

Herring and potatoes

- *from the Stone Age to today. Told by professionals.*

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Source introduction

Food shortages hit Norwegians seriously towards the end of the First World War.

Norway was neutral during the First World War. Neither Germany nor Great Britain had an interest in occupying Norway. Nevertheless, Norway was affected by the war. The Norwegian coast and the North Sea were controlled and mined by both countries, and the Norwegian fleet was affected by both submarine warfare and blockade.

Norway had Europe's lowest self-sufficiency in food and was therefore completely dependent on imports of grain in particular from abroad. The war led to a number of shiploads of supplies to Norway being sunk and to the fact that the supply of necessary goods was reduced considerably.

Below you can read how the authorities tried to solve the supply problems that arose.



Kristiania Municipal provision board's outlet for meat, fish, potatoes and vegetables on Grønland square, opened in January 1916. Photo: Narve Skarpmoen. Owner: Arbeiderbevegelsen's archive and library.

The source

Title: Herring and potatoes. Our old national diet. With additions on how herring and fish can be prepared.

Dating: 1917

Origin: Ministry of Provisions 1917

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[Modernized source extract.]

Herring and potatoes. Our old national diet.

However it goes, we will probably have to assume that there may be a shortage of bread grains and fat this winter. We should perhaps expect that we can be referred to ourselves. So far, the authorities have been able to get us what we need. But due to circumstances, which we all know, the supply from outside now threatens to stop, and then everyone will understand that there will be a shortage of flour.

We have once before been in the same situation – in the war years before 1814. Fortunately, however, we now have a food plant that we missed then, namely the potato. And by a sensible application of it, we can help ourselves a long way.

Our annual harvest of potatoes amounts to 800 million kilograms with a round figure. This year, our potato areas have been significantly expanded. According to a preliminary calculation, we should be able to calculate approximately 1,200 million kilos, perhaps even more.

Our annual grain consumption is approximately 700 thousand tonnes (700 million kilos). It has been calculated that we should be able to produce 400 million kilos of cereals in total. There is therefore a shortfall of 300 million kilograms, which must be brought in from outside. If we don't get them, we risk starvation. But then we will have to resort to the potato.

Now, 1 kilo of potatoes is of course not as nutritious as 1 kilo of grain. If you calculate that 4 kilos of potatoes are used in 1 kilo of flour (the amount of calories is about 90 to 360), 1,200 million will therefore correspond to 300 million kilos of flour. Assuming that we can supply the potatoes in the right way, and assuming that our grain crop this year is average, we must [...] seek to cover the missing 300 million kilos of grain with the help of our potato crop.

But then the prerequisite is that for the winter a larger quantity of potatoes than usual is not used, but also that the potato largely replaces the bread in our household. [...]

It is not enough that we all have to use boiled potatoes as a leavening agent in our bread, up to 25-30 percent of the solid ingredients, but we also have to use the potato in numerous other ways. This winter we have to eat twice as much potatoes as we usually do. It may have its difficulties, but as we shall see, we Nordics are in this respect luckier than most others, as in our national diet we have dishes that seems made for this application. [...]

Expressed very scientifically, a normal person's needs are set at approximately 3,000 calories or heat units per day, a hard-working person needs 4-5,000. Not all foods are equally good. Both to build up the body and to take care of the activities of life, we need different kinds of substances, both in egg whites, fats and carbohydrates.

The need for the different nutrients is extremely different, but on average it has been found that you need 80 grams of egg white (meat or fish), 80-100 grams of fat and 4-500 grams of carbohydrates (sugar or flour). Fortunately, we have enough of egg whites, meat and fish. With carbohydrates, we should get by fairly well, if we used the potatoes, and if we get too little, we'd rather eat more meat and fish. It gets worse with fat.

In recent years [...] we have used up to 74,000 tonnes of fat, but of this we import 1/3 in the form of margarine and other oils. The war has shown that the worst thing that can happen is fat starvation. Everything else is interchangeable with other items, just not fat. It seems that fat in particular is nerve food. But here too, we Norwegians are luckier than most others. We have not reduced our pig population. We have roughly the same amount of pork now as before, and we also have an excellent fat-rich food in our old national diet: plaice.

Speke herring

Except for a few species, the fish are consistently lean. It needs fat added during cooking. With the herring, it's the other way around. When fresh, it contains between 7 and 8 percent fat. Herring, on the other hand, contains up to 17-18 per cent fat in addition to 19 per cent egg white. When you take it out of the barrel, it also contains 15-16 percent salt.

