

ESTONIA • LATVIA

FLAVOURS OF LIVONIA

D I S H E S



From the XIII to XVI century, parts of Estonia and Latvia made up a unified country Livonia on the shores of the Baltic Sea, with geographical and economic ties, similar lifestyles and traditions. The native cuisine of locals originated from self-grown, hunted and caught produce; wild plants were also used. Due to the long winters, they developed elaborate skills to preserve products for a prolonged period of time.

Crops, legumes, dairy products, vegetables and greens, fish, livestock, birds and game meat were consumed according to one's means and social status.

Here you will find a selection of traditional food with a preparation history coinciding with the Livonian historical period. Cheese, cottage cheese with hemp, milk with berries. Kama flour. Peas and beans. Sorrel and mushrooms. Barley porridge and rye bread. Sauerkraut and salted cucumbers. Salted sprats and herring. Smoked fish. Martin's day rooster. Meat and lampry that's cooked on open fire.

Before 16th century the honey was the only sweetener that was available to people. Excellent beer and mead brewing traditions have been preserved from this time. Wheat pies, rolls and cakes were baked during festive occasions. During Livonian times exotic spices started to come to Europe through sea and land trading routes. Spices were very expensive, and only rich people could afford them. It became trendy to season the wine with herbs and spices.

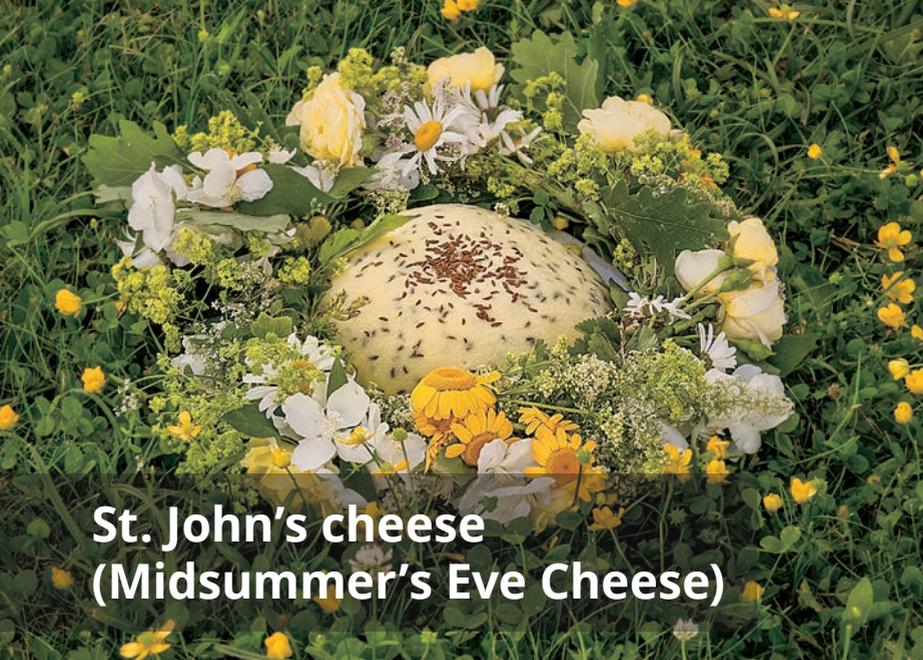
Over time, Estonian and Latvian cuisine has been shaped by our nature and influenced by traditions of people of various nationalities, religions and social classes.



Milk

In Livonia people bred cows both in the countryside and in the towns. Milk was used to produce curdled milk, sweet and soured cream, cottage cheese, butter, cheese and buttermilk. Fresh milk was mainly used as produce for children, older people drank fermented milk more often. There were no dairy products in winter in those times.

Cows in an autumn pasture



St. John's cheese (Midsummer's Eve Cheese)

On 23 June, Estonia and Latvia celebrates Midsummer's Eve (*Jaanipäev / Jāņi*). Cheese symbolising the Sun and fertility. Many housewives make this cheese themselves before Midsummer's Eve. Cheese is cooked, heating up farm milk with cottage cheese, filtered and heating of the cheese mass continues by adding butter, eggs, salt and caraway seeds. When the cheese becomes chewy, it is wrapped in a cloth and left under the press. It is consumed, when cooled down and cut into slices, together with beer.

