



Intimate Dining in the Home of Faroese Locals

HEIMABLÍDNI SUPPER CLUB — Faroe Islands ○ Anna and Óli Rubeksen are just one of several families in recent years to have joined the Heimablídni Supper Club. The premise of *heimablídni*—which literally means “home hospitality”—is to give visitors to the Faroe Islands, a remote chain in the North Atlantic, a chance to sample authentic Faroese cuisine and hospitality in the homes of local people. This venture is mutually beneficial: it gives local families and farmers an opportunity to supplement their incomes, while introducing guests to this distinctive traditional cuisine. What’s more, by sharing their culinary traditions, the Faroese have a better chance at preserving them. One notable tradition involves the fermentation of meat and fish—historically, this culinary technique helped families survive the long harsh winters.







THE RUBEKSENS' farm is beautifully located on a cliff. Their produce is homegrown or sourced from other Faroese farms or companies.



KOKS



Minimalist Nordic Cuisine at the Far End of the World

With his Michelin-starred restaurant Koks, chef Poul Andrias Ziska has turned the unique ingredients and taste of Faroese cuisine into a fine-dining experience, admired by food lovers worldwide.

Few places in Europe are as exposed to the forces of nature as the Faroe Islands, whose rocky cliffs and green mountains peek out of the Atlantic, halfway between Iceland and the Norwegian coast. At least once a year, a storm whips up both sea and air so ferociously that neither ship nor plane can reach the islands. This remoteness helps explain why its inhabitants have developed a cuisine over the centuries that relies solely on the what the island and the surrounding waters can provide. Especially the food preservation methods—most importantly *Raest*, which is what locals call the method of letting meat dry in the air until it is covered by a mold—can strike visitors as unusual. But young chef Poul Andrias Ziska has succeeded in making the local dishes covetable by international food enthusiasts. With his Michelin star awarded restaurant Koks, just a 25 minute drive away from the capital Tórshavn, he serves locally-sourced ingredients with a contemporary twist, treating his guests' taste buds to flavors that can't be experienced anywhere else.

Poul Andrias Ziska's introduction to Faroese cuisine is this: "We like it simple, using only very few ingredients, but aim to use every part of them. We eat different types of fermented meats—unsalted and unsmoked—, which is quite unique to the Faroe Islands. Almost all the locally-slaughtered meat is fermented and dried by the air, giving it a very particular flavor. Back in the days, conserving food like this was a matter of survival. So overall it's a protein-heavy diet, based on



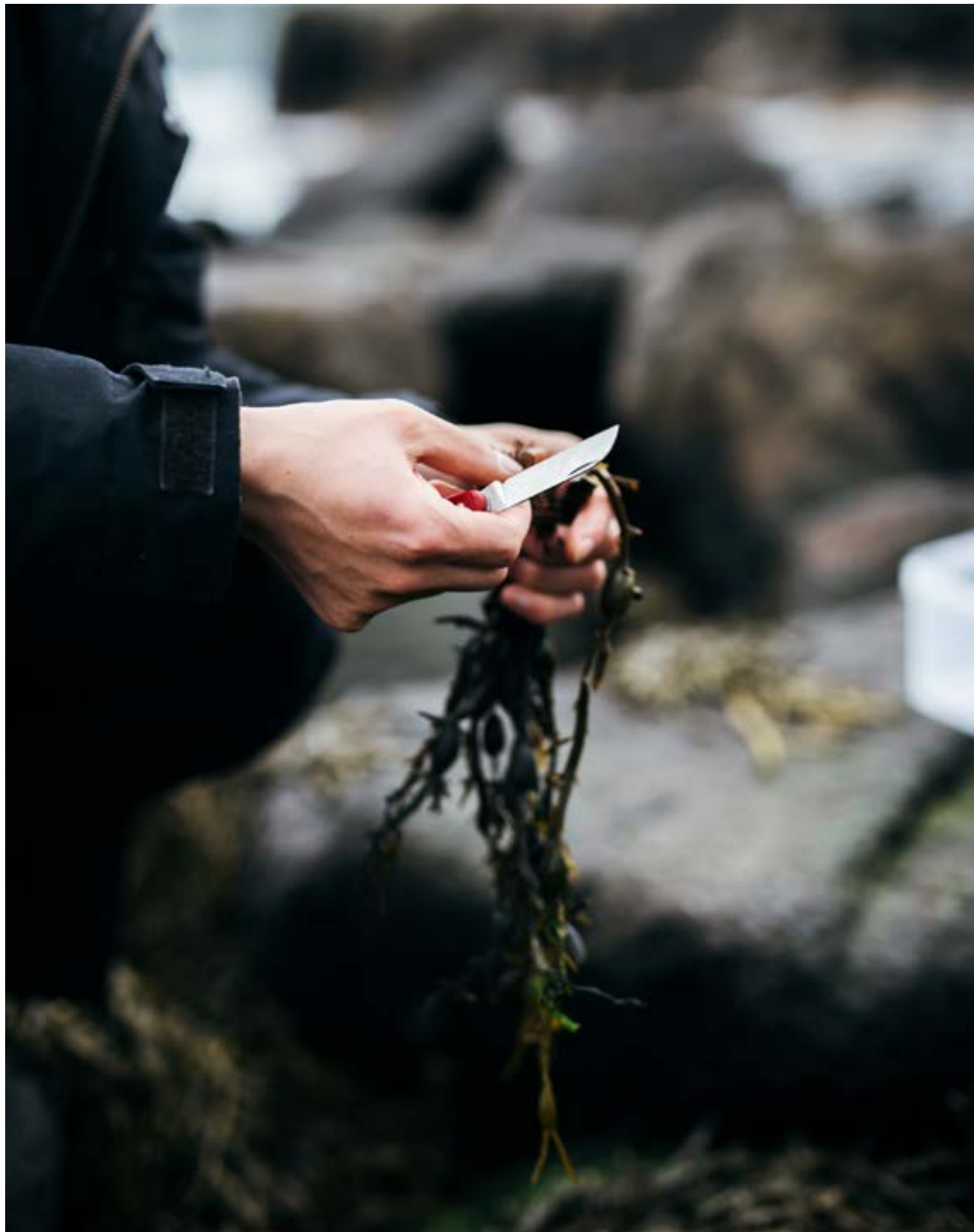
Head chef POUL ANDRIAS ZISKA's basic assumption in the kitchen is: "Less is more basically."

