



Finland's Archipelago is a Foodie's Hidden Treasure

Discover the pearls of Nordic cuisine on a culinary journey through the Finnish coast.

Finland's archipelago is one of the largest in the world, and a haven for culinary exploration. Traditional food culture there is rooted in seasonal, local ingredients, with dishes as fresh as the Baltic Sea breeze. From unique Finnish flavors to the best of Nordic cuisine, it's time to put the food culture of Finland's Coast and Archipelago on the map.

Big Flavors on a Small Island

Chef William Hellgren's story reads like a feel-good movie. He grew up on the small island of Korpo, fell in love with cooking, trained in renowned fine dining restaurants in Stockholm, and eventually returned home to take over the family business – a small historic hotel, [Nestor](#), named after his great-grandfather. In 2016, William opened his restaurant, [Back Pocket](#), at Hotel Nestor. Today, he runs it with his spouse Sandra.

Korpo is located in the Turku archipelago, and travelling there feels like stepping back in time. But the same can't be said about the dishes William creates. Restaurant Back Pocket is aptly named: it's secluded and full of surprises, serving archipelago-inspired cuisine with a modern flair.

"Our food is playful and untraditional," William explains. "While using local ingredients, I like to incorporate Asian – especially Japanese – influences, combining those umami flavors with the creaminess of Nordic cuisine."

Back Pocket's six-course tasting menu changes with the seasons. In early summer, William uses wild herbs, rhubarb, new potatoes, edible flowers, and asparagus from the nearby Åland Islands. Later in the year, it's time for apples, plums, mushrooms, and root vegetables.

"Last summer, I fell in love with strawberries. We buy them fresh every day from a nearby farm, and they're the best you'll ever taste," William promises.

In the Finnish archipelago, food is simple but rich in flavor. Smoked fish and herring are staples. The traditional archipelago bread is malty, sweet, and dark, pairing perfectly with a Nordic summer classic, Skagen made with shrimp.

"All visitors should try new potatoes with chives and crème fraîche, alongside herring and smoked rainbow trout," William suggests. "Personally, I love archipelago bread with brown butter. It has a nutty, caramel-like flavor."

Some Finnish flavors are completely unique, and you might find tar or spruce on the menu. William's sea buckthorn-licorice ice cream is about as Finnish as it gets.

Summer is the peak season, but William and Sandra host visitors all year round. In winter, there's a special kind of romance in the air – and the food might get even better.

"Think meat and game, stewed and cooked for hours, served with root vegetables and mushrooms."

Savor the Tastes of the Finnish Archipelago

Many restaurants in Finland's coastal towns and on its islands embrace the seaside food culture. Here are some of the best picks:

Restaurant **OobuOobu**, located in Turku, the capital of the Finnish archipelago, brings the tastes of the sea onto land. Set in a historic building by the Aura River, it serves soul-nourishing, fresh dishes that honor local traditions while showcasing the best of modern cooking.

In Vaasa, **Restaurant HEJM** follows a similar recipe for success: traditional food culture, seasonal ingredients, and a modern touch. The three chefs behind HEJM are passionate about Ostrobothnian produce – from fish and vegetables to meat and locally crafted drinks. For them, a restaurant visit is a holistic experience, so friendly service and a relaxed atmosphere are always on the menu.

The enchanting Pellinge archipelago, in the Eastern Gulf of Finland, is a popular island destination and easily accessible from the capital region. The newly opened **Pellinge Marina** restaurant specializes in authentic archipelago flavors and locally sourced ingredients. Enjoy fresh sea food, amazing views, and live music on the terrace. You might even feel tempted to stay for the night in their luxurious seaside villas or boutique hotel rooms.

The Baltic Sea is always present in Finland's capital, Helsinki. There are several excellent restaurants on Helsinki's islands serving amazing Nordic food and sea views, but perhaps the most traditional, and the prettiest, is **Restaurant NJK**. Built in 1900 on a small island, NJK offers romantic views of maritime Helsinki and fine seafood dining just a short shuttle boat ride from the city. In late summer, it's the top spot for crayfish – a beloved Finnish archipelago specialty that's celebrated with festive crayfish parties along the coast.

For trailblazers, the most anticipated restaurant opening this summer is **TAR**, located on Tervasaari Island, just a short stroll over the bridge from downtown Helsinki. This high-end eatery is destined to become Helsinki's next hot spot. If the name is any clue, you may find tar – a unique, traditional flavor in Finland – on the menu.

PHOTOS

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