

Nordic Islands' Cuisine

Alexander is an homage to the last noble owner of Pädaste Manor, Alexander von Buxhoeveden. Alex – as he was called by intimae – had a great impact on local life on the Islands. He was the Land Marshall and thus the highest in command.

Without doubt his considerable wealth and his position at the court in St. Petersburg as one of the inner confidants of the last Czar, helped him to realise his quest.

Little known is Alex's passion for nature; he was also an ardent collector of trees that he brought home from his travels, many of which still line our park. In a certain way, Alexander was very much alike ordinary inhabitants of Muhu Island, who for centuries combined the love for their Island with new discoveries from neighbouring Island communities. In this spirit, I like to introduce you to the Nordic Islands' Cuisine.

Foundation Principles of the Nordic Islands' Cuisine

Baltic Coastline Terroir

Muhu Island together with other Islands in the Baltic Sea shoreline (like Gotland, Bornholm, Saaremaa, Öland) are now a mostly forgotten connection that once united people and cultures for centuries, dating back to Viking times. Today, these bonds are still kept by harsh climate; comparable terrain; geological formation and cultural crossover that preceded the modern Nation State. We wish to restore this connectivity by gathering information from these lands, turning them into our larder, making links between people, their customs and produce.

Island Biodiversity

Separated from mainland on the secluded, less inhabited lands, allowed us to preserve a unique biodiversity nowhere else to be found. Its signs are easily traceable in the abundance of lichen, single honey type, abundance of wildflowers, raw milk quality from free grazing herds or the wildlife found in the sea and forests that we feel privileged to showcase within our menu.

(Im)Perfections of Nature

Nature is considered the most important deity on Muhu, so it is to us. The cycle that determines a year, is much alike a Rosary that strings the beads. A herb, berry or vegetable that comes into perfection for some moments to flicker, then to disappear again. We applaud that each glory has its own moment determined by nature. At the same time the short vegetation period brings impediments that we have to make most of, thus it has a strong footprint on our menu. We love imperfection and consider it part of the many shades that colour life. If our heart is with nature our love should be with diversity.

Heritage, Provenance & Craftsmanship

Fishermen have always inhabited the islands; women would work in the field and knit or embroider on moments of rest. Going to work in the mainland for winter, men would take crafts made by women to sell in cities. People and their history form inseparable stories entwined in this place and our menu.

Hence at Alexander we strive to honour this craftsmanship and connection to the wonderful people that grow our produce, hunt and fish, produce our honey and woodwork cultivate our garden or forage in nature surroundings.

Preservation

With only 148 days of growth during a year, our survival in Muhu depends on preservation techniques like drying, ageing, fermenting, smoking, pickling and curing, which form the DNA of traditional cuisine at our latitude. For this reason we continue to search our terroir for forms of food preservation, but also for the techniques and dishes that have been already long forgotten.

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Unique common elements among the Nordic islands we came across, have led us to us ask ourselves, if something like a Nordic Islands Cuisine exists. Formulating the 5 foundation principles, we embarked 16 years ago for the first time on what we decided to call our continuous expedition in search of its true identity and elements.

We want to share the elements of Nordic Islands' Cuisine we have already found at Alexander, by telling you the story wrapped in customs, products and crafts from the islands, yet from a forward looking perspective.

Welcome to Alexander Restaurant!



Martin Breuer
Restaurateur & Hotelier