Food in Greenland
A guide to Greenlandic Delicacies

We know a place... It is the most beautiful country in the world – Greenland. From the gentle breeze of the midnight sun and the bright colours of late summer to the dark nights of autumn with dancing northern lights and winter with dogsledding and creaking snow. Sheer, breath-taking beauty, always.
FOOD IN GREENLAND
All along the Greenlandic West coast, you will find amazing restaurants. This is not necessarily common knowledge to people. Many people have a misguided impression of Greenlandic food, because many travel programmes on TV have focused on the delicacies, which are reserved for the more advanced of diners – unless you are Inuit. Not everyone will appreciate rotten birds that have been buried inside a stomach for half a year or so. Just like not everyone will gladly accept a piece of raw, warm liver, which has just been cut from a seal on the beach.

Greenland definitely has certain specialities that do not melt on all tongues. These are not the primary topic of this guide. Instead, we would like to show you some of the most delicious food you can eat in Greenland.

In this inspiration guide, you can read more about

- Traditions
- Animals in Greenland
- Edible plants in Greenland
- The Board
- Restaurants
- How to get a real taste of Greenland?

TRADITIONS
When you caught a whale back in the old days, you had food for ages. You obviously had food for here and now, but the food – which included seal, whale, fish and other animals – was dried, put away or preserved (in blubber). Thus, you spent a large part of the summer preparing for winter and to stock up your larder where you would find food in the winter months where sealing, whaling and fishing were not possible due to ice, storm or death hazards.

RECIPES IN SULUK
For decades, Air Greenland's in-flight magazine, "Suluk", has promoted Greenlandic food. Each issue contains either recipes, food articles or an "in the kitchen with …" piece in which one of the magazine employees gets in the kitchen with foodies who are either from Greenland or have an affiliation to the country. You can read the most recent issue of the magazine here: http://www.airgreenland.com/about/suluk-magazine
MOTHER OF THE SEA

The legend of the Mother of the Sea is one of the most famous legends in Greenland. When the people became too greedy and misbehaved in the settlements, the Mother of the Sea caught all the fish, whales and seals in her long hair, causing starvation. There was no other solution than to send a necromancer down to her at the bottom of the sea. Following some negotiation, the necromancer was allowed to comb her hair, and the animals were set free, providing food once again. The necromancer was also given some clever advice: You must not be wasteful and live in plenty; you should be modest with nature, otherwise you will kill it.

For this reason, tradition prescribes that you have respect for the animals you catch and use all parts of the catch. The meat will be eaten, the train oil is used for cooking, preserving or candles and heat, the innards are eaten or used as sewing thread, for instance, and the skins are used for clothing, kayak covers or tents. Even the bones can be used to make tools.

Many locations in Greenland are named after the animals available for catching in the area. Ammassalik means the place with capelin, the name of the Southern Greenlandic village Eqalugaarsuits refers to the trout found there, and the Kapisillit village near Nuuk is named after the salmon that can be caught there – just to mention a few examples.

SEALS

Throughout thousands of years, seals have been the basic main ingredient in Inuit cooking, and the national dish of Greenland is Suaasat, which is a thick broth often made with seal meat (however, it can also be made with other types of meat). Today, the main ingredients in Suaasat is the meat, barley and onions, although a lot of people replace the barley with round-grain rice as the local kiosk may not have barley.

In this short YouTube film, a rather remarkable child has been sent to make a nice portion of Suaasat: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYipRhTeXc0

Roasted seal is not half bad either, but if you have not grown up with the taste, it takes some getting used to. This has given rise to seeking out new possibilities, such as honey-roasted seal, which is said to taste almost like traditional beefsteak.
WHALES
Many Greenlanders light up just at the mention of whale meat, while many foreigners often are horrified by the fact that whales are hunted, let alone eaten. But whales have been part of the Greenlandic menu for more than a thousand years, and what is often forgotten is that Greenlanders have not caused certain species of whale to become endangered. Instead, the industrialised countries are to blame, as they all but exhausted certain species in order to obtain fuel (train oil) for street lighting. Today, only a few nations are allowed to practise whaling, which happens within strict guidelines established by the International Whaling Commission, the IWC.

Whale meat is a great delicacy in the Greenlandic kitchen. Just like seals, whales can be prepared in several ways, but the most popular is probably to cook steaks and serve them with lots of onions.

