

Kroppkakor by Irene Roberts and her cousin, Janet Taylor

My story

Our Swedish heritage came through our grandfather who emigrated from the Umeå area in his early twenties, so information about Swedish food (and recipes in particular) was scanty. However, about 10 years later, our grandfather sponsored two nephews emigrating from the same region. One of them, Erik, married Hilda, who also emigrated from Sweden. Hilda would occasionally make Kroppkakor and invite the extended family to share them. I have a distinct memory of one of these events, when I was around the age of nine. Dinner consisted of just Kroppkakor which appeared to me as glossy baseballs swimming in melted butter (with some lingonberry jam on the side). The flavor was delicious, the texture firm yet silky, and there were no vegetables lurking on the side... I was hooked!!

Also remarkable to my nine-year-old self was the strange ritual to create these wonders. Hilda described an arduous process, beginning the previous day, of grating potatoes and hanging them in cheesecloth to extract the starch - then creating these silky and solid balls wrapped around a savory nugget of meat and spices. Between Hilda's flair for drama and her heavily accented Swedish (Erik and Hilda both spent their youth in Sweden and spoke Swedish at home), the Kroppkakor grew to mythical proportions in my young mind. Happily, in recent years, Janet and I have discovered a couple of sources for these delicacies. Recipes, however, have been hard to find and those that match Hilda's extensive process are very elusive. But, thanks to Google, I've found that Kroppkakor recipes vary from region to region, and Hilda's laborious process is similar to that practiced today in Öland.

The history:

Potatoes have been a staple food in Sweden since the 1700's, when it was discovered that alcohol could be readily distilled from them, they were widely cultivated. Potato dumplings are eaten throughout the country but with different names. **Kroppkakor** (translated "Body Cakes") are potato dumplings traditionally common in southern regions of Sweden: Öland, Småland, Gotland, and Blekinge. The dumplings are typically filled with pork and onion, although there are many varieties, other fillings include bacon and mushrooms. Very popular are **Kroppkakor** from Öland using grated raw potatoes mixed with some boiled potatoes and yellow onions and bacon.

In "Sweden Regional Recipes," potato dumplings were listed in Norbotten and Västerbotten as Piteå potato dumplings – Pitepalt.

Kroppkakor are also traditionally eaten in March in the student town of Uppsala, where the student society Kalmar Nation arranges a Kroppkakegasque, a formal dinner honoring the dish which includes an eating competition.

The recipe

Ingredients

- 4# russet potatoes *(sub up to 2# with Yukon gold if desired)
- 6 oz. smoked chopped bacon
- 4 oz. Canadian bacon, diced
- 1 med. onion, chopped
- 1½ cup flour + more for rolling dumplings
- Coarse salt
- ¼ tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. ground allspice
- ¼ tsp. ground nutmeg
- Dash of ground cloves
- 3 large egg yolks

Butter for serving / frying

Lingonberry jam for serving

Preparation

****Dough:** Place potatoes into saucepan covered completely with cold water and 1 T salt. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer for 30 min. Drain and return to pot on stove with burner off for about 15 mins. to dry. Peel potatoes and pass through a ricer. Let cool completely.

****Filling:** Cook bacon for 2-4 minutes, add onion and spices, reduce heat and cook about 4 mins. Let cool and mince (or coarsely grind).

Lightly brown the finely minced Canadian bacon and add to bacon/onion mixture.

****Shape+ Fill:** While the filling is cooling, sift 1½ tsp. salt, the baking powder and flour together and add to the riced potatoes along with the egg yolks. Mix well together by hand. Divide into 4 equal parts. On a lightly floured surface, shape into a log about 1½ in in diameter. Then slice each log into 7 equal pieces. With floured hands, roll each piece into a ball, make an indent in center to fill with 1 heaping T. of filling.

Push filling into center and roll the ball to completely enclose the filling. Place on a parchment lined baking sheet and cover with a clean towel.

**** Cook:** Bring a large pot of salted water to a low boil. Add 7 dumplings and simmer, stirring occasionally until dumplings rise to the surface (about 5 minutes). Using a slotted spoon, transfer to clean kitchen towel to drain. Repeat for the rest of the dumplings.

**** Serve:** Pour melted butter over and keep warm **OR** fry in butter until golden brown. Serve warm with Lingonberry jam on the side.

Yields 28 dumplings

Dumplings can be wrapped individually and refrigerated for a couple of days before serving.

