



Welcome Guest Register Sign In

Share Guide, Atlantic City & Site GO

Web Search powered by YAHOO! SEARCH



email this print this

TEXT SIZE: A A A

Posted on Sun, Dec. 7, 2008

Personal Journey: Unpronounceable hospitality in Denmark

By Steven Schultz For The Inquirer

"You're going to die up there," came the warnings from my coworkers after I announced that I was going to spend Christmas in Denmark. "You'll freeze to death."

Although I am prone to midwinter depression, I packed my bags and flew off to visit friends in Vejle, Denmark, during the coldest, darkest part of the year - determined to tough it out. Little did I know, that wasn't going to be necessary, because of something called hygge.

Hygge is a Danish word that can't be translated or even pronounced in English. The closest I came to saying the word out loud produced peals of side-splitting laughter from my Danish hosts. Say "hooga," stretch out the "oooh," and stick a "y" sound somewhere in the middle while imagining drinking straws stuck in your nose, and you'll get close.

Hygge is a process. It's the fine art of hosting and cultural refinement that Danes have perfected with relish. When a Dane says you have a hyggily home, it's the highest compliment. Hygge can best be defined as a full-scale assault against the winter blues, enacted by an army of friends packing an arsenal of warmth, firelight, food and drink.

Because Scandinavian winters are so miserable, hygge requires a toasty living space best augmented with a wood stove or an open fire.

Food is the next wave of attack. Copious piles of smoked salmon - laks - adorn every table. Huge open-faced sandwiches - smorrebrod - piled high with eggs, meats, cheeses, fish and/or vegetables on rich, dark breads are just a start. If you can walk out of a Danish home unassisted, you have not eaten enough.

Drink is the rough equivalent of the heavy cavalry in the Hyggian Army. Start with hot tea and coffee, always within arm's reach. Every Danish table offers a variety of alcoholic beverages. Danish yule beers, rich, powerful ales available only during the holidays, are the centerpiece. They are surrounded with other Nordic drinks, most notably varm glug, a sweet, hot wine; aquavit, a powerful anise-flavored "snaps" (the Danish word for schnapps); and a local favorite called Nord's Oil, a vodka laced with hand-crushed licorice candy, shaken well, and served by the shot. I had my suspicions that homemade Nord's Oil might have been the reason for many a Viking raid over the years, but after one shot I forgot to ask.

Light is the final weapon that Danes deploy against winter. Candles burn everywhere in Danish homes. Indeed, if I had to create a two-word definition for hygge, it would be "reflected light." Hygge is the reflected light of culture, friendship and hospitality that shows in the faces of the Danes I met. To me, it is the most effective defense against the winter blues ever created.

Steven Schultz lives in Ardmore, Montgomery County.

Buzz this story.

Comments

Sign in to post a comment

0 comments

Register to Comment

Why are we asking you to register? We've made some changes to the Philly.com commenting system to increase the quality of the user experience and dialogue, and reduce the number of inappropriate or

Already Registered? Sign In

Email Address



The writer (right, in blue) ensconced in the welcoming "hygge" of a Danish home - a weapon against winter consisting of warmth, food, drink and cultural refinement.

READER FEEDBACK

Post a comment

SAVE AND SHARE

Buzz this story.



Advertise Here

find an event

Su DEC 7	Mo DEC 8	Tu DEC 9	We DEC 10	Th DEC 11
-------------	-------------	-------------	--------------	--------------

Search input field with FIND button

RESTAURANTS & FOOD



Yule love this log: It's a real French treat, when buche comes to shove

IN SO MANY cultures, holiday baking traditions bring family and friends together.

The confections may be symbols of religion, a way to celebrate the act of sharing or a nod to cultural heritage.

The no-splurge holiday spread

A soup-wars objector stirs his own pot

With Chef Pepin, throwing it all together

most POPULAR

VIEWED

SHARED

Female teacher accused of having sex with boy Postal Service manager gets canned

Tina Fey's scar a cold case in Upper Darby

Brit actor Vinnie Jones arrested in SD bar fight

Father surrenders in savage attack on Pa. baby

Students fight vice principal at Camden High

Wildwood raising revenue from auto accidents

Tweeter abruptly shut; workers fired

Sunny von Bulow dead after 28 years in coma

Deaf Northeast Philly man says Cherry Hill car dealer swindled him

More Most Viewed

Postal Service manager gets canned

Letters: Criminals stung today, then back tomorrow

Deaf Northeast Philly man says Cherry Hill car dealer swindled him

Humble merchant, heroic WWII soldier

Szczur a versatile threat for Villanova football

Post Office offers chance to be Santa's helper

The Elephant in the Room: A bad choice for Obama transition team

More the merrier on Birds' defensive line

Mentor young America? The answer is Yes, We Can

Phila. man sentenced to 30 to 60 years for brutal rape of 77-year-old

More Most Emailed

conversation!

