Toppeladugård

Toppeladugård’s status as a separate estate dates from 1720. Up to then the farm had been an outlying farm or barn belonging to the Häckeberga estate. During the 1710s, the then owner, Mette Sofia de Bruin, was tricked by a fraudster who demanded such a large amount of money from her that she was forced to sell the farm to Countess Christina Piper of Krageholm. When Countess Piper took over, she immediately started to plan a new, grand main building. It was built during the 1720s. She also improved the park and did it so thoroughly that Carl von Linné on his visit to Toppeladugård on 4 July 1749 describes the estate as: ”a beautiful manor farm belonging to Countess Piper, notable for its beautiful garden, which illustrates the art of landscape gardening”. He also described how the orchard nursery: ”was full of all types of trees; apple, pear, quince, walnut, horse chestnut, elm and lime, which were sold to people with an inclination for gardens. Peaches, apricots and grapevines grew against the fence. The quinces trees were small, only a couple of cubits high, and bore a lot of fruit, which had ripened well and was always low on the tree.”

It is known that previously there was a renowned labyrinth at Toppeladugård and Linné describes how: ”a labyrinth or maze was sited on a filled-in marsh on the garden’s southern side. It was 65 cubits in diameter, with sets of hornbeam bushes. Inside, the shape had been cut into a privet hedge, and in the very centre was an octagonal pavilion in which the poles or corners were made of beautiful lime trees, and the walls of trimmed elm hedge.”

It is easy to imagine the shimmering summer heat on the fields at Toppeladugård when Linné writes: ”the hay-maker walked and sweated, and the women folk close by pulled up the flattened grass where it lay sparsely on the ground.”

After Countess Piper’s death, the family retained ownership of Toppeladugård for two generations until 1791, when the married couple, Ulrika Piper and Otto Wilhelm Mörner, died childless. In the 1800s, the estate was owned by several families for relatively short periods. In order, it passed from Thott to Skabersjö, Bennet, Wrangel von Brehmer and Linder. The last owner, Ernst Linder, was an officer in the Swedish army in the years 1887-1918, and as such served in Finland in the civil war of 1917-1918 and, as a member of the Swedish Volunteer Corps, in the winter war of 1939-1940.

In 1905, Toppeladugård was sold to the director, P. Åkesson, and in 1918 to the captain, John Kuylenstierna. He built the present main building in the years 1919-1920 in the architectural style from the 1600s that is usually called Christian IV’s Renaissance. The estate was sold in 1928 to public prosecutor and financier, Nils Ascan. After a subsequent owner, Toppeladugård was taken over by the present owning family, Wersäll. The second generation’s Claes Wersäll, is the present owner.

The surroundings
Toppeladugård is located 2 km west of Genarp. The castle is surrounded by greenery and several buildings dating from the 1600s and 1700s.

Goose in the castle and the kitchen
Few culinary experiences are so associated with Scania as goose. There are several reason for this: the climate and thus good rearing conditions, external influences, livestock farming with a strong element of poultry, a culinary culture that is well suited to goose, and not least, a strong tradition. The climate-related conditions were well illustrated by Carl von Linné, who in his Scanian journey in 1749 was captivated by: ”countryside with such a splendid climate, nothing other than the most wonderful, yes, it is so much like Germany and Denmark, that one could say that the sea had
violently cut off Scania from the southern countries and added it to Sweden.”

There is an old and rich tradition of rearing poultry in Scanian farming. Hens, ducks, geese and turkeys are the most common. In recent years, turkey has become more popular due to a growing interest in a more low-fat diet. Goose, on the other hand, contains so much fat that it is linked to the Central European liking for pork, goose and dripping and thus to the basic elements of Scanian cuisine.

The Scanian goose tradition comes from Denmark and Germany, where goose could be eaten as everyday or festival food, but mainly in connection with St. Martin’s Day and Christmas. In olden times, goose was cooked and eaten with vegetables, mainly root vegetables. Another, but similar speciality, is salted goose, which is put in a salt bath two to three days before and then cooked on the day it is to be served. Goose breast was the greatest delicacy and was always present on the festive table of a well-off home.

Fritjof Nilsson Piraten was a great connoisseur of Scanian cuisine. According to him, a traditional St Martin’s Day dinner consisted of bread and dripping, black soup made of goose giblets, stockfish, roast goose and mussels with jam and cream. Sometimes there was rice pudding between the stockfish and roast goose, and the mussels could be replaced with Scanian apple pie. There are striking similarities between the St Martin’s Day dinner and Christmas dinner, which is why St Martin’s day is often called ”lillejul” – little Christmas.

Black soup, which is today a natural combination with goose, is not actually a genuine Scanian tradition. It is said to have originated in a restaurant in Stockholm, which at some point in the mid-1800s launched the goose-black soup combination. Previously, the farming folk of Scania had black soup as everyday food, mainly associated with slaughtering.

The genuine Scania goose is the most common on today’s farms. They grow rapidly and become large and heavy. Like all tame geese, they stem from the wild greylag goose. They lay 25-30 eggs annually and brood for 28-29 days after making their nest on the ground. Most hatching is now done in incubation machines. Geese generally eat grass and corn. In previous times, geese were taken into the kitchen a few months before they were slaughtered and locked into a ”gåsabänken”, a small enclosure that held them while they were fattened up. It resembled a wooden sofa with a built-in frame and hatches in the front where the geese were shut in. Geese have a lifetime of at least 30 years. St. Martin’s Day is 10 November and is celebrated in memory of the holy Martin of Tours.