



EUROPEAN REGION OF GASTRONOMY
NORDLAND CANDIDATE 2028

NORDLAND -SEASONS UNDER THE LIGHT-



EUROPEAN REGION OF GASTRONOMY

**NORDLAND
CANDIDATE 2028**



EUROPEAN REGION OF GASTRONOMY
NORDLAND CANDIDATE 2028

IGCAT

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
GASTRONOMY, CULTURE, ARTS AND TOURISM



Nordland
FYLKESKOMMUNE

CONTENTS

04	Prologues	46	The future of gastronomy
08	Ambassador: Elise Bratteng Rønning	49	Ambassador: Chef Espen Laumann
10	Explore Nordland	50	Goals & Strategies
12	Ambassador: Halvar Ellingsen	52	Concept – Seasons under the light
19	Arctic Quality - Agriculture	73	Building Inclusive Communities
32	Seafood	80	Marketing & Communications
38	Ambassador: Roderick Sloan	82	Organisation
41	Reindeer Herding in Sápmi	85	Internationalisation
44	Ambassador: Máret Rávdna Buljo	87	Budget

As the Minister of Food and Agriculture of Norway, I am excited that we have a Norwegian candidate for European Region of Gastronomy 2028 by the International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts and Tourism (IGCAT).

The northern part of Norway has a unique food culture and produces world-class ingredients. The farmers and fishers provide unique ingredients, including lamb, fish, berries and root vegetables grown under the midnight sun, and combine modern and traditional methods to ensure high quality and sustainability.

Norway has a differentiated geography including both mountains and fjords. Our farmers in the northern part are good ambassadors for our culture. Food from both land and sea is refined to world leading products.

**Minister of Food and Agriculture
Nils Kristen Sandtrøen**



Norwegian Ministry
of Agriculture and Food



Photo: Thor-Wiggo Skille

Greetings from Nordland county council and county councilor for industry

In Nordland County Council's political platform 2023-2027, we have committed ourselves to taking greater responsibility for creative measures that contribute to residential vitality and the recruitment of people and expertise to Nordland. We want to promote Nordland nationally and internationally, and a status as European Region of Gastronomy will be a very important measure to create vibrant communities by moving from words to action.

"We are proud to apply for the status of European Region of Gastronomy 2028. As the second region in Norway, and as the first ever in the Arctic.

Nordland is a region founded on rich culinary traditions, from reindeer husbandry and our Sami food culture to interaction with the world where stockfish and salmon have played a central role in history.

Our food tradition is an important part of our cultural heritage, and we look forward to sharing our flavors and stories with the rest of Europe towards 2028 and beyond.

Thank you for the food, and good luck!

**Yours sincerely,
Bjørn Larsen
Executive for Business Development**



People from Nordland often say – echoing the words of Norwegian poet Rolf Jacobsen – that most of our long country is North. The quote is from his poem «North», opening with a simple encouragement: «Look North, more often».

The poem can be read in a romantic way, telling the reader about the natural beauty of the region. But it can also be read as an appeal. A call to the reader, urging them to learn more about this part of Europe. We are more than an exotic cliché. It's a large, diverse region, with its own histories, cultures and identities. It's a region of optimism and resilience. You don't choose the North because it's the easier path, but because of its qualities. The light, the air, the water. And most of all, because of the people.

As we wrote in our Bodø2024 bid for status as European Capital of Culture for 2024, «the colder the weather, the warmer the hearts». I really believe this to be true. There are cold and stormy days in the European Arctic, but they are balanced out by friendly, inclusive people.

In 2024, our title year as European Capital of Culture, we focused on the importance of bringing people together. Food played an important role in a lot of our events and projects. Not just as a tool of hospitality, but as an integral part of our cultural programme. All major events made use of local products and top-level professional chefs, of course. But maybe as important were the smaller events, like the monthly «Food and mingling», where volunteers from international communities got small grants, assistance from local chefs and access to professional kitchens to prepare sharing menus.

Understanding food as cultural content in itself, is a success factor for Bodø2024. With the Feeding Europe project as one of our flagships, we got the chance to learn more about our own food culture, and experiment with formats and methods we want to sustain and improve. The experience from our year as European Capital of Culture have the potential to become a solid foundation for more and better focus on food culture and gastronomy in Nordland.

Henrik Sand Dagfinrud
Programme Director Bodø2024



Photo: David Engmo

AMBASSADOR



ELISE BRATTENG RØNNING

Til Elise fra Marius was founded with a vision: to create a restaurant and destination that brings guests from around the world to the very source of our ingredients —the countryside and nature.

“Both Marius and I are trained chefs with a deep passion for quality. To deliver the best experience, we rely on a profound understanding of ingredients. We collaborate closely with regional producers, especially Sletten Farm, whose expertise is invaluable. Together, we explore how to cultivate the finest ingredients for our menu. We also work with local fishermen and our neighbor Arild, known for his exceptional strawberries!”

Today, Til Elise fra Marius plays a vital role in the local community, helping to showcase and uplift other businesses in the region. Utskarpen has developed a strong business network where cross-industry collaboration fosters growth beyond individual efforts. The village also has a thriving agricultural sector and a committed business environment, creating jobs that generate lasting, positive impacts. More and more young people are choosing to settle here and invest in their future.

“I believe the European Region of Gastronomy title year will shine a spotlight on local ingredients, traditions, and sustainable practices for an international audience. As an ambassador, I look forward to sharing our story and emphasizing the power of collaboration between local food producers, restaurants, and the tourism industry.”



Photos: Kristoffer Møllevik/ Visit Helgeland

TIL ELISE FRA MARIUS

Til Elise fra Marius is a food destination in Utskarpen, established by the couple Elise Bratteng Rønning and Marius Martinsen. Set in the idyllic surroundings of the old Utskarpen farm, guests visit Til Elise and are served food From Marius. The restaurant focuses on local products and ingredients. The concept, from pasture to plate, is based on the finest ingredients, how they are created, where they are found, and how they are prepared. For a complete experience, guests can stay overnight in rooms or cabins in a rural setting between the fjord and mountains.



EXPLORE NORDLAND

The Arctic nature is a rich resource for tourism, with the northern lights and midnight sun as the most unique natural phenomena. The long coastline and archipelago provide opportunities for paddling, cycling, bird watching, fishing, whale watching, surfing and seafood experiences.

The region has several world-class natural attractions. Saltstraumen is the world's strongest maelstrom and is a marine conservation area. Lofoten, with its characteristic Lofoten Wall mountain range, has long been a strong international brand. The region also has several other well-known landmarks such as Mount Torghatten, Svartisen glacier and the national mountain Stetinden. The Arctic Circle cuts through Nordland county and marks the boundary between areas with midnight sun in summer and darkness in winter.

Photo: Asgeir Kvalvik/ Visit Narvik

NATIONAL PARKS AND UNESCO SITES

Nordland has nine national parks, each of which has its own distinctive character. These are valuable resources for the tourism industry and provide great nature experiences for visitors.

Nordland has two UNESCO sites. These are Vegaøyan World Heritage Site and Trollfjell UNESCO Geopark. The Vegaøyan World Heritage Area is known for its unique coastal culture and the interaction between people and nature. Here you can experience the history of the eider traditions that have characterized the area for centuries. Trollfjell UNESCO Geopark has received its status due to its special geological natural heritage, which is of international importance. The park focuses on sustainable development, site development, knowledge dissemination and geotourism.

GASTRONOMY AND FOOD

Local food, food traditions and good ingredients are important for tourism in Nordland. The region has a number of renowned restaurants that can be destinations in their own right, but also as part of a larger experience in combination with nature and culture.

CULTURE

Nordland has a rich and diverse culture and history. The area has Sami settlements, with no less than five different Sami languages. Sámi history and traditions play a vital role in many local communities, with several operators offering knowledge and experiences tailored to tourism.

The region also offers other cultural experiences such as music and theater festivals, cultural monuments, galleries, art installations and a range of museums. Some of the most important cultural attractions are the Narvik War Museum, the Lofotr Viking Museum and the Lofoten Fishing Museum: SKREI (opening 2026), Jektefartsmuseet and Nordnorsk kunstmuseum in Bodø, Vega World Heritage Center, Sjøgata in Mosjøen and Skulpturlandskap Nordland.



Photo: Liz Seabrook

AMBASSADOR



HALVAR ELLINGSEN

Kvitnes Gård, is a renowned farm-to-table restaurant in Vesterålen. The journey of a meal at Kvitnes doesn't begin when it's prepared in the kitchen. It takes years of preparation – from good compost, nutritious soil, the right feed, the right weather conditions and gentle harvesting and slaughtering.

“Our commitment to sustainable food production, animal welfare, and continuously improving our guests' experience is what drives us forward”, says Halvar Ellingsen, Head Chef and Founder of Kvitnes Gård.

Halvar, who was awarded the “International Chef of the Year” by the Italian food magazine Identità Golose in January 2025, envisions European Region of Gastronomy as a driving force to:

“For me, I hope we can use the status as European Region of Gastronomy to raise the level of food served in Nordland. That more tourism operators gain self-confidence and the competence to choose ingredients from our region. It's important that we use the time until Nordland gets the status as European Region of Gastronomy to build this competence and pride. This will lead to a lasting change that those of us who live here and those who visit us can enjoy even after 2028”.

KVITNES GÅRD - THE STORY

Several years ago, an unexpected phone call brought Chef Halvar Ellingsen from Michelin-starred restaurants in Oslo to a remote fjord-side farm in Vesterålen. He was offered a rare opportunity: to create his own farm-led restaurant on a historic site spanning fields, forests, and fjord beaches. The setting was postcard-perfect.

The name Kvitnes didn't initially mean much to Halvar, until his father reminded him, "How could you forget the Ellingsen family farm? Your great-great-great grandfather built it!" What began as a chance opportunity turned into a fateful reunion. Once the Ellingsen family farm, Kvitnes Gård had fallen into disrepair. When Helge Mørck bought it in 2012, it needed extensive renovations, but many historic buildings remained. Halvar and Mørck began restoring the farm, repairing the buildings and soil. Over the years, Halvar revived the farm's operations, building a greenhouse, planting thousands of vegetables, fruits, and herbs, and raising over a hundred animals. He formed a team of gardeners, chefs, and staff, creating a dining space to rival the best in the Nordic region.

Kvitnes Gård proves the Arctic can support diverse, heritage-driven culinary experiences. Often ranked among the top dining experiences in Norway and the Nordic region, they've stayed self-sufficient while maintaining culinary ambition. With local knowledge and traditional practices, they offer a menu made from their own produce—fresh, preserved, or fermented—showcasing local ecosystems. For Halvar and his team, it's a beautiful 'homecoming.'

Kvitnes Gård received several prestigious awards in 2024, including Matprisen's "Kitchen of the Year," Norges Vel Founder Award for "Circular Food Entrepreneur," and a spot among Norway's top three most sustainable restaurants by the 360 Eat Guide.