seafood and sheep—we have between eighty and a hundred thousand of them on our islands." Fermenting is an essential practice on the Faroe Islands. "Some of it we do ourselves," says Poul Andrias Ziska's, "but most of the meat we like to buy from different parts of the islands. It's like sourcing wine. You can actually taste if the meat was fermented in the northern parts of Faroe or in the east or south. Its taste is not only influenced by the aging process, but also where a sheep was grazing and how it's been slaughtered. They say some farmers can even tell which island and which valley or mountain the sheep has lived on. And like with wine, we have good years and bad years."



The food preservation practices—especially the meat-drying method *Raest*—can strike visitors as unusual.





As with most traditional Nordic cuisine, Koks' menu is influenced by the seasons. They also work with a few preserved ingredients, like pickled, dried, or fermented products. "A dish like our dessert made with dried seaweed and fermented blueberries can be served all year around," explains Ziska. "But wild herbs and flowers are only available during summer. Also, the annual slaughtering is a key event. We hang the lamb slices up so they're ready in time for Christmas, hence there's more lamb on the menu in winter, while in summer the focus shifts to fish.

We also have small micro-seasons here. The eggs by the Fulmar bird can only be captured three or four days of the season—and they'll only be on the restaurant's menu for one or two weeks."

Ziska remembers that it used to be difficult to find the right suppliers for seafood. He also remembers that people did not use to eat things like that. "When I started cooking, I went to the national aquarium to ask who's diving out all these animals for them. If they have them in the tanks, I thought, it should be possible for me to get them to the restaurant. They gave me a couple of numbers and I just called them all. And one of those divers supplies me today with almost all of our seafood."

When Ziska started working in a professional kitchen at the age of 18, he knew that he wanted to work with food every day of his life. "I was tired of school and applied for an apprenticeship at

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if I want to take over—I immediately said yes."

Due to the remoteness of the island, it sometimes takes visitors to open the inhabitants' eyes to the uniqueness of the Faroese cuisine. "We serve



fermented, minced lamb tallow, which can be used for sauces and dressings and one guest commented 'Oh, it tastes a lot like blue cheese.' It's a connection I'd never have made—but it's true. Now we can combine it with other things that blue cheese works well with. That's great about visitors from abroad: they have different mindsets, they have a different view on things."

Today, people from all around the world are interested in the way Nordic chefs cook. "Less is more basically," states Ziska. "When you have something of extremely good quality, a fish straight

out of the ocean, you can only destroy it from then on. Ideally you would sit in the harbor and prepare everything there directly. Adding too many things like herbs, gels, or croutons, takes away the pureness and flavor—it lacks respect." ○

Leif Sørensen's restaurant—the guy who also signed *The New Nordic Food Manifesto*. When the restaurant closed down in 2009, all the staff went to a hotel whose owners were open to a new concept. There, the first edition of Koks opened in April 2011. When in 2014 Leif decided to leave, the owner called me and asked me