



IN THE KITCHEN WITH Anna Barnett

After an action-packed year,
Anna is learning the art of
slowing down, Swedish-style...

A recent trip to Sweden gave me first-hand experience of *lagom*; the Swedish way of living by 'moderation: just enough and nothing to excess.' The Swedes say there's an art to *lagom*; a way of life so true to the Swedish nature and culture that they created a name for the ideal so many live by. A tricky concept or unfamiliar notion to us Brits, perhaps! I myself can admit to getting carried away at every which turn, but practising a little restraint and enjoying what you have, as opposed to over-consumption can be a charming and much more rewarding experience. I love that this idea extends across every aspect of life. Taking the time to enjoy every little bit, slowing down and taking it all in isn't a new concept, but rather one that is intrinsically part of the Swedes entire ethos. Modest, pared-back, simplistic lifestyles with a focus on quality over quantity.

With this being my first trip to Sweden, I saw the concept of *lagom* in almost everything we did and everywhere we went. At Högtorp Gärd, where we foraged for wild mushrooms, the focus wasn't on the quantity of the haul but rather on the act of foraging, the quality of the produce, and the eco system and how it can be sustained to continue to flourish for future generations. There was a real understanding of preservation and the consequences of our actions. The wealth of wild berries, saps and buds that can be fermented, pickled, bottled or turned into oils was truly

inspiring. A real sense of living off the land and living the good life!

Whilst I was keen to spend time exploring much of Sörmland; the lush, green, south-eastern coast of Sweden, I also wanted to take time to experience what many are calling the New Nordic cuisine of Stockholm. Despite being made up from over 14 islands, Stockholm is a city of two halves. Gamla Stan (the old town) is historic, architecturally beautiful, with a plethora of ochre-coloured buildings which surround the 13th-century cathedral. While the other half is more modern and experiencing much regeneration. Endless new restaurants and an incredible food scene, that not only comprises of high-end establishments but also numerous indoor food markets, championing quality produce from

The two restaurants at the top of

my list are both commanding much attention. Tak, a fusion experience of Japanese-inspired dishes using Nordic produce, also offers almost a 360-degree view of the city. Headed up by chef Frida Ronge, this seems like the place to be or be seen! They have served over 250 covers a day since opening the restaurant just six months previously and offer delicious wine pairings across all the dishes. Next up, is the tasting menu at Rutabaga, the newly reopened restaurant of Mathias Dahlgren, who leaves behind his two Michelin stars to start from scratch and champion a vegetarian-only menu.

It's clear the food scene of Sweden is going through a transformation of sorts. At the heart of everything however, is still *lagom*. The ingredients may have changed, but the practice of 'moderation: just enough and nothing to excess' is as relevant as ever.

EAT WELL

