

Birka Banner

Birka Lodge 732,

Vasa Order of America

March, April, 2014

Chairperson's Message

Greetings to all Birka Members. Daylight saving time has arrived with an extra hour of sunlight each day. Spring is not far behind and hopefully, we have seen our last snowstorm, but it is anyone's guess with this winter! Our January and February meetings were well attended and enjoyed by all. At the February meeting, we welcomed three new members to Birka Lodge: Eric and Greg Blomgren, sons of Gus and Roz Blomgren, and Tina Rawson. Thank you to the Refreshment Committees for January and February for the delicious food we enjoyed.

The **March 28th meeting will be our annual Pask (Easter celebration)**. The Refreshment Committee, chaired by Ann-Marie Breuer, will be providing refreshments. As part of our Easter meeting, there will be an **Easter bonnet/hat contest** for all members: women, men, and children. Some ideas might be an Easter witch, chicken, etc. Prizes will be awarded. Let's surprise one another with our creativity! I'm looking forward to seeing your best creations! Please plan on attending to support your lodge and officers. Ron Holmgren is planning a cultural program for the evening. We will also have a raffle provided by Gus and Roz Blomgren.

We are in need of refreshments following the Installation in April and help to set up the hall. If you did not sign the Refreshment List at the February meeting, please give me a call. The sign up sheet will be available at the March meeting. Donations of food – sandwiches, sweets, etc. are welcome. My phone number is: 781-933-4949. Thank you in advance. Your help is appreciated.

The **April 25th meeting** will be the Installation of Officers. Grand Lodge Deputy/District Deputy Dawn Briggs and her team from Nordic Lodge in Worcester will conduct the installation ceremonies. Other guests from the District Executive Board will also attend. Please plan on joining us to support your lodge officers and to welcome guests from the District. We will also have a special raffle. Please come and enjoy Vasa fellowship and refreshments.

The Activities Committee met on February 2 and planned the upcoming lodge events for 2014/2015. The new program booklets will be distributed at the April Installation. Thank you to Marlys Mahajan for hosting the meeting. The next Activities Committee meeting will be held on April 6 at 3:00 p.m. at the home of Ann-Marie Breuer in Hamilton.

Thank you to Ann-Marie Breuer and Mike Swanson for providing the cultural programs for the January and February meetings.

Sick Benefit Fund If you have been a Vasa member for five years or more and have paid your dues, you are entitled to receive assistance with medical expenses from the Grand Lodge. Each member is entitled to receive up to \$3,000. If you would like an application, please contact Recording Secretary, Judy Tanzer.

Annual dues of \$25 for 2014 are now due. Please mail your dues to: Financial Secretary, Linda Boylan, 12 Upton Lane, Boxford, MA 01921, payable to: Birka Lodge No. 732.

Reminder: Please consider this your dues notice for 2014. Dues are due in January.

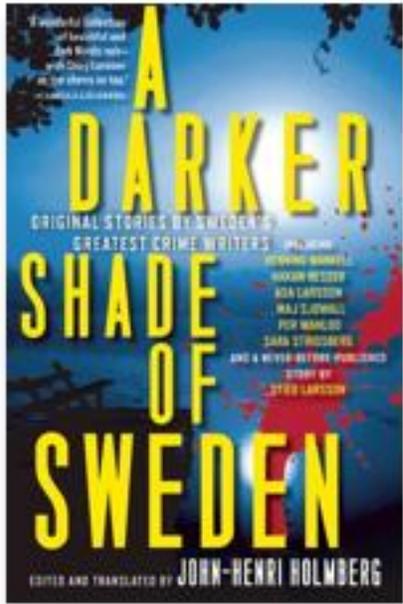
It would be great if all dues were paid by April, 2014.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the **March 28 Easter meeting and the April 25 meeting and Installation of Officers**. Please mark the dates on your calendars! Your

presence gives encouragement to your officers and makes more secure the future of our Order.

In truth and unity, Linda Christianson, PDM, Chairman

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### Book Review

## A Darker Shade of Sweden

Edited and translated by John-Henri Holmberg (The Mysterious Press, New York, 2014)

This book of short stories by some of Sweden's most popular crime authors has something for everyone who loves a good suspense story. It has psychological thrillers, O'Henry-esque endings, and plenty of twisted characters. While enjoying these well-crafted stories, you also get to visit (or revisit) the sights and sounds of Sweden, such as the Lake District shortly after Midsommer and the Arctic frontier in mid January. The collection includes one unpublished short story by Stieg Larsson.

Why not put this book on your summer reading list?

### . . . 'round the Lodge

Welcome and congratulation to our three new members Tina Rawson and Greg and Eric Blomgren. Tina has helped out at our Jul Fair for several years, and we are happy to have her join us as a full member. Eric and Greg, along with parents Gus and Roz, have been part of the Vasa family for many years. We are happy to see Greg and Eric join us as adult members.