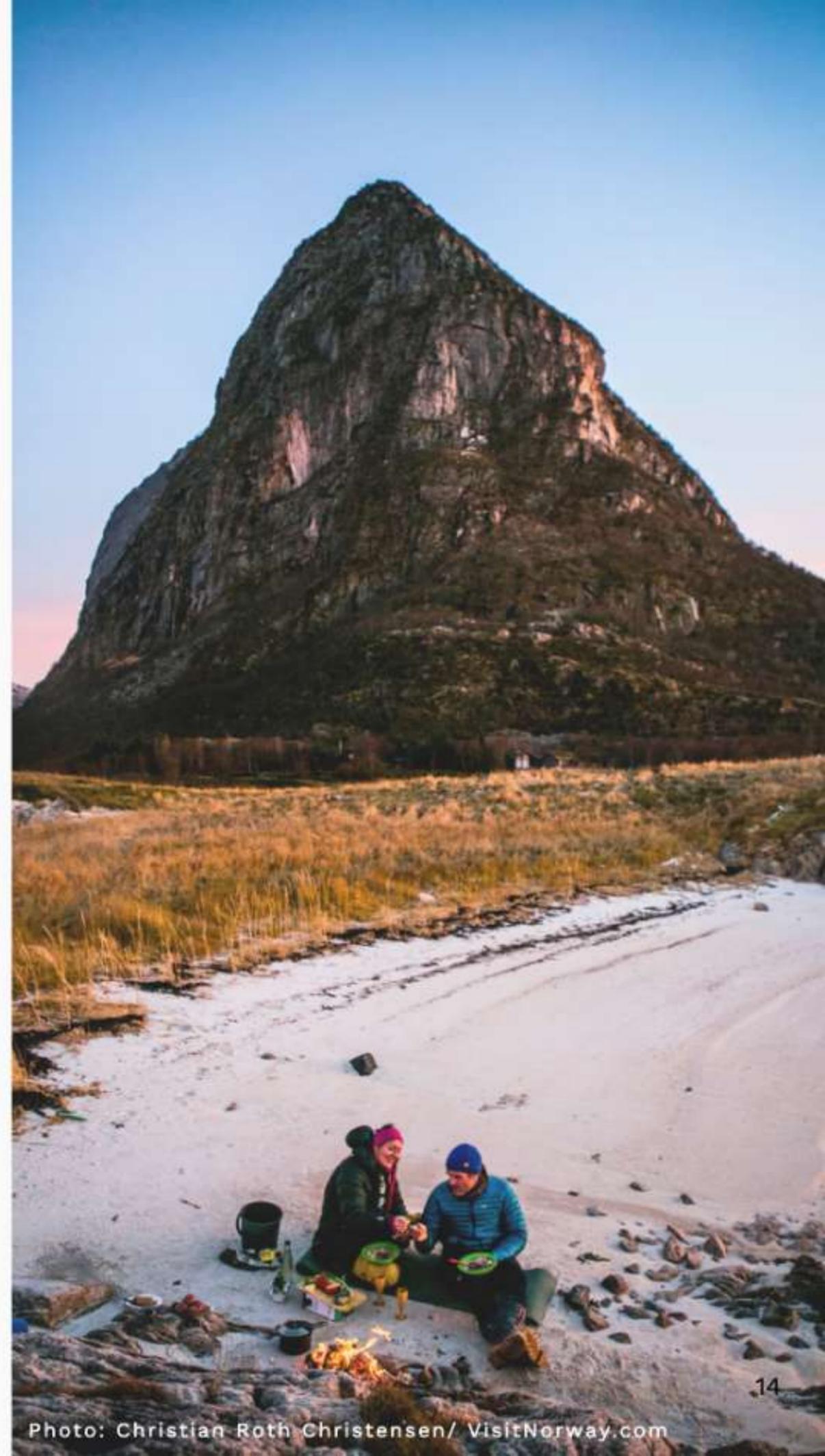
THE GEOLOGY OF NORTH NORWAY

Geological forces shape the world around us, and few countries have been shaped as visibly as Norway. Snow-capped peaks jut above the picturesque, green fjords, with cascading waterfalls reaching down to pastoral grazing lands – such landscapes are so quintessentially Norwegian that for many they form an important part of Norway's identity. While the fjord-and-mountain landscape does dot along much of the northern coastlines, the coast is also fringed by intricate archipelagos, like the twelve thousand islands of Helgeland coast.

The entirety of human prehistory and history in Norway fits into a geological instant, starting with the melting of the ice some twelve thousand years ago. As the ice receded, humans worked their way north, hunting seal, moose, and reindeer, while fishing and finding shelter on the small sliver of land between the North Atlantic Ocean and the vast expanse of ice stretching toward the east. Continued melting of the ice opened new lands in the south. By 5000-4000 B.C. agriculture communities developed near Oslo, while it would take thousands more years before farming became widespread in North Norway.

The rugged and mountainous coastline, protected by thousands of islands and sheltered fjords, pre-empted a sea-faring people with a knack for the maritime that still exists today. The lack of fertile soil encouraged settlers to look elsewhere for better lands, and the Vikings were born. At the time, small settlements popped up in areas of unique geological circumstances, where opportunities for fishing, hunting, and agriculture were most promising.

Text by: Eric Ryan, Ph.d. from *North Norway Seasons of Sun and Snow*, a book by Fare Folk.





GET AROUND NORDLAND

Nordland is home to around 240,000 people. They live in towns and districts, on islands, in the mountains, in the countryside, by the fjords and the sea.

The Nordland coast is vast, with thousands of islands, making maritime transport a vital part of the region's infrastructure. The area is served by 23 ferry routes and 28 express boat routes, ensuring connectivity between islands and the mainland.

The Hurtigruten Coastal Express and Havila sail along Nordland's stunning coastline, connecting communities both large and small, serving as a vital lifeline for locals while also attracting tourists.

European Route 6 in Nordland runs between the county border with Troms in Narvik and the county border with Trøndelag in Grane.

The Nordland Railway passes some of the most beautiful scenery Norway has to offer. With start and end stations in Bodø and Trondheim, the 729km journey takes around ten hours.

Nordland has 12 airports, some very small and others large.

POPULATION OF
243.081

4,4 % OF
NORWAY'S
POPULATION

FIVE REGIONS: HELGELAND,
SALTEN, OFOTEN, LOFOTEN OG
VESTERÅLEN

THE REINDEER
POPULATION IS
APPROXIMATELY
14,000, AND AROUND
3,000 PEOPLE ARE
AFFILIATED WITH
SAMI REINDEER
HERDING IN THE
COUNTY

Twenty percent of
Norway's
fishermen live in
Nordland, totaling
around 2,000
individuals



FACTS & FIGURES

38154,7 KM² IS THE TOTAL
SURFACE OF NORDLAND,
MAKING IT THE 4TH LARGEST
COUNTY IN NORWAY

9 NATIONAL
PARKS

1800 farms in Nordland,
600 km² farmland with a
total value of 1,7 billion
NOK

Seafood exports
from Nordland
totaling 28.5
billion NOK
(2023)



2 UNESCO
HERITAGE SITES

The agriculture sector in the
county employs around 4,000
full-time equivalents, including
both farming and forestry

5087 KILOMETER
LONG COASTLINE
WITH
APPROXIMATELY 18
400 ISLANDS, ISLETS
AND SKERRIES

In 2023, 340,000
tons of fish and
macroalgae were
landed in
Nordland to a
value of NOK 4.8
billion, with cod
alone accounting
for NOK 2.2
billion.

THE ARCTIC CIRCLE PASSES
THROUGH THE REGION, BRINGING
THE MIDNIGHT SUN IN THE
SUMMER AND THE NORTHERN
LIGHTS IN THE WINTER

79% INCREASE IN REVENUE
FROM TOURISM FROM 2013
- 2023
(4,3 COMMERCIAL
OVERNIGHT STAYS)

The total volume
of wild fish and
harvested
salmon reached
almost 700,000
tons in 2023,
accounting for
17% of the
national volume



NORDLAND NORWAY



AGRICULTURE IN NORDLAND

Nordland's diverse landscape presents both challenges and opportunities for agricultural production. Agriculture plays a vital role in the region's economy and development, with the area's unique geography and climate fostering a rich and sustainable farming tradition that blends both modern and traditional practices. As Nordland prepares to be named the European Region of Gastronomy in 2028, agriculture will be central to this recognition. The region will showcase high-quality products and celebrate its rich food culture. During this special year, the "farm-to-table" value chain will be strengthened, potentially increasing profits for local producers while deepening residents' pride in their culinary heritage and connection to the land. In addition to agriculture, tourism and other industries built on agricultural resources are also key to the region's economy. This includes experience-based businesses that highlight nature and culture, where food plays a central role in offering visitors a taste of Nordland's unique identity.

Trine Bolstad at Furuheim Gård in Hattfjelldal, a dairy farm established in 1920. The farm cares for cows from three traditional Norwegian breeds, including Sidet Trønderfe and Nordlandsfe (STN), a heritage breed from Northern Norway known for its distinct markings.



THE FONN-HOLAND FARM - TURNING WASTE INTO VALUE

When Henning Andreas Holand and Dina Fonn Sætre took over their farm on Engeløya in 2018, they aimed to improve crops and reduce potato waste. Dina was shocked that many potatoes were discarded just for their size or shape. In Oslo, small potatoes were a delicacy – why throw them away? This led to Engeløya Mandel. They pitched the idea to Coop, which agreed to sell the small potatoes if the farm developed the concept and design. Oversized potatoes were sold as baking potatoes at their farm shop, while the rest became pig feed.



Photos: Fonn-Holand gård



Photo: Fonn-Holand gård

SHARING THE FARMING JOURNEY

In 2020, Henning and Dina won Young Farmer of the Year, an award recognizing role models in Norwegian agriculture. This brought visibility to Fonn-Holand Farm, which they leveraged through social media to share their farming journey, focusing on innovation, sustainability, and their products. They also post stunning Steigen landscapes. Their pink bridge and large field swing have become popular photo spots for visitors.

AQUA VITAE WATER OF LIFE

The farm also cultivates Gulløye potatoes, a Northern Norwegian specialty. One year, 20 tons were deemed too imperfect for store shelves. Rather than wasting them, Henning and Dina turned them into aquavit, a traditional potato spirit. Partnering with Det Norske Brenneri, they distilled and flavored the potatoes with herbs. The result was a smooth summer aquavit, with a bottle design inspired by Engeløya's landscape and their iconic pink swing.

NORDLAND IN A GLASS

Nordland boasts abundant, high-quality drinking water, with around 83% of the region's natural water sources—including rivers, lakes, and coastal waters—classified as being in good or excellent ecological condition.

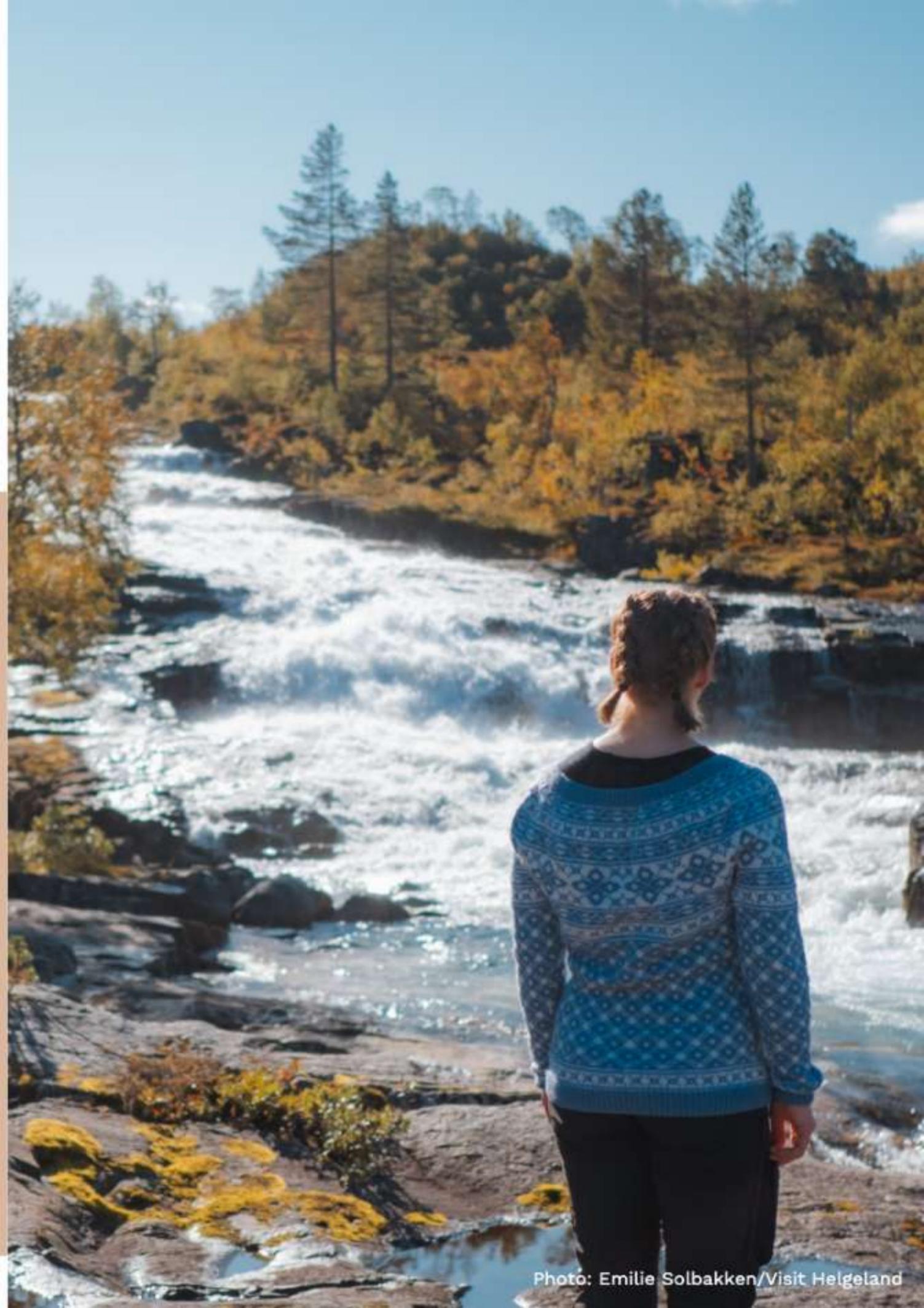
This clean water is key for the many local breweries, as water quality is essential in beer production. Brewing traditions in Norway go back over 3,000 years.