Whales also provide mattak – the skin of the whale with a layer of blubber. Mattak is also known as Greenlandic chewing gum or Greenlandic candy, which to us seems a little disrespectful. Mattak is quite unique, and while chewing gum is cheap, synthetic candy, mattak is the largest and most expensive delicacy in Greenland. It is often ripped from the counters the moment it arrives – or even better when it on rare occasions is sold fresh from the Board (read more about the Board further below in this guide).

REINDEER
Everyone invited for dinner in Nuuk, Maniitsoq or Sisimiut in autumn should anticipate that reindeer is on the menu. You can also prepare yourself for accounts of reindeer hunting. If you are up for that, you have a splendid evening in store, where stories are told – and laughed at – and food is enjoyed to the full.

Reindeer live along most of Greenland's east coast – from Narsaq in south to north of Qaanaaq. It is a combination of original reindeer and deer that have been released into nature by humans, which has triggered growth in the populations. Reindeer is the only species of deer, and the number can vary quite a lot, depending on the season. If there are too many animals, they will overgraze, causing the population to drop, as it takes a long time for the Greenlandic flora to recover following such overgrazing. Therefore, regulating the population is carried out with hunting to ensure the animals do not starve to death.

Reindeer soup, reindeer steaks, reindeer osso buco, leg of reindeer – there are endless possibilities, and this is subject to a lot of experimentation in Greenlandic kitchens.
MUSK OXEN
Kangerlussuaq has a rich wildlife. The best known animals of the area are musk oxen and reindeer. The musk oxen were actually moved to the area from North-Eastern Greenland in 1963. Back then, 27 musk oxen were flown to the other side of the ice, and it has been a huge success. The growth rate among the musk oxen in the area was the highest in the world. In fact, due to the success, no one quite knows how many musk oxen live in the areas near Kangerlussuaq, Sisimiut and Maniitsoq today.

As was the case with the reindeer, there are several ways to prepare musk oxen. Again, one of the favourites is oxen served as a roast or as steaks with lots of onions.

The musk oxen wool is rather expensive but you will love any knitted item in musk oxen wool. It is incredibly soft and provides unbelievable warmth. A small, thin woollen scarf provides the same amount of warmth as 12 down jackets. Well, almost...

LAMBS, SHEEP AND COWS (AND HORSEBACK RIDING)
In Southern Greenland, the sheep farms lie like pearls on a string, and there are a lot of lambs being bred in Greenland. In recent years, however, cow farms have also resurfaced in Southern Greenland, due to a large demand for beef.

Greenlandic lamb is not sold as organic, but it more or less is. They roam freely in the rocks from birth in spring to autumn when they are driven in and butchered. Greenlandic lamb is probably some of the most delicious lamb you will ever taste. The cold climate causes the lambs to grow slower, and the taste is delicate and utterly amazing.

The sheep farms are obviously first and foremost households where sheep are bred, and in order to drive the animals in for butchering in autumn, the farms often have a number of Icelandic horses. Several of the sheep farms offer accommodation, and in some places, you can also go horseback riding; for instance, at the Inneruulalik sheep farm, located across from Narsarsuaq.

TRANHUSET IN COPENHAGEN (THE TRAIN OIL HOUSE)
Tranhuset (The Train Oil House) is a store in Copenhagen, specialising in North Atlantic products, i.e. goods from Greenland, Iceland and the Faroe Islands. Here, you will find a great selection of goods – including edible ones – from the three countries. If in Copenhagen, take the new bridge from Nyhavn to Nordatlantens Brygge where the store is located to look up some of the specialities.
**BIRDS**

In Greenland, you can come across a total of 235 bird species – if you are counting – out of which approximately 60 breed in the country. Many of them – including the white-tailed eagle – are unconditionally preserved. But there are still many other birds to make the Greenlandic kitchen wonderfully varied and particularly tasteful. The grouse, razorbill, black guillemot, guillemot and the common eider are some of them. They can be cooked the same way game birds are cooked in other countries and have the same characteristic gamy flavour.