The original title:  sõir /  Jāņu siers



Cottage cheese

Cottage cheese is made by slowly heating up curdled milk. Since ancient times it is eaten with sour cream and salt. You put cottage cheese on a slice of rye bread, then sprinkle over finely roasted crushed hemp seeds. Nowadays, Latvians usually consume cottage cheese and herring with potatoes, which only became available after 19th century. Since Livonian times herring has come from abroad, but together with local products it is considered a national food.

The original title:  kohupiim /  biezpiens



Berries with Milk

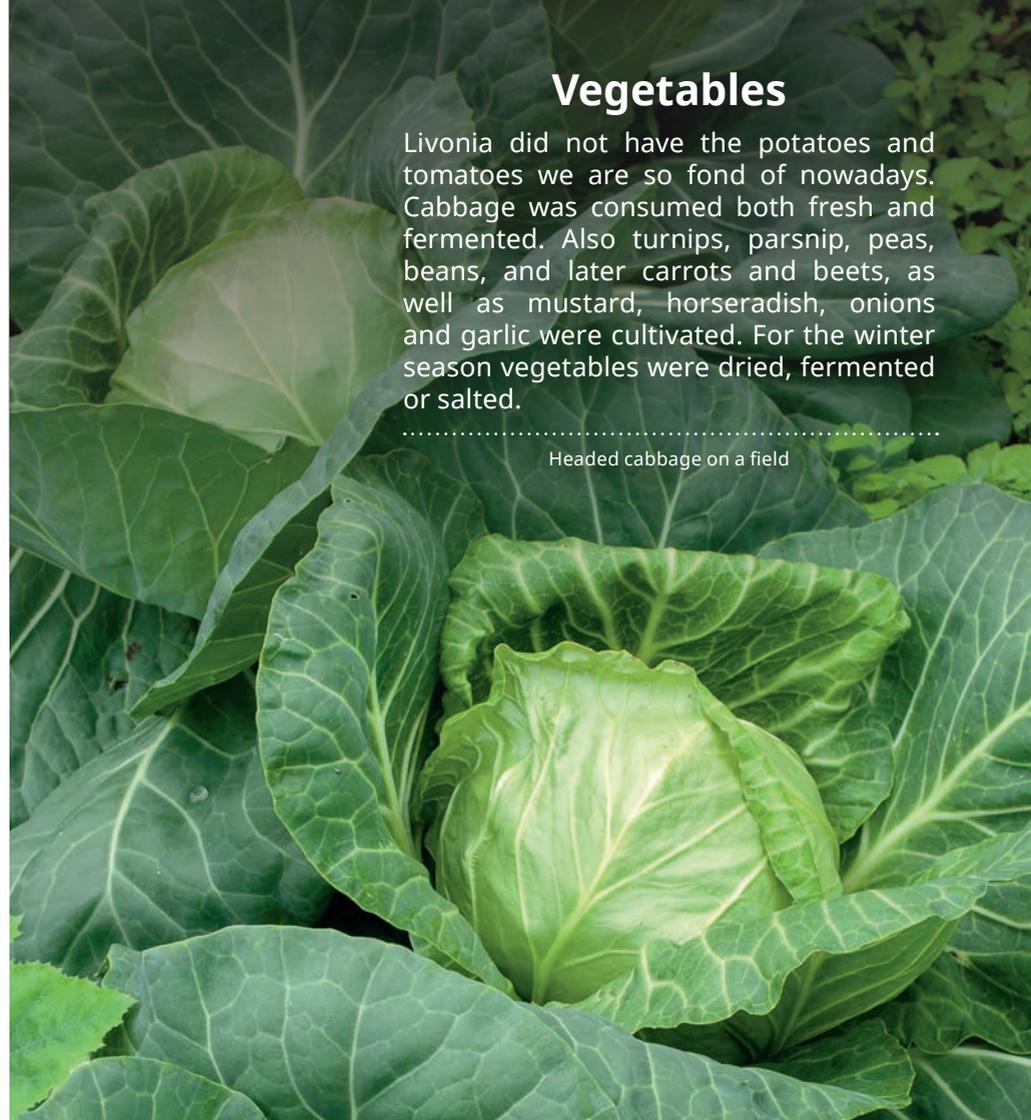
The special dessert of summer is forest berries with various additives, a healthy and simple to cook meal. Forest strawberries, raspberries or bilberries are put into the bowl, milk or yoghurt is poured over, a bit of sugar or honey is added and the dessert is ready!

