



ESTONIA.
TASTE OF FOUR SEASONS

Estonia in figures

Official name in English: Republic of Estonia

Capital: Tallinn

Official language: Estonian; English, Russian and Finnish are also widely spoken

Head of state: President

System of government: parliamentary republic

Membership in international organizations:

Member of NATO, the European Union, UN, OSCE, OECD, WTO

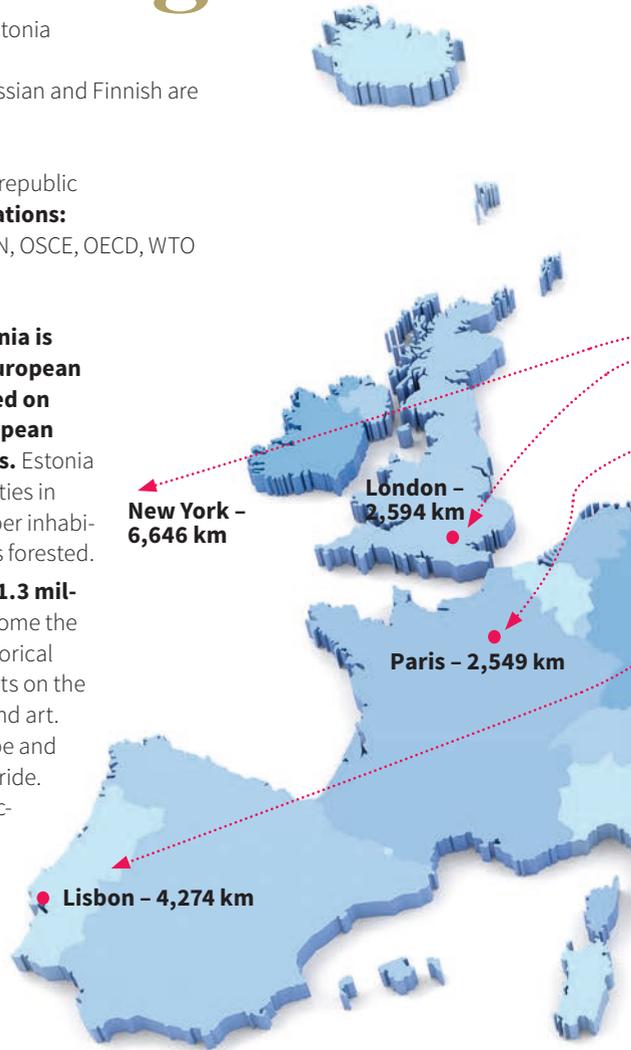
Currency: Euro (EUR)

▶ **With a land area of 45,339 km², Estonia is slightly smaller than the average European country. Estonians have been settled on these shores longer than most European nations in their respective countries.** Estonia has one of the lowest population densities in Europe – there's 3.51 hectares of land per inhabitant. About half of Estonia's land area is forested.

▶ **There aren't many Estonians – just 1.3 million, and we stick together.** We welcome the chance to talk to visitors about our historical roots and traditions and we're standouts on the world stage in fashion, design, music and art. Estonian-founded companies like Skype and TransferWise are a matter of national pride. We're also proud of having efficient electronic public services, and we're one of the world leaders in this field.

▶ **The Song Festival is a special cultural event for Estonians. It appears on the UNESCO list of oral and intangible world heritage.** The Song Festival has played an important role in creating and maintaining our national identity. Since 1997, the UNESCO list of world heritage has also included Tallinn's Old Town and its mediaeval architecture.

▶ Small, Nordic in outlook and boasting a largely unspoiled and biodiverse environment, **Estonia is an extraordinary place** where more than 76 species of plants can be found growing in a given square metre.



Did you know? Estonia...

has 1,521 islands. The largest is Saaremaa
has 1,400 lakes, the biggest being Lake Peipus
is 51% covered by **forest**

The country's **highest hill is 318 m Suur-Munamägi**
(Big Egg Hill)



Estonia's neighbours are the Republic of Finland across the Gulf of Finland to the north, the Kingdom of Sweden to the west across the Baltic Sea, the Republic of Latvia to the south, and the Russian Federation to the east.



We love Estonian food!

Featuring a Baltic Sea location with picturesque natural scenery, Estonia is a northern European country with a unique history, language and culture, where innovation and traditions are closely intertwined.

As a people, Estonians are rich in many ways. Our greatest wealth is our people, our language and culture, our unspoiled nature and some of the cleanest air in the world. The forests, fields and sea have kept Estonians well-fed throughout history. Our close relationship to nature is reflected in our old custom of taking walks in the woods in summer, mushroom and berry picking and making preserves for the winter.

A lifestyle built on harmony between humans and nature also describes Estonia's best food producers. The four distinct seasons provide a variety of fresh seasonal ingredients for preparing food, and that has fuelled a vibrant restaurant and café culture. In this innovative and rapidly developing country,

the skills of past generations are fused with modern trends.

Estonia is a beautiful country and has several gateways open to the rest of the world. One of them is good Estonian food, which we want to share with you.

This little guide will lead you to country's best flavours and gastronomic experiences. Estonia's black bread, honey, fish, milk and wild berries are prized by Estonians themselves. The local grass-fed beef sets a high bar for Central and Eastern Europe. Tallinn Kilud, an iconic tinned marinated fish product, was praised in "1,001 Foods You Must Taste".