And we must not forget the sea kings, which we mentioned initially. They can be cooked in a rather unusual way. You flense a seal and take out the innards. Leave the blubber in and fill the sealskin up with whole sea kings. Then you sew the seal together and use blubber to ensure that the "seal bag" is completely airtight. Bury the animals for 3-12 months before eating them. This is not a meal for everyone, not in Greenland either where particularly young people in the south almost pass out at the thought of it.

**SEAFOOD**

Fish and shellfish from Greenland are incredibly delicious. As they are cold-water fish and animals, they grow slowly, giving the meat a unique texture.

Great eating fish include trout, salmon, cod, redfish and Greenland halibut. Obviously, you might come across many other species, but the ones mentioned above are the most popular, and they can be served in a great number of ways. Redfish or cod turned in cornflakes, for instance, makes for a very tasty and easy everyday meal. But that is just one of an endless number of ways to cook fish.

In the prologue to her book "Takanna – great food from Greenlandic produce", Tupaarnaq Rosing Olsen writes about her mother Alma Olsen and her grandmother Sara Rosing: "She obtained much of her knowledge about cooking Greenlandic food from her mother, Sara Rosing, who – as a clergyman’s wife – often had a representative role to visitors and therefore developed her own kitchen, also due to the then limited supply of goods. I can picture her as another Babette whipping up a delicious feast for the visitors who, by all accounts, had quite a culinary experience. Fortunately, much of her knowledge has been passed on to her children and grandchildren."

A lot of experimentation was carried out, just as it is still done today. It is experimentation with whatever is within reach that has put new Nordic food on the map. In Greenland, people have always been good at adapting to new things.

Other fish include the small capelins, "amasetter", which – to the surprise of many Greenlanders – is being sold as dogfood in Denmark. In Greenland, the small, dried fish are a great delicacy. The fish are typically air-dried and not salted as they are in Norway.
Cod from the fjords is particularly tasty when air-dried, which gives a wonderful – well, dry – fish. Other fish, such as the Greenlandic halibut contain more fat, and is used to make dried strips called "ræklinger", which are dry on the outside but almost juicy on the inside.

Greenlandic prawns are unlikely to require further introduction, as they are known far beyond the borders of the country. Due to the cold water, it takes longer for a prawn to grow, and so it becomes deliciously firm in the meat compared to hot-water prawns. Royal Greenland, which is the largest producer of fish in Northern Europe, sells excellent prawns that are sold almost world-wide.

Other interesting seafood count Greenlandic crab, which is probably the envy of many top models due to its very long legs. A lot of mussels are harvested in Greenland, and it is done very carefully. Four things are important in that regard: Mussels must be harvested on the north side of the rocks, they must be harvested during low tide, in low tide they must still be covered by water, and they must not have been exposed to sunlight. If you adhere to these rules, a blessed feast awaits you. You might also be served sea urchin, but it is not so common.

See Chef Chris Coubrough cook delicious food from Greenlandic commodities outside in Greenland. You find the films here: www.atasteofgreenland.com/watch/
PLANTS AND BERRIES

Berries
Particularly crowberries and blueberries are very popular in Greenland. So popular even that the Greenlandic name for these berries, paarnat or paarmat (depending on the region), is used to form many girl's names such as Paarma, Parnuna, Paarnuna and Parnanguaq. The berry bushes in Greenland are all very low as berries on higher branches will not stand a chance in the wind. If you visit Greenland during late summer or autumn, you might happen across a lot of bottoms popping up in the rocky landscape, as many people go berry-picking. Berries are eaten raw (possibly with milk for breakfast or dessert), preserved or used for ice cream.

Mushrooms
Gathering mushrooms is a relatively new pastime in Greenland. It has always been known that it is possible to eat mushrooms, but as in all other places, not all mushrooms are edible, and most people have thought "better safe than sorry". Only recently, in the past decades, it has become popular to gather the edible mushrooms. If you are a mushroom expert, or if you are walking with one, you can expect some great experiences while gathering mushrooms in Greenland, where they are used in the same way as in other countries.

Angelica
In Greenland, angelica is in high demand. Especially the stems, which look like celery or pale rhubarb, are used for cooking or eaten raw. Most people like the wonderful, strong flavour, while evil tongues claim that it tastes like soap. Angelica can also be used for snaps, and some people chop it up and freeze it into ice cubes, giving your ice water a light angelica flavour as the ice cubes melt.