The original title: 🇪🇪 marjad piimaga / 🇫🇮 ogas ar pienu

Vegetables

Livonia did not have the potatoes and tomatoes we are so fond of nowadays. Cabbage was consumed both fresh and fermented. Also turnips, parsnip, peas, beans, and later carrots and beets, as well as mustard, horseradish, onions and garlic were cultivated. For the winter season vegetables were dried, fermented or salted.

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Headed cabbage on a field





Sauerkraut

In Livonian times cabbages were prepared for fermentation by cutting them into four pieces; nowadays they are finely grated into chips, generously sprinkled with caraway, also adding a bit of salt and sugar, pressed until the juice comes out, fermented and stored in a cool place. Sauerkraut was a great source of vitamins during the long winters. During the cold season sauerkraut was turned into a soup or prepared as a side-dish to the main course, consumed together with pork chop, meat balls or sausages.

The original title: 🇱🇻 hapukapsas / 🇷🇺 skābēti kāposti



Salted cucumbers

In the Livonian cuisine, salt had a significant role in preserving foods for a cold seasons. The cucumbers placed in a glass jar are poured over with pickle, where dills with whole stems and seeds, as well as other seasonings are added according to the cook's taste: leaves of black currants, horseradish or cherries, garlic and pepper. The cucumbers are hold under the pressure at least until the next day. Cucumbers for winter storage are fermented, pasteurised and then stored in a cool place. Pickled cucumbers have different taste.

The original title: 🇱🇻 hapukurgid / 🇷🇺 sālīti gurķi



Peas and beans

Field beans and grey peas were food of the simple folk of Livonia, especially in pre-potato era. They are very filling, easy to store, easy to cook; you just need to boil them. Pea and bean soup was important ceremonial food of farmers. Consumed with roasted smoked pork and onions, as well as curdled milk. This is a traditional Latvian Christmas and New Year's Eve meal. It is believed that you will not have to cry in the new year, if you eat all the peas served on the table.

The original title:  herved ja oad /  pelėkie zirņi



Soups and porridges

In Livonia simple everyday meals were soups, porridges or gruel cooked in large pots. They were cooked from barley, peas, beans, vegetables, mushrooms, sorrel, herbs, adding milk, meat, fish or lard, depending on the season and possibilities. Soup was made thicker by adding small pieces of bread. For the fine stomachs of Livonian noble men, soup was passed through a sieve.

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Soup cooked over a campfire



Barley porridge

Barley was the most popular crop in Livonia. Barley porridge – made from pearl barley and from 19th century also milk and potatoes – was the main course of the lunch. Sometimes the porridge was whisked to make it more airy. Served with streaky roasted pork and onions. In addition to barley oats were used to make porridge.

The original title:  odrapuder /  miežu putra



Yellow Pea Soup

Pea soup has been cooked before fasting, when consumption of meat is prohibited, since ancient times. Together with groats the peas were well known Lent (*Vastlapäev*) day food. The nutritive soup helps accumulate strength before the days of cleansing.

The yellow pea soup is boiled together with pig trotters or other soup meat, potatoes, carrots and grain. Pea soup is thick, soft and warming.

The original title:  hernesupp /  zirņu zupa



Sorrel Soup

Sorrels are one of the first greens in spring. They are used to make the soup with smoked pork or other meat of your choice, carrots and groats. Today we also add potatoes that were not available in Livonian times. For additional dose of vitamins, add fresh spinach or nettle leaves. Served with boiled egg, sour cream and rye bread.

