

When I think of ways by which people I know try to honor their family heritage, it seems that food is the primary means of maintaining that connection with the past. Or, perhaps, I believe this to be true because everything about food is interesting to me.

Today is one of those times when this tradition is most apparent to us. February 21, 2023 is Shrove Tuesday. For many of those who observe Christian practices, tomorrow, Ash Wednesday, is the beginning of Lent, a period of 40 days leading up to Easter when many Christians give up some food or other luxury. In Sweden, the day before Lent is observed by eating delicious buns called semlor, or where Runo grew up, fastlagsbullar or fettisdagsbullar. These slightly sweet, eggy yeast buns, often flavored with cardamom, are split, filled with whipped cream and almond paste, and topped with a sprinkling of powdered sugar. One does not have to observe Lent to enjoy these rolls. They accompanied our midmorning coffee today and will probably make another appearance this evening. I have to say that, in my biased opinion, they are much superior to the now popular Polish filled doughnuts called Paczki.

I usually bake two sheet pans of these buns—24 in all. During these yet rather isolated times when Covid is still on our minds, it would take us awhile to eat all these fastlagsbullar. But, the freezer is part of the solution. They will keep nicely for several weeks.

And, we don't make all of them into the whipped cream filled version we have had today. Instead, split and toasted under the broiler, buttered generously and topped with a little raspberry or plum jam, we eat them just as thankfully as we do for all the rest of the good food we have.

But, today, at least, the buns were a rich treat. I sliced off a "hat," then, with a fork scraped out crumbs to make a hollow. I mixed the crumbs with stiffly whipped cream, slipped a patty of almond paste in the depression in the roll, filled the cavity with cream, put the lid on, and dusted on some powdered sugar.

Some traditions are meant to disappear. Some are desirable, but hard to keep up. Baking and eating semlor on Shrove Tuesday isn't hard at all to continue.