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Activity: Cultural heritage in Europe – Traditional Cooking

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KALAKUKKO



Kalakukko is a traditional Finnish food made from fish and pork baked inside of bread. Kalakukko is especially popular in Savonia region's capital, Kuopio. We have many

kalakukko bakeries and the dish is so popular that town even holds an annual baking contest for kalakukko.

Kalakukko will keep for a long time when unopened. That's why it used to be a practical lunch for workers away from home. Kalakukko obtained Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG) status in Europe 2002.

Ingredients

The dough will be made of rye flour, with some wheat flour to make the dough more pliable. The fish is either vendace or perch. The pork used needs to have lots of fat. No spices are added to the filling mixture, just salt.

The filling can also be potatoes and meat (best known in northern Finland) or swede and meat or only meat. These versions are popular in Carelian region.

Baking

The dough is formed into a large, flat round. The filling is heaped in the centre. The dough is then wrapped around the filling, and the edges glued together with water and smoothed tight with a knife.

Kalakukko is first baked an hour at 475 to 575 F (250 to 300 C.) Then it's taken out and the oven temperature reduced. When the temperature inside the oven has gone down to between 250 and 300 F (125 and 150 C), the loaf is brushed with melted butter, and covered in tin foil, and placed back in the oven to cook for an additional 4 to 6 hours. Then the kalakukko is taken out, wrapped in newspaper and let stand for 2 to 3 hours for further cooking with its own residual heat. If prepared correctly, bones of the fish soften and the meat and fish juices cook thoroughly inside the bread. This results in a moist filling.

Eating

Kalakukko is served in slices, hot or cold. In Savo region traditional way to eat Kalakukko is to open the top with a sharp knife, eat the top with butter, and then slice some of the bread making the hole on the top larger and eat it with the filling.

Kalakukko recipe

- 1 ⅔ cups (4 dl) water
- 3 cups (7 dl) rye flour
- 1 ¼ cups (3 dl) all-purpose flour
- 4 tablespoons (50 gr) butter
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 ¾ pound (800 gr) small fish (vendace, perch)
- 7 ounces (200 gr) side pork
- 1 tablespoon salt

Instructions

1. Clean the fish and strain well.
2. Prepare the dough. Mix the flours and salt and then stir them into the water. Add the soft butter and knead into a firm dough.
3. With a rolling pin, roll out the dough into a circular, approximately 1 cm thick crust (the center of the crust should be thicker than the edges). Sprinkle the center of the crust with rye flour.
4. Place the fish, salt and side pork, in layers, onto the center of the crust.
5. Raise the edges and close the seam tightly with water and flour. Form into a round shape. Place the pie upside down (the seam downwards) onto a baking tray covered with greaseproof paper.
6. Bake at 250-300°C until the crust has a brownish color. Wrap the pie in foil, lower the heat to 150 °C, and bake for approximately 4-6 more hours.
7. After removing the kalakukko from the oven, cover it with newspaper or a kitchen towel to soften the crust.