



The 2017 Swedish Porridge Championship

So, what do you do once you've won the World Porridge Championship and the World Speciality Porridge Championship? Turns out you become a porridge judge!

That was the challenge set for me by Catarina Arfwidsson. "Why don't you come out to Steninge Vandrarhem and judge our Swedish Porridge Championships?" she said, the idea being that the winners would go forward to compete for the Golden Spurtle at Carrbridge, UK.

"Bring Jane," she said, "Bring the dogs," she said, "Mostly, bring lots of Spons!" she said, (that is a whole separate story!). It was too tricky to take the dogs, so we left them in the care of our friends Yvonne and Susan and packed our bags. The best way to travel was Edinburgh-Copenhagen then continue by train, which meant crossing the Oresund Bridge (yeah, the one off the telly), definitely a highlight.



The competitors



Whiskey tasting

We met the competitors on Friday evening and enjoyed a taste of Swedish single malt whisky. On the Saturday I met my fellow judges, Asa Agmyr and Lova Brodin, who quickly decided that I should be head judge. After opening speeches, we were sent off to the judging room so that we didn't know whose porridge was which. We didn't have long to wait for the first of the eighteen bowls to arrive and, as they started to pile up, we realised the enormity of the task ahead of us. We considered nuttiness, creaminess, and salt in the traditional category, but the range of speciality dishes had much wider criteria. There were sweet and savoury versions and we also had to look at presentation and use of ingredients.

After lunch, which featured more oatmeal, we reconvened to judge the junior competition, which proved almost too close to call. With the speciality and junior winners decided, it was time for our three top scoring traditional competitors to cook off for the final. By this stage, we all had a clear idea of what we were looking for in a good porridge, and there was quite a lot of debate, but when we added our scores we found we had a winner by one point, with third place only two points behind. This was a considerable relief!



Cooking away – using spurtles, of course!



Beautiful porridge



So, after a restorative glass of Glenmorangie, we made our way up to the hall to announce the results. This is the bit I remember most vividly from the World Championships, two delighted winners and everybody else wanting to know why it wasn't them! We then had a relaxed evening of food and wine with jazz guitars in the background, but my porridge duties weren't over yet. On the Sunday we served a porridge brunch featuring the winners' dishes, a bircher muesli, and my version of likuni phala, which is the dish served to kids in school by the Scottish charity Mary's Meals, all washed down with a range of Catarina's delicious smoothies.

I have to say it was a privilege to have so many people cooking their hearts out to serve us their best dishes, and I would like to commend them all for their efforts. I would also like to thank Salta Kvarn for their sponsorship of the event and the goodie bags they handed out at the end.

And the winners were-

Traditional:	Ellinor Persson
Speciality:	Per Carlsson
Junior Traditional:	Alice Ljungberg
Junior Speciality:	Alva Wester



The winners

P.S.: If you would like me to come and judge your porridge anywhere in the world I am available....

Neal Robertson,
World Porridge Champion 2010
World Speciality Porridge Champion 2011

www.steningevandrarhem.se

www.goldenspurtle.com

www.thesponco.com