LOFOTPILS BREWERY, SVOLVÆR

Lofotpils is where Lofoten's stunning nature meets the craft of brewing. Using pure, fresh water from the Lofoten mountains, the brewery creates beers that reflect the region's unique character. Lofotpils offers craft beer tastings and has become a popular spot for locals and visitors alike.

RAUS BREWERY, NESNA

"Raus," meaning generous, brews exceptional beer on the Helgeland Coast. With a focus on hospitality, Raus has created a social hub for beer tasting and events. In addition to beer, they produce non-alcoholic beverages like orange and blackcurrant sodas and alcohol-free beer, enriching the local community and tourism.





BÅDIN BREWERY, BODØ

Bådin Brewery pioneers Arctic craft beer, blending tradition with innovation. Their diverse range of beers has earned national and international acclaim. Bådin also offers brewery tours and tastings for groups, providing a unique experience for visitors.


BÅDIN

Photo: Bådin Bryggeri



NOE I GJÆRE

Noe i Gjære (Something's Brewing) in Rana, produces non-alcoholic sparkling drinks from rescued ingredients, focusing on sustainability. By collaborating with local suppliers, they save produce that would otherwise go to waste, contributing to a more relaxed drinking culture in the region.

MYKEN DISTILLERY

Myken Distillery, the world's first Arctic whisky distillery, produces single malt whisky and gin with local herbs and berries. Since 2014, they have been crafting their spirits using traditional methods in the old fishing village of Myken, located on the northern Helgeland coast. Visitors can enjoy tastings and learn about the aging process in the Arctic climate.



SUSTAINABLE FARMING IN NORDLAND: LIVESTOCK, AND OUTFIELDS

Livestock farming is the backbone of Nordland's agricultural sector, with cattle farming as a primary industry. Both dairy and beef production are crucial in many municipalities, and beef from cattle and sheep represents a significant share of the agricultural output. The meat is produced for local consumption as well as export beyond the region. Additionally, pig and goat farming are present, alongside active reindeer husbandry.

One of Nordland's greatest advantages is its vast outfield. Livestock spend the summer grazing in these areas, which supports local food production and preserves cultural landscapes. As environmental concerns grow, interest in low-carbon meat production has increased, particularly for pasture-raised animals. Consumers are increasingly seeking food with lower environmental impact and higher animal welfare standards.



Photo: Liz Seabrook

GROWING UP NORTH

Nordland's climate is shaped by its location north of the Arctic Circle, which results in slightly shorter growing seasons and cooler temperatures compared to Southern Norway. The benefit of these cooler temperatures is a reduction in pests, leading to a decreased need for pesticides. Vegetable farming plays a key role in Nordland, with crops such as potatoes, carrots, cabbage, lettuce, and other root vegetables thriving, particularly in the region's more temperate areas. Much of the vegetable production is focused on local food, with many farms selling their produce directly to consumers through local markets or farm shops.



ARCTIC QUALITY

The midnight sun plays a crucial role in enhancing the nutritional value of agricultural products from Nordland. Studies show that the combination of extended daylight and cooler temperatures creates a more intense growing season, with significantly more hours of photosynthesis each day compared to southern Norway. This results in fewer bitter compounds and a natural sweetness in the crops. For instance, berries and root vegetables grown in Northern Norway are notably sweeter due to these unique conditions.

(Report NIBIO v.4, nr.40, 2018)



Crop farming also plays a key role in Nordland's agriculture, with the region's climate well-suited for grass cultivation. However, inland areas have a shorter growing season, which can impact yield levels.

SHEEP FARMING: A VITAL RESOURCE IN NORWAY

The United Nations encourages all countries to utilize their natural resources for food production. In Norway, 95% of the land consists of outfields, and half of this can be used for grazing. Grazing animals convert grass, shrubs, and herbs into food for humans, making sheep an ideal livestock choice.

“Despite its benefits, sheep and lamb meat account for less than 10% of Norway’s meat consumption. To better utilize grazing resources, this percentage must increase. Consumers need more awareness of why and how to incorporate more meat produced from Norwegian feed resources.”

-Eva Narten Høberg/NIBIO

FÅRIKÅL

Fårikål, Norway’s national dish, is celebrated on the last Thursday of September. This simple lamb and cabbage stew is easy to prepare, simmering for hours with black peppercorns. It is traditionally eaten in autumn, aligning with peak sheep and lamb slaughter season. Its ease of preparation and informal serving style contribute to its lasting popularity.



Photo: Liz Seabrook



Photo: Matprat, Synøve Dreyer



LOFOTLAM – A CULINARY SPECIALTY

Lofotlam (Lofoten Lambs) is a renowned specialty product known for its exceptional quality and flavour, shaped by Lofoten's unique natural environment. For thousands of years, the lush mountain slopes have developed a distinctive flora, providing nutrient-rich herbs and grasses naturally salted by sea spray carried by wind and storms. Seaweed from the Arctic Ocean also contributes to the grazing diet.

Lofotlam holds a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status, meaning only approved farms in Lofoten can use the name. This designation adds value for farmers and ensures higher production standards than general food safety regulations require. Lofotlam represents sustainable sheep farming that respects the environment, maximizes natural grazing resources, and delivers world-class products to Norwegian consumers.



Photos: Liz Seabrook

The Norwegian Food Foundation manages three labeling schemes that ensure consumers trust and receive information about food origin and quality: Nyt Norge, Protected Designations, and Specialty. The Specialty label guides consumers to the best of local food.



CHEESE AND FARMLIFE EXPERIENCES

Northern Norway is home to several farms specializing in artisanal cheese production, each offering unique flavors and farm experiences. Here are some standout producers:

BEIARMAT, SALTEN

Beiarmat produces cheese from its own farm's milk and from local farms in Beiarn. Their range includes salad cheese, cream cheese, semi-soft fresh cheese, and aged varieties, along with traditional Norwegian products like gomme, prim, and brunost. Their high-quality cheeses have won multiple awards, including the Specialty label for their Kvita Akevittkarve, a goat's milk salad cheese, in 2023. Their farm shop offers a selection of handmade local foods.

STRANDLI GÅRD, FIPLINGDAL

Strandli Gård specializes in dairy farming and cheese production, offering tastings and accommodation in a historic 1870s guesthouse. The farm is near lakes and rivers, providing a scenic retreat along Villmarksvegen. Their cheese selection includes Bæråscammen, Golvertind, Fjellsnadder, and Steike, alongside various yogurt varieties.



Photo: Liz Seabrook



Photo: Liz Seabrook



Photo: Emilie Solbakken/ Visit Helgeland

SÆTERSTAD GÅRD, HATTFJELLDAL

Located in Hattfjelldal near the Swedish border, this organic mountain farm combines goat farming, fish farming, a micro-hydropower plant, and a salt cave. They produce goat cheese, cured meats, earning the Specialty label in 2015 for their Ekte Brun Geitost. Sæterstad also make a variation on a Sámi “coffee cheese”, which was traditionally made with reindeer milk. Visitors can dine at the farm restaurant, shop for local products, and enjoy activities like fishing, hiking, and guided mountain tours.

AALAN GÅRD, BØSTAD

Aalan Gård is a diverse farm with dairy production, livestock, and an herb garden. This family-run farm sells products in its farm shop and summer café. Their signature cheese, Capra—a semi-soft, gray-mold cheese made from fresh organic goat's milk—was the first cheese produced at Aalan and the first Northern Norwegian cheese to receive the Specialty label. The farm also offers agritourism experiences and serves as the starting point for the Lofoten Farm Trail, a network of historic farm pathways.

LOFOTEN GÅRDSYSTEMER, SAUPSTAD

Since 2000, Marielle and Hugo have run this organic and biodynamic farm. Originally from the Netherlands, they found their way to Lofoten by chance and now produce award-winning cheeses that attract visitors worldwide. Their Nordlandsost won gold at the Norwegian Cheese Championships in 2019, with Steinfjording earning silver. The farm features a café and shop, and their cheeses are available in local stores and select retailers across Norway, as well as on restaurant menus.

DEN SORTE GRYTE YSTERI (THE BLACK POT), LØDINGEN

The farm has around 300 goats supplying milk for its cheesemaking. Their award-winning cheeses include Salad Cheese and Karveost from the 2015 Norwegian Dairy Product Championships. Visitors can watch cheese production through a viewing window in the farm shop, and the farm restaurant offers a unique dining experience with views of the goat barn.



Photo: Liz Seabrook

SEAFOOD

Fisheries and aquaculture are vital industries in Nordland, crucial for coastal employment and settlement. In 2023, seafood exports reached NOK 28.5 billion.

Various fish species are caught year-round or seasonally, including skrei, Greenland halibut, and mackerel. Quotas regulate all fisheries, but declining stocks highlight the need for better processing and use of raw materials. Nordland hosts one of the world's largest cod fisheries from January to April, especially in Lofoten and Vesterålen, with a rich cultural history shaped by nature and the Gulf Stream.

Aquaculture has grown significantly, with 60+ companies producing 350,000 tons of salmon and trout in 2023, worth NOK 26 billion. The industry employs 1,900 people and accounts for 20% of Norway's salmon production. Some locally owned companies help retain value within communities.

Nordland has a rich seafood tradition, including stockfish, boknafisk, lutefisk, roe, mølje, fish cakes, cod tongues, and fish soup. Stockfish has fostered international ties, and local pride in seafood has grown, with boknafisk and rødsei now seen as delicacies. Preserving processing knowledge and developing new dishes is vital.

Fishing has long sustained Nordland's coastal communities. Dried fish was once the main trade good, and some argue Norway's independence relied on it. Bergen's wharf and Nidaros Cathedral were built from stockfish wealth. Today, the industry remains key for jobs and producing clean, high-quality food.

STOCKFISH FROM LOFOTEN

Stockfish from Lofoten is a traditional product made from Arctic cod, wild-caught near the Lofoten islands. The fish is dried and matured using natural methods. This process involves hanging the fish on wooden racks, called "hjell", where it is dried by cold air and wind.

The climate of Lofoten is ideal for this drying process, ensuring the fish does not freeze or rot but dries slowly and naturally. The result is a high-quality product that retains its nutrients and flavor.

Stockfish from Lofoten, with its cold and stable temperatures, was the first Norwegian food to receive European Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status in 2014, recognizing its unique qualities and traditional production methods.

The Lofoten fishery has long been vital to Norway's economy, with stockfish as a key export, especially to Italy, sustaining both traditional and modern fishing.

