

Created by: Debra C. Argen

Swedish Midsummer in New York

[Swedish Midsummer](#) is a time to enjoy nature, and share traditional culture, music, and gastronomy with friends.

On June 13, 2007, Edward F. Nesta and I were invited to an early Summer Solstice and Swedish Midsummer dinner at the home of the Consul General of Sweden in New York and his wife, Ambassador Ulf Hjertonsson and Mrs. Karin Oldfelt Hjertonsson, to celebrate the upcoming [Swedish Midsummer festivities in New York](#) on June 22, 2007 at Robert F. Wagner, Jr. Park, Battery Park City.

Traditionally, Swedish Midsummer festivities take place each year the Friday closest to June 24th. It is a magical time when friends gather to celebrate nature, the longest day and brightest time in Swedish, share traditions, and celebrate with special music, dancing, and gastronomy.



Ambassador Ulf Hjertonsson and Visit Sweden Team

Preparations for Swedish Midsummer festivities begin with girls gathering seven types of wild flowers and birch leaves to be woven into crowns to wear at the event. We arrived at the party where our hosts, Ambassador Ulf Hjertonsson and his wife Mrs. Karin Oldfelt Hjertonsson, as well as Lars Östling, Consul, and representatives from VisitSweden greeted us wearing the customary flower crowns.



Ambassador Ulf Hjertonsson and Annika Benjes, Director Public Relations of VisitSweden in New York, welcomed guests to the Swedish Midsummer festivities, to celebrate this special time of the year, as well as learn about Swedish customs. In addition to the special flower crowns, there are flower decorated maypoles, dancing, and traditional food and drink.

Gastronomy is an important part of the Swedish Midsummer festivities, and beer and schnapps (Aquavit) always accompany the food. The menu included boiled new potatoes with dill; two types of herring served with sour cream, dill, and chopped red onion; gravlax; cold poached salmon; mixed green salad; beet salad; shrimp salad with dill; deviled eggs crowned with caviar; and Vasterbotten cheese accompanied with marmalades and Swedish krisp bread. A second course followed of meatballs, pork, and au gratin

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potatoes. For Midsummer dessert, fresh strawberries, the first of the season, are enjoyed with whipped cream. For our dessert, Chef Marcus created luscious, macerated strawberry compotes with fresh cream. There were three types of schnapps: traditional, as well as a spiced schnapps with dill, and another with blackberries.



Salmon

Herring

Eggs with Caviar



Swedish Singer/Storyteller, Eva Engman, beautifully dressed in traditional clothing, brought life to the Swedish Midsummer festivities through her music and the telling of folklore tales. Eva taught the guests to sing the traditional Swedish schnapps song, *Helan Går*, (from *Helan Går* (1989) Gidlunds Förlag). At the conclusion of singing *Helan Går*, she instructed guests to say "skål" (cheers) to each person at their table, and then to drink the small glass of schnapps. Midway through the meal, we sang *Helan Går* again, and this time our glasses were filled halfway with schnapps, and the process was repeated.

Helan Går

Helan går, sjung hopp falle rallan rallan lej,
helan går, sjung hopp falle rallan lej.
Och den som inte helan får.
Helan går, sjung hopp falle rallan lej.

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The evening concluded with Linda Ericson, Marketing Manager of VisitSweden in New York, also dressed in traditional clothing, joining Ms. Engman singing other Swedish songs. It was evening of music, food, drink, learning customs, and the gathering of new and old friends to celebrate this beautiful holiday.

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For more information on **Sweden**, please visit the **Swedish Tour Board** website: www.VisitSweden.com. For information on next year's **Swedish Midsummer** festivities in New York, please visit: www.NYCMidsummer.com. For information on traveling to Sweden, please visit **SAS Scandinavian Airlines**: www.sas.se.

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