***Newsletter Service***

**March/April 2024**

**MARCH ISSUE**

**Scandinavian vs. Nordic**

What's the difference between "Scandinavian" and "Nordic?" Good question! For those outside of the region, the terms often get used interchangeably. However, if you look a little closer, you will discover that they are not one and the same.

* Geographically, Scandinavia refers to the peninsula that Norway, Sweden, and a small northern part of Finland sit on
* The most common use of the term Scandinavia refers to the three countries of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark which share geography, language, and history
* In general, speakers of Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish can understand each other well enough to communicate, because of the three languages' similarities
* Sámi people who live in Norway and Sweden may not identify as Scandinavian because of the complicated history of assimilation policies the countries had
* The term Nordic refers to five countries: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland - and the autonomous regions those countries have jurisdiction over - the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and the Åland Islands
* Nordic countries are linked by cultural, historical, financial, and political influence on each other
* Nordic countries have a strong tradition of intergovernmental cooperation, with the foundation of the Nordic Council in 1952 that allowed citizens easy travel between the countries
* You won't hear people refer to themselves as "Nordic" because it's often seen as an added layer of their Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, Icelandic, or Finnish identity

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**Brain Discovery** 

Neuroscientists and Nobel Prize Winners May-Britt Moser and Edvard Moser, have made yet another exciting discovery about the human brain. Along with their team of researchers at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), they studied lattice cells in mice and have found an interesting phenomenon. The cells follow a pattern that repeat over and over again. The neuroscientists’ main focus was on the medial entorhinal cortex, which is the part of the brain that supports episodic memory. They set up an experimental environment for the mice to study neuron activity over a given period of time. The results excited them. Edvard Moser stated, “I believe we have found one of the brain's prototypes for building sequences.” The hope is that this discovery will give them a look into how the brain places memories and experiences in time order. Interpreting the findings could help them understand Alzheimer’s disease, as well as inspire further research into brain functions.

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**Ancient Rock Paintings Discovered in Norway**

Out for a hike with his family on the outskirts of Oslo, in the municipality of Moss, Tormod Fjeld unexpectedly discovered history. The family had stopped for a snack break when something caught his attention. While many others likely would not have noticed, Tormod had a well-trained eye, since he likes to look for rock carvings in his free time. While not a carving, he noticed colors on a boulder near to where they were resting. He used an app on his phone to analyze the picture he took of the rock. It was immediately clear that there was something special about this rock and so he reached out to a friend that works in archeology. Experts from the Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research (NIKU) were soon called in and it was determined that this faint pattern on rock was in fact something that likely dates to the Bronze Age (3300 to 1200 BC). It depicts a boat with oarsmen and human and animal figures.

This is a significant discovery for many reasons. It’s remarkable that they survived all this time, although a rock protrusion protected them from the brunt of the elements. Also, given the faintness of the images, the majority of people hiking in the area would likely not have given it a second glance. It’s a fortunate happenstance that Fjeld was there with eagle eyes to spot this stunning discovery. This adds to an already impressive list of finds that he and two friends have made over the years and will hopefully continue making for years to come.

***Sources:***

[**Norwegian Family Discovers Bronze Age Rock Paintings on a Hike (mymodernmet.com)**](https://mymodernmet.com/norwegian-rock-paintings/)

[**Eagle-Eyed Hiker Spots Bronze Age Rock Paintings in Norway | Smart News| Smithsonian Magazine**](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/bronze-age-rock-painting-norway-180982486/)

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**TRANSLATION**

**Det er sunt å la tankene fly**

Å la tankene vandre i hverdagen har ufortjent dårlig rykte, mener forsker.

Tenk deg at du må jobbe på spreng med en rapport sjefen har bestilt, men gløtter ut av vinduet på solen som smelter den skitne snøen. For ditt indre blikk ser du de gule krokusene hjemme i hagen. Har det kommet flere siden i går, og kanskje noen tulipaner?

Slike dagdrømmer bør du ikke ha dårlig samvittighet for.

- Du bør gi deg selv rikelig med luker i arbeidsdagen til å la tanker komme og gå fullstendig fritt, mener professor Halvor Eifring ved Humanistisk fakultet ved Universitetet i Oslo.   
   
**Halvparten av våken tilstand**

Vi bruker nesten halvparten av vår våkne tid til å tenke på alt annet enn det vi «skal» og «bør». Spontane tanker utgjør hele 47 prosent av vår våkne tankevirksomhet.