QUERINI OPERA

The Querini Opera, or "stockfish opera," premiered in Venice in October 2023, telling the story of Venetian nobleman Pietro Querini, who shipwrecked on Røst in 1432. This event forged lasting ties between Italy and Norway, especially in the stockfish trade. As a part of the Bodø2024 European Capital of Culture project, the opera blended Norwegian and Italian heritage, exploring themes of endurance, friendship, and cultural connection. Performed annually on Røst since 2012, its Venice premiere marked a major cultural exchange. The event also featured Arena Querini, celebrating Nordic seafood traditions through showcooking, art exhibitions, and seminars, further strengthening Norwegian-Italian ties

VIA QUERINISSIMA

Via Querinissima is a cultural and historical route inspired by the journey of Pietro Querini. This route connects various regions across Europe highlighting the historical and cultural ties established through Querini's voyage. The route includes significant locations in Italy, Greece, and Norway. Via Querinissima aims to promote cultural tourism, celebrate regional heritage, and foster connections between different European communities.



COD TOUNGE CUTTING

Cod tongue cutting is a tradition in Lofoten where children and young people cut out tongues from cod heads during winter fishing for skrei. This practice gives young people the opportunity to earn their own money, with incomes ranging from two to three thousand to forty thousand kroner over the course of a season. The work takes place on the quays, where the tongue cutters stand with razor-sharp knives and cut tongues from cod heads, often in cold and demanding conditions.

This tradition has become an important part of the local community and gives young people an early entry into working life.

Cod tongues are considered a delicacy and can generate considerable income. The tradition has also attracted international attention, with growing demand from countries such as Spain, England, France, Germany, Sweden and Denmark.

Every year, the World Cod Tongue Cutting Championships are held, bringing together both local and international participants.





THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP IN SKREI FISHING

An annual event held in Svolvær, Lofoten. This competition celebrates the traditional fishing season for skrei, the migratory Arctic cod that swims from the Barents Sea to the Norwegian coast to spawn.

Each March, around 80 fishing boats and up to 1,000 sports anglers gather in Svolvær to compete for the largest catch and the biggest individual fish. The event includes various activities, prizes, and entertainment, making it a festive occasion for both participants and spectators.

The competition has been held since 1991 and is open to both professionals and amateurs. It highlights the importance of skrei fishing to the local economy and culture, as this fishery has been a vital source of livelihood for the region for centuries.

KVARØY

Kvarøy Arctic, a family-owned fish farm in Northern Norway, specializes in high-quality salmon with a focus on fish health and sustainability. They use vegetable-based feed, implement sea lice prevention, and reduce plastic waste with biodegradable labels.

A key supplier to Whole Foods, Kvarøy helps Norway dominate 60-70% of its salmon market and undergoes annual audits. Certified by ASC, SFW, BAP, GlobalG.A.P., and the American Heart Association, Kvarøy ensures quality and consumer trust.

Photo CH/ Visit Norway



Photo CH/ Visit Norway

THE WORLD'S PUREST SEAFOOD

Lofoten Seaweed is a notable company based in the Lofoten Islands, Norway. Founded by Angelita Eriksen and Tamara Singer, it blends Norwegian and Japanese culinary traditions to create unique seaweed products. Angelita, a fisherman's daughter, and Tamara, with a background in Japanese cuisine, are passionate about seaweed as a tasty, sustainable, and nutritious ingredient.

Lofoten Seaweed focuses on sustainable harvesting with minimal environmental impact. Their high-quality, certified organic seaweed is used in salts, caviar, snacks, and even chocolate.

Supplying both consumers and gourmet chefs, their products are featured in Michelin-starred restaurants across Europe. They aim to put seaweed on menus worldwide.

Norway has a long history of seaweed use, dating back to the Viking Age. Seaweed production in Northern Norway has grown rapidly, driven by its ideal coastline and conditions.





SHELLFISH

The gulf stream carries warm water from the Gulf of Mexico into the icy Arctic creating ideal conditions for rich marine ecosystem, including fish, shellfish and other life forms.

In winter, the sea is not the coldest place. It stays between +4 and -2°C, while air temperatures can drop below -13°C, with wind chill making it feel even colder. Despite harsh conditions, seafood divers like Roderick Sloan brave the elements to harvest top-quality shellfish for world-class restaurants.

Norwegian shellfish thrive in these unique waters and are highly prized for their exceptional quality. The pristine environment and careful harvesting ensure they meet the highest standards.

Global appreciation for Norwegian shellfish has grown, driven by their quality and flavor. This demand has inspired innovative culinary techniques, blending tradition with modern trends, ensuring Norwegian shellfish remain a prized delicacy both locally and internationally.

AMBASSADOR



Photo: Erik Olsson photography

RODERICK SLOAN

Roderick Sloan is a renowned seafood diver based in Northern Norway, known for his exceptional skill in harvesting high-quality shellfish from the icy waters around Nordskot.

Roderick's work involves hand-collecting sea urchins, scallops, and Icelandic mussels from the seabed. His meticulous attention to detail ensures that the shellfish he harvests are of the highest quality, making them highly sought after by top restaurants worldwide.

His dedication to sustainable and traditional harvesting methods has earned him a loyal clientele, including renowned chefs like René Redzepi of Noma. The shellfish are prized for their exceptional flavor, which is attributed to the pristine, mineral-rich waters of the Arctic.

Despite the harsh winter conditions, Sloan continues to dive, believing that February offers the best visibility underwater due to the cold temperatures inhibiting algae growth. His commitment to his craft and the unique environment of Northern Norway have made him a celebrated figure in the culinary world. In 2023, Sloan co-founded Dundrun, a premium seafood company, with Johan Sigmundstad. Dundrun is committed to ethical fishing practices and sustainability, focusing on preserving the marine ecosystem and collaborating with local communities. The company has made significant strides in reducing plastic waste by replacing conventional plastic tags with biodegradable Sulapac seafood tags. Dundrun's dedication to sustainability and high-quality seafood has made it a respected name in the industry.



LUTEFISK FROM RØST

Lutefisk from Røst is a delicacy with deep roots in Norwegian food culture. Røst, an archipelago in the Lofoten Islands, is known for its unique drying conditions that are ideal for the production of stockfish, which is the basis for lutefisk. The production of lutefisk starts with stockfish, which is cod (skrei) that has been naturally dried in the special climate of Røst. This stockfish is then placed in water and lye to rehydrate and gain its characteristic texture and taste. Lutefisk from Røst has a Protected Geographical Indication, which ensures that the product meets strict quality requirements and can only be produced in this specific area. This tradition goes back hundreds of years and lutefisk is still an important part of Norwegian Christmas traditions. It is often served with accompaniments such as pea stew, bacon, potatoes and mustard sauce.

ISHAVSRØYE



Ishavsrøye, or Arctic char, from Vesterålen is a renowned product in Norway. This fish is known for its reddish flesh, firm texture and mild flavor, making it versatile for various culinary preparations. Sigerfjord Fisk AS is the largest supplier of Ishavsrøye in Norway. They offer a range of products including fresh fillets, cold-smoked and hot-smoked fillets, and rakfisk (fermented fish). The fish is farmed sustainably, without the use of medicines, vaccines, or chemicals.

Ishavsrøye from Vesterålen has a protected geographical indication, ensuring that it is produced according to strict standards within the specified region. This guarantees the quality and authenticity of the product.

RAKET FJELLRØYE



Raket fjellrøye is made from Arctic char raised at Sæterstad Farm. Char fishing has a long tradition in Hattfjelldal's Røssvatnet area. This Norwegian dish uses trout or char, salted and autolyzed for up to a year. The entire process, from roe to fermented fish, happens on the farm. Broodfish roe is hatched in small tanks, and the char grow for 3–4 years in fresh mountain water. After slaughter, they mature in salt brine at low temperatures—medium matured at three months and fully fermented at six.





REINDEER HERDING IN SÁPMI

History, Culture and Industry

The land of Sápmi covers the Northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia, Reindeer herding has deep roots in Nordland's history. Early hunter-gatherers, known as the Veidefolk, relied on reindeer meat as a key part of their diet. Sámi reindeer herding evolved from this culture and represents an impressive adaptation to the Arctic environment. Traditional Sámi reindeer herding is not only an industry but also a vital carrier of Sámi culture, language, and beliefs. This way of life is protected by both national and international laws.



HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE & NUTRITIOUS

At the heart of nomadic reindeer herding are the reindeer's natural migration patterns. Throughout the eight seasons of the herding year, they move vast distances between summer and winter pastures. In summer, they graze on nutrient-rich herbs and grasses, while in winter, they feed on mountain lichen.

Nordland has some of Norway's best grazing areas, ensuring high slaughter weights and excellent meat quality. Reindeer meat is prized for its unique flavor, and research from the University of Tromsø highlights its high nutritional value. Compared to Norwegian beef, lamb, pork, and chicken, it has more vitamin B12, iron, zinc, and selenium. It is lean, as healthy as fish, and a great omega-3 source.

YOUNG PEOPLE & HERITAGE

Most of Nordland falls within the Nordland reindeer grazing area, where herders have grazing rights on uncultivated land regardless of ownership. However, only people of Sámi descent can practice reindeer herding. Though small, the industry is economically, socially, and culturally vital for the Sámi. Each grazing district has a regulated reindeer limit to sustain pastures, with Nordland home to around 14,000 reindeer and 3,000 people connected to the industry.

Young people in Nordland can pursue vocational education in reindeer herding, but traditional knowledge transfer is equally important. It is a family-based industry where women play a crucial role in daily operations. Both children and elders are involved, ensuring traditions and knowledge pass seamlessly between generations.

TOURISM

Reindeer herding can enhance Nordland's appeal as a culinary destination by offering unique food and cultural experiences.

Nordland is home to skilled reindeer herders across the region, providing a strong foundation for collaboration between reindeer herding, agriculture, coastal fishing, and tourism. This can take the form of tourism experiences, local food production, cultural events, and educational programs for children and youth through initiatives like Ut på vidda businesses.

INGA SAMI SIIDA

Located in Vesterålen, Inga Sami Siida offers visitors a unique opportunity to experience Sámi culture. Guests can hear stories about local Sámi traditions, myths, magic, reindeer herding, and joik—the traditional Sámi singing—around a campfire. Visitors can also try lasso throwing, interact with reindeer, and taste traditional Sámi dishes.



Photo: Liz Seabrook

SÁMI CUISINE

Sámi food is deeply rooted in nature, featuring reindeer meat, fish, berries, and herbs as essential ingredients.

Reindeer graze outdoors year-round, consuming a variety of grasses, herbs, flowers, lichen, and berries. This natural diet gives the meat its distinct flavor and high nutritional value.

BLOOD PANCAKES

During reindeer slaughter, every part of the animal is utilized, including the blood. Blood is used in several traditional dishes, with blood pancakes being one of the most unique and nutrient-rich delicacies passed down through generations. This dish reflects the Sámi people's respect for nature and their ability to make full use of the animal.

SOUVAS

Souvas is a modern way of preparing reindeer meat while preserving its original flavors. The dish consists of thinly sliced, traditionally smoked reindeer meat, often served in pita bread with lingonberry sour cream and salad.

BIDOS

Also spelled bidos or bidus, bidos is the national dish of the Sámi people. It is a Sámi meat soup made with reindeer meat, traditionally served at festive gatherings. There are many variations of the dish, often including different cuts of reindeer meat, potatoes and vegetables.

GAHKKO

There are many recipes and variations of gahkko—also known as gáhkku—a traditional Sámi celebration bread. It plays an important role in Sámi food culture. Gahkko is a lightly spiced, moist bread. Ground anise gives it a mild licorice flavor, while syrup adds a pleasant sweetness.



MÁRET RÁVDNA BULJO

I come from a long line of reindeer herders. At just one year old, I received my first reindeer brand, and by the age of three, I knew I would follow in my parents' footsteps. Reindeer herding is more than a profession for me—it's a way of life, deeply rooted in the traditions of our family and culture. Despite the challenges we face, such as the encroachment of big industry on our land, we remain committed to this way of life, it is part of our identity and heritage. I am honored to carry this responsibility forward.