If you haven't checked out our website recently, now is the time! Richard Lilja, our web master, has given it a new, clean design with lots of new links to all things Scandinavian. It still has the familiar pages for photos and newsletters, and you can still find it at [www.birka732.com](http://www.birka732.com)

. Thank you, Richard, for all the improvements! The site looks great!

At the March meeting we will be reviewing our options for a summer outing. So far, the proposals have been a Boston Duck Tour, a cruise to the Isle of Shoals (outside of Portsmouth, N.H.), or an outdoor concert at Castle Hill in Ipswich. Details will be presented at the meeting. Be sure to come and decide which is your favorite.

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## Calendar Summary

### **March:**

28 Pask (Easter Celebration), 7:30 p.m.

### **April:**

6 Activities Committee meeting, 3 p.m. at Ann-Marie Breuer's home.

28 Installation of Officers, 7:30 p.m.

### **August:**

Summer outing: Stay tuned!

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## Hearty Birka Birthday Wishes to these members . . .

### **. . . in March:**

|                   |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Ethel Johnson   | 15 James Jensen     |
| 7 Linda Flanagan  | 19 Mathz Olsson     |
| 10 Carol Landoni  | 22 Kristine DiPillo |
| 11 Miriam Lane    | 27 Marilyn Kelly    |
| 13 Karole Johns   | 30 Diane Forsstrom  |
| 14 Ellen Sandberg | 31 Daniel Guidera   |

### **. . . in April:**

|                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 2 Pathrik Olsson     | 14 Janet Lundstrom |
| 10 Danika Ashness    | 15 Carin Liu       |
| 12 Sheila Sunman     | 15 Helen Riddle    |
| 13 Christine Lovgren | 17 Michael Bagnulo |

## REMINDERS . . .

- **Change of address** Please notify Recording Secretary, Judy Tanzer, 3 Anthony Road, Hamilton, MA 01982 (Tel: 978-468-7407) of any address changes. We appreciate your helping us keep the membership rolls up to date.

- **Easter hats** remember to put together a crazy hat for our March Easter meeting. It's a great way to liven up what has been a too-long of a winter!

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- **Payment of dues** If you haven't paid your dues yet, now is the time. We would like to have the rolls complete by the end of April. Send your \$25 payment to our Financial Secretary, Linda Boylan, 12 Upton Lane, Boxford, MA 01921. Make your check payable to Birka Lodge 732.



## REFRESHMENT COMMITTEES

Pask (Easter Celebration)

### **March 28**

Ann-Marie Breuer, chair

Sue and Mike Bagnulo

Diane Forsstrom

Matilda Halloran

Carol and Bob Landoni

Chris Lovgren

Inga-Lill Olsson

Helen Riddle

### **Installation of Officers**

#### **April 25**

**Everyone is on the committee.**

Q: Why are Swedish lighthouses upside down?

A: Because they want to show the submarines the way.

## *Swedish Culture and Geography*

Our January and February meeting gave us a small glimpse of Sweden's history and geography. In January, Mike Swanson reported on the famous Vasa ship, built in 1626–1630. The government poured big money into the mammoth ship that was to be the pride of the Swedish Navy. It was 226 feet long, 172 feet high, and only 16 feet wide! This unstable configuration led to its sinking on its maiden voyage, less than ½ mile from its launch site. It was recovered in 1961 and is now housed in the Vasa Museum in Stockholm. It is still a fantastic ship, worth your visit when you go to Stockholm.

In February Ann-Marie Breuer reported on the Dalarna province in central Sweden, a traditional vacation spot for Swedes from some of the southern cities, such as Stockholm. Because of the many beautiful lakes, rivers, and valleys, it is an important getaway spot for the locals. It is also the source of the famed Dala horses. So Dalarna, too, is a great side trip when touring Sweden.



Photo: Pontus Lundahl/TT

### 'Alcoholic Pepsi' recalled after Swedish mishap

**Carlsberg Sweden was forced to recall thousands of cans of Pepsi Max after realizing the popular soft drink was actually filled with an alcopop party drink instead.**

The 1,872 cans were sent to food chain Lidl in southern Sweden, and contained Xide Citrus Fizz, a ready-mix alcopop party drink with 4.5 percent alcohol content.

"We apologize for what happened and any discomfort it caused," Henric Byström, spokesman at Carlsberg Sweden, said in a statement.

"We take it very seriously and have launched an internal investigation."

Carlsberg added that it would be tough to drink the party drink by mistake, and that the Citrus Fizz was a much lighter colour.