The original title:  oblikasupp /  skābeņu zupa



Mushroom soup

The taste of mushroom soup varies depending on the various species of mushrooms, for example, russula, saffron milk cap, bolete or chanterelle. Bolete soup is considered to be a meal of royals. Sweet or sour cream is added to the soup. Nowadays, cream of mushroom soup is no longer passed through the sieve but simply blended.

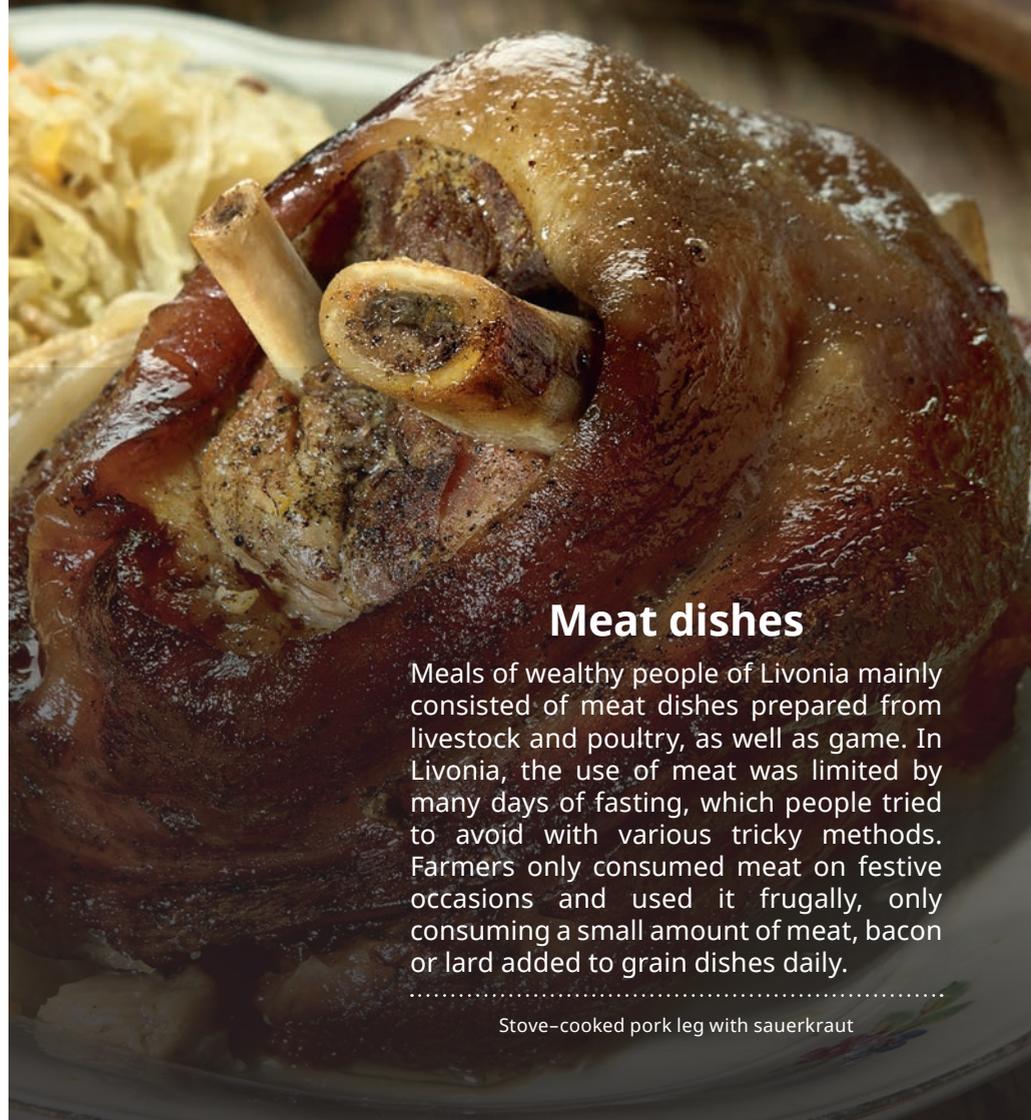
The original title:  seenesupp /  sēņu zupa



Vegetable soup

In autumn and winter, thick soups from cabbages, carrots, Swedish turnips, turnips, onions, garlic and beetroot were prepared. If lamb, pork or beef was used, then only on the bone. Today we also add potatoes that were not available in Livonian times. Served with sour cream, generous amount of chopped greens and a slice of rye bread.