When I harvest from nature, I always think of the long-term impact on the land and its ecosystems. I am conscious of the need to protect the clean water, lakes, rivers, and land where cloudberries grow, and where our reindeer graze. I believe in taking only what is necessary, ensuring that nature has time to regenerate.

Food is sacred in our culture. One of the most important traditions is the first reindeer slaughter of the year, which marks the beginning of the new season. The blood sausages we prepare are a sacred dish, and we carefully select different cuts of meat for different members of the family, ensuring that each person gets what they need for their growth and health. Every part of the reindeer is used, from the meat to the skin and bones, which are crafted into clothing and Sámi handicrafts.

I am passionate about preserving traditional Sámi foods, including nearly forgotten practices. I forage pine bark for nutrient-rich bread, make blood pancakes, and have revived reindeer milking, using it to create yogurt and cottage cheese—ensuring these traditions live on.

On a general level, I see European Region of Gastronomy as a tribute to food production in Nordland, as well as a means of protecting both nature and the industries based on food production in the region. It can help promote local food production, culture, and sustainable development.

For us and the reindeer herding industry in Nordland, European Region of Gastronomy can contribute to increased visibility in the world of gastronomy. It can serve as a platform to showcase our unique products to a broader national and international market, fostering positive development for reindeer herding in the region.

Reindeer herding is already a sustainable industry, and through European Region of Gastronomy, it can gain further support to develop sustainable methods and practices while also achieving greater recognition for its role and historical presence in Nordland. Additionally, European Region of Gastronomy can help promote Sámi culture and traditions.

By collaborating with other food industry stakeholders—such as restaurants, food producers, and markets—we can develop new products based on traditional Sámi cuisine, strengthening the region's food network. A status as European Region of Gastronomy, Nordland can attract more visitors interested in authentic food experiences, culture, and traditions, creating new income opportunities for reindeer herders who wish to offer experiences or products to visitors.



RECRUITMENT

-INVESTING IN THE FUTURE OF GASTRONOMY

NATURE BASED EDUCATION

Agricultural education has been available in Nordland since 1883, and currently, five upper secondary schools offer nature-based studies. Students can choose between green nature-based studies (agriculture, animal husbandry, horticulture) or blue nature-based studies (aquaculture, fishing and harvesting). In 2022, the county council approved the inclusion of Restaurant and Food Studies at the Mosjøen Nature-based School, allowing students to explore the entire value chain – from land and sea to table.

ADULT AGRONOMIST EDUCATION

This program is perfect for adults wanting to become agronomists while working. It's a two-year course offered by Sortland and Mosjøen Nature-based Schools and Nettskolen in Nordland.



Photo: Smak deg frem

FOOD EDUCATION IN NORDLAND

Around 2020, the recruitment crisis in the food and meal industry was at its peak, worsened by the pandemic. A public investigation revealed several challenges: low priority of food and health subjects in primary schools, limited knowledge among counselors about the industry, and a negative reputation due to low wages and demanding working hours.

To address this, the report “Uten fagarbeidere – ingen matnasjon” (Without Skilled Workers – No Food Nation) was presented, leading to the launch of the five-year national recruitment campaign “Smak deg frem” (Taste Your Way Forward) in 2021, supported with two million kroner from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. The campaign targets youth and parents via social media, showcasing opportunities in Restaurant and Food Studies.

In Nordland, this has led to results. After years of declining applicants, Restaurant and Food Studies saw its highest number of applicants in 2024 since 2016. At the same time, interest in vocational studies increased – 64% of applicants in the county now choose vocational education, with both Restaurant and Food Studies and Nature-based Studies growing.



AMBASSADOR



Photo: Espen Laumann

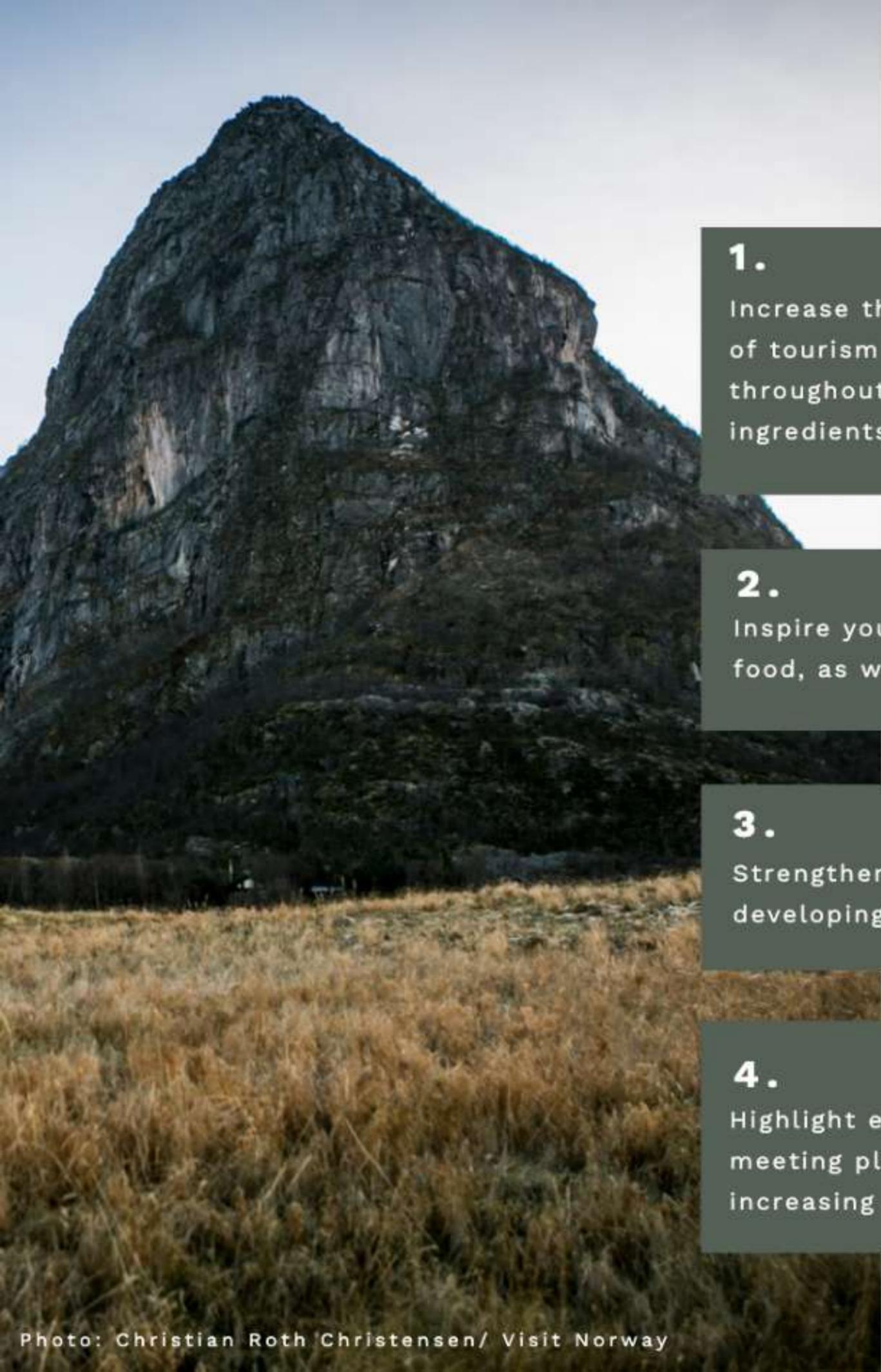
ESPEN LAUMANN

Espen Laumann, a 25-year-old chef from Brønnøysund, initially pursued another field before discovering his passion for cooking. He began at Hildurs Urterarium before apprenticing at Britannia Hotel's Speilsalen in Trondheim, later working at top restaurants like Jonathan Grill and Le Bistro. Espen's love for cooking led him to the competitive culinary world, where he quickly made his mark. He was part of the team that won gold at Norwegian Chef of the Year 2023 with Håvard Werkland. Recently, he has contributed to Bocuse d'Or Team Norway as a coordinator and creative developer, aiding their international success.

As a young chef, I've gained valuable insight into the European Region of Gastronomy through my work in Trondheim and as a participant in the European Young Chef in 2021. Trøndelag did a great job promoting food producers, raising awareness of local products, and encouraging their use in restaurants and stores. The project also highlighted the importance of local, sustainable food. I see great potential for Nordland to achieve similar success, benefiting local communities and small producers.

I recently returned to Brønnøysund to take over the kitchen at Hildurs Urterarium. Coming back to Nordland feels right! I've learned a lot and see huge potential for our region. I look forward to representing Nordland and helping put it on the culinary map.

It's fantastic that one of Nordland's 2028 goals is to recruit young people into the culinary field, which offers endless opportunities. I highly recommend it to anyone passionate about food and hands-on learning. You can work worldwide, explore further education, or even become a private chef for Premier League players!



GOALS

1.

Increase the quality of and interest in food experiences as a valuable part of tourism in Nordland. Attract desired guests in sustainable volumes throughout the year, by developing food experiences based on local ingredients, culture and nature.

2.

Inspire young people to choose education and careers in agriculture and food, as well as attract qualified professionals to the region.

3.

Strengthen Nordland's role as an internationally renowned food region by developing and promoting local produce and food experiences.

4.

Highlight everyday food based on local ingredients, creating activities and meeting places for collaboration and knowledge sharing, with the aim of increasing well-being, diversity and inclusion.

STRATEGIES

REGENERATIVE TOURISM

Nordland County is embracing a more sustainable path by gradually shifting toward regenerative tourism. The 2023–2027 Tourism Strategy outlines a holistic vision for building a competitive, sustainable tourism industry that adds value to nature, culture, and communities—while encouraging broader societal responsibility. Tourism is vital to regional development. Experiences based on local food traditions raise awareness of culinary heritage and support cultural diversity. With world-class seafood, game, and agricultural products, Nordland is well-positioned to foster a regenerative food culture—enhancing food security, promoting healthy, local meals, strengthening producer-consumer ties, and supporting sustainable value creation.

EDUCATION & RECRUITMENT

Recruitment to the food industry has long been challenging, with low and unstable enrollment in restaurant and food studies. The COVID-19 pandemic worsened the situation, as many professionals left the sector. Nationally, only 1,200–1,300 students enroll annually (80–90 in Nordland), with a completion rate of around 50%. Reindeer husbandry is essential for sustainability and preserving Sámi culture, language, and identity. Much of Nordland is within reindeer grazing areas, and there's a growing need for workers skilled in both traditional and modern practices.

Seafood remains one of Nordland's largest and fastest-growing industries. As offshore and land-based operations evolve, so does the demand for qualified professionals.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Public health efforts must include all age groups, with special focus on vulnerable populations. Promoting nutrition based on local ingredients can improve health and reduce inequality. Collaboration with public and volunteer sectors is essential for prevention. Urban agriculture offers environmental and social benefits—reducing transport, improving air quality, and boosting self-sufficiency. Local growing projects also foster community and integration. In times of crisis, local food production enhances preparedness and resilience. Public procurement plays a key role in food security and supporting local producers. Providing healthy, local meals in schools, hospitals, and care homes aligns with Nordland's ambition to become a European Region of Gastronomy.

NATIONAL TOURISM STRATEGY 2030

Norway's National Tourism Strategy 2030 targets a NOK 20 billion increase in both export value and domestic tourism spending, a 25% rise in tourism-related employment, and a 50% cut in tourism-related local emissions. Over the past 10–15 years, Norway's food scene has flourished, with top-quality ingredients, chefs, and culinary communities. While gastronomy and local food are key tourism drivers, their international potential remains underutilized. By 2030, Food Nation Norway aims to be a recognized brand, boosting food exports and promoting quality labels like PGI and Northern Norwegian specialties. Nordland's skilled reindeer herders further enhance its appeal as a unique and authentic food and travel destination.

OUR CONCEPT

SEASONS UNDER THE LIGHT

The light in Nordland is truly unique, and it affects both our lifestyle and how food grows and tastes. The bright summer nights give us energy, while the dark winter months invite coziness and reflection. Life here follows a rhythm closely tied to the seasons – in a way that feels inevitable; not as a choice, but as a quiet demand from nature.