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### *Some soul-satisfying Swedish comfort foods*

As the darkness and chill of Sweden's winter gathers pace, food blogger Maia Brindley Nilsson offers up a list of ten Swedish comfort foods to keep your belly full and nourish your sun-starved soul. The trees are bare and the darkness of winter is here. It's time to fire up the stove, cozy up to the hearth, and partake of some soul-satisfying comfort foods.

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Every person and country has comfort foods, the dishes that transport you to your childhood and evoke warm memories. What makes a comfort food varies from person to person, depending on their background and experience.

My favourites include my dad's stuffing at Thanksgiving and my mom's homemade chicken and dumplings. A classic comfort dish for someone with connections to the UK may be shepherd's pie, or udon soup for those with a connection to Japan.

When it comes to comfort food, the options are endless.

Reflecting on my own favourites got me thinking about what qualifies as a comfort food in Sweden.

Meatballs and Swedish pancakes with lingonberry preserves? Absolutely. They are arguably the top contenders so let's put all three on the list and move on to consider some additional candidates.

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**Bruna bönor** or brown beans is a classic side dish that works well with meatballs or fried pork and have a sweet and sour taste from being cooked with vinegar and sugar. Swedish brown beans are the key ingredient and have been continuously grown on the island of Öland since 1883. They are popular for their nutty flavor as well as holding their shape under long cooking periods. The soil and climate of Öland is particularly suited to growing the beans which have received Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status from the EU meaning it's only a true Swedish brown bean if it comes from Öland.

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**Ärtsoppa** or [yellow pea soup](#) has been a Thursday tradition in Sweden since the Middle Ages when Sweden was largely Catholic and Friday was a day of fasting. Filling up on the hearty pork-filled soup was intended to get you through the next day's fast. Today the tradition is still going strong as evidenced by the profusion of plastic-cased tubes of pea soup in supermarkets year-round. If you really want to warm up you can chase it with a little warm [punsch](#) which became a popular addition to the pea soup tradition during the 1800s.



**Pytt i Panna** is essentially "bits in a pan." Commonly known as a way to clean out your refrigerator and make a meal, it can be assembled from essentially anything as long as the key components of chopped onion and cubed leftover potatoes and meat play a starring role. Whether it's purchased from the freezer section or made at home the essential finishing touches are a fried egg and pickled beets. It's a homey comfort food pile of little cubes.

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**Falukorv** is perhaps the most-loved Swedish sausage. Its history dates back to the 17th-century and it has received Traditional Specialty Guaranteed (TSG) status from the EU.

This versatile sausage is well-loved by Swedes whether it is thickly sliced and fried, baked with onions and apples, or chopped and served in korv stroganoff.

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**Gryta**, or "Moose Stew", ([stew](#)), isn't exclusive to Sweden, but it's popular winter fare. What makes it regionally special is the kind of meat and ingredients used. [Elk](#), reindeer, and wild boar are commonly available in Swedish supermarkets and all make excellent stews. Combined with chanterelle mushrooms and parsley root a gryta takes on a wild, earthy tone that highlights some of the gems of Swedish cuisine that can be foraged and hunted in our own forests.



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**Kroppkakor** just doesn't translate well since it literally means "body cakes." Not exactly an appetizing invitation for the tasty dumplings. Before the arrival of the potato in Sweden during the 1800s they were mainly made with flour but today's versions typically include potatoes.

Depending on the region, they can be made of raw potatoes, cooked potatoes, or a combination of the two. The filling also varies from region to region and can include eel, herring, pork, or goose.

The island of Öland is known for its unique kroppkakor made from a blend of cooked and raw potatoes. Filled with fried cured pork and onion, laced with allspice, boiled and covered with melted butter, they are a serious contender for my "new favourites" list.



**Äggkaka (egg cake)** is popular in [Skåne](#) in southern Sweden where the fluffy, golden skillet meal can be prepared on the stovetop or baked in the oven. Historically it was a staple meal for the workers at harvest time and was an easy on-the-go food that could be tucked into a lunch pack. Whether chopped cured pork is folded into the batter or cooked in strips and laid on the top it's considered an easy and filling lunch or dinner (although this immigrant wouldn't hesitate to have äggkaka for breakfast). In classic Swedish style

lingonberry preserves are the complement.

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What do all of these comfort foods have in common? They are economical (if you foraged your own chanterelles and shot your own moose for the gryta) filling, and draw on tradition and simple ingredients. Perfect for warming you up during a cold and dark Swedish winter.

*Maia Brindley Nilsson is a designer and food enthusiast based in Malmö, Sweden. Her food blog [semiswede](#) is "sort of about Sweden, and sort of not."*

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Q: How do you get a one armed Swede out of a tree?

A: Wave to them !



Birka732.com

The Birka Banner is a bi-monthly newsletter, published by Birka Lodge 732, Vasa Order of America, and on the web at [www.birka732.com](http://www.birka732.com)

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