As you leaf through this guide, you will learn a great deal of interesting things about Estonia and its food: We hope you will also find yourself drawn to experience and try our flavours.

*Wishing you wonderful gastronomic experiences,
Ministry of Rural Affairs*

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“*My wife and I live in Estonia, which is also where all of my children and grandchildren live. Estonia is where my ancestors are buried. I speak Estonian everyday, I work in that language. Estonia is a very special land for me, the most special country there is.*”

Estonian actor **Lembit Ulfak**, leading actor in the film *Tangerines* nominated for an Oscar for best foreign film



► *Tangerines*, an Estonian-Georgian joint production, has generated much attention for Estonia. In 2015, it became the first film of Estonian origin to be nominated for a Golden Globe and the Oscar for best foreign film. *Tangerines* don't grow in Estonia's part of the temperate zone, though. Our species-rich forests feature fruits such as tasty blueberries, strawberries, lingonberries; and our bogs and mires hold cranberries and cloudberries. Home orchards contain fruit trees and berry bushes – apples, plums, cherries, aronia (chokeberries), currants and gooseberries, strawberries and raspberries.

Estonian flavours and culinary traditions

THE FOUNDATION OF ESTONIAN CULINARY CULTURE – THE FOUR SEASONS

Estonia has some of the cleanest air in the world. The level landscape is dotted by mires and bogs, fields and forests, limestone barrens and coastlines. The four distinct seasons have the greatest influence on Estonia's culinary culture. Seasonal food is one of the key values in Estonian restaurants and homes. Everything local, fresh and pure is available within a radius of 200 kilometres. German and Russian cuisines have had the deepest influence on Estonian taste buds – after all, we have been between these two big cultures for many years. The new Estonian culinary art draws increasing inspiration from the Nordic and Scandinavian cuisines, which also put a premium on good locally sourced ingredients.

“*The cool and crisp Nordic climate and rich flora and fauna give us natural, high-quality raw ingredients. The long, cold winter has taught us ways of preserving food – brining, drying, smoking, fermenting, marinating, freezing and so on. These skills create a link back to our forebears and keep our food culture vital.*”



Top Estonian chef **Ants Uustalu**, chef de cuisine and owner of Ööbiku Gastrofarm

SPRING

In the old days, spring was a time when the winter's supplies started running low and the table became bare. Our resourceful ancestors tapped into newly budding energy of the natural world. Wild foods, once seen as a way of ward off starvation, now get high marks for their wholesomeness and exciting flavours.

Even before the buds burst into bloom or the first green shoots pop up in a sunny corner of the garden, it's a time to harvest birch and maple sap – these have been highly regarded thirst quenchers for Estonians since time immemorial. The first produce from the gardens, forests and meadows set a spring-like mood: onion tips, wild garlic, cucumber, lettuce, wild sorrel, ground elder, nettles, spruce tips. Rhubarb and radish add zestier or spicier notes. These heralds of spring are enjoyed as fresh as possible – in salads and on sandwiches. The spring fishing season brings fresh catch to the menu: Baltic herring, perch, ide, roach, vimba bream, and pike. Whereas salted herring was a mainstay in Estonian peasant cuisine, today Baltic herring is enjoyed fried and marinated as well. Whitefish is also considered a delicacy, and it's eaten fresh with just a tinge of salt. In the olden days, the beginning of spring could be dated to the first milking of the cows, it was the season of dairy products and milk-based foods. Today's Estonian kitchen sees goat-milk products gaining popularity: in forms like chèvre, curds, ice cream and yoghurt.

“The spring fishing season brings fresh catch to the menu: perch, Baltic herring, ide, roach, vimba bream and pike.”





SUMMER

Summer is a time of great opportunity. The first new potatoes melt in your mouth, with chanterelles sautéed in butter on the side. Vegetables appear on plates, and berries by the bushel from the forest and garden. The summer flavours are preserved in jams and juices. Golden honey is gathered from hives. Estonians hasten to make the most of the short summer, grilling and picnicking outdoors, enjoying lunch and dinner al fresco. Food is prepared quickly in summer. Summer's flavours are light and succulent. The first berries to ripen are various wild and domesticated strawberries, then blueberries, cloudberries, raspberries, red, white and black currants, gooseberries, blackberries, sea-buckthorn, and finally at summer's end, lingonberries. The first berries tend to be eaten au naturel, or with honey, sugar and milk. Great smoothies, berry cakes, gelatin desserts and ice cream are also made. Berries are also used to produce

home liqueur and many households can be proud of the array of jam jars lining their cellar shelves. Top chefs have developed a refined taste for the intense flavour that wild berries pack.

In the olden days, soured milk, a piece of bread and mouthful of salt accompanied hay-making. In hot weather, milk soup, a roasted and ground grain product called kama, curds and a rich cheese, sõir, provided sustenance. Kvass (kali) was a good thirst quencher in summer: the menfolk favoured beer brewed from barley. Nowadays, food lovers are drawn by the aroma of grilling or smoked fish. In coastal villages, flounder is a treat, and around Lake Peipus, a small fish called vendace. The crayfish season is always a big happening. Home-made produce and genuine farm goods – juicy young carrots, crunchy peas, plump bean pods, red tomatoes are found at fairs, markets and food festivals. tivalidel.

