

Dine like the Danes

Copenhagen attracts the swish set thanks to its Michelin-studded restaurants and world-famous chefs

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If you are tired of the unending Indian queue, made so much the worse by Modi's demonetisation, we are sorry to inform you that Copenhagen fares no better. It too has a waiting list that runs into months literally, and we're not exaggerating here. The swanky Danish capital is a must-visit for Michelin-obsessed foodies, who wait for as long as six months to get a coveted table at its world-famous restaurants. All with good reason: the city, after all, boasts of 20 Michelin stars awarded to 16 of its restaurants — the highest number on this planet.

STAR EATERIES AND SWADESH

Geranium tops the list with three stars, while Noma and AOC hold two stars each.

But how exactly did this dining revolution evolve in a country that we thought only had salmon and black bread to its credit? Well, we were wrong: the Danes have always been aesthetically sound — a trait has percolated into their design and culinary sensibilities. At a time when Danish cuisine was synonymous with smørrebrød (open sandwiches) and herring and chopped onions at street stalls, in came Noma, which literally took the epicurean world by storm. Four times winner of "Best Restaurant in the World", Noma epitomises the New Nordic wave (and we're not talking about Dogma cinema here, which is another trip altogether).

Claus Meyer and René Redzepi, co-founders of this iconic restaurant literally redefined new Nordic cuisine by taking traditional methods such as marinating, smoking and salting, and re-inventing the use of local produce such as rapeseed, oats, cheeses, and forgotten varieties of apples and pears. In a way, Noma was a 'swadeshi' movement for this astoundingly good-looking race.

THE POSH IN NEW NORDIC NOSH

The New Nordic kitchen is characterised by its commitment to organic, sustainable and local produce: ingredient-driven menus that change according to the season, a food culture based on supply rather than demand, as things ought to be. The chef will first figure out what items are seasonally prevalent



PHOTO COURTESY: COPENHAGEN MEDIA CENTER

An example of new Nordic cuisine — smoked milk ice cream with freshly foraged flowers; (l) interiors of the Michelin-starred Marchal restaurant; (r) caviar at Marchal



and then style dishes around them. For example, a sample menu at Noma will feature deep-fried moss, edible flowers and the very lucky can even partake of a serving of live ants. "Themes" (a malaise that has afflicted our brunch culture in Mumbai) range from "forest in the fall", "the sea in the winter", or vegetables — grown in its own urban garden — during the spring and summer. Authenticity and funk are two sides of the same coin with new Nordic grub. The chefs employ techniques such as fermenting and pickling, considered unfashionable until recently, but inherent to Nordic civilisation. Preservation techniques, such as drying, fermenting, smoking, salting and pickling have for centuries enabled Danish people to survive the long, dark winters.

BEYOND STARDOM

For tourists who are eager to sample Copenhagen's culinary gems but don't have the deep pockets or patience to wait half a year for a table, there are plenty of other options. A personal favourite is Manfreds, in a cool bylane of Jaegersborggade (don't even think of pronouncing it) in Norrebro district.

Here one can relish home-style food made from raw ingredients in an unpretentious atmosphere. Sample the beef tartar here, which literally melts in your mouth, along with delicious homemade wine. Also at Jaegersborggade, Grod is the only restaurant that specialises in just one dish: divine porridge (grød means porridge in Danish). This

mushy delight comprises a small, weedy-changing menu, and is served with seasonal fruits, nuts and berries. Post 5 pm, expect dishes such as pea risotto with cheese, and topped with rababertrifli, a traditional Danish rhubarb compote. Need we say more?

The Danes truly enjoy their hot dogs and almost every major street has a hot dog vendor. Also, do munch into some smørrebrød (open sandwiches), usually eaten for lunch at one of the many old-style restaurants. You can also avail of street food at Torvehallerne, the city's upscale market which opened in 2011: delis, bakeries, butcher vans, coffee shops, cheese vendors, vegetable stands, all vie for your

Claus Meyer, one of the co-founders of Noma, redefined new Nordic cuisine by twisting traditional methods such as marinating, smoking and salting



FACT FILE

Culinary Copenhagen
• Danish chef Rasmus Kofoed, of Geranium, has won Best Chef Award 'Bocuse d'Or' thrice.

• Copenhagen is home to Noma, ranked 'Best Restaurant in the World' in 2010-12 and 2014. In 2014, Geranium was No. 42 and Relæ No. 53.

• The Nordic kitchen has its own manifesto — The New Nordic Kitchen Manifesto, written in 2004 by Danish gastronomic entrepreneur and culinary ideologist Claus Meyer and some of the greatest chefs in Scandinavia.

• Copenhagen has 16 Michelin-starred restaurants and a total of 20 Michelin stars. Geranium tops the list with three stars, while Noma and AOC each hold two stars.

• Organic food accounts for 13% of the total food sale in Copenhagen, the highest in Denmark.

• 75% of the food consumption in the City of Copenhagen's public institutions is organic.

• In 2014, the American gastro magazine SAVEUR awarded Copenhagen Best Culinary Destination in the small international (city) category.



taste buds here! For an upscale treat, visit Marchal, housed in the acclaimed Hotel D'Angleterre, the grand dame of historic hotels. A hybrid of Nordic and French classics will seduce your palate here. Be prepared to spend lavishly, but you will be rewarded with an impeccable dining experience that will linger in your memory forever — much like unforgettable Copenhagen itself.