Rhubarb
You are not likely to find a garden in Greenland that does not have a bed dedicated to rhubarb. Therefore, you are instead very likely to come across rhubarb tart, stewed rhubarb and rhubarb preserve on Greenlandic coffee tables.

A TASTE OF GREENLAND

A Taste of Greenland is a series of TV programmes produced by the award-winning Danish company Ace & Ace in association with Visit Greenland. In the series, which is broadcast worldwide, we follow New Zealand chef Chris Coubrough on a journey through the four regions in Greenland where he uses the produce available to him to cook some really delicious dishes. You can find recipes, information and great cooking advice at www.atasteofgreenland.com.
Potatoes
Southern Greenlandic potatoes have become quite common on Greenlandic dinner tables across the country. Global warming has been rough on Northern Greenland where it is difficult for the sealers and fishermen to get out on the ice in winter. In Southern Greenland, however, the vegetable producing season has become longer and, consequently, more and more potatoes are grown.

Turnips
In other regions of the world, turnips are often used for feed and sugar production, but in Greenland, we love eating the turnips raw. They are, of course, also used in soups and preserves, but it is in their raw state that they are a hit with many Greenlanders. You can almost compare the turnips to strawberries in other countries. As the first turnips arrive in stores from the sheep farms, people queue up to buy them.

Bluebells
You have to gather quite a lot of bluebells in order to make real use of them, but if you are patient enough, you can use the bellflowers for salads and as a jelly.

SOUTHERN GREENLAND
One of our travellers once giggled with delight when he learnt that there is a book titled "Gardens in Greenland". He imagined a pamphlet of eight pages or so. If only he knew that there are actually two books on Greenlandic gardens. The one mentioned above, "Passion – Gardens in Greenland" by photographer Finn Larsen and "Greenlandic Gardens through three centuries" by Karen Nørregaard. Southern Greenland is particularly lush, which explains why this region is often referred to as Greenland's larder.

Southern Greenland is home to approximately 37 sheep farms and the Upernaviarsuk research station, which doubles as the government's research farm as well as Greenland's agricultural college – a word that is not often connected with Greenland. As in many other sheep farms, potatoes and turnips are grown here, but also radishes, iceberg lettuce, regular lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, etc.

Also privately, a lot of Greenlanders make an attempt at growing many different vegetables, plants and fruit – both in greenhouses, garden frames, window sills and wherever you can find protection from the elements. Among the more curious attempts, we have seen Greenlandic bananas and strawberries. But many have success with growing redcurrants in their garden.

In recent years, Brugseni – the Greenlandic co-op – has focused on sustainability and has made a great effort at distributing home-grown foodstuffs in the country, not least in Nuuk where the market is biggest.
**The Board**

The Board is the local market where fishermen and hunters can sell their catch of the day. Here, you can purchase meat from seals, whales, reindeer, musk oxen and – on rare occasions – even a polar bear, all sorts of fish, prawns, lumporporer caviar, berries and angelica, birds like the razorbill, guillemot and common eider, and what else is in season.

The board also functions as a local town centre where many go to have a chat and to hear what is new.

**THE EUROPEAN AND DANISH TRAIT**

Since whalers arrived in Greenland, the Greenlandic kitchen has been influenced by impulses from abroad. The great classic cookbook in Greenland is "Cookbook for Greenland", which was published in 1963 in a dual-language version with Greenlandic and Danish side by side. The book was a culmination of eight years' work with collecting recipes and a general take on nutrition in Greenland. Here, domestic science mistress Caia Hansen translated Danish recipes into ones that could easily be used by Greenlanders. Not only in terms of the language, but more so in terms of ingredients available to Greenlanders at the time.

Generally speaking, Greenlandic eating habits are to a great extent inspired by the Danish kitchen. Not least because Danish food is often cheaper than Greenlandic food. It was meant as a joke, but former premier of the home rule government Aleqa Hammond was once criticised for saying in an interview with Danish newspaper Information that the best Greenland had gotten from Denmark was "steak with onions and brown gravy". And, as she also pointed out, she is "better at making gravy than most Danes. It also goes well with whale steak."

This is very characteristic of Greenlanders: When something useful arrives on the island – whether it is polka, metal sewing needles and dental floss (to replace floss made of sinew), we happily take it in and adapt it to make it our own.

