary *julbock* in 2016 didn't even last a full night. As of last year, the Southern Merchants goat has been destroyed 36 times and only survived 17 times, though some of those survived with damage and most had at least one attempted arson or other harm. Surprisingly, 2016 was the last time the Gävle Goat burned, making 2019 the first year the goat survived more than two years in a row – perhaps due to a full protective suite of double fences, 24-hour CCTV surveillance and security guards on patrol, often assisted by various taxis, volunteers, and even a K-9 unit, all at the same time. Time will tell whether 2020 extends the streak or not.



# Museum Membership

By *Caroline Gerbaulet-Vanasse*

We love our members here at the Museum! When you join or renew membership, you are showing us love and support that lasts the whole year through! What is more, membership makes a wonderful gift to a friend or family member! There are many benefits and reasons for membership. In case you are not already familiar, allow me to refresh your memory about membership benefits, which include:

Free Admission	Subscription to <i>Flaggan</i> newsletter and e-newsletters.
A single-use Family Admission Pass that you can use to bring guests on a visit or give to a friend to use	Reciprocal memberships with the American Swedish Historical Museum (Philadelphia), American Swedish Institute (Minneapolis), National Nordic Museum (Seattle), and Swedish Historical Society of (Illinois)
Discounts in the Museum Store	There are even more benefits at the Supporter and above levels!
Discounts on classes and programs	

Membership is so much more than these tangible benefits! In its purest form, membership demonstrates love of the Museum. All of us at the Museum are grateful to you!

The unforeseen circumstances of 2020 have had some silver linings. You, our members, have demonstrated your loyalty and support in the most beautiful manner by renewing even when we had to be closed to the public. We cannot thank you enough for standing by us throughout this year. Here at the Museum we have felt empowered by your continued faith in us, and we love the opportunities to be creative in our programming and events! We look forward to celebrating the holidays with you, seeing you in the Museum Store, and visiting the exhibits as we head towards the end of 2020 and beyond!

# Saffron Buns

By *Elise Beck*

*Saffransbullar* (saffron buns) are a staple of Swedish Christmas. They are not only beautiful in shape, but also delicious! Saffransbullar get their name from the incorporation of saffron into the dough. Another common name for these pastries is *lussekatter* (Lucia's cats) as their traditional shape resembles curled cats. They are consumed throughout advent, but especially around St. Lucia's Day on Dec. 13.

*Saffransbullar* can also be baked into a variety of shapes or even eaten as a loaf. They are most often enjoyed fresh out of the oven with Glögg or during fika with a hot coffee. Want to try these delicious, traditional treats yourself? Why not to pair it with Glögg? Or enjoy one during your next fika? Grab some of these Swedish staples from our Museum Store.



## Holiday in the Museum Store

This holiday season the Museum is offering a number of different shopping experiences. You can book an in-person visit to the Store, Holiday Store and Julmarknad. You can shop online on our website or you can shop via FaceTime or Zoom. All the information can be found on our website.









# Julmarknad 2020





# Making Gingerbread Houses

*By Stacey Nyman*

As we move into the holiday season, families begin to look forward to beloved traditions. Food is an important tradition in many families around the holidays.

Growing up, we gathered with my extended family to make homemade potato sausage. We would shop in Andersonville for all the essential ingredients and meet in the home of a relative. We used grinders that we would crank by hand and little homemade inventions to make the process easier. The kids all took their required turns, but then would run off to play and sometimes sneak a hand into the cold water pot full of casings. Thinking back to that time, I can instantly pull forward sights and smells of those special times. Food brings people together and often memories are formed that last a life time!

Baking is a very big part of holiday preparation for many families. In Sweden, pepparkakor or gingerbread is a very common baked good to prepare. Although traditional pepparkakor cookies (gingersnaps) of hearts, pigs and other shapes are fun to make, nothing compares to putting together and decorating a pepparkakshus, or gingerbread house. Most families with children in Sweden will build at least one pepparkakshus leading up to the holidays. This is a tradition that is also very popular here in America.

Once World War II ended and people could afford luxury decorations, building gingerbread houses became popular again. According to tradition, gingerbread houses should be built on the first of advent and eaten during julsgransplundring. Julsgrandsplundring is Christmas tree plundering. It is when decorations are removed from the tree on January 13, marking the end of the holiday season. However, many families make the houses throughout the holiday season.

Gingerbread house kits are plentiful and can be found in many different stores. It is very fun (and much tastier) to make your own! To help you make your own, a recipe for gingerbread houses has been included. For the house templates, you can either purchase a premade cutter set or simply print out a template online that you can use after rolling out your dough. Then all you need is some icing and fun candy to use as decorations. If you have leftover icing, you can save it to make decorated pepparkakor!

# Pepparkakshus

This is a low-fat dough that is well-suited for houses and other decorations, but it is not as tender as regular gingerbread dough.. To make one small house you need ¼ of the dough. The remaining dough can be used to make a fence or decorations for your Christmas tree. To make a template for the pieces of your house, you can draw your own or find one online! Some are elaborate while others are simple. Print out the template and trace the pieces onto a hard material like the back of a cereal box.