[...]

Read original source text

Herring and potatoes, our old national food.

However it goes, we probably have to assume that bread grains and fat may be scarce this winter. Perhaps we should expect that we can be referred to ourselves. So far, the authorities have been able to get us what we need. But due to circumstances that we all know, the supply from outside now threatens to stop, and then everyone will understand that there will be a shortage of flour.

We have been in the same situation once before - in the war years before 1814. Fortunately, however, we now have a food plant that we missed then, namely the potato. And by a sensible use of it, we can help ourselves a long way.

Our annual harvest of potatoes amounts to 800 million kilos, a round figure. This year, our potato areas have been significantly expanded. According to a preliminary calculation, we should be able to calculate approximately 1,200 million kilos, perhaps even more.

Our annual grain consumption is approx. 700 thousand tons (700 million kilos). It has been calculated that we should be able to grow a total of 400 million kilos of cereals. There is therefore a shortfall of 300 million kilos, which must be imported from outside. If we don't get them, we risk starvation. But then we are forced to resort to the potato. Now, 1 kilo of potatoes is of course not as nutritious as 1 kilo of grain. If you want to calculate that there are 4 kilos of potatoes on 1 kilo of flour (the amount of calories is related to approx. 90 to 360], 1200 million will therefore correspond to 300 million kilos of flour. Assuming that we can make the potatoes in the right way, and assuming that our grain crop this year is normal to medium, we must therefore - as Professor Torup has so excellently demonstrated in his lectures - seek to cover the missing 300 million kilos of grain with the help of our potato crop.

But then the prerequisite is that for the winter, not only are much larger quantities of potatoes used than usual, but also that the potato replaces bread for a large part of our household.

Already early in the spring, Professor Torup in particular, and partly from others, stressed the importance of bringing the potato crop into such a form that it could also technically replace other flour, in other words, that we were able to set up drying plants for the production of potato flour. Due to the delivery difficulties of the war, this year we can only partially open this. We must therefore all make an effort to use more potatoes. Not only that, but also prepare ourselves for having to use the potato in other ways, both as human food and animal food. It is not enough that we must all use boiled potatoes as a leavening agent in our bread, equal to up to 25 to 30% of the solid ingredients, but we must also use the potato in numerous other ways. This winter we have to eat twice as many potatoes as we usually do. It may have its difficulties, but as we shall see, we northerners are in this respect more fortunate than most others, as we have dishes in our national diet which seem to have been created for this application. There is one thing we must not forget, and that is that a diet which consists mainly of vegetables, above all the high-calorie potatoes, requires a high degree of salt (globule sodium). The potatoes contain only $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{5}$ of the carbohydrate amount of the flour and only about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the bread. So it doesn't take such small amounts of potatoes to offset the bread.

What an adult person needs, Professor Torup has explained in his brochures. Expressed very learnedly, a normal person's needs are set at approximately 3,000 calories or heat units per day. day, a hard-working person needs 4 to 5,000. Not all foodstuffs are equally good. Both to build up the body and to take care of the business of life, we need different kinds of substances, both in egg whites, fats and carbohydrates. The need for the various nutrients is extremely different, but on average it has been found that you need 80 gr. egg white (meat or fish), 80-100 gr. fat and 4-500 gr. carbohydrates (sugar or flour). Fortunately, we have enough of egg whites, meat and fish. With carbohydrates, we should manage fairly well, if we make use of the potatoes, and if we get too little, we can rather eat more meat and fish. It gets worse with fat. In recent years (according to Torup's calculations) we have used up to 74,000 tonnes of fat, but of this we import $\frac{1}{3}$ in the form of margarine and other oils. The war has shown that the worst thing that can happen is fat starvation. Everything else can be exchanged with other subjects, only not fat. It seems that fat in particular is nerve food. But here too, we Norwegians are luckier than most others. We have not significantly reduced our pig population. We have about the same amount of pig meat now as before, and so we have an excellent fat-rich food in our old national diet:

Speke herring

With the exception of a few species, the fish is consistently lean. It needs fat added during cooking. With the herring, it is the other way around. When fresh, it contains between 7 and 8% fat. Herring, on the other hand, contains up to 17-18% fat next to 19% egg white. When you take it out of the barrel, it also contains 15-16% salt.

[...]

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