Eating My Way Abroad

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by Reuben Hall

"Cooking is the most ancient of arts, for Adam was born hungry." Ever since the Garden of Eden, they say, designing women have sought to capitalize on man's inherent interest in victuals.

I, being a man like Adam in respect to hunger and food interest, was rather skeptical and dubious as to what might befall my digestive tract during a sojourn in Europe. Would my stomach, as sensitive to shock as a seismograph, be able to withstand the onslaughts of such a varied diet as this trip would unquestionably produce? But I, like Adam with the rueful apple, dared to venture, and unlike Adam, only happiness befell me.

My baptism to foreign diets and customs occurred during the passage to Hamburg, Germany, on a German liner. The dexterity of maritime waiters and diners was astounding as they dished out food with amazing precision, which at first I embarrassingly doubted. Even more intriguing than the waiters' skill were the silverware manipulations of European diners.

The knife and fork are grasped in practically the same manner as a snare drummer holds his sticks. The fork is held in the left hand, with the times pointing down, while the knife is controlled by the right. The two implements are used together. A morsel of food is cut with the knife, and then speared with the fork. It is seemingly permissible to use the knife to drape an added tidbit over the speared particle. Also, the knife serves as an impromptu ladle to add a bit of gravy if desired.

One innovation in gastronomical experiences to a traveler from the inland was the omnipresence of the lowly herring. It had a delectable palatability, and achieved "social class" when prefixed with the mighty name, "smørbrød." But it wouldn't help! Ice cream is becoming popular in Europe, but Europeans have not the American ability to prepare it. Its taste is more like a sherbet, but I was a steady customer of ice cream at an automat after the fashion of the young man in the song, "A Million Dollar Baby." It was discouraging that that blonde ladle of frozen cream could not understand my Norwegian! A young traveler also

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has an appetite for romance—but that is another story.

I was presented with so many Utopias of culinary delight that space forbids me to present all, but one cannot visit Sweden without falling under the spell of the "smorgas" table of the Swedish restaurant. It is a table laden with appetizers, from which one serves himself. It has a "57 variety" charm. On one I counted over 50 different dishes. After having returned for three or four helpings, it was very discouraging and disconcerting to notice a tempting dish that one had overlooked. I best remember delicious squirming eel, suspended in colorless gelatin, and enticing shrimp, served beside luscious, billowy omelet.

I traversed only a small part of Europe, but I had a variety of epicurean experiences. I had a varied diet. It ranged from dried horse meat to caviar; delicate French pastry to coarse black bread. I ate blood dumpings, potato dumplings, fish dumplings, thick milk soups, cold waffle hearts, cold pancakes, hot fruit soups and jams and jellies from unknown berries.

I tasted dozens of different cheeses, and yet smack my lips over the memory of delicious goat cheese given me by a dairy maid high in the Norwegian mountains. I ate in the home of poor peasants, and dined in luxury at sumptuous night clubs. My appetite increased in a geometric progression, to an opposite decrease in my purse.

I had tried for two years in America to gain weight, but failed. In Europe, by eating the customary four and five times a day, I gained 25 pounds with ease. All my original fears were allayed. My stomach had no wrinkles of satisfaction, only a rotund happiness. I came, tasted and conquered.

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