

THAT'S WHY FOODIES GO TO ICELAND

FROM EUROPE'S BEST HOTDOGS TO ON-TREND NEW NORDIC CUISINE, ICELAND'S DINING SCENE IS TURNING HEADS.

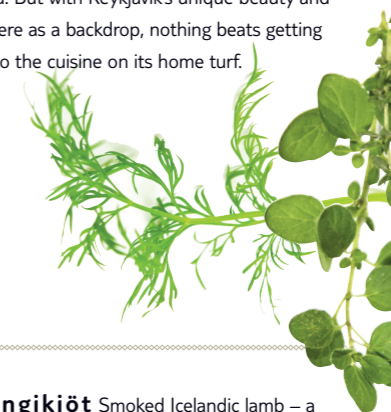
Unlike most of the world's cuisines, you'll struggle to find Iceland's national dishes on menus anywhere in the UK. For culinary bragging rights to the likes of hákarl – that's rotten shark – or svið, boiled sheep's head, you really do have to go to Iceland.

These days, though, there's more than the prospect of a Nordic Bushtucker Trial to tempt foodies to the island's shores. Thanks to plenty of natural, local and unprocessed food, the country shone in Channel 4's 2014 documentary The World's Best Diet – beating even the longevity-boosting diets of the Mediterranean to the top spot.

Fresh seafood, high-fibre rye and quality meat are all regulars on dinner tables. Icelandic sheep, for example, are a hardy breed that roam freely all summer – making for delicious organic lamb. Dairy products are top-rate, too, thanks to grass-fed cows with Viking-era ancestors. And the island's pure waters are strictly protected by environmental regulations, so the seafood is exceptional. Brits might be surprised to spot controversial, but completely legal, Icelandic delicacies like puffin, reindeer and whale on menus, too.

To road test the trendiest of Iceland's food offerings, you'll want to set up camp in Reykjavik. There's a hotdog stand, Bæjarins Beztu Pylsur, on the harbour, that's so famous even Bill Clinton's paid a visit. And at the other end of the scale are the five-star tasting menus available at restaurants like Fish Market and Dill. There's also a strong coffee culture, with passionate baristas serving quality coffee in cosy bars all over the city centre.

Back in Blighty, flavours of Iceland are slowly creeping on to the dining scene. Michelin-starred London restaurant Texture is leading the way, with traces of Icelandic-born chef Agnar Sverrisson's homeland on the menu. But with Reykjavik's unique beauty and atmosphere as a backdrop, nothing beats getting stuck in to the cuisine on its home turf.



A TASTE OF ICELAND FIVE REYKJAVIK MUST-EATS...

- 1 Skyr** Rich, nutritious and yoghurt-like, this is served cold, often with fruit or milk and sugar
- 2 Harðifiskur** Wind dried white fish that you tear off in chunks and eat smeared with butter
- 3 Rúgbrauð** Dense sweet-tasting rye bread best served with pickled herring or pâté

- 4 Hangikjöt** Smoked Icelandic lamb – a festive favourite eaten with potatoes in béchamel sauce
- 5 Plökkfiskur** Flaky white fish and potatoes in a white sauce, sometimes topped with grilled cheese



APPY HOUR

It's not just eating they do well in Reykjavik, they know how to party, too. At weekends, the friendly but raucous rúntur – or pub crawl – kicks off around midnight, with locals hitting the bars and clubs until as late as 4 or 5am.

Drinking in the city can be quite pricey, but most bars offer happy hour deals ahead of the midnight rush – download the Reykjavik Appy Hour app to keep track of the best ones. Available free on the App Store and Google Play.



MENU

FOODIE FAVOURITES

OUR PICK OF REYKJAVIK'S RESTAURANTS, CAFES AND STREET FOOD

KOPAR

Right by the harbour, this restaurant's big windows showcase the views in all their glory. Icelandic Rock Crab is the speciality here, but even the non-seafood dishes, particularly the beef brisket, are very good.

FISKMARKAÐURINN

Translated as Fish Market, this open-kitchen restaurant puts a modern spin on Icelandic cuisine. The tasting menu serves dishes like beer-steamed mussels and lamb fillet on platters for the table to share.

BÆJARINS BEZTU PYLSUR

Hotdogs from this world-famous stand in the harbour are a mix of pork, beef and lamb, best served with 'the works' – ketchup, sweet mustard, a mix of raw and fried onions, and a mayo-relish sauce.

SUSHI SAMBA

The décor at Sushi Samba is quirky and the menu uses the best of Iceland's fresh produce to create Japanese and South American dishes – from sushi to steak platters.

DILL

This trendsetting restaurant, housed in landmark cultural venue Nordic House, serves informal lunches of meatballs and fish stews, and a seven-course dinner menu with avant garde dishes like herring ice cream.

