

Sweden is that beyond that time-honored presentation, the meatball often appears in another classic guise: on a sandwich made with dark brown bread, lettuce, and a layer of creamy diced-beet salad (*rödbetsallad*). The same sandwich is sold in the food stalls of every Swedish city's central train station; early in my travels I fell into the habit of purchasing one to eat as my train—invariably on time to the minute—hurtled into the countryside. The beet salad is typically enlivened by a dash of cider vinegar and a grating of horseradish. In the full bloom of Sweden's short summer, a sprinkling of fresh dill is often added, and in the brisk days of autumn, sometimes diced green apple.

Still, when it came to the meatballs themselves, all of those I sampled in Sweden were remarkably consistent, though standards of spicing and tenderness varied somewhat from cook to cook. In my family, we use equal measures of ground beef and pork, and the onion is added raw; minced finely enough, it readily cooks within the meat, and to my maternal kin the extra step of pre-sautéing would have

**The classic iteration is precisely browned all over, subtly seasoned with allspice, and glistening with the butter it's cooked in**

been un-Swedishly inefficient. We eschew black pepper in favor of milder, muskier white pepper, which is more traditional in Scandinavian cooking; ground allspice and sea salt are the only other seasonings. The accompanying mashed potatoes are lubricated with plenty of butter and heavy cream, and the gravy is made with savory pan juices and yet more cream, still the pillar of Swedish cuisine that it was in the days when every rural villager kept a dairy cow. The tart lingonberries that balance out the dish are harvested wild in forested regions like Värmland and neighboring Dalarna and then preserved, traditionally with nothing more than sugar and a splash of water. (You can harvest yours at the nearest Ikea.)

Every Swede has his or her own secrets to success when it comes to making *köttbullar*, a birthright passed down from one generation to the next. Recently, watching the Swedish film version of the mega best seller *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, I smiled to see the protagonist, Mikael Blomkvist, advise his niece that when rolling meatballs, it helps to wet your hands. My grandmother advised the same. 🐾

## Köttbullar med Potatismos

(Swedish Meatballs with Mashed Potatoes)

SERVES 6

In Sweden meatballs are served plain, as a snack; on a sandwich with beet salad; or as they are here, with mashed potatoes, creamy gravy, and tart lingonberry preserves.

- 4 lb. (about 5 large) russet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1" chunks
- 2¼ cups heavy cream
- 14 tbsp. unsalted butter, cubed
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black or white pepper, to taste
- 2 slices (about 3 oz.) crustless white bread, torn into small pieces
- 12 oz. ground pork
- 12 oz. ground beef
- ¼ tsp. ground allspice
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- ½ small yellow onion, minced
- 3 tbsp. flour
- 3 cups beef stock
- Lingonberry preserves, for serving

**1** Make the mashed potatoes: Place potatoes in a 4-qt. saucepan and cover with water by 1"; bring to a boil over high heat, and cook until potatoes are tender, about 15 minutes. Drain potatoes and pass through a ricer or food mill set over a bowl; set aside. Meanwhile bring 1½ cups cream and 12 tbsp. butter to a boil in a 1-qt. saucepan; pour over potatoes and whisk until smooth. Season with salt and pepper, and keep warm until ready to serve.

**2** Make the meatballs: Place ½ cup cream and bread in a small bowl; let sit until soft, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl along with pork, beef, allspice, egg, and onion, season with salt and pepper, and mix until evenly combined. Shape mixture into about thirty 1-oz. balls, about 1" in diameter. Heat remaining butter in a 12" skillet over medium heat; working in batches, add meatballs and cook, turning as needed, until browned all over and cooked through, about 12 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer meatballs to a plate and set aside.

**3** Return skillet to medium-high heat. Add flour, and cook, stirring, until smooth and light brown, about 4 minutes. Whisk in beef stock until smooth, and then bring to a boil; stir in remaining cream and return meatballs to gravy. Reduce heat to medium, and cook, stirring gently, until meatballs are warmed through, about 3 minutes; season with salt and pepper. Serve meatballs and gravy over mashed potatoes and garnish with a generous dollop of lingonberry preserves.