FALL

In fall, Estonian cuisine is particularly colourful and rich in nuances. Grain and potato harvests are placed in storage. Carrots, swedes, cabbages and beets are harvested. Attractive braids of onions and garlic are woven. Red apples and plums set a mood in the kitchen. Nor does one come out of the forest empty handed – people gather mushrooms, nuts, lingonberries and cranberries. The meat of animals grazed in pastures is in fine fettle in the autumn. Roast elk or boar or some more unusual game dishes are enjoyed by gourmet diners. Everyone is in a hurry in the autumn, to get the compotes, juices and jams ready. Making berry and fruit wines is an ancient tradition in Estonia.

Estonia's forests offer up a resplendent selection of edible mushrooms in autumn. There are tens of different species of Russula, Boletus and Lactarius mushrooms, all with

their own texture and nuances of flavour. In older times, it was mainly the peasants of eastern and southern Estonia who ate mushrooms, and they became universal food slightly more than a century ago. On the other hand, mushroom dishes have a longer history in town and manor kitchens. Mushrooms are marinated, salted, dried, even fermented. They are tossed into salads, pies, casseroles, sauces and soups.

Potato harvesting is the most important job for farmers and the most basic everyday dish is potatoes in a gravy with meat or fish. The number of methods of preparation attests to the respect accorded the potato: boiled with or without the peel, steamed, fried, baked, roasted or deep-fried. Potatoes baked in coals are a special treat, while mashed potatoes and potato salad are popular favourites.

“One doesn't come out of the forest empty handed – people gather mushrooms, nuts, lingonberries and cranberries.”



WINTER

In a cold winter, when temperatures drop to 20 or 30 below, food has to stoke the body's stove and keep spirits high in the darkest time of the year. Thus people don't look askance at rich or sweet foods. Black bread with sliced fatback – which can be salted, smoked or seasoned with herbs – is a good pairing for cold weather. Estonians have always loved pork. Dishes made from oily fish like salmon or herring are also held in high regard.

In winter, Estonians dig into their root cellars and larders for stored food. Only a small part of local produce stays fresh until spring. In general, it has to be preserved by brining, smoking, marinating, fermenting, drying or freezing. In the winter months, roast meat, dishes containing blood, and jellied meat are predominant on tables. Spicy condiments like horseradish, strong mustard, vinegar and

nowadays, ketchups and other sauces add zing. In the olden days, there was no holiday or feast day for which beer was not brewed.

The long winter, when the stove has to be kept warm to heat the house, is the best time to enjoy a number of baked dishes and goods. The peasants of old ate many kinds of dishes made from pearl barley and flour, barley groats were found at nearly every holiday and family function. Later, white wheat flour was introduced to make breads and pastries, which are particularly delicious fresh out of the oven on a cold day. Today, home cooks are rediscovering the joys of making rye bread and salads and porridges made from grains like barley and buckwheat. For centuries, gingerbread have decorated Christmas tables in Estonia, and the custom of eating whipped cream buns for the beginning of Lent remains extremely popular today.



“ Estonian cuisine is honest. Flavours do not mix to disguise each other, on the contrary; they work more like a mosaic where individual tiles are giving you the character of their produce. Products such as the **“verivorst”** and **“kama”** have very humble beginnings, yet they could be easily fitted in modern dishes. Honest natural flavours do not lose their value over the years. I always love how **“verivorst”** makes me feel like Christmas because of the



warm cinnamon smell and the crunchy gloss exterior, or the earthy smell of **“kama”** which makes me think of freshly cut wheat every time I add it to my desserts.”

Vasileios Kalamas,

Exhibit Designer; a Greek who has been living and working in Estonia for 3.5 years

ESTONIAN CAFÉ AND RESTAURANT CULTURE: A REFLECTION OF NORDIC WAYS

Although Estonia's cafés and restaurants have often received inspiration from Mediterranean cuisine, there are many people who have the most respect for fusing traditional and modern Estonia's cuisine. More and more frequently, local farmers' products find their way on to Estonian café and restaurant menus and head chefs find new and interesting ways to combine Estonia's traditional cuisines with new methods of preparation or flavour combinations. These restaurants reflect the changing seasons, ways of using local ingredients. They also place importance on healthy eating. The most popular new and original restaurants have opened their doors in the countryside, small towns right by the sea or even in a dense stand of woodland.

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A TRULY EXCITING EXPERIENCE in a restaurant or café, something that's been singled out as Estonia's best by a jury of top specialists, look no further.

▶ The Best Restaurants of Estonia flavoursofestonia.com

LEARN ABOUT ESTONIA'S DIFFERENT CULINARY REGIONS and undertake a truly tasty food odyssey through Estonia, finding the closest and most appetizing restaurant to your location

▶ Estonian Culinary Route estonianfood.eu

GET GOOD TIPS ABOUT SPECIALITIES SERVED IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE COUNTRY as well as on acclaimed restaurants. Choose a restaurant interactively on the map and book a table:

▶ visitestonia.com/en/what-to-see-do/eat-and-drink

THE WHITE GUIDE NORDIC, AN INTERNATIONAL RESTAURANT GUIDE presents the restaurants picked as Scandinavia's best by independent food critics. The guide also includes 25 best Estonian restaurants that earned the master class or high class level. The result of years of work, it's a true feather in the cap for Estonian gastronomy and everyone who works in a restaurant day in and day out.