Dette har forskere målt ved å sende meldinger på smarttelefon til en rekke mennesker på tilfeldige tidspunkt, med spørsmål om hva de tenker på.

Når vi lar tankene vandre fritt blir hjernens *default mode network*, eller hvilenettverk, mer aktivt, viser forskning fra 2007. Senere har forskning vist at denne delen av hjernen som også er involvert i drømmer.

**Skifte av fokus sikret overlevelse**

Vi er genetisk disponert til av og til å gløtte opp på fuglene i luften, antilopene ved vannet, vinden i trærne og den varme luften på bakken i horisonten.

Mennesker stammer fra savannen i Afrika, hvor vi var avhengige av å se, høre og lukte rundt oss for å overleve.

- Det ville være farlig om vi ikke jevnlig skiftet fokus fra det nære til mulige fjerne farer, som å registrere et rovdyr som nærmet seg, illustrerer han.

**Spontan tenking fyller åtte funksjoner**

Eifring har samlet forskning på temaet innen flere fagfelt, og funnet ut at spontane tanker kan fylle minst åtte ulike funksjoner:

* De kan fungere som trøstetenking
* De kan bearbeide vonde følelser
* De fremmer kreativitet
* De kan gjøre at du skifter perspektiv om du står fast
* De kan bearbeide og tolke minner fra fortiden
* De bidrar til økt selvforståelse
* De stimulerer empati, og
* De kan forberede deg på mulige nye utfordringer i fremtiden

 

**TRANSLATION**

**It's Healthy to Let Your Mind Wander**

Letting your mind wander in everyday life has an undeservedly bad reputation, a researcher has found.

Imagine that you have to work on a report the boss has ordered, but are gazing out of the window at the sun melting the dirty snow. In your mind’s eye, you see the yellow crocuses at home in the garden. Have more arrived since yesterday, and maybe some tulips?

You should not feel guilty about daydreaming.

"You should give yourself plenty of gaps in the workday to let thoughts come and go completely freely,” says Professor Halvor Eifring at the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Oslo.    
   
**Half of our waking state**

We spend almost half of our waking hours thinking about everything other than what we "must" and "should." Spontaneous thoughts make up a whopping 47 percent of our waking thought activity.

Researchers measured this by sending messages on smartphones to a number of people at random times, asking them what they are thinking about.   
   
When we let our thoughts wander freely, the brain's default mode network, or resting network, becomes more active, research from 2007 shows. Later research has shown that this part of the brain is also involved in dreams.

**Shifting focus ensured survival**

We are genetically predisposed to occasionally stare at the birds in the air, the antelopes by the water, the wind in the trees and the warm air on the ground on the horizon.

Humans originated from the savannah of Africa, where we depended on seeing, hearing and smelling our surroundings to survive.

“It would be dangerous if we did not regularly shift the focus from the near to possible distant dangers, such as registering a predator that was approaching,” he illustrates.

**Spontaneous thinking fulfills eight functions**

Eifring has collected research on the topic in several fields, and found that spontaneous thoughts can fulfill at least eight different functions:

* they act as comforting thoughts
* process bad feelings
* promote creativity
* help change your perspective if you are stuck
* process and interpret memories from the past
* contribute to increased self-understanding
* stimulate empathy
* prepare you for potential new challenges in the future

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**Suksessterte med Sjokolade og Appelsin (Success Cake with Chocolate and Orange)**

Source: [Living a Nordic Life](https://www.livinganordiclife.com/post/suksessterte)

Serves 12

**Ingredients   
For the base:**   
4 egg whites   
150 g / 5.3 oz. icing sugar or powdered sugar   
150 g / 5.3 oz. chopped almonds, but not ground. Leave the skins on because it gives the tart its characteristic color and texture   
1/2 tsp. baking powder   
90 g / 3 oz. chopped chocolate or chocolate chips

**For the topping:**   
100 ml / 3.5 fl. oz. double or heavy cream   
125 g / 4 oz. sugar   
4 egg yolks   
150 g / 5.3 oz. butter, at room temperature   
Grated rind of 1 orange

**To decorate:**   
A little melted chocolate   
Thin strips of orange peel

Or go crazy with some chocolate mini eggs, sprinkles or whatever takes your fancy!

**Method:**  
Preheat the oven to 160°C / 320°F.   
  
Line the bottom of a 25 cm (about 10 inch) diameter springform cake pan with a circle of baking or greaseproof paper. There is no need to grease the tin.