1 ¼ cup sugar

¾ cup dark syrup (if you can't find dark syrup, mix half corn syrup with half molasses)

7 tbsp butter or margarine

1 tbsp cinnamon

1 tbsp cloves

1 tbsp ginger

1 ¼ cup milk

1 tbsp baking soda

7 cups flour

1. Mix sugar, syrup, butter and spices (cinnamon, cloves and ginger) in a pot on medium heat until the butter has melted. Add the milk and let the mixture cool.
2. Add the baking soda and some of the flour to the pot. Add the remaining flour to the mixture on the work surface. Then wrap the dough in plastic wrap and keep in the refrigerator for at least 24 hours.

3. When you are ready to make the house, knead the dough on a well-floured surface and roll to 1/16 inch thickness. Bake a test cookie. If it spreads, then add more flour to the dough.

4. After rolling the dough, move it to lightly buttered cookie sheets or parchment paper before placing your template and cutting out the shapes. If the shapes are moved after cutting, they may warp.

5. The house should be baked at 345F for 10-15 minutes.

6. Compare the finished pieces with the template and cut off any parts that might have shifted.



# Holiday Drinks

By Zach Weiss

There is something special about sharing a drink. A bit more informal than sharing a meal, beverages are your best bet for everything from a casual reunion with family, to a big celebration of the season. During *jul*, the Swedish Christmas season, traditional beverages keep the season bright and emphasize the warmth of home and family, whether you imbibe or not, while the dark and cold Swedish winter overtakes the outdoors.

Originally only available during the *jul* season, for the youngsters, or those of us who fondly remember our childhood, *Julmust* is a traditional Swedish soda. According to the bottle of Grandpa Lundquist Christmas Soda, available in the Museum Store, “Created in 1910, *Julmust* was quickly embraced and continues to be a part of Swedish culture to this day.”

The flavor is sweet up front, with a heavy malty flavor at the back of the pallet, and finishes with a very light hop that craft beer enthusiasts are likely to recognize from their favorite IPA or hopped pale ale. There is no booze in *Julmust* though! This soft drink is for all ages. In Sweden during the Christmas season, *Julmust* even outsells Coca-Cola. Any Swede will tell you that this dark, yet effervescent and bright beverage tastes like *jul*, even though these days, you can find it twice per year, as *påskmust*, or Easter soda, during Easter time.

If you are of age you might want something that packs a little more punch. Glögg is the traditional warm, mulled wine that Swedes all over associate with Jul. The association is almost as strong as the drink is! Many families have their own glögg recipe, so it is likely that you will experience many different glöggs throughout the Jul season.

Glögg starts with a base of warmed red wine or port, mulled with spices and raisins, and served hot with some kind of inclusion. Many recipes call for the addition of a spirit, such as brandy, whiskey, or akvavit. As for spices, most recipes call for orange peel, cinnamon, cardamom, and clove, with some including ginger. When served, the warm infusion is usually served over some raisins and almonds. Around Jul, glögg can be found in most Swedish grocery stores, but a traditional, homemade glögg can't be beat.

When making glögg at home, you first warm the wine and liquor on the stove in a pot big enough to contain your batch, to no hotter than 175 F, so as not to boil off the alcohol. Then, add the spices and raisins and simmer for 2-5 minutes. Once the wine/spice/raisin mixture has simmered, you remove the pot from the stove and let stand for an hour. After the steep, you can strain the spice debris out, and either reheat and serve with the almonds and raisins, or store for the deep winter months.

Christmas is a special time of year. You can feel it in the air! When the weather dips below freezing, traditions take over and familiar flavors remind you of Christmases gone by. Whether you're enjoying Julmust or glögg, what's important is that you're sharing it with family and continuing the Jul tradition. Even though this Jul will look a little different, let these traditional Swedish celebration drinks remind you that Jul will always be there.





# Aspire!

Gala 2020

This year made for interesting Gala preparations. As guidelines were constantly shifting the Museum had to make plans for both an in person as well as an online event. Pretty early on we decided to move the silent auction online since we were unsure of how many people would be able to get together if there was an in person event.

As in previous years, both business and individual donated generously to the silent auction. A platform was chosen and we introduced a week long silent auction online. Many of our members have participated in online auctions before but this was the first time for us running one. It turned out to be a smooth process and even if we were limited to the software we were using, it turned out great. We made a total of \$\$\$ from the silent auction this year.

As November got closer it became clear that the Gala itself would also have to move online. We opted for a livestream on YouTube. It was a lot of fun getting all the pieces together and getting the timing just right and we hope that all of you who participated had a really good time!

It was good to try something different this year and we have learned a lot that we hope will come in handy in the years to come, but we really hope that next year we will be able to get together in person for the Gala yet again.



# Thank you to our Gala Sponsors!

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## *Silent Auction*

Julie Benson

## *Decoration*

Vereen Nordstrom

# Museum Hours

The Museum and Brunk Children's Museum is closed until further notice.

## Museum Store Open

Monday, Dec. 21 – Wednesday, Dec. 23

10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Monday, Dec. 28 – Wednesday, Dec. 30

10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

## CLOSED

Thursday, Dec. 24 – Sunday, Dec. 27

Thursday, Dec. 31, 2020 – Monday, Jan. 3, 2021

**Starting Jan. 4, 2021 until further notice the Museum Store is only open for curbside pickup and online orders.**

Tuesday – Friday, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Saturday – Sunday, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.