▶ whiteguide-nordic.com

Estonia's chefs have been successful at **THE BOCUSE D'OR SINCE 2008**, representing the top of the line of Estonian gastronomy. It's been called the culinary Olympics and Estonia's high finishes attest to the talent in this field.

▶ bocusedor.ee/en



Dmitri Haljukov, who successfully represented Estonia at the finals of the Bocuse d'Or, serves the fish dish that won the national round.



The dish that brought top chef Dmitri Rooz victory in the Estonian national round of the Bocuse d'Or in 2015.

Eat like an Estonian!

REGIONAL TASTES AND TRADITIONS

If Estonia were divided into regions on the basis of food customs and flavours, it would be very hard to notice the transition from one area to the next without a knowledge of the administrative boundaries. Local fare is largely distinguished according to whether it is a coastal area or the interior. **Northern Estonia and eastern Estonia** are located in coastal northern region with less fertile soil. **Southern Estonia is located in an area of the interior**

with fertile farmland and many lakes. In this region, we can distinguish Mulgimaa and Vana-Võromaa. The southern Estonian culinary region also include **Setomaa**, a distinct and multifaceted cultural island and the **Lake Peipus lakeshore** with the Old Believers villages. The west coast and islands make up the **Western Estonian** culinary region. Besides food, the **islands** are different in terms of nature and architectural heritage– Saaremaa, Muhumaa, Hiiumaa and Ruhnu – these islands vie with Western Estonia's most distinct cultural community, the small island of Kihnu.

In NORTHERN ESTONIA, the basic building blocks of everyday food were even in the early 20th century bread, potato, herring, fish, pork, milk, barley and flour. **The food of Southern Estonia was more diverse.** It included *kama*, legumes, curds and *sõir*. The best known traditional foods are two typical staples of **Mulgimaa** – *kama* (a ground grain product mixed with soured milk or yoghurt) and *mulgikapsad* (braised sauerkraut with barley grains and bacon). Other regional specialities include *mulgipuder* (mashed potatoes with barley) and *mulgi korp* (an open-face curd pie). **Setomaa** cuisine is dominated by *sõir*, fish dishes, various filled pies (covered and open-face) and *suuliim* – a cold soup that's a traditional summer dish.

One of the most important players in the cuisine of the ISLANDS AND



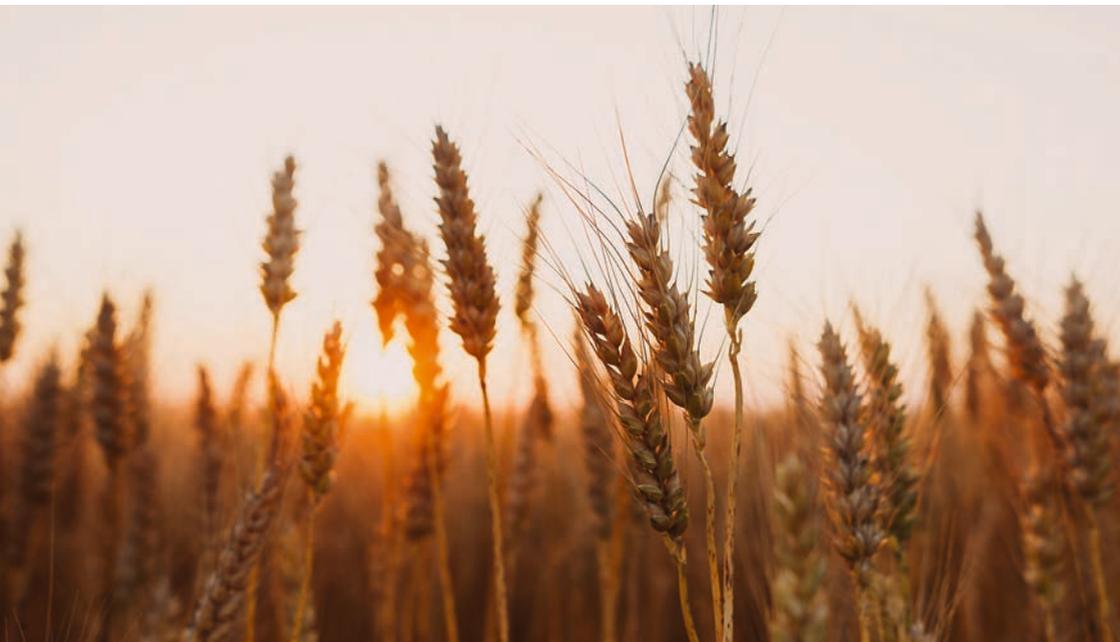
WESTERN ESTONIA is fish – above all **Baltic herring, sprat and flounder**. Here, too, pearl barley porridge is common. And home beer brewing has been passed down from generation to generation.

EASTERN ESTONIA is classically typified by bean, pea and fish soups. For centuries, fishermen have been catching lampreys from the Narva River. A blend of hard-boiled egg and butter is a condiment at festive occasions.