Whisk the egg whites until they form stiff peaks. Sift the icing sugar and baking powder together and stir in the almonds and chocolate. Carefully fold this into the whipped egg white, taking care not to knock out too much air. Pour into the prepared cake tin and smooth the top. Bake in the center of the preheated oven for about 30 minutes. When it's cooked it'll be a nice rich golden brown and rebound slightly to a light touch. Remove from the oven and let cool completely before even attempting to remove springform. Once cooled, run a blunt knife around the inside of the tin to loosen the cake. Place a plate on the top and tip the pan upside down. Lift the tin off and carefully peel off the baking paper. Place a serving plate on top of the cake and tip it back so it is the right way up. Wash the ring part of the cake and slip it back over the cake to form a ring. Don't worry if you don't have a springform pan, simply make a ring shape from some foil and shape it around your cake to form a "wall."

To prepare the topping, put the cream, sugar and egg yolks into a pan and cook slowly over a low to medium heat stirring constantly. The mixture will gradually thicken and turn less opaque. You really do need to stir all the time or it will split. Try not to boil the mixture. It will take about 5 minutes. Stir in the grated orange rind. Allow it cool for a minute or two before stirring in the butter a cube at a time. You will end up with a smooth, rich and shiny topping that is a beautiful golden color. Pour the topping over the cake and gently tease it to the edges. Put it in the fridge to cool and set for a couple of hours. When it's set, you can carefully remove the tin or foil from around it.

Decorate with melted chocolate and orange peel or however you like!

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**APRIL ISSUE**

**A Color-Coded City**

On the southern tip of the island of Karmøy in Norway, lies a charming village known as Skudeneshavn. Skudeneshavn is a coastal town that features narrow streets, seafront wharves, and a unique cohesiveness. In 2018, the King adopted the cultural environment protection in Skudeneshavn that is protected by the Cultural Heritage Act. This act recognizes the value of historic areas and seeks to maintain their cultural significance. It is the reason Skudeneshavn is so well preserved. The conservation means that there are regulations in place for the maintenance and upkeep of building exteriors and outdoor areas. Skudeneshavn has had a rich color history in respect to their building exteriors and those same colors are now portrayed in the city's color code as a result of its status as a culturally protected environment. Any maintenance or painting to one’s house must be in line with the city’s guidelines in a specific color palette and with the right technique/tools. The colors include white, shades of green, red, and blue. There is no doubt that the protection creates an authentic experience and draws forward the rich history of the town.

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## **Counties Go Separate Ways** In 2017, Norway’s Storting voted to combine several fylker, and [19 counties became 11 regions](https://www.sofn.com/blog/nineteen-counties-to-become-11-regions-by-2020/) in January of 2020. This administrative reform attempted to strengthen each region and improve coordination between municipalities, regions and state. According to the website LifeinNorway.net, several of these combined regions decided that the set-up was not working and have rolled back the mergers as of January 1, 2024. Now there are a total of 15 counties. Here is the current line-up of fylker: **Continuing as merged counties:**

* Agder
* Vestlandet
* Trøndelag
* Innlandet

**Splitting:**

* Troms og Finnmark are breaking up
* Viken will revert to Buskerud, Akershus and Østfold counties
* Vestfold og Telemark will also roll back the changes

**Unaffected by both 2020 and 2024 changes:**

* Møre og Romsdal
* Nordland
* Oslo
* Rogaland

Not everyone was in favor of the restructuring, including the police service, who will need more resources and officers to cover the increased number of counties.

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**Barnehage on the Move**  
  
Pre-schoolers in Norway are some of the most hardy and adventurous kids around. Each weekday, kids in *barnehage* are prepared for anything the weather can throw their way.   
  
Growing up in the rugged countryside and even in cities, kids experience *friluftsliv* at a young age, braving the elements wearing tiny safety vests with their care providers.  
   
Around 400 Norwegian daycare centers go on daily adventure outings with their 11,000 charges. The hope, according to Kristin Oftedal of the Norwegian Trekking Association, is that they “learn skills and attitudes that they can carry with them for their whole lives.”  
  
“We believe outdoor children are happy children,” she adds.   
  
The aim is to teach children simple and nature-friendly ways to be outside together, play, experience, wonder, explore and learn about nature. Oftedal says that she hopes this practice will produce a new generation of nature lovers.

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**Translation**

**Mener sang er et universalspråk**

En ny amerikansk studie hevder at vi kan kjenne igjen en vuggesang, uansett hvilken kultur sangen er fra.

Etter å ha testet mennesker fra over 60 land hevder to forskere at sang og musikk er et universalspråk.