**HERBS AND SPICES**

In recent years, new companies have developed a niche production of different products, from Greenlandic seasalt and seaweed to herbs and other tasty items.
GREENLAND FUSION – THE RESTAURANT FOOD
As previously mentioned, the Greenlandic kitchen has been inspired by the foreign for many years, and today, you can find numerous excellent restaurants, which combine Greenlandic produce and dishes inspired by other parts of the world.

At the same time, Greenland has focused on the cooking industry, for instance by establishing the Inuili food science college in Narsaq. Almost each year since 2000, the Greenlandic championships for chefs have been held. Being awarded chef of the year in Greenland is considered to be rather prestigious. Furthermore, the winner is invited to take part in the Danish cooking championships. A number of chefs have won the championships several times. Jeppe Eivind Nielsen was the first to get a hat trick, winning the award three times. An achievement, which Inunnguaq Hegelund from Hotel Arctic in Ilulissat also has accomplished.

Of the many great restaurants in Greenland, we will mention a handful or two. As menus are not static, we will just name the restaurants and provide a link to their websites.

ILULISSAT
Best known is Restaurant Ulo, which is located at Hotel Arctic in Ilulissat. Here, the great chefs have worked for quite a while and have helped create a magnificent dining experience at the hotel. In Ilulissat, you can also enjoy great food at restaurant Mamartut. At Hotel Hvide Falk and Hotel Icefiord you will also get great food, which you can enjoy in the friendly atmosphere. The two latter restaurants serve great quality food and both of them also have really great Thai dishes on the menu as they employ chefs from Thailand.


SISIMIUT
Nasaasaaq Brasserie & Restaurant, located at Hotel Sisimiut, is a wonderful experience that really tickles your taste buds. www.hotelsisimut.com

FISH ON A ROCK
It is quite a special experience eating fish from a rock. It just tastes much better and it is something probably all Greenlanders will have tried. When you have caught a fish in nature, you fill your pot with water from the fjord, which is already salted. The fish is cut into pieces and boiled on a bonfire. While the fish is boiling, you find an appropriate rock that will make a great table. Also look out for shells, which you can later use as both spoon and fork. When the fish is done, you dish it up on the rock. Some choose to rinse the stone using the boiling water, while others choose to keep the water and eat it as a soup using shells as spoons. When the meat is on the rock, you gather around it and dig in, either using a shell or your bare hands. You can dine at Noma and never get fish this tasty!
Kangerlussuaq
At Restaurant Roklubben (Rowing club), you will find the best food in Kangerlussuaq and the surrounding area. Roklubben is beautifully situated on the shore of Lake Ferguson, approximately 5 kilometres outside Kangerlussuaq and has catered to both tourists and locals for many years.

Read more about Roklubben here: www.wogac.com/restaurant
Download also our guide to Kangerlussuaq at www.greenland-travel.com/kangerlussuaq

Narsaq
Restaurant Klara at Hotel Narsaq offers delicious Greenlandic food, inspired by traditional European cooking where high-quality produce is a priority. Read more at www.hotel-narsaq.gl.

Qaqortoq
Restaurant Ban Thai in Qaqortoq is, not surprisingly, a Thai restaurant. The food is really delicious, and they have a five-star rating on TripAdvisor. You can find them on Facebook.

Nuuk
Nuuk has restaurants for wallets of all sizes with an incredibly wide repertoire of food. Here are gourmet restaurants, chain restaurants and some nice cafes.

Hotel Hans Egede has several restaurants – including the best in the city, Sarfalik. The restaurant is definitely one of the best in Greenland, and the view is great too. Right next to Sarfalik, A Hereford Beefstouw Steak House is located, offering the same concept as at their other locations throughout Europe. Read more at www.hhe.gl.

On the other side of the road, you will find the good Cafe Esmaralda. The owners run another cafe in the Nuuk Centre called Caffé Pascucci, which is the town's meeting place, not only for the young and beautiful, but also for the rest of us.

Charoen Porn in Nuuk is the oldest Thai restaurant in the country, and it is much loved by citizens and travellers alike. It is placed at a central location right next to Hotel Hans Egede, and many people who eat there for the first time agree that they have never tasted Thai food as good as this. Read more at www.charoenporn.gl.