The original title:  juurviljasupp /  sakņu zupa



Meat dishes

Meals of wealthy people of Livonia mainly consisted of meat dishes prepared from livestock and poultry, as well as game. In Livonia, the use of meat was limited by many days of fasting, which people tried to avoid with various tricky methods. Farmers only consumed meat on festive occasions and used it frugally, only consuming a small amount of meat, bacon or lard added to grain dishes daily.

Stove-cooked pork leg with sauerkraut



Meat on a stick

Wealthy Livonians prepared meat on an open fire. Pieces of meat were put on the sticks – both large livestock and birds. The stick was turned so the meat would cook evenly. Pieces of fatty pork were used with the lean meat. Nowadays this kind of meat is served at open-air markets and gastronomy festivals. Shashlik, the dish that became famous during Soviet times, is usually cooked on the stick – small pieces of marinated meat cooked on the coals.

The original title: 🇱🇻 liha vardas / 🇷🇺 uz iesma cepta gaļa



Martin's day rooster and goose

Over centuries old tradition, on 10th or 11th of November both Christians and pagans cooked whole chicken, rooster or goose in celebration of Martin's day. It was stuffed with apples or plums and roasted in the oven. Medieval noblemen, wanting to highlight their social status, used to generously season the meat with spices that nowadays seem unusual to be used with meat, such as cinnamon, cloves or almonds.

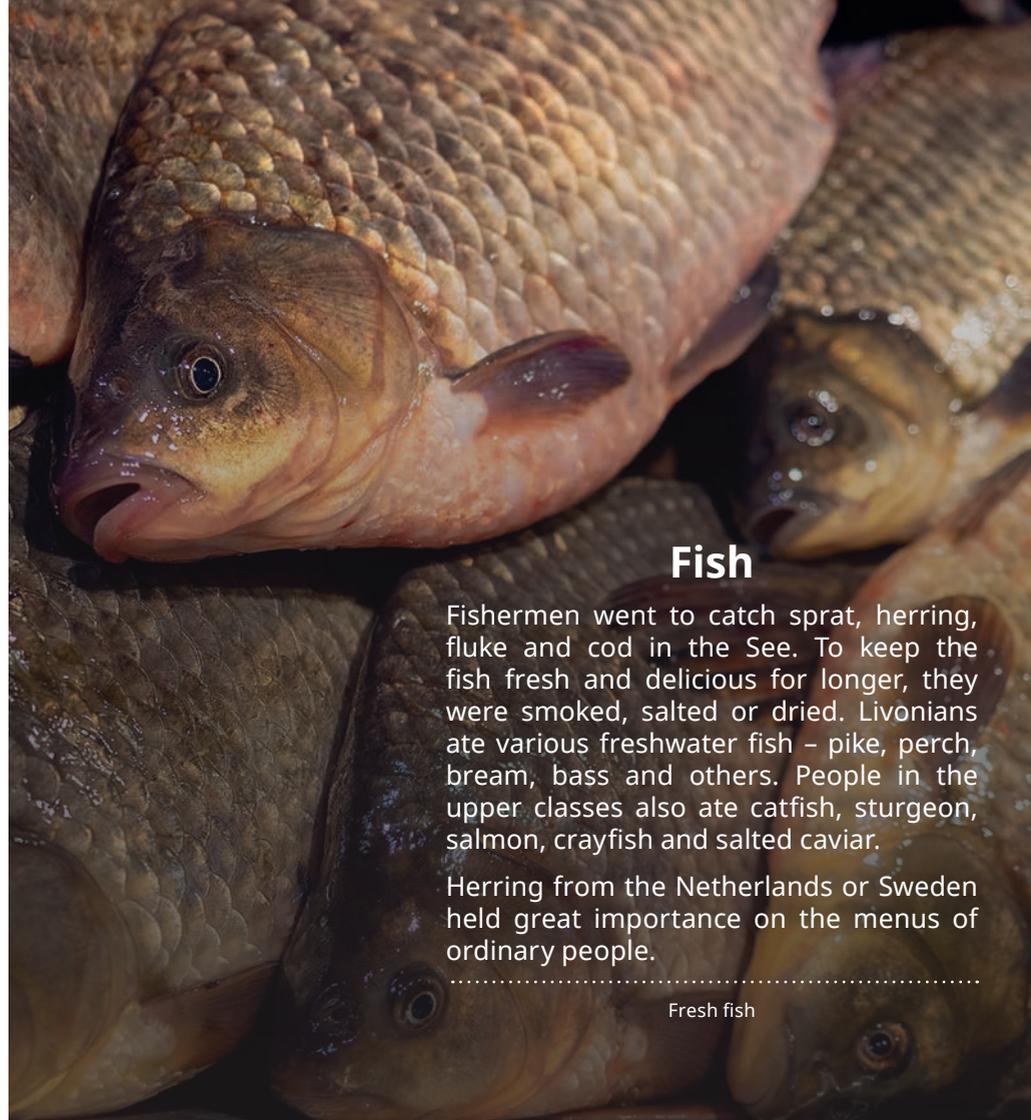
The original title: 🇱🇻 mardipäeva kukk / 🇷🇺 Mārtiņu gailis