De mener vi kan høre forskjellen på en sang som er ment til dans, og en som er ment til å få et lite barn til å sove. Det gjelder uansett hvilken kultur sangene kommer fra, og hvilken kultur lytteren er oppvokst i.

– Vi viser at vår felles psyke lager grunnleggende mønstre i sanger som overskrider store kulturelle forskjeller, sier Manvir Singh, doktorgradsstipendiat ved Harvard University, i en pressemelding.

Han er en av de to forskerne bak musikkstudien, som er publisert i tidsskriftet Current Biology.   

**Klarte å skille dansesang fra vuggesang**

Harvard-forskerne har gjort et eksperiment hvor sanger på forskjellige språk fra alle verdens deler ble delt inn i kategorier ut i fra hvordan de ble brukt i sitt eget samfunn. Hvis sangen ble brukt til dans i samfunnet hvor den ble sunget, hørte den hjemme i dansekategorien. De lagde også egne kategorier for sanger som skulle brukes i helbredelsesritualer, som vuggesang for et urolig barn eller var rene kjærlighetssanger.

Forskerne klippet ut 14-sekunders smakebiter fra sangene, og ga 750 internettbrukere oppgaven om å legge dem inn i riktig kategori. Selv om det bare var fire virkelige alternativer, fikk forsøkspersonene flere å velge fra. Forskerne hadde lagt inn to lurekategorier, noe som gjorde det mulig for internettbrukerne å påstå at sangene var sørgesanger eller bare skulle fortelle en historie.

På tross av lureriet klarte forsøkspersonene seg ganske bra. Lettest var det å gjenkjenne dansemusikk, men forsøkspersonene klarte også å kjenne igjen vuggesanger og helbredende sanger.  

**Translation**

**Study Finds Song is a Universal Language**

A new American study claims that we can recognize a lullaby, no matter what culture the song is from.

After testing people from over 60 countries, two researchers claim that songs and music are a universal language.

They think we can hear the difference between a song meant for dancing and one meant to put a small child to sleep. This applies regardless of which culture the songs come from, and which culture the listener was brought up in.

“We show that our common psyche creates basic patterns in songs that transcend large cultural differences,” says Manvir Singh, doctoral fellow at Harvard University, in a press release.

He is one of the two researchers behind the music study, which has been published in the journal Current Biology.

**Distinguishing Dance Songs from Lullabies**

The Harvard researchers have done an experiment in which songs in different languages from all parts of the world were divided into categories based on how they were used in their own society. If the song was used for dancing in the community where it was sung, it belonged in the dance category. They also created separate categories for songs that were to be used in healing rituals, such as lullabies for a troubled child or pure love songs.

The researchers cut 14-second snippets from the songs and tasked 750 internet users with putting them into the correct category. Although there were only four real options, the subjects were given several to choose from. The researchers had entered two trick categories, which allowed the internet users to claim that the songs were mourning songs or just telling a story.

Despite the deception, the subjects did quite well. It was easiest to recognize dance music, but the subjects were also able to recognize lullabies and healing songs.  

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**Blandaball – Mixed Dumplings**   
   
A traditional dish from Møre.   
Recipe source: [Recipe Reminiscing](https://recipereminiscing.wordpress.com/mixed-balls/) and [Oppskrift.klikk.no](https://oppskrift.klikk.no/blandaball/1251/)  
4 servings

**Main ingredients:**

2.2 lbs / 1 kg fish fillets (preferably pollock, haddock or sole)   
2 lbs / 900 g raw potatoes   
1 large onion   
1 Tbsp. salt   
1/2 tsp. Pepper   
about. 2 Tbsp. coarse barley   
about. 2 Tbsp. Flour   
fried bacon crumbles

**Typical sides:**  
bacon – either crumbled as topping, or served in strips   
boiled rutabaga   
boiled carrots   
boiled potatoes

**Directions:**   
Cut the clean fish fillet into pieces. Peel and cut potatoes and onions into pieces.    
   
Shred fish, potatoes and onions in a meat grinder or food processor on coarse setting. Stir salt, pepper and flour into the mixture.    
   
Form the mixture into round balls, and if desired, use your finger to make a hole and press pieces of bacon into the center of each ball.   
   
Place the balls in simmering lightly salted water or fish stock, and let them simmer for 20-30 minutes. After 20 minutes, divide a ball in two to see if it is cooked through. Serve blandaball hot with sides of fried bacon and turnips, rutabaga, carrot and/or potatoes.

Leftovers can be pan-fried in slices or frozen.

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