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Santa Lucia Celebration in New York



Santa Lucia Celebration at The Waldorf=Astoria in New York City.

The Swedish-American Chamber of Commerce New York (www.saccny.org) held their Annual Christmas Luncheon and Lucia Celebration at **The Waldorf=Astoria** hotel in New York on December 8, 2005. Edward F. Nesta and I were guests of Robert and **Annika Benjes** of the **Swedish Travel & Tourism Council**, and we felt that it was the perfect way to start the holiday season in the festively decorated Grand Ballroom of The Waldorf=Astoria. **Mikael Grahn**, was Master of Ceremonies, **Mikael Svahn** was the Musical Director and **Henry Gooss**, Chairman of SACC New York welcomed the members and their guests to the Annual Christmas Luncheon and Lucia Celebration.

Marcus Samuelsson, Executive Chef at Restaurant Aquavitin New York provided the Swedish Smörgåsbord for the luncheon which consisted of appetizers of two types of herring, half a boiled egg topped with Swedish bleak roe, thinly sliced smoked salmon, chopped beets, boiled potatoes, slices of sausages, cheese, and a cube of thickly cut smoked salmon. For the entrée there were shredded potatoes, shredded cabbage, Swedish meatballs of course, sausages, Christmas ham, and Ligonberry preserves. There were chilled bottles of Becks and Carlsberg beer, and O.P. Andersson Aquavit to drink with the meal and toast to the snaps songs. For dessert there was a thinly sliced multi-layer white cake with alternate layers of raspberry filling and cream filling, topped by a green slice of fondant icing, which added to the festive appeal of the day.



After the luncheon, the room darkened and **Michaela von Koch** as Santa Lucia made her way down the long aisle of the Grand Ballroom wearing a crown of candles on her head, followed by her Lucia maids from the Swedish Church. The girls wore long white gowns, with gold crowns on their heads, and each girl held a candle in her hand. The girls made their way to the stage, and only illuminated by the candlelight, sang Christmas songs. At the conclusion of their program, they sang as they made their way down the steps of the stage and down the aisle that they had come in. It was a beautiful and moving celebration.

Afterwards, the stage lights came back on, and there was more entertainment by Swedish singers, Mia Lofgrén and Mikael Svahn who flew in from Sweden to participate in the Santa Lucia Celebration. At the large Christmas Raffle lucky winners went home with donated prizes from such esteemed Swedish companies as **Volvo Cars of North America, LLC, Scandinavian Airlines System (SAS), Grand Hotel Stockholm, Ulrika's, IKEA, Sony Ericsson, Orrefors-Kosta Boda, Sunnex, Inc., Swedbank, The Absolut Spirits Co, Inc, WASA North America, Restaurant Aquavit, Thule, Inc., Skanska, Nordic Partners, BTS USA, Inc., Danske Bank, Gevalia Kaffe, Swedish News** and many others.

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