The midnight sun and the bright summer nights, known as “the endless Nordland nights,” must be experienced to truly be understood. It’s light around the clock, but the sounds and atmosphere remind us when night has come. The animals and birds know it too.

The polar night isn’t dark, but lit with a softer, different glow. As autumn fades, shorter days spark talk over morning coffee—a quiet reminder that winter is near. Life continues with work, school, and activities, even as darkness deepens.

The blue hour casts a rich hue over sea and snow. On clear nights, stars and moonlight light the landscape with a calm stillness. From August to April, the northern lights often appear—more vivid as the days grow darker—fascinating viewers for generations.



OUR WAY OF LIFE

The locals of Nordland adapt to nature and the changing light throughout the year. The long, bright summer nights give us energy, and many choose to stay up a little later. During the dark season, daily life continues as usual, but we might feel a bit more tired, sleep a little more, and retreat into the warmth. There, we find comfort in candlelight while the winter darkness embraces us outside.

In Nordland, there are strong traditions tied to the light, and throughout the year, the many changes in nature's rhythm are celebrated with various events. The winter solstice, which occurs around December 21st, is a turning point when the darkness reaches its peak and the light slowly begins to return. On this day, we experience the longest night, but at the same time, we know that brighter days are on their way. In many places, people gather to mark the day, often around a bonfire, where there is time for meaningful conversations and reflection during the darkest part of the year.

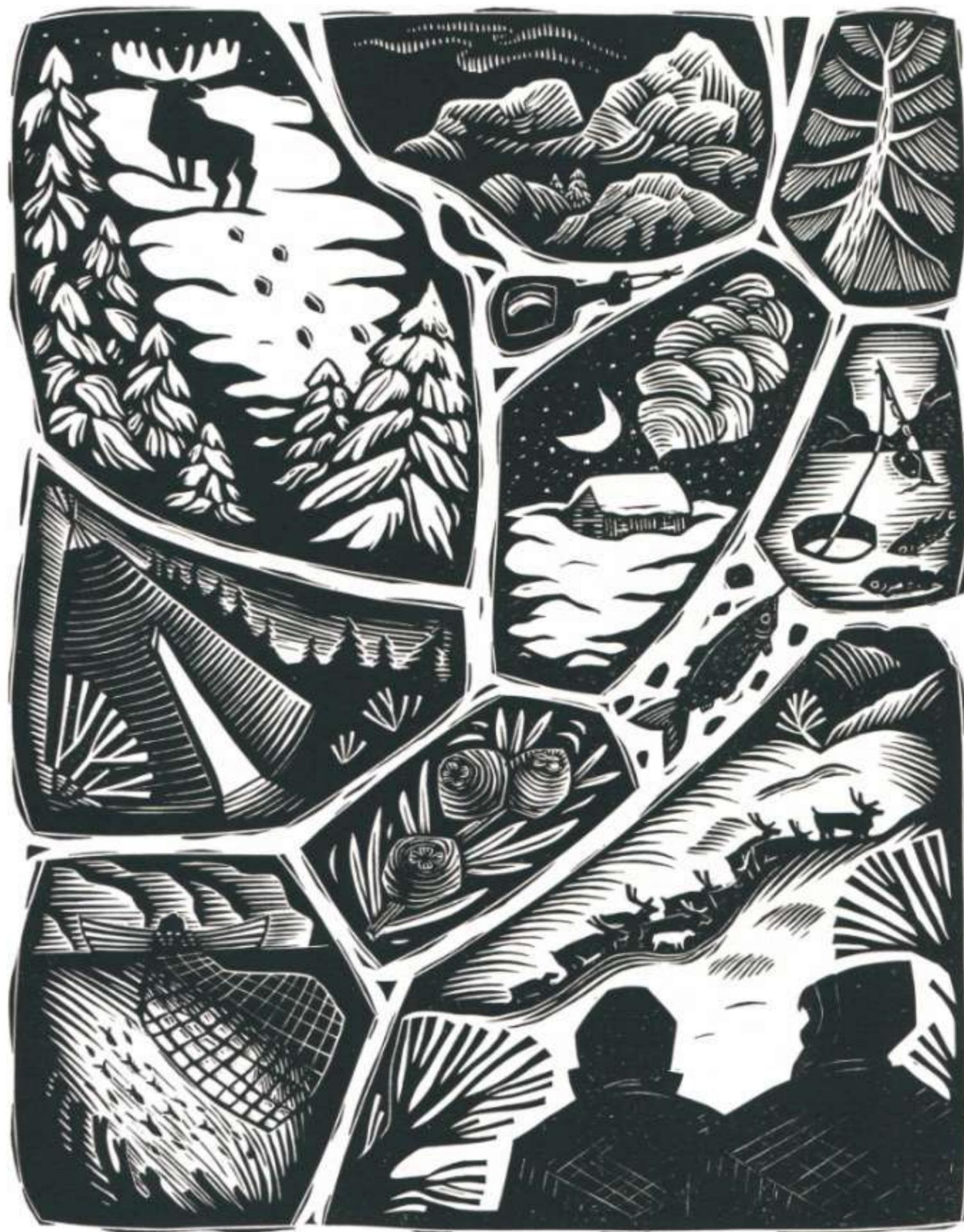
At the end of January, when the sun rises above the horizon again after several weeks of absence, both small and large gatherings are held to celebrate the sun's return. People come together outdoors to watch the first rays of sunlight touch the landscape, and this is often celebrated with bonfires, candles, food, and drink.

Midsummer's Eve, around June 23rd, marks the summer solstice and the arrival of the bright season ahead. On this evening, people once again gather around bonfires, together with friends and family, to celebrate the return of the light summer nights. It is a time for joy and togetherness, where we celebrate the light and nature's vitality in the north.

Our concept will evolve with the seasons, reflecting the unique character of each one.

WINTER LIGHTS

From November to mid-January, the people of Nordland experience the long Polar Night, often linked to darkness, yet also known as the time of colour. On clear days, the region is treated to some of the longest and most colourful sunrises and sunsets. With its vast uninhabited spaces and minimal light pollution, Nordland offers a pristine view of the northern lights, the moon and the stars. In the depths of winter, this quiet darkness creates a truly serene atmosphere.



LAUGHTER AS A LIFELINE

There is however no denying that winter in Nordland is long, cold, and harsh! The freezing temperatures last for months, with snow and ice covering the ground. The winds can be biting and weather conditions can make travel and daily life difficult. In these tough conditions, the people of Nordland have turned to humour as a valuable resource.

"Humor has shone like a lighthouse in the dark night, showing the way to the harbor and to the happy realization that nothing was so bad that it couldn't have been worse."

Arthur Arntzen – comedian, known for his Northern Norwegian humour.

THE TASTE OF WINTER

The Northern Norwegian cuisine is based on the harvest of each season. For generations, Norwegians have preserved and stored food to get through the winter. Even though meat and dairy are now fresh year-round, it is still a tradition to eat salted and smoked meat at Christmas and Easter.

In Nordland, every town and city create its own unique holiday celebration. Cozy Christmas markets pop up, offering local crafts and seasonal treats. Streets and squares glow with twinkling lights, making the long polar night more bearable and enchanting. From small villages to larger cities, the holiday spirit brings people together.



"Lammerull"
Photo: Lasse Flode/Matprat



"Pinnekjøtt"
Photo: Matprat

"Lammerull" is a traditional Norwegian dish made from lamb. It consists of lamb meat that is rolled, seasoned with salt, pepper, and spices tied into a roll.

"Pinnekjøtt" is a traditional Norwegian dish made from salted and dried lamb ribs. The meat is usually preserved by being heavily salted and sometimes dried or smoked. The preparation involves steaming the ribs in a pot, traditionally using birch sticks (the word "pinne" means stick) placed in the bottom of the pot to create steam.



JULEGRØT/CHRISTMAS PORRIDGE

In the small town, Mosjøen, they have created a tradition of bringing the town's population together around what they call the "World's Longest Porridge Table." Every December around 4,000 people gather to enjoy 1 ton of porridge at a table approximately 300 meters long! Over 100 volunteers worked to make the event happen.



Photo: Liz Seabrook



Photo: Sara Johannessén/Matprat

SÁMI NATIONAL DAY

On February 6th, the Sámi National Day is celebrated. The day is marked with the Sami flag, and many people wear traditional Sámi clothing or "gákti." The flag features the traditional colors red, blue, yellow, and green, and the circle symbolizes the sun and the moon. Many eat/serve bidos, a traditional meat soup with reindeer meat and potatoes, or a more modern version, Sámi street food, Suovas.



VINTERFESTUKA IN NARVIK

A cultural festival with 200+ events and 25,000+ visitors, combining music, literature, art, and theater within a historical framework. It collaborates internationally and works with businesses to enhance festival development and reach. Annually in March.

NARVIK TO HOST FIS ALPINE WORLD SKI CHAMPIONSHIP 2029

The FIS Alpine World Ski Championship is the second-largest winter sports event in the world after the Winter Olympic Games, and in 2029, the world will experience the event set against the unique Arctic surroundings of Nordland, in Narvik.



Graphic Art by: Anine Hansen

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP IN SKREI AND THE SKREI MUSEUM

Every March, the World Championship in Skrei takes place in Svolvær, celebrating this important fishery. In 2026, the SKREI museum, dedicated to experiences and knowledge about the Lofoten fishery, will open in Kabelvåg, offering visitors an in-depth look at this vital tradition.

VESTERÅLEN SKREIFESTIVAL

Vesterålen Skreifestival takes place in Myre annually in February/March. The festival honours the Skrei (cod) with cooking demos, tastings, and competitions like the World Championship in tongue cutting. Visitors learn about handling skrei through workshops and lectures on the fishing industry's future while enjoying some of Norway's best seafood.

THE SWIFT SPRING

Spring in Nordland often arrives suddenly, as a short, intense period before summer takes over. The transition between winter and spring is unpredictable, but once spring sets in, nature explodes in colour. The long, bright days make the landscape turn green quickly, and the birds return to a lush and vibrant environment. One of the special highlights of spring is Lundkommardagen, which celebrates the return of the puffins to the cliffs of the Lovund island. This day, often celebrated in late April, marks the arrival of these iconic seabirds and is a symbol of the changing season.





EASTER CELEBRATION

In Norway, Easter has been celebrated for nearly 1000 years. Originally a solemn holiday, it is now more closely associated with holidays, relaxation, and spending quality time with family and friends. During Easter, many people take the opportunity to put on their skis and head to the mountains. One of the highlights of these outings is sitting down to light a fire, grilling sausages and enjoying the peace of nature. Food plays an important role in the easter celebration, with lamb roast or leg of lamb being a traditional dish.

FIRE

A campfire is more than just warmth and coziness – it's a way to disconnect and build community, according to a 2025 survey for Norsk Friluftsliv. 70% of people feel that gathering around a campfire fosters a sense of community, while 63% say it helps them unwind from everyday stress.

"It's not spring you love the most, but the promises of the light of a summer sun that never sets."

Halvdan Sivertsen – Singer Songwriter from Nordland

SUMMER NIGHTS

Summer in Nordland – the magical season, with the midnight sun casting a unique light over fjords and mountains. Midsummer Eve is celebrated with bonfires and festivities along the coast, a tradition that brings people together across the region.



DON'T SLEEP THE NIGHT AWAY

Summer is synonymous with festivals, and nearly every town and village has one to enjoy. In Nordland, the festival scene is particularly vibrant, showcasing everything from Sami culture and traditional music to contemporary art and local cuisine. These festivals draw both locals and tourists, with smaller events in picturesque villages offering a more intimate and authentic taste of Northern Norwegian culture.





TRÆNAFESTIVALEN

A unique music festival on the Træna Islands, 33 nautical miles offshore the Arctic Circle. Annually in July, concerts take place in sea-carved caves, ancient churches, and forests under the midnight sun. It's small and intimate, yet big enough to attract music's wildest names - like Manu Chao, Charlie XCX, Damien Rice, Wardruna and Yoshinori Hayashi. The non-profit festival funds local community projects and has gained international recognition.