The cuisine of the PEIPUS LAKESHORE is characterized by mushroom dishes – the **fungi are dried and salted, turned into soups**. Wild berries are gathered – mainly blueberries and raspberries – and dried or made into jam. Cranberries are stored in water. The local berry pies are famous. Berries are also used to make cold fruit soups, sometimes thickened with corn starch (in which case it's called *kissell*). Lake fish is caught and poached, fried, baked, salted, and dried. Fish is also served in aspic. The rich-tasting onions of the Peipus region are known Estonia-wide and in high demand.



“ *Kama is a traditional Estonian food prepared from a blend of grains. Kama is traditionally mixed with soured milk for a nutritious snack. Today, kama is also added to whipped cream or curds for a fancy dessert – a kama mousse.* ”





Estonian potato salad

Estonian-style potato salad can be recognized by the sour cream dressing. Each family has its own way of making it, but there's hardly an Estonian who doesn't love it.

Serves 4-5

4-5 potatoes
2 carrots
1 cooked egg
100 g cured sausage
½ long cucumber
1 apple
100 g canned peas
200 g sour cream
200 g mild-tasting mayonnaise
A little salt and mustard

Cook the potatoes and carrots unpeeled in salted water and let cool completely. Peel and dice. Grate or mash the eggs. Dice the cucumber, apple and sausage. Combine in one bowl, and add the peas, drained. Mix the sour cream and mayonnaise and season with salt and mustard if needed. Pour over vegetables and mix gently. Let flavours mingle for a few hours before serving. Serve with fresh black bread.

Rhubarb cake with angel food cake topping

10-12 slices

PASTRY BASE:

200 g butter
300 g all-purpose flour
100 g sugar
1 egg
1 tsp vanilla

FILLING:

700 g rhubarb
75 g sugar

TOPPING:

6 eggs
125 g sugar
75 g all-purpose flour
**30 g corn starch (potato
starch in Estonia)**



- 1 Combine sugar and flour, work in chopped cold butter. Add a lightly beaten egg and combine into a smooth dough. You can also use a food processor for this step. Form a ball and chill for half an hour. Roll out the dough on a floured surface and using the rolling pin to help you, place the dough on to a baking sheet. Use a fork to poke some holes in the base and bake 10 minutes at 190 degrees C until light brown.
- 2 Add a layer of cleaned and chopped rhubarb on the baked base. If the rhubarb stems are young, there's no need to peel them. Sprinkle the sugar over the rhubarb.
- 3 For the angel food topping, whip the eggs until frothy (8-10 minutes), sift the flour and starch into the bowl and mix carefully. Pour the batter evenly to cover the cake. Lower the oven temperature to 180 and bake an additional 20-25 minutes. Sprinkle with confectioner's sugar before serving.

Know your Estonian foods!

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PROCESSING

- ▶ **Over half of Estonia's land is forest, 30% is cultivated land and natural grassland.**

Estonia has around 1 million hectares of agricultural land in use and crops take up 600,000 hectares of that amount.

- ▶ **Dairy production makes up the greatest share of the agricultural output** (about 30%), followed by grain production (around 20%) and pig farming (some 10%).

Our climatic conditions and surrounding nature lay a fine basis for animal husbandry and grain farming, and thus Estonia is most self-sufficient in dairy and grain. Estonian agriculture has centuries of tradition behind it and is quite diversified. The dairy sector is significant and yields more than one-quarter of Estonia's agricultural revenue. In part, dairy development is supported by natural advantages, solar energy and precipitation, but just as important is the long livestock breeding efforts. As a result the primary herd is quite high-yielding. Due to the small size of the home market, Estonia's dairy sector is quite export-dependent – approximately one third of the dairy products Estonia makes are sold abroad.

Estonia's agriculture companies are a mix of big and small producers. Today the country has a couple hundred big farms that produce and sell tasty, high-quality Estonian food to industries and retailers country-wide. In addition to big farms, the country has thousands of smaller farms. The quality products are available locally at markets, festivals and fairs as well as in select stores.





Farm produce includes dairy and meat as well as syrups and preserves. Fresh produce, of course, too. Farms specializing in animal husbandry produce mainly pigs, cattle and sheep. Crop growers try to develop different varieties – if the potato harvest fails, the proceeds from grain or vegetables can keep the farm afloat.

In recent years, organic farming has received more attention. The whole production process has to be certified organic. The ingredients must be grown without synthetic pesticides or mineral fertilizer; all ingredients come from organic agriculture, the people who produce food have received training in handling organic food and organic food at no stage of the cycle comes into contact with conventional food.

Although many of today's big farms have long traditions, production and management methods have changed a great deal over the recent decades. Efforts are being made to innovate and introduce new technologies. Machinery has taken on a greater role alongside manual labour, and this has helped farms substantially increase their output.

ESTONIAN PRODUCTS – TRADITIONALLY GOOD

Estonia has a total of around 450 food processing companies that employ around 15,000 people. About 70% of the sector's output is consumed in Estonia and one-third is exported to neighbouring and more distant markets. The primary export articles are beverages and alcohol, milk and dairy products, fish and fish products.

For quality food, the journey to the table starts from carefully selected inputs like 100% antibiotic-free raw milk, the meat of animals fed quality local feeds or grain grown in a nearby field. Food producers also make sure that the origin of the raw ingredients is as traceable as possible.