The cafe of the Katuaqs culture centre, Cafetuaq, offers a great brunch and tasty burgers. For more information visit www.katuaq.gl.
OTHER SPECIALITIES

GREENLANDIC ICE CREAM
Greenlandic ice is a relatively new phenomenon – at least when the ice is made from cream. The ice cream produced by Greenland Ice differs from most other ice creams as it is made from cream as well as ice from the Ice Cap. The company produces both regular ice cream and sorbet, which is very popular in summer. The ice is also available at Tranhuset in Copenhagen. [www.greenlandice.gl](http://www.greenlandice.gl)

GREENLANDIC COFFEE
Greenlandic coffee is ideally enjoyed after a nice dinner. Just like many other countries have a coffee named after them, some bartenders once chose to create a Greenlandic coffee. It consists of coffee, Grand Marnier, whisky, Kahlua, whipped cream and a proper flame. The flame symbolises the northern lights in Greenland.

This video shows, how the flame should be used: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=wledmHQY4UU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wledmHQY4UU)

Pickles from Ipiutaq. Restaurant Roklubben in Kangerlussuaq. Dish of delicious produce (Photos: Camilla Hey, WOGAC and Visit Greenland)
HOW TO GET TO GREENLAND
If you are convinced that Greenland is a must-visit place, your next step is to plan your trip. You can find much more inspiration on our website. We are never more than a phone call or an email away, and we are happy to answer any and every question you may have.

TRAVEL INSPIRATION ABOUT GREENLAND
We are the biggest travel agency in the world specialising in Greenland, and therefore we offer a large selection of package tours all year around. You can use our trip finder to see, which tours are best suited for you and match your preferences for experiences, mode of travel and level of activity.
You will find the tripfinder here: www.greenland-travel.com/tripfinder

You will find a lot more inspiration, photos and films from Greenland on our website. Visit the section www.greenland-travel.com/inspiration.

Frequently asked questions
How do I get to Greenland? Are there any mosquitos? How cold is it? In our section on Frequently Asked Questions we have come up with a lot of answers for you. If you don’t find your answers here, do not hesitate to contact us.
Find the FAQ here: www.greenland-travel.com/faq

What our customers say
On Trustpilot.com, our customers are free to speak their mind. You can read all their comments on www.trustpilot.com – type ‘greenland-travel.com’ in the search field.

READ OUR OTHER GUIDES
If you have enjoyed our food guide, we suggest you read some of the other guides we also have produced, including guides on dog sledding, ice and snow, towns in Greenland, etc. You will find these guides on our website. Visit the section www.greenland-travel.com/inspiration.
GREENLAND TRAVEL
Whether you want a complete package tour or a customised tour, we can find the right solution for you. We also arrange tours for special groups, conferences and associations. The common denominator for all our tours is that we create a travel experience that suits you and takes you on a journey of a lifetime. We are more than 30 employees in Denmark and Greenland, and – in all modesty – we are the world’s biggest and most dedicated specialist in Greenland. Therefore, we know what we are talking about.

A part of Air Greenland Group
Greenland Travel is part of Air Greenland Group, which also comprises Air Greenland, Hotel Arctic and Arctic Umiaq Line. Moreover, we are co-owner of the excursion operator World of Greenland in Ilulissat. We help develop the excursion possibilities in Greenland and work closely together with those offering excursions and accommodation all over Greenland.

Are you curious?
If you want to know who we are, our smiling faces will greet you on our website where you can also read more about our different backgrounds: www.greenland-travel.com/team.

WHY OUR CUSTOMERS CHOOSE US

The world’s biggest specialist in Greenland
We are the world's biggest specialist in Greenland, Iceland and the Arctic regions, and our senior travel consultants have many years of experience with our destinations. Use it to your advantage.

Reliable guidance
We have been there. We would never dream of selling a tour to a destination we do not know ourselves. Things change quickly in Greenland, so we always stay up to date.

Excellent service
At Greenland Travel, excellent service is still at the heart of everything we do. 98% of our customers recommend us due to our excellent service. We are always available – by phone, email or chat.

Peace of mind
We are a member of the Association of Danish Travel Agents and Tour Operators, the Travel Guarantee Fund and an IATA agent, which is your guarantee for a serious travel agency.