Sausages

During Livonian times, people were frugal, and they learnt to process tasty foods from all kinds of meat, starting with the head, and ending with the legs. They took various leftovers, chopped them up, mixed them with spices and made sausages, that were afterwards smoked in the chimney and fried during the holidays. Blood sausages were prepared from blood and groats, they were cooked in the bread oven on straw and consumed with lingonberries. In some parts, only white or no-blooded sausages were made.

The original title:  verivorst /  asinsdesas



Fish

Fishermen went to catch sprat, herring, fluke and cod in the See. To keep the fish fresh and delicious for longer, they were smoked, salted or dried. Livonians ate various freshwater fish – pike, perch, bream, bass and others. People in the upper classes also ate catfish, sturgeon, salmon, crayfish and salted caviar.

Herring from the Netherlands or Sweden held great importance on the menus of ordinary people.

Fresh fish



Smoked fish

Smoking in hot or cold smoke is a local tradition that has been developed over centuries. Any fish can be smoked, but Baltic herring, cod, salmon, vendace, bream and plaice are the most popular smoked fish. The plaice is gutted, strung on the sticks and hung in smoke house. The fish are smoked until the desired thermal processing is achieved. Taste nuances are obtained using smoke of various types of tree, often smoked with green alder wood or pine cones. The fish is eaten alone, with bread, or used for cooking different dishes.

The original title: 🇳🇴 suitsutatud lest / 🇲🇩 kūpinātas butes



Herrings and sprats

Baltic sprats and also vendace from lake Peipsi are a salty and spicy speciality. Salting is an ancient traditional method or preserving fish for longer periods of time.

Whole, fresh sprats are salted in a spice mix containing allspice, black pepper, bay leaf and salt. A bit of wine can be added, too. The ready sprats can be eaten on a sandwich, together with boiled egg and boiled potatoes, cottage cheese and sour cream.

The original title: 🇳🇴 räum ja kilu / 🇲🇩 Țilavas



Lampreys

Lampreys are an ancient lineage of jawless fish; they are caught in the rivers of Latvia and Estonia using special weirs. They are cooked on the grill on hot coals. Prepared lampreys are placed in small tubes and pressed, with marinade poured onto them. Delicious jelly is formed from it. Lampreys have a very soft, specific taste. They are served with fresh bread and butter, complementing the flavour bouquet with lemon slices and greens.

The original title:  silm /  nēģi



Bread and pastries

During medieval times rye became increasingly more important than barley. It was even exported to other countries. Rye flourished in Livonia and was famous because of the aromatic and filling bread that was baked from it. Bread was also often baked from barley. White bread was a celebratory food for ordinary people at that time, only city folk and people in the upper classes ate it daily. It is made from coarse-grained whole wheat flour with natural yeast. Flatbread cakes and pies were baked during holidays.