Forgot Password?

SIGN UP NOW

SIGN IN

Sponsored Links

Hospital San Angel
Modern facility in Nuevo Laredo. Emergency Services. Specialists.
Hospital.localplacement.com

Hotel & Restaurant Management
Work worldwide in Resorts, Restaurants & Top Hotels. Train Today.
www.PCIchef.com

AHA - Hospitality Management School
Top Hospitality School with lower tuition. Excellent Placement.
www.aha.edu

today's POLL

Smoking.

- Still do.
- Quit.
- Never did.

Vote

[View results](#)

[JOBS](#) | [CARS](#) | [REAL ESTATE](#) | [RENTALS](#)

top jobs

FEATURED VIDEO:

To View Videos...

Please click on a job description to the right.

Healthcare Positions

Connolly Healthcare

Healthcare Positions

Take Care Health Systems

Home Health Aides; Rn Cas

Horizons Hospice

[View all Top Jobs >>](#)

SEARCH JOBS [FIND >>](#)

[Find a Car](#) | [Sell a Car](#) | [Research](#) | [Loans](#)

Spotlight Deal



2006 Chevrolet Impala LT
\$14,883

Liberty Toyota Scion
(877) 894-8699

'07 GMC Acadia Sport
\$23,600

'06 Volkswagen Beetle 25
\$18,990

'05 Jeep Liberty Limited
\$13,995

'07 Ford Edge SEL Plus
\$23,200

- **4-door Sedans**
- **Sport Utility Coupe**
- **Convertibles**
- **Sports Wagons**
- **Pick-up Trucks**

SEARCH CARS Used New [Select Make...](#) [Any Model](#) [FIND >>](#)



Spotlight Deal

\$90,000
12135 Academy Rd #24
Byberry 19154



Spotlight Deal

\$199,900
79 N Savanna Dr
Pottstown 19465

SEARCH REAL ESTATE [FIND >>](#)



Spotlight Deal

\$995
The Victor
Camden 08102



Spotlight Deal

\$1,350
Greenwood Terrace - Model 3A
Jenkintown 19046

SEARCH RENTALS [FIND >>](#)

express HEADLINES

- An eroding mission**
- Bush's last official trip to Philly**
- Opening doors to painful pasts**
- South St. Bridge's shutdown arrives**
- Man shot after pointing BB gun at officer**

PROMOTIONS

- Philly.com Fan Spotlight Contests
- Philadelphia Visitors Guide
- Philadelphia Business Today
- Philadelphia Restaurants
- Philadelphia Sports

photo GALLERY

LEN'S AUTO BODY

4819 COTTMAN AVENUE ---- 24 HOUR TOWING

NEW YORK DIAMOND EXCHANGE

DEALERS' PRICES TO THE PUBLIC

DATA CARPET & FLOORING

FREE SHOP-AT-HOME SERVICE.... 215-332-4597

THE CHOTINER FIRM

LEGAL SERVICES FOR PEOPLE

WASHERS OUTLET

LOWEST PRICES IN THE CITY!

Philly.com: [News](#) | [What's Happening](#) | [Sports](#) | [Restaurants & Food](#) | [Arts & Entertainment](#) | [Living](#) | [Green](#) | [Business](#) | [Video](#) | [Opinion](#)

Site Services: [Advertise on Philly.com](#) | [View print ads and special sections](#) | [Mobile Edition](#) | [The e-Inquirer](#) | [Join Our Team](#) | [News In Education](#)

The Inquirer: [News](#) | [Front Page](#) | [Sports](#) | [Business](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [Arts & Entertainment](#) | [Food, Home & Life](#) | [Health & Science](#) | [Education](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Blogs & Columns](#) | [Subscriber Services](#)

Daily News: [City & Local](#) | [Sports](#) | [Yo! Features](#) | [Columnists](#) | [Daily News Opinion](#) | [Photos](#) | [Multimedia](#) | [National News](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [Subscriber Services](#)

[Phrequency](#) | [The Trend](#) | [Active Adult Housing](#) | [Beach and Bay Homes](#) | [Homes and Living](#) | [Homes and Living - Ocean County](#) | [Communities Magazine](#) | [Employment Weekly](#) | [Taste of Philadelphia](#) | [Parade Magazine](#)

[About Philly.com](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Terms of Use & Privacy Statement](#) | Copyright 2008

[Latest News Feed](#)  [RSS](#)  [MY YAHOO!](#) [All RSS Feeds](#)