PARKENFESTIVALEN I BODØ

Parkenfestivalen is an outdoor pop/rock festival in Bodø that was first held in 2006. The festival takes place in Rensåsparken. Parkenfestivalen is organized as a non-profit foundation. The event spans three days, with "FamilieParken" and "Thursday in the Park" taking place the day before the main festival.

ARCTIC RACE OF NORWAY

A four-day road race held every August in Northern Norway's breathtaking landscapes. Established in 2013, it's Scandinavia's top cycling event, part of the UCI ProSeries, drawing elite Tour de France teams while promoting inclusivity and regional unity.

NORDLAND MUSIKKFESTUKE

A leading festival for classical music, attracting 25,000 visitors to Bodø annually in August. It blends classical, jazz, folk, and pop performances in unique venues, from mountain-top stages to transformed furniture stores and world-class concert halls.

FESTSPILLENE HELGELAND

One of Northern Norway's largest festivals, featuring 100+ events, concerts, art fairs, and a children's festival. Held in Mosjøen annually in July, it showcases local and international artists, offering concerts, theatre, exhibitions, and workshops for all ages.



Márkomeannu means “fun in the woods” and is a Sámi festival at Gállogieddi celebrating Sámi culture through music, art, literature, and sports. Founded in 1999 by Sámi youth, it has grown into a major cultural event, fostering pride, identity, and cross-generational engagement. Annually in July.

AMBER AUTUMN

Autumn brings a shift in nature's colours, as green leaves are replaced by shades of yellow, orange, and red. The mountains take on a reddish-brown hue from the heather, while the birch forests glow in gold. The crisp autumn air and vibrant landscapes provide the perfect backdrop for hunting and foraging.



FALL FESTIVALS

Autumn also marks the start of various food festivals in Nordland, providing a unique opportunity to explore and celebrate the region's rich culinary traditions. With the harvest season in full swing, this time of year offers an abundance of fresh, local ingredients—from seafood to game and berries—making it the perfect moment to savor the flavors of the north.

MAT I VESTERÅLEN

Mat i Vesterålen is a regional food festival in Vesterålen, celebrating local food traditions. Formerly the Vesterålen Food Festival, it features cooking demonstrations, tastings, and competitions, promoting identity and pride in local cuisine. It unites amateur and professional food producers, fostering collaboration and innovation. Annually in the beginning of September.

MATFESTIVALEN LOFOTEN

Held biennially in October in Leknes. This festival gathers local food producers and showcases high-quality local food and drink. It includes a bustling food market, wine tastings, cultivation courses, and the Lofoten Food Ambassador of the Year awards, with activities for all ages.

ARKTISKMAT

ArktiskMat is an annual food symposium in Mosjøen. In mid-September chefs and food enthusiasts unite to explore local food through lectures, workshops, and tastings. Each year features a unique theme, such as 2024's "Nurture," honouring farmers, fishermen, and gatherers. Since 2012, ArktiskMat has collaborated with key organizations to promote food culture, hosting roadshows across Norway and Europe.



Nordland offers excellent fishing with thousands of lakes, where you can catch trout and char. The region also has many rivers, some of which are great for salmon fishing. In winter, ice fishing is a popular activity.

Photo: Liz Seabrook

HUNTING

Hunting traditions in Norway run deep and remain a vital part of the culture, particularly moose and small game hunting (like grouse and hare). Moose hunting is one of the most anticipated events of the autumn season, drawing hunters from across the region. The season kicks off in late September. Hunting is typically conducted in organized teams, with many hunters relying on dogs to track moose. Once a moose is felled, the meat is customarily shared among the group.

FORAGING

For centuries, Norwegians have gathered food from forests, mountains, and the sea—both as a necessity and as part of their cultural heritage. In recent years, interest in foraging has surged, with the Norwegian Association for Mushroom and Edible Wild Plants reporting a 10 percent increase in membership.

The traditional “right to roam” (Allemannsretten) grants people free access to uncultivated land, allowing them to pick berries and mushrooms without needing permission. This has made foraging more accessible, and in recent years, it has evolved into a lifestyle—especially following the pandemic, which spurred a renewed interest in outdoor activities and self-sufficiency.



WILD

Wild ingredients like seaweed, mushrooms, herbs, and berries are becoming increasingly popular in gourmet restaurants and among celebrity chefs. Many foragers are also exploring preservation techniques to enjoy nature's harvest year-round. Foraging not only connects people to their local environment but also enhances the satisfaction of knowing exactly where their food comes from—often making it taste even better.

CHANTERELLE

The chanterelle (*Cantharellus cibarius*) is a prized wild mushroom in Norway, it's easy recognizable and known for its golden colour and mild, slightly peppery aroma. It thrives in forests during late summer and autumn and is rich in vitamins and antioxidants. Commonly fried in butter as a side dish, or in soups, sauces and stews.

PORCINI

Porcini is also a highly regarded wild mushroom in Norway. Known for its meaty texture and rich, nutty flavour, it is a favourite in many traditional Norwegian dishes.

CLouDBERRY

Cloudberry is a delicacy that grows in the northern parts of Norway, known for its unique taste and high nutritional value. The berries are orange and have a sweet yet tart flavor. Rich in vitamin C and antioxidants, cloudberry is often used to make jam or enjoyed fresh in desserts. Because they grow in marshlands and mountainous areas, they can be difficult to find, making them especially valuable. They have a short growing season and are highly sought after when they ripen in late summer and autumn. Cloudberry can be frozen, and many Norwegians save them for Christmas to make the traditional dessert multekrem (cloudberry cream).

LINGONBERRY

In September, the forests turn red with lingonberries. The berries are easy to pick and incredibly nutritious. They contain high amounts of natural fruit acids, giving them a sharp taste and long shelf life. Lingonberries are commonly used to make jam, juice, and are often served as a side to meat dishes.

BLUEBERRY

Blueberries are one of the most popular berries in Norway. These blue, juicy berries are rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals, and are well-known for their health benefits. Blueberries can be enjoyed fresh or used in jams, juices, and desserts. They have a long shelf life and can easily be frozen or dried for later use.





FOOD & CULTURE – BUILDING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Nordland is working actively to promote public health and build sustainable, inclusive communities by increasing well-being, preventing disease and reducing health threats. To succeed in this, collaboration across different sectors is key. Public health is closely linked to social sustainability and is about ensuring equal opportunities for health, education, work and well-being for all members of society. The European Region of Gastronomy title year puts local everyday food on the agenda and creates activities and meeting places for collaboration and knowledge sharing, with the aim of strengthening well-being, diversity and inclusion in local communities.

MORE LOCAL FOOD

The government aims for local food and drink sales to reach 25 billion NOK by 2035, with public procurement as a key tool. The Recipe for More Local Food and Drink plan (LMD) highlights public meals as crucial to achieving this goal. National nutrition policies encourage increased consumption of healthy foods such as fish, vegetables, berries, and low-fat dairy products.

INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH FOOD AND COMMUNITY

A major challenge in Nordland is the high number of people on benefits, with many young people outside of work and education. To reduce social inequality and create a more inclusive society, more people need to finish school. Both physical and mental health play a key role in this, which is why Nordland has invested in health-promoting kindergartens and schools for over 20 years. During the status year, these initiatives will be continued and strengthened, with a focus on enabling more children and young people to participate and contribute. By fostering identity and relationships through regional food traditions and local ingredients, the role of food in health, education, and community development will be further emphasized.

ONGOING FOOD ACTIVITIES

In collaboration with Unge Kokker (Young Chefs), Nordland County Municipality has organized the cooking course Make Your Own Soup for middle school students over several years.

The national nutrition program Fiskesprell holds annual courses for kindergarten and after-school program (SFO) staff in Nordland. These courses teach both staff and parents how to prepare child-friendly fish meals.

As part of the ArktiskMat symposium in Mosjøen, the Seafood Course for Youth has been held for many years with seafood expert Roderick Sloan. The course is designed for students in restaurant and culinary programs, as well as food-interested 10th graders. It has also been offered at the culinary program at Bodø Upper Secondary School.





NUTRITION, DIGNITY & QUALITY OF LIFE IN LATER YEARS

In recent years, the County Governor of Nordland has focused on the project Joy of Food for the Elderly and the importance of good food quality for those who cannot choose their own diet, particularly food they recognize from earlier in life. The Joy of Food project targeted food professionals and those who inspire municipalities to see the connections between food procurement, diet, and the joy of eating. Experiences from the project show that staff in institutional kitchens are keen on gaining access to as many local ingredients as possible.

Procurement regulations for food in public institutions are complicated, and many fear making mistakes. Municipalities often participate in purchasing collaborations and enter into large framework agreements, including for food. To ensure procurement meets residents' needs, good collaboration among multiple stakeholders in the municipality is required. Moving forward, the County Governor, together with the District Center, will explore the opportunities and challenges of procurement in cooperation with the municipalities in the region.



Local food is often fresher and more nutritious since it avoids long transportation routes. Increasing self-sufficiency not only improves public health but also strengthens food security and preparedness—especially in uncertain times.



A European Region of Gastronomy title year will give Nordland a unique platform to increase the visibility and awareness of the importance of local food for social development. Local food production can not only strengthen the economy but also promote public health and contribute to sustainable local communities. The status year will support plans and work initiated by the public sector. With its broad focus and strong communication channels, European Region of Gastronomy can highlight this issue, create a platform for discussion, and contribute to knowledge development.



Photo: Kathrine Sjørgård



Photo: Bejarlefs



Photo: Laila Ingvaldsen/
Nordland Nasjonalparkseier

BAKING TOGETHER IN NORDLAND

Nordland has a rich baking tradition with strong local variations. The takke (griddle) and stone oven are key tools, and baking is often a shared, social activity that reflects the region's food culture. The round "kamkake" from Hemnes is named after the kam/comb once used to press its distinctive grid pattern. "Rengakake" from Rana is a small, ring-shaped bread, while lefse varies from village to village—some are soft and thin, others sweet and filled with butter, sugar, and cinnamon. "Flatbrød", crisp and durable, has long been a staple, and melkkake with gomme is a festive favorite. The best-known dish from the Salten region is "Møsbrømlfse". A soft lefse is filled with møsbrøm, a sauce of melted brown cheese and milk, then topped with butter and sour cream. It's the beloved taste of home for many in Salten.

BEIARLEFS A SPECIALITY

Beiarlefs is a lefse bakery based in Beiarn, specializing in traditional recipes from the Salten region. Their lefse is homemade, hand-rolled, and generously spread with cinnamon and sugar. Four of their varieties — Kvitlefse, Krinalefse, Egglefse, and Bruostlefse — have earned the prestigious "Specialty" label by the Norwegian Food Foundation.



URBAN FARMING

Urban agriculture has emerged throughout the country in recent years, and in Nordland it has taken shape in various projects such as school gardens, allotment gardens, cooperative farming and arenas for exchanging knowledge and experience. Bodø has a long tradition of urban agriculture. The city is undergoing significant development, and through a dedicated project initiative, it aims to facilitate increased local and sustainable food production, business development, and knowledge sharing. The goal is for residents to understand where their food comes from and for everyone to have the opportunity to grow their own food. Bodø Municipality is an active driving force for urban agriculture throughout the region and has established arenas for knowledge and experience sharing, such as the Food and Cultivation Festival in Bodø. Cultivation projects serve multiple purposes, including education, hobbies, business development, entrepreneurship, social meeting places, public health, integration and food culture.

In Rana, Helgeland Food Culture Center is now being developed for children and young people. In collaboration with schools, businesses and other partners, the center will work to increase expertise and strengthen recruitment to the food industry in Nordland. The center, which is located in the town of Mo i Rana, has also planned a large kitchen garden - a great meeting place for the town's population, and an arena for sharing knowledge about urban agriculture.



