



production area

Norway
Region of Sunnmøre

The producers

Thirty fishermen and one company processing the herring:

Njardar as
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Cured and Smoked Herring from Sunnmøre

Slow Food Presidia are local projects that work to improve the infrastructure of artisan food production. The goal of the Presidia is to guarantee a viable future for traditional foods by stabilizing production techniques, establishing stringent production standards and promoting local consumption.

The Presidia project is coordinated by the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, which organizes and funds projects that defend our world's heritage of agricultural biodiversity and gastronomic traditions.

photo: Carlo Fantì

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Slow Food Foundation
for Biodiversity


Slow Food®

An ancient Tradition

What generations of Norwegians born after the 1920s remember most clearly from their childhoods is the tradition of smoked herring. Those who spent their youth in villages along the coast can still picture the fat silver fish their mothers would roast on burning coals and leave hanging over the fireplace. They would serve the herring with mashed potatoes. For hundreds of years, herring have been an essential part of the Norwegian diet: the remains of this fish have been found all over Norway in archeological sites dating as far back as 600 BC. As early as the 13th century, the country was already enforcing laws regulating herring fisheries, describing the tools used and establishing punishment for offenders. In the 19th century, herring were salted in wooden barrels in salting houses, which numbered nearly 1,000 along coastal Norway. At the beginning of 1900, the Norwegian market for cured and smoked herring was mainly destined for export to the Caribbean, where the British sold so-called slave herring. It is in that period that Norwegians refined their salting and smoking techniques, adopting from British tradition



The Presidium

During the months of January and February, Njardar collects freshly-caught North Sea *storsild*, or herring, from the boats that land at the small harbor in Naerøy. After they are delivered, the herring are placed in pinewood barrels for 24 hours and covered with salt and subsequently with brine. The salting process can last up to 60 days. The herring are then rinsed with salt water and placed on skewers: at this stage they are ready to be smoked for a minimum of 10 hours to up to 12 days. Types of herring are identified according to the duration of the smoking process: silver herring are smoked no more than 12 hours, golden are smoked up to 3 days and hard cured are smoked from 10 to 12 days. The finished product is packed in wooden boxes and sold directly by the company.

Cured and smoked herring are traditionally served as a salad with apples and beets or with mashed potatoes or are made into omelettes.

The Presidium is working to educate consumers about this product, to revive traditional production techniques at risk of extinction and to support small-scale sustainable fishing.



the distinction between silver herring, golden herring and hard cured herring. Today these three different versions are still produced by the family-run company Njardar, located in the small fishing village of Naerøy along the fjords of northwest Norway. Founded at the beginning of the last century, Njardar is the last company in Norway that still uses artisan salting and smoking techniques. The situation has changed dramatically since the golden age of herring fishing, which lasted from 1946 to 1968. In that period the region of Sunnmøre boasted 35 companies that produced the three kinds of herring. Eight of these small plants were based in the village of Naerøy. The last significant stock of herring reached Norwegian waters in the 1950s, supplying these fishermen with plenty of fish for about twenty years. However, after a series of unfavorable fishing seasons, all the processing companies were compelled – one after the other – to shut down, which led to the disappearance of herring from the Norwegian diet. These small companies were also victims of industrialization and of food factories springing up everywhere. Competition with mass food production has gradually estranged Norwegians from consuming artisan herring.

