

Kultá Kitchen & Bar

Lapland Hotels Bulevardi

HELSINKI

Attracting diners with its Nordic mystique, Lapland Hotels' new culinary venture makes its mark on the Finnish capital.

Words: Heleri Rande • Photography: Courtesy of Lapland Hotels

Lapland, with its Arctic magic that encompasses six-month long winters and Santa Claus' residence, is undoubtedly one of the most intriguing tourism destinations of the Northern hemisphere, attracting visitors from all over the world. Authentic food from the polar region has become an integral part of the appeal, but no longer is a lengthy and sometimes costly journey to the North required to get a taste of reindeer tongue or sustainably sourced Arctic char. Lapland Hotels, Finland's largest private hotel chain with 18 properties, has started expanding its urban hotel concept to major cities around the country, including to the capital, Helsinki.

Opened in the first quarter of 2019, Lapland Hotels Bulevardi has already made a culinary mark on Helsinki's bustling food map. The first of its kind in the capital to offer contemporary Lappish cuisine, Kultá Kitchen & Bar on the ground floor of the hotel attracts diners with its creative menus and Nordic mystique. Complemented by a 14m-long golden bar serving authentic and fresh northern flavours and banqueting floor Rikastamo, the F&B programme of the hotel integrates seamlessly into the relaxed and cosy design of the rooms, most of which come with a private sauna. "We wanted to introduce a modern version of the Lappish spirit to Helsinki and offer something that has never been

seen here before," explains Riikka Tenhunen, Restaurant Manager at Kultá. "Lapland and its nature are at the core of what we do. We put great attention to the atmosphere and its tranquillity."

The urban collection of Lapland Hotels currently has four properties spread across the country, each with a restaurant dedicated to Lappish food. The peculiar name of Kultá is somewhat different to the Sami names given to the other three. "In our other urban hotels, the restaurant is named after the Sami word for the location. Helsinki was probably too far south for the Samis to travel, hence there is no equivalent," notes Tenhunen. "Kultá means gold in Finnish and what is more precious than the Lappish gold mined in the North."

The entire hotel, including the 250-cover restaurant that serves breakfast, lunch and dinner, was designed by architects Pervin Imaditdin and Marjut Kauppinen, who in 2017 decided to merge their practices under Arkval Taite Architects. The collaboration for the flagship in Helsinki also involved owner Pertti Yliniemi and the operator's own in-house creative team. "I'm not saying that you need to be from Lapland to understand the culture, but it helps," notes Tenhunen. "Having started in the 1960s, our owner lives and breathes everything about the region so a constant dialogue



Menu highlights include salted whitefish with sour cream and reindeer sausage

with the designers was a necessity. The Lappish feeling – it means different things to different people and we know how we want to translate that.”

The reindeer antlers that adorn the lobby, restaurant and rooms, complemented by the softness of woollen shawls evoke an atmosphere synonymous with the fells of Lapland. It almost feel as if someone is giving you a giant warm hug when you enter the property. The cosiness and warmth of the interiors is a beautiful juxtaposition to the six-month cold winter roaming outside in the far North, while the subtle and soft lighting by Mount Kelvin accompanies the distinctive scent that has been developed for the urban hotel collection. In the restaurant, beautiful glassware by Schott Zwiesel and specially commissioned ceramic artwork and dinnerware by Anu Pentik adds a layer of personalisation and charm to the entire ensemble.

Taking charge of the menu and selection of ingredients is the group’s Executive Chef Tero Mäntykangas, often referred to as the king of food in Lapland. Born and bred in the northern region he has established personal relationships with the local herders, foragers, fisherman and farmers; his 23-year career with the company makes him an invaluable piece of the culinary puzzle that is Lappish food. “Pure food is really the buzz right now,” he explains. “Lappish ingredients are a natural response to this trend. We Laplanders eat what we see outside our window. It is fantastic to serve our guests food that we know exactly where it came from.”

With the harvesting season running from August to October, it is mother nature that defines the menu. “We







need to be on the lookout when sourcing ingredients,” continues Mäntykangas. “For example, we have to carefully plan next year’s requirement of Arctic cloudberries to be able to serve them for breakfast.”

Some of the other quintessential items that feature on the menu include reindeer in various forms, such as liver mousse with blackcurrants and spruce sprout brioche, and Lappish delicacies like snow grouse, Arctic char, king crab and vendace, together with vegetables and fruits grown using a sustainable form of slash-and-burn agriculture. For dessert, blueberries are combined with cardamom and sour cream, to complete the three-course offering.

“We change our à la carte menu three times-a-year, but the evening surprise menu is where we can really get creative,” says Mika Heiskanen, Head Chef of the Helsinki property. One might argue that having reindeer liver pâté

and reindeer blood sausages on the breakfast buffet is already adventurous enough, but it seems that the dinner menu’s reindeer of the day dish is where imagination can really run wild. The meat of the Arctic animal has a low-fat percentage and is rich in vitamins and minerals, yet, according to the culinary team, the most delicious part is the tongue.

With works under way to open another urban hotel in Tampere in southern Finland, it is with curiosity that one ponders whether it would be possible to scale this concept in an authentic way to the international arena. There is no doubt that with such special ingredients making up the culinary fabric the exotic draw factor is certainly high, but what of the sustainable practices and supply chain management? Perhaps a concept as unique as this one only works within its own country’s borders, mirroring the culture and values of the people who call it home.



IN A BITE

Covers: 250

Owner: Pertti Yliniemi

Operator: Lapland Hotels

Architecture: Soini & Horto

Interior Design: Arkval Taite Architects

Head Chef: Mika Heiskanen

F&B Manager: Riikka Tenhunen

Glassware: Schott Zwiesel

www.kitchenkulta.fi