Photo: Ura School Garden

FOOD SECURITY & PREPAREDNESS

Urban farming can also contribute to increased preparedness in Nordland by making local communities more self-sufficient. By producing food locally, regional food security is strengthened, and vulnerability to disruptions in transport and imports is reduced. The government is working towards sustainable food production across the country, with particular focus on Northern Norway to ensure self-sufficiency. The goal is for Norway to reach a self-sufficiency rate of 50% (it was 39% in 2023). To ensure enough and safe food in the future, we must protect agricultural land and grazing areas – the foundation for the region's preparedness and food security (Norwegian Strategy for Urban Agriculture – Cultivate Cities and Towns).



Photo: Ingrid Roaldsen

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

The marketing of Nordland as a European Region of Gastronomy will be credible and reflect both tradition, culture, and the unique culinary experiences the region has to offer. The communication should highlight these elements through carefully selected messages, visual expressions, and knowledge-based marketing. Specific marketing measures will be further developed closer to the status year, as market trends and changes occur rapidly, making it difficult to determine concrete activities at this time.

As European Region of Gastronomy, the marketing will support Nordland County Municipality's vision of creating attractive and inclusive communities. It will also support the region's focus on regenerative tourism, contributing to positive development in local communities and building social and cultural values.

The goal is for the marketing to attract the right visitors to Nordland, at the right time and in the right places. The status should increase attention and pride among the local population. A combination of media coverage, profiling, and activities that engage the community will contribute to this.

Nordland's status as a culinary destination should enhance Norway's position as a culture-based travel destination by offering experiences rooted in local culture, heritage, cuisine and the opportunity to connect with locals. It will also help establish food tourism as a dedicated focus area within Nordland's tourism sector. This will be achieved through close collaboration with Northern Norway Tourist Board.

ACTIVITIES:

- Regional, national and international PR activities, including press trips.
- Creating a website for Nordland European Region of Gastronomy.
- Social media channels.
- Communication materials.
- Content production, including: storytelling, photography and video material.
- Digital campaigns focusing on gastronomy, local food and lifestyle.
- Close cooperation with local and regional tourist boards to create new ways to promote the region.
- Create an events calendar promoting the events leading up to and throughout the status year.



PROJECT OWNER

Nordland County Municipality

REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS, COMMITTEE AND BOARD

Nordland County Municipality
Bodø 2024 organisation
Nordland Research Institute
Til Elise fra Marius
Innovation Norway Nordland
The County Governor's office

PROJECT MANAGER

Nordnorsk Kompetansesenter MAT

PROJECT GROUP

Nordnorsk Kompetansesenter MAT
Innovation Norway Nordland
Nordland County Municipality
The County Governor's office

Organisation

In the spring of 2024, a pre-project was launched under the leadership of Nordnorsk Kompetansesenter MAT (NKMAT), titled "Nordland Seeks Status as European Region of Gastronomy." The aim was to lay the groundwork for a full-scale project by gathering input, building support, and preparing a bid book outlining goals, budget, and financing. The feasibility study was funded by Nordland County Council, Innovation Norway Nordland, and the Reinprogrammet.

A steering committee was established with representatives from Nordland County Council, the State Governor of Nordland, Innovation Norway Nordland, the food industry, Nordland Research Institute, and Bodø 2024. A project group with the same public partners was also formed, with NKMAT serving as project manager.

Although no formal resource group was created, three workshops were held and the project was presented at key events, including the 2024 Reindeer Conference in Tromsø, the Northern Norway European Office in Brussels, and a Ministry of Food and Agriculture event in Berlin. The workshops, held in Bodø, Svolvær, and Mosjøen, involved around 70 participants from business, public administration, and funding bodies, offering project insights and gathering input on priorities.

For the Nordland European Region of Gastronomy 2028 period, the organization will largely follow the pre-project model. NKMAT will handle daily operations, consulting the project group as needed, with the project manager reporting directly to the board. Public meetings will be held regularly to ensure broad participation and local anchoring. Ensuring alignment with IGCAT's guidelines, Nordland County Council's strategies, and industry needs remains a top priority for the initiators. The Nordland European Region of Gastronomy will include accompanying research to ensure continuous learning, evaluation, and alignment with strategic goals throughout the process.



FOOD & MARKET ORGANIZATIONS, PRODUCERS ASSOCIATIONS

Collaboration with organizations, associations, volunteers, and businesses will be central to the implementation.

LoVe FOOD

In June 2023, Aalan Gård received Innovation Norway funding to develop LoVe FOOD, a network for food producers, trade, and tourism in Lofoten and Vesterålen. The goal is to boost collaboration, improve conditions for food production, and promote the regions as top food destinations.

HANEN Nordland

Part of a national network, HANEN Nordland promotes rural tourism, local food, and authentic farm experiences. Highlights include Aalan Farm, Aimees Farm, Den Sorte Gryte, and Lofoten Gårdssystemer—each offering unique local products and experiences.

Stiftelsen Norsk Mat/Norwegian Food Foundation

Established by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food in 2007, the foundation promotes quality, diversity, and value in Norwegian food. It manages labeling schemes like Nyt Norge, Protected Designations, and Specialties, oversees the KSL quality system, and runs lokalmat.no—the largest portal for local food and drink producers in Norway.

The Norwegian Seafood Council

A market organization owned by the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries, it promotes Norwegian seafood in global markets. Financed by an export tax, it operates in 15 countries, focusing on market access, insights, marketing, PR, and preparedness, collaborating with local agencies for expertise.

Norwegian Fishermen's Sales Organization

An important organization for seafood sales in Norway, it manages sales and resource control for northern fish stocks. It ensures fair prices for fishermen, supports market efficiency, and provides information to fish receivers while maintaining competitive conditions.

Hun Fisker/She Fishes

Hun Fisker is as a dynamic network organization dedicated to empowering women within the realm of Norwegian fisheries.

The Norwegian Farmers' Union

Founded in 1896, the Norwegian Farmers' Union is the largest agricultural interest group in Norway, with over 60,000 members. It advocates for agriculture through political influence and state negotiations. The Union has 500 local branches and 14 county branches, focusing on food security, emergency preparedness, and predator challenges. The branch in Nordland is based in Bodø.

Norwegian Farmers and Smallholders Association

A politically independent organization with 7,000 members, it advocates for better economic and social conditions in agriculture, focusing on food production, business development, animal welfare, and cultural landscape preservation. Nordland's branch promotes smallholder interests, focusing on income and predator management, and organizes annual meetings and courses.

EDUCATION, RESEARCH & PRESERVATION

Collaboration with educational, cultural and research institutions will be central to the implementation.

NIBIO

The Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy focuses on food security and sustainable resource management with about 750 employees. In Nordland, NIBIO has departments in Tjøtta and Bodø. Tjøtta research beef cattle, sheep, grazing, and methane emissions, while NIBIO Bodø, in collaboration with Nord University, specializes in macroalgae and marine organism research.

Nordland Research Institute (NRI)

NRI, established in Bodø in 1979, is the only social science research institute in Northern Norway with headquarters in the region. It focuses on interdisciplinary research in the Arctic and High North, collaborating with local communities, governments, and businesses. Research areas include governance, sustainability, natural resources, biodiversity, welfare, health, and growth.

Nordland Vocational School

Offers higher vocational education focused on practical skills for the future workforce.

Programs include:

- **Sustainable Food Experiences:** Covers the value chain of sustainable food, from production to consumption, with a focus on local resources and environmental values.
- **Tourism and Experiences:** Focuses on sustainable, experience-based tourism, including destination development, marketing, and entrepreneurship, with practical workshops and company visits.

Nord University

With campuses in Bodø, Mo i Rana, Nesna, and Vesterålen, Nord University focuses on blue and green growth, innovation, and welfare. It leads research in aquaculture, life sciences, and entrepreneurship, and has national responsibility for Sami language and culture education.

The South Sámi Knowledge Park

The South Sámi Knowledge Park (Áarjelsaemien Vierhtiesåafoe) in Hattfjelldal, Nordland, works to preserve and develop the South Sami language, classified as endangered by UNESCO. It offers distance learning, cultural gatherings, and workshops to support Sámi language and culture for future generations.

Árran

Árran Julevsáme Guovdásj in Hamarøy is a national Lule Sami center focused on preserving and developing Lule Sami culture, language, and community life. It offers cultural dissemination, research, education, and hosts exhibitions on Sami identity. The center also collaborates with NRK Sapmi and other Lule Sami institutions.

Nordnorsk kompetansesenter MAT

Affiliated with Nordland County Council, the center aims to develop Northern Norway as an international food region by promoting local ingredients and traditions. It fosters collaboration between industries and education, boosting the region's food visibility globally. The center manages the ArktiskMat concept and led Bodø 2024's "Feeding Europe" food culture project.

Internationalisation

Nordland joined the European Region of Gastronomy Platform in September 2024 and is committed to building strong collaborations with other member regions. Since joining, we have actively participated in key events, including the Platform Meeting in Saimaa (September 2024), where we also presented at the Closing Seminar in January 2025. We took part in the Platform Meetings in Sicily in both November 2024 and May 2025. Additionally, Per Tørrissen was invited to serve as a judge for both the European Young Chef competition and the World Food Gift Challenge, held in Sicily.



EXPANDING INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS

Nordland County Council is committed to expanding its international network through long-term engagement in EU programs like Erasmus and Creative Europe, and Nordic platforms such as NORA. The goal is to position Nordland as a globally recognized food region by promoting local produce and culinary experiences. International cooperation is a strategic priority, enhancing quality, knowledge, synergy, and global visibility. The Council's international office supports this work through active participation in international organizations, committees, and bilateral partnerships. It leverages global experience for local development and helps secure international funding. The office also serves as Norway's contact point for NORA and Interreg NPA and contributes to managing Aurora and Kolarctic.

NORDIC COOPERATION

Nordland County Council is actively engaged in Nordic and Northern Nordic cooperation. A new international strategy (2022–2026), adopted in December 2021, guides our international efforts. A dedicated strategy for the Northern Nordic region is currently in development at both county and national levels, with political approval expected in June 2025. Culture is a central focus in both strategies.

BODØ 2024: EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE

Bodø 2024 has made a strong international impact by fostering cultural exchange and cooperation. Over 1,000 events have been held, including exhibitions, concerts, theatre, sports, and capacity building for the cultural sector. The program has promoted collaboration with other European Capitals of Culture such as Tartu and Bad Ischl, while highlighting Sámi culture through dedicated events. These efforts have strengthened the region's cultural identity and international profile. A key initiative, Feeding Europe, has showcased regional cuisine and food traditions, contributing to the cultural and culinary visibility of the region.

ARKTISKMAT GLOBAL

ArktiskMat is an annual food symposium in Mosjøen (organised by NKMAT), featuring lectures, workshops, and culinary experiences. The event promotes artisan producers, supports recruitment to the food sector, and builds knowledge among young chefs and food makers. With strong international networks and media coverage, ArktiskMat highlights Northern Norway's resources through a sustainable lens, fostering collaboration, innovation, and cultural exchange. It connects students, chefs, producers, and food enthusiasts through competitions, courses, and shared experiences. As part of the Feeding Europe program (Bodø 2024), NKMAT has hosted international ArktiskMat-roadshows in cities like Venice, Tokyo, Berlin, Brussels, and New York, promoting the region's food, nature, and culture globally. The project manager for Nordland's European Region of Gastronomy 2028, together with NKMAT-colleagues, brings valuable experience and networks built through ArktiskMat and Bodø 2024—assets that will be key in the years ahead.



BUDGET 2024 - 2029

Project Management	9 000 000	NOK
Marketing & communication	5 000 000	NOK
International collaboration	10 000 000	NOK
Cultural content and programme activities	30 000 000	NOK
Membership fees & administrative costs	1 500 000	NOK
TOTAL	51 164 000	NOK

FUNDING

Much of the funding rests with the project owner Nordland County Council and Innovation Norway Nordland. In addition, funds will be sought from the Sami Parliament, Innovation Norway's Reindeer Program and Samfunnsløftet (SpareBank 1 Nord-Norge). Other businesses and interest organizations, as well as income from sales, will also contribute to a small part of the funding.



EUROPEAN REGION OF GASTRONOMY

NORDLAND CANDIDATE 2028



Nordland
FYLKESKOMMUNE