Loaves of bread in the market



Rye Bread

Rye bread is one of the most important foods of Livonian times. In difficult times also other flours were added to rye bread dough to increase the volume of bread. In accordance with ancient traditions rye bread is baked into large loaves. The flour is scalded with boiled or warm water, the dough is mixed with the leaven and the malt and caraway seeds are added. It is baked at the high temperature in firewood-fuelled oven. The overall process of scalded bread preparation lasts for two days. Pan bread is also baked. It is made from softer dough, poured into shape and can be baked even in electric ovens.

The original title: 🇱🇻 rukkileib / 🇪🇪 rupjmaize



Bacon pies

The tempting aroma of traditional Latvian bacon pies takes over the house before the winter and summer solstice, but in bakeries you can enjoy it every day. Pies are made from wheat or rye flour yeast dough, and filled with smoked, finely chopped streaky pork roasted with onions. You can also add caraway seeds for taste. Estonian meat pies are usually made from ham or minced meat.

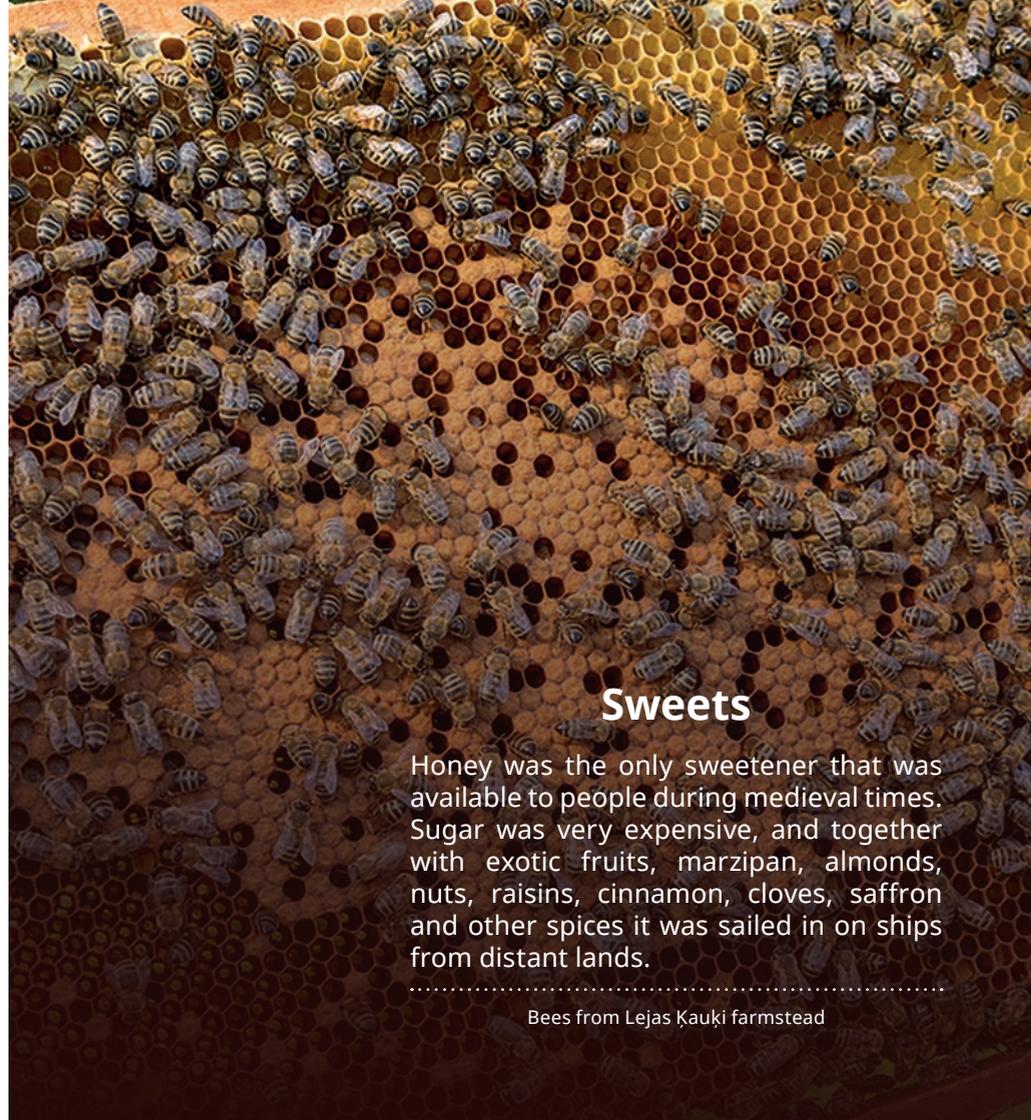
The original title: 🇱🇻 pekpirukad / 🇪🇪 speķa pīrāgi