Modern Estonian food industries use modern technology that ensures that production and logistics is as efficient, automated, hygienic as possible with minimum environmental impact. Every large food production business has not only production and packaging equipment, but also a well-equipped lab employing specialists who develop new and

enticing products and keep a close eye on quality indicators.

Estonia's food processing business have made extensive investments to bring production into conformity with EU health rules – today's food processing sector is no less sanitary than operating rooms or pharmaceutical industry standards. Production facilities are spic and span from floor to ceiling and workers can only enter wearing special work suits. Besides the fact that stringent rules guarantee food safety, the food stays fresher longer, without the need for preservatives

Although the main goal of food processing businesses is to ensure the availability of high-quality staple foods at affordable prices, more attention is also being paid to high nutritional value, health benefits and a balanced diet. Estonian consumers are very health-conscious and thus food processing plants strive toward natural qualities, avoid use of artificial additives, too much salt and sweeteners, and maximize the content of the basic ingredient.

- ▶ Close to 1/3 of the Estonian food processing industry's output is exported.
- ▶ The primary export articles are beverages and alcohol, milk and dairy products, fish and fish products.
- ▶ The most important export destinations are Estonia's close neighbours Finland, Latvia and Lithuania.



DIVERSE DAIRY

Milk is Estonia's white gold. Estonia's climate and natural setting favour dairy sector and generating value added in the sector has been a key source of income for Estonians. Before World War II, butter export made up close to a quarter of the trade balance - nearly half of all agricultural export. Thanks to the long dairy farming traditions in Estonia, the herd is once again one of the bigger producers for its weight in Europe.

Estonians love dairy products, and our stores feature a wide selection of products – milk, yoghurt, cheese, butter, curds, sweetened snacks made of curds, cottage cheese, kefir, buttermilk – the list goes on, and all are consumed daily by many Estonians. The dairy industry has been instrumental in the development of the agriculture into a high-tech area that allows high-quality dairy products to be produced. Estonian dairy producers are constantly developing new products and working with researchers to upgrade product lines and keeping up with changing food trends. Thus there are many Estonian dairy products that are enriched with live probiotic cultures like LGG Lactobacilli, the ME-3 bacteria developed by University of Tartu scientists, and various vitamin-fortified and lactose-free dairy products.

Milk is one of the primary export articles. Although raw milk continues to be shipped in large quantity to neighbouring countries for processing, innovative Estonian products are making it everywhere in the world. The primary export articles besides raw milk include cheese and curd products as well as fermented dairy products.



Semolina mousse with milk

Serves 6-8

200 ml concentrated cranberry juice

700 ml water

150 ml cream of wheat

50 ml sugar

1-1.2 L milk

Dilute the concentrate with the water and add sugar to taste. Bring the juice to the boil and whisk in the cream of wheat. Cook on low heat for 10-15 minutes until the semolina has absorbed water. To whip into a mousse, the porridge should be quite soupy in consistency. Let cool slightly and use a mixer to whip into a foam. Serve with cold milk and berries.

ESTONIANS ARE GREAT MEAT-LOVERS

People in Estonia consume an average of 65 kg of meat products per person per year, with pork the leading meat.

A roast of pork is the culinary centrepiece of every festive occasion. In the run-up to the midsummer holidays, the meat sections of Estonian shops are full of various chunks of meat in vinegar-based and other marinades – intended to be grilled on skewers around a bonfire. Hams, pork sausage, minced pork, liver pate, bacon and – lately – various snacks like pork rinds are also popular.

Poultry is becoming more popular as of late. Chicken and turkey are especially popular among the more health conscious population because of their leaner profile. Over the last decade, the share of chicken in various traditional and more exotic marinades has been growing in Estonian shops. Gourmet

Close to one-quarter of **Estonian meat export** is pork. About the same quantity of tinned meat is exported. Pork and tinned meat are mainly destined to nearby regional markets. Other significant export articles are sausages and other processed meat, poultry and beef. The main export destinations are the Baltics and Nordics.

eaters also enjoy local duck, goose, quail and pheasant.

Beef has always been prized in Estonia. A filet from a prime cut of meat is a hallmark of quality for many restaurants. Beef is also enjoyed at home both cured form, in frankfurters, as hamburger meat and other ready to eat products.





Roast pork with braised sauerkraut

THE PORK:

- 1 kg pork with rind**
- 2 tbsp salt**
- 1 tbsp black pepper**
- 2 tbsp mustard**
- 2 tbsp oil**

THE SAUERKRAUT:

- 1 kg sauerkraut**
- 500 g marbled pork**
- 200 g barley groats**
- 0.5 l water**
- 1 tsp salt**

- 1 Score the pork rind with criss-cross cuts. Mix the salt, pepper, mustard and oil and rub it into the meat. Bake the meat at 160 degrees C until tender. Baste occasionally to keep meat juicy. Cook en papillote for even juicier meat.
- 2 Place sauerkraut into a large pan. Add chopped pork and (after rinsing) the barley. Add enough water to cover. Simmer covered for 2-3 hours until all ingredients are soft. If needed, add hot water. Add sugar, salt to taste.

