

An Introductory Guide to New Nordic Cuisine

Art & Photography / AnOther Guide



Michael Oleson, "Queen stålgrönkling", Courtesy of Sabina Nordström

What might a Scandinavian cuisine look like? A new exhibition in Oslo traces the culinary movement's cultural impact through architecture, art and design

June 04, 2025

Text: Ruby Conway

In the early 2000s in Scandinavia, **New Nordic** emerged as both a philosophy, an aesthetic, and a cuisine. It was characterized by an expansive rediscovery and reevaluation of place and landscape – multi-sensory, embodied, and holistic. At the same time, material cultures and the idea of the 'productive landscape' were brought into focus. What could the local land offer? How do traditional techniques and crafts work in symbiosis with nature?

At the simpler end of the spectrum, it took shape in the foraging and artisan ceramics revival; at the more avant-garde end, live acts and strings on the menu at Noma, Copenhagen, or the project 'Studio Ground' by Stehr Ode, which saw a gallery space filled with trees and mosses. Such a localized, naturalist culture and way of thinking has since seeped across the globe, where farm-to-table eating, natural wine, and earth-toned ceramics are increasingly mainstream.

New Nordic: Cuisine, Aesthetics and Place

The National Museum of Oslo's new exhibition, *New Nordic: Cuisine, Aesthetics and Place*, traces the interdisciplinary movement and its roots across architecture, art, design, craft and food cultures. "Taking gastronomy as a starting point", says senior curator Martin Beathen, is "something we've never done before". With diverse works ranging from Edvard Munch's vitalist paintings and still lifes of vegetables to ceramic collections and soundscapes, it's a curated mapping of creative and culinary offerings to discover and live by the landscape.

Below, *Another* explores five guiding principles of the movement.



Another's made by Odd Strand for the restaurant *Konstmat*. Photo: Lars Petter Pedersen
Courtesy of National Museum Oslo

1. The movement takes an avant-garde approach to food

The New Nordic Food movement began with an intellectual and philosophical reckoning – what might a Scandinavian cuisine look like? How would it aesthetically function? What would its guiding principles be? Setting out to challenge and rethink the very nature of the contemporary culinary scene, it reconsidered everything from food sourcing and production, to cooking, design and service choices. The movement also sought, at least in theory, to restructure the culinary hierarchy, repositioning local producers and craftspersons as equally important as head chefs.

A ten-point New Nordic Food Manifesto followed, signed by 12 Nordic male chefs (to some fair feminist criticism), laying bare the guiding principles of the movement. It encompassed a strong focus on locality, traditionalism, and seasonality, in a notable shift away from a global cuisine.



Restaurant Nolis, Faroe Islands. Photo: Claus Bech Poulsen. Courtesy of National Museum Oslo

2. It attempts to capture 'the spirit of place'

Genius Loci – in Latin, 'the spirit of a place' – is an ancient notion, adopted by the New Nordic movement across architecture, design, art and gastronomy in an effort to draw out a deeply realised and localised sense of place. The spirit of a place is a multi-layered one, cultural and material, but also temporal and metaphysical. As a deeply subjective and somewhat intangible notion, capturing Genius Loci has given rise to all forms of cross-disciplinary art and practices, from site-specific architecture to unexplored ingredients.

Genius Loci can be seen in Jens I. Thomassen's soundtrack for the restaurant Koks, which evokes the soundscape of the producer's harvest ground, or [Oleaf Eliasen's](#) photography series of fault lines. For ceramicist Anette Krøstvad, it takes shape in capturing 'the smell of mushrooms' in one of her plates. The endeavour is perfectly embodied in the words of chef and Noma co-owner [René Redzepi](#) on one of his dishes: "It was a small mouthful representing a few square metres of a particular Danish forest on that exact day."



Oleaf Eliasen, The Fault Series (Aerial), 2007. Photo: Oleaf Eliasen. Copyright Eliasen, Oleaf/1907AG
Courtesy of National Museum, Oslo

3. Nature and locality are central

At its heart, the New Nordic movement is a natural one, drawing from locally-sourced material and food cultures. Your local landscape is your most valuable resource, its offerings fluctuating with the cycles of the season. Processing of materials is minimal, and a sense of the natural is preserved.

In gastronomy, dishes tend to elevate a single ingredient – a type of seasonal seaweed or rambon, say, while locally collected materials are used similarly in design. Pebble and moss centrepieces, algae paper lamps at Noma, painted juniper twigs as serving plates at the restaurant Best. The season and landscape are matched at every level. Anders Smebye's sculpture *Kraft* distills the essence of the landscape further, created from a condensed broth of local animals and plants from the artist's farm.



Mikael Østergaard, "Gæster vil glemme dig" Courtesy of Statens Sæmlestiftelse
Courtesy of National Museum Oslo

4. Notions of sustainability are expanded

Under the New Nordic approach, the potential of a resource is expanded. When it comes to food culture, this is often referred to as a 'nose-to-tail' methodology, where all aspects of an animal are used for diverse purposes. Such a practice has roots in Sámi knowledge: "We eat the entire animal and keep every bit of skin, bone and outlier for crafts," Sámi reindeer herder Måret Bårdnäs tells the National Museum. Crucially, Andreas Lieke Dalsøtt notes that no Sámi restaurant exists under the movement.

Ceramicist Sissel Wathne's use of food leftovers for her ceramic work stretches sustainable dining into new territory. "The shells of lobsters from the Troandheimsfjord, the bones of cows from the Skjelberg Sondre farm, and reindeer bones from Stensaas Reindjerve Slaughterhouse are refined into aggregates that she can mix with colour pigments," says curator Inger Helene N. Sternshaug of Wathne's process.



Detail of works by Sissel Wathne. Installation view of *New Nordic: Cuisine, Aesthetics and Place*. The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design in Oslo, Norway. Courtesy of National Museum, Oslo.

5. Ancient culinary and craft traditions are revived

Where older practices, crafts and traditions had been gradually forgotten in Scandinavia, New Nordic sought to reclaim and revive historic food production and creative techniques. In gastronomy, for example, there was a revival of methods such as fermentation, hearth cooking, and Sámi slaughter. In step with the seasons, traditional preservation techniques like smoking, salting, and pickling flourished, produce conserved for the winter months. At the same time, old recipes and grains made a comeback. In design, a traditional craft revival encompassed everything from textile production to glassblowing. Here, New Nordic emphasises tacit knowledge – a kind of material and cultural knowing that can only be gained through making.

[New Nordic: Cuisine, Aesthetics and Place](#) is on show at the National Museum of Norway in Oslo until 11 September 2025.