Poppy seed sweet rolls

In Livonian times poppy seed flatbread was baked during holidays from wholegrain flour and sweetened with honey. Nowadays, poppy seed sweet rolls are baked from yeast dough made of fine wheat flour, sprinkled with poppy seeds and sugar. When ready, they are coated with a thick chocolate glaze that was not available in Livonia in those times.

The original title:  moonisaiad /  magoņmaizītes



Sweets

Honey was the only sweetener that was available to people during medieval times. Sugar was very expensive, and together with exotic fruits, marzipan, almonds, nuts, raisins, cinnamon, cloves, saffron and other spices it was sailed in on ships from distant lands.

Bees from Lejas Ķauķi farmstead



Honey cake

Wax and honey were exported from Livonia in significant amounts; due to the short northern summers, honey was distinguished for its especially high quality. Honey cake, one of the most popular cakes in Latvia, is also often found in the assortment of confectioneries. Fragrant honey pastry layers are filled with sour cream and the surface of the cake decorated with crumble, nuts or berries.

The original title:  meekook /  medus torte



Carrot cake

As sugar was very expensive in Livonia, sweet root vegetables like carrots were used for baking cakes. The cake was especially rich and delicious, when honey, cinnamon, nuts and raisins were also added. Today carrot cake is made by adding layers of cream cheese, walnuts or hazelnuts, but this cake is also a perfect companion for afternoon tea or coffee without these extras.

The original title:  porgandikook /  burkānkūka



Kama Flour dessert

Kama is a flour mix made of roasted rye, barley, wheat and dried green peas. Sometimes also oats are used. Kama flour, a pinch of salt and sugar are mixed into a kefir, yoghurt or whipped cream and the mixture is left to rise. Farmers ate kama mixed with sour milk during summer time. Fresh berries or jams can be added for taste. It is often eaten with cranberry sauce as a breakfast food or light snack.

The original title:  Kamamagustoit /  kamas deserts



Drinks

Barley beer was brewed on a territory of Estonia and Latvia already few thousand years ago and it was kept well alive during Livonian times. In the past, it was called liquid bread, because it is also made of grain and contains many calories. A lighter drink is kvass, but the best option for quenching thirst would be pure and tasty water from ancient sources.

Beer poured from a keg into a ceramic pitcher



Beer

Baltic countries have very old beer brewing traditions. There were times when beer was consumed more than water. There is dark and light, filtered and unfiltered beer. The taste of beer differs according to the ingredients added and their proportions: the beer is brewed from barley, malt, hops, and less commonly from wheat. The good taste of beer largely depends on good drinking water.

The original title: 🇱🇻 ðlu / 🇷🇺 alus



Mulled wine

Seasoning of the wine with spices is a culinary heritage from Livonian times and spiced claret wine was highly valued in medieval Europe. At that time, wealthy townspeople could order spiced wine at a pharmacy, where the pharmacist prepared it. Nowadays during the cold seasons of autumn and winter, but especially around Christmas, pubs, street markets and homes are filled with the sweet aroma of mulled wine, cinnamon, cloves and orange peel.

The original title: 🇱🇻 hõõgvein / 🇷🇺 karstvēns



The information brochure *Taste of Livonia. Dishes* is a supplement to the map *Culinary Route "Taste of Livonia"*. The selection of courses described here comprises national dishes which, in terms of their cooking history, correspond to the historical period of Livonia.

www.flavoursoflivonia.com

www.celotajs.lv/livonia www.maaturism.ee www.viahanseatica.info

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 Front cover: "Hansa Gold AM" spiced almonds in a fair.