FISH, A FIRM FAVOURITE

Fish has always been held in high esteem in Estonia. Angling is a sport for many, others a way of spending time with friends or a meditative solitary activity in naturally scenic environs. Estonians eat an average 10 kg fish per person annually. An open-faced sandwich with spiced sprats, with hard-boiled egg and scallions has become an iconic dish on buffet tables for festive occasions. The sprats are among the most typical fish products one is bound to see in Estonian grocery stores. Two other beloved fish are perch and Baltic herring. The latter of these was proclaimed the country's national fish in 2007.

The most common fishes in local smokers, grills and frying pans are flounder, crucian carp, pike, eel, pike-perch, roach and smelt. Local waters also feature true rarities and endangered species such as Wels catfish, whitefish, sea trout and river trout. Estonian rivers and lakes also harbour the crayfish, which is known as the best-quality of freshwater crustacean in Europe. Prized for its flesh, the river crayfish has large claws, but its shell is so thin that no special utensils are needed to get at the meat.

Fish ranks third in export of agricultural products and foodstuffs, mainly making its way to markets in Europe. Much of the fish is exported frozen, allowing to reach more distant places around the world.

Fried Baltic herring with tartar sauce and black bread



HERRING:
500 g Baltic herring:
100 g flour:
salt
pepper
Vegetable oil

SAUCE:
2 pickles
100 g mayonnaise
100 g sour cream
lemon juice
salt
pepper

- 1 Fillet the herring, remove heads and fins. Season with salt and black pepper. Dip the fillets into the flour on both sides and fry until golden brown.
- 2 To make the sauce, dice the pickles and blend with the mayonnaise and sour cream. Season with salt, pepper and lemon juice.

BREAD AND GRAINS – THE FOUNDATIONS OF ESTONIAN CUISINE

Bread has been made for 7,000 years in Estonia and black bread is virtually sacred for Estonians. Today, bread sections are often the best-stocked parts of the supermarket. Besides classic rye bread, there's pocket bread versions, light rye, bread baked in square moulds, flatbread, whole wheat loaves, and white bread. Estonians eat an average 40 kg of bread per person annually. Practically all of the bread consumed is domestic. The first bakeries started operating in Estonia in the 19th century and Estonia's oldest breadworks is over 250 years old. Estonia's leading grains are rye, barley, wheat and oats. Different grains can be mixed together to make *kama*, consumed as a thick salty or sweet beverage with fermented milk or kefir. *Kama* can be considered the national food.

Wheat makes up close to half of Estonian grain exports; barley accounts for 45%.

To some extent, rye and oats are also exported. Products made from grain are also exported, with breads leading the way – Estonian bread has an especially good reputation in Russia and Finland.

Black bread dessert with cranberry jam

The pudding can be made with apple juice and served with milk or whipped cream.

Serves 10

THE BREAD

7 slices of black bread

300 g cranberry juice

2 tbsp sugar

THE CRANBERRY

JAM

100 g cranberries

80 g sugar:

THE SWEETENED SOUR CREAM:

30% fat sour cream, sugar to taste

Fresh mint for garnish

- 1 Let the bread soak in the cranberry juice and sprinkle in the sugar. When the bread has absorbed liquid, transfer it to a pan and bring to the oil. Cool and blitz in the blender until smooth.
- 2 Transfer the berries and sugar to a saucepan and add 1 dl of water so that they won't stick to the bottom.
- 3 Cook the berries on low until jam forms.
- 4 Beat the sour cream with sugar.
- 5 To serve, pour the bread mixture and the prepared sour cream into a shot glass in alternating layers. Garnish with dry black bread crumbs and fresh mint or some other suitable herb.



VEGETABLES AND BERRIES MAKE ANYONE A GARDENER

Estonians have always been fond of growing all sorts of edible roots, tubers and fruits. Potatoes, cucumbers and tomatoes are an inseparable part of the Estonian kitchen. Summer isn't all that long, so most of the tomatoes and cucumbers are grown in greenhouses. More and more city dwellers are growing them on their windowsills.

All sorts of root vegetables are beloved – carrots, radishes, turnips and swedes. Beets have become especially popular. Thanks to its healthy qualities, intense colour and sweet taste, it has found its way on to many a gourmet restaurant menu and interesting factory-made products.

Estonia's summer is ideal for growing peas

and beans. Cabbage also grows well – it's used to make sauerkraut – and cauliflower and lettuce. Apple trees are the most common fruit tree by Estonian homes, and used to produce scrumptious apple tarts and compotes, apple wine and a dry cider that competes quite well to French products. In home kitchens and production farms as well as big food plants turn fruits of the orchard and fields and forests into tasty jams, syrups and other delights.

You'll be sure to see different herbs growing in gardens and windowsills. The most common ones are dill and scallions. Parsley, chives, spinach, sorrel are also grown and Mediterranean flavours like basil, thyme and rosemary are becoming more popular.

Pea soup with smoked shank

Pea soup is a classic dish served for Shrove Tuesday.

At the end of the simmering, toss in a few frozen peas to give the soup some colour and a fresher spring-like flavour.

Serves 6-8

**40 g butter, 2 onions, 4 cloves of garlic,
1 kg smoked pork shank, 700 g dried peas,
300 g frozen green peas, 3 carrots**

- 1 Soak the peas for 12 hours. Melt some butter in the bottom of a soup pot and sauté the chopped onion and garlic. Add the shank and add 3-4 litres of cold water. Bring gently to the boil and simmer for 1-1.5 hours until the meat is falling off the bone. Remove the shank and set aside to cool.
- 2 Add the soaked peas to the broth and cook until soft. Add the sliced carrot and cook until it, too, is tender. Finally, add the frozen peas and simmer a few more minutes. If you'd like a creamier soup, puree it. Season with salt and black pepper. Serve with meat pulled from the shank.



FRUITS OF THE FOREST – AN INCREASINGLY PRIZED NATURAL RESOURCE

Just about every Estonian has tasted wild strawberries once in their life, around midsummer holiday. And people who have been picking blueberries for various desserts or jams can be recognized by their blue-stained fingers. Estonia's bogs and wetland forests also conceal cloudberries. Loaded with vitamin C, they can be turned into jam and, dried, the clusters of berries can be steeped in hot water for tea. A trip into the forest in autumn often yields lingonberries and cranberries, which some may consider too tart to be eaten plain, but which are both very good for the health and have played a role in folk medicine for centuries. Estonia's forests are rich in mushrooms and the locals are most fond of boletes and chanterelles – these choice species can be just sautéed. A rich gravy made of these mushrooms is among many an Estonia's favourite foods.

Estonians are gatherers and children are told how to identify mushrooms and berries at an early age. They learn which ones are poisonous, which have to be boiled first and which can be fried straight from the basket. Some foreigners, looking at this sorting process, wonders in amazement whether we aren't worried we'll get something mixed up and eat something poisonous. The golden rule is to gather the mushrooms that you know you can identify. Fungi can be frozen, fried, salted and fermented, but the most popular way of preservation is marinating.



Marinated mushrooms

Sure to be found on any Estonian banquet table.

Fresh wild mushrooms

THE MARINADE:

1 l water
4 tbsp salt
7 tbsp sugar
1 bay leaf
5 cloves
5 peppercorns
2 whole allspice
Piece of cinnamon bark
1 carrot
1 onion
dill blossoms and stems
2 tbsp 30% strength vinegar

Clean and boil the mushrooms in 4-5 changes of water. At the end of the process, boil the mushrooms in the marinade for 5 minutes; add the vinegar at the very end. Transfer mushrooms and cooking liquid to jars sterilized in an oven and seal airtight.

BEVERAGES ARE ESTONIA'S MOST IMPORTANT EXPORT ARTICLE

Non-alcoholic beverages

Estonia is typified by juices and syrups made from different wild and domesticated fruits and berries. The selection of juices on store shelves is very extensive, and often food is served with a glass of juice or diluted fruit syrup (*morss*). Apple juice is popular. Many families make it at home from apples in their own orchard. As vitamin-packed, delicious wild berries ripen in the fall, it is very common to turn blueberries or cranberries into juice, which in turn is often used to prepare mulled wine type beverages or kissel that will provide a warming glow on a cold winter day. Besides juices, Estonia has been drawing natural mineral water for decades. It's available in sparkling and still varieties.



Beverages are Estonia's most important export article.

Due to Estonia's favourable location, re-export is an important part of our trade balance, yet even domestic beverage producers have found niches all over the world. Strong spirits and malted beverages like beer are the top export products, and primarily it ends up on the Latvian and Finnish markets.

Alcoholic beverages

Beer was brewed here already in the first millennium A.D. The selection of Estonian beers is wide – it can be refreshing or strong, light or dark-coloured. Chilled, crystal-clear, strong vodka is a part of many festive private gatherings. It was first distilled in Estonia back in the 15th century. As to sweet alcoholic beverages, typical of Estonia are berry and fruit liqueurs (e.g. blueberry, cranberry or sea-buckthorn liqueur) and dessert wines (such as apple wine and black currant wine).

SWEETS

Estonia has nearly two centuries experience in making baked goods and confectionery products. It's customary to bring a box of chocolates or a block of chocolate as a gift when visiting. The newest entries in the wide selection of chocolates contain dried berries (blueberries, raspberries and cranberries). Sweet teeth of all ages love

the combination of sweet and sour. Berry chips (made from dehydrated blueberries, raspberries, lingonberries, black currants and sea-buckthorn) are gaining popularity. Marzipan is another traditional Estonian product that is often used as a filling but also shaped into hand-painted figurines. *kujukestena*.

Kirju koer (a traditional Estonian no-bake cake)

Kirju koer (literally “spotted dog”) has been made by several generations of Estonians. For this recipe, use biscuits that are lower in sugar.

Serves 6-8

- 180 g Estonian biscuits**
- 150 g marmalade confection**
- 15 g freeze-dried berries (raspberries, strawberries)**
- 2 tbsp cocoa powder**
- 100 g butter**
- 50 g milk chocolate**
- 100 g condensed milk**

Chop the biscuits and marmalade confection into small pieces. Add the freeze-dried berries. Melt the butter, chocolate and condensed milk and add the biscuits and marmalade confection pieces. Transfer the mixture to a 10 x 20 cm dish lined with baking paper or plastic film and chill for at least 2 hours. Remove the sweet from the mould and cut into pieces for serving.





See also:

www.estonianfood.eu

www.estonia.eu

www.visitestonia.com



REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
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