

## DELICIOUS OR DISGUSTING? THE WINDING JOURNEY OF COLOSTRUM IN ESTONIAN FOOD CULTURE

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines the changing meaning and status of colostrum in Estonian food culture, relying on data drawn from ethnographic archives and historical sources, cookbooks, and the media. From seasonal food consumed by both Estonian peasants and the Baltic German elite it has been transformed into a modern functional food. The study provides a lens through which to examine the economic, social, and cultural factors that have shaped the modernisation of food culture in Estonia as well as contemporary interpretations of food heritage.

**KEYWORDS:** food culture • colostrum • milk • ethnographic archives • cookbooks

### INTRODUCTION

In spring 2018, the Estonian National Museum (ENM) launched a food souvenir competition to promote product development based on food heritage and to diversify product selection at the museum shop. The competition was also expected to provide materials for researchers of contemporary interpretations of food heritage.<sup>1</sup> One of the products submitted to the competition – colostrum powder – gave rise to disputes. Whereas some members of the jury tended to regard it as an interesting innovation, a functional food based on local historical tradition, to others it seemed not only a disgusting but also a possibly unethical product. Consequently, the museum shop considered the idea of putting it on sale too risky. This incident highlighted the dilemmas related to the interpretation and reception of traditional rural food and dishes in modern urbanised society. Furthermore, it showcased the dramatic changes in attitudes towards milk and

milk products over the past few decades, a transformation “from perfect food to hazardous substance”, as Swedish ethnologist Håkan Jönsson put it (2019: 1). At the same time, it raised questions about the historical background of colostrum, a seasonal and special food known in many traditional cultures (Walker 2000; Valenze 2011; Kurlansky 2018, etc.), as well as questioning its modernised revival.

Eating habits and attitudes towards food are shaped by the availability of products as well as cultural and religious understandings and ideas about what is desirable, tasty, edible or inedible. Food is given significance by how it is narratively framed, and by the significance we digest along with the calories (Vester 2015: 1–2). From the viewpoint of semiotics of culture, culinary traditions and practices constitute heterogeneous semiotic systems that can be analysed as cultural ‘texts’. The historical dynamics of meanings attributed to certain foodstuffs or dishes confirms the inherently heterogeneous nature of food, a characteristic that Juri Lotman (1990: 125) attributes to the semiosphere. Thus, the examination of food practices, especially transcultural culinary encounters, can shed new light on food as a network of interrelated embodied processes of semiosis (Parasecoli 2011: 646–652).

This article aims to examine the changing meaning and status of colostrum in Estonian food culture, relying on data drawn from ethnographic archives and historical sources, cookbooks and the media. Mapping the diverse uses of, and ambivalent attitudes towards, colostrum from the 18th century onwards sheds light on the specific Estonian ways of food modernisation and the meanings of food heritage in contemporary society.

Until the 1990s the main focus of ethnological studies of Estonian food culture was on rural foodways of the 19th and early 20th centuries (Lööke 1959; Moora 2007); modernising and contemporary food received attention only recently (Võsu and Kannike 2011; Bardone et al. 2016; Kannike and Bardone 2018; Bardone and Spalvena 2019; Bardone and Kannike 2020). Likewise, food history has mainly been examined from the viewpoint of one social group (Estonian peasants, or the Baltic German elite), yet there are also some studies that analyse the use of foodstuffs or dishes over a longer period and from a trans-social perspective (Viires 1985; Jürjo 2012; Põltsam-Jürjo 2013; 2017a; 2020; Jürgenson 2015). Older milk economy has been examined by ethnologist Gustav Ränk (1956); however, in his historical study of cheesemaking in Scandinavia he argued that the process of making colostrum cheese is too easy and thus of no further analytical interest (Ränk 1987 [1966]: 176). In her major study of Estonian peasant foods, Aliise Moora (2007) discussed milk dishes rather briefly, yet she mentioned colostrum in the context of porridges and sauces. Thus, colostrum has remained a relatively marginal topic in Estonian food studies and the intriguing moments in its history have been overlooked. The studies of Latvian ethnologist Linda Dumpe (1985; 1989; 1998) on milk in Latvian folk culture, and especially her analysis of the cultural connections with neighbouring peoples on the basis of milk economy, are of great comparative interest. Although the ritual significance of colostrum largely remains beyond the scope of this article, some folkloristic overviews of customs related to colostrum among the Finno-Ugric peoples are also worth mentioning (Minnijahmetova 1995; Vinokurova 2009).

The main source for this article was the answers submitted to the Food, Drinks, Seasonings questionnaire from the ENM (Linnus and Manninen 1937) in the correspondents' archive of the ENM<sup>2</sup> (KV 33, 50–52, 55). At the beginning of the 1920s the ENM started a systematic collection of ethnographic reference material, with among other issues the questions covering rural foodways. The lengthy 95-item questionnaire of 1937 included questions about colostrum in the section dedicated to milk dishes: "Was milk (*tsäärpiim*, *ternepiim*) used right after a calf was delivered? What was made from it? How?" The years from 1937 to 1940 provided more than 7,000 pages of material on local food culture. The answers originated almost exclusively from rural regions, were mainly based on the answers given by local older people and described peasants' foodways. Only a few respondents – mainly schoolchildren – highlighted changes and described some novel dishes. In addition, answers to questionnaires on dairying, drawn up by Endla Jaagosild (1973; 1975), provide good background information (KV 306, 502). The article also makes use of material collected during fieldwork in the 1920s and 1930s as well as in the second half of the 20th century, preserved at the ENM's Ethnographic Archives (EA), which gives a better overview of the new usages of colostrum. In 2017 Anu Järs drew up a questionnaire about the usages of colostrum. Although only 18 answers were submitted (KV 1321), they were considerably more substantial than the former ones, and the material demonstrates the contacts of both rural and urban inhabitants with colostrum and colostrum foods from the pre-World War II period to date.

Such questionnaires put the respondent in the frame and in this way influence the structure and content of answers. We thus have to keep in mind that the correspondents' recollections are not just individual memories but also constitute a collective memory initiated and shaped by institutional interest and research questions (Kõre Saar 1995; Bardone and Kannike 2020). The 1937 questionnaire was aimed at regional descriptions of peasants' vernacular foods. Therefore, the respondents have striven for objective generalisations and regarded innovations in food culture as insignificant. The 2017 questionnaire focused on biographical and subjective aspects, and so the answers involve more context, with foods often described in connection with family stories.

Additional source material comes from social media, involving food blogs as well as posts to the Nostalgic Food Facebook group. Certain aspects of contemporary attitudes towards colostrum were also discussed in some informal interviews conducted in Tartu.

While archival materials mainly give a good overview of peasants' food culture, information about other social groups can be found in other types of source. The intelligentsia's descriptions, reminiscences and dictionaries offer data about food culture and views of the common Baltic Germans' way of life, who until the 20th century constituted the local upper social stratum. The older history of cookbooks has not been studied in detail in Estonia, and we also lack exact data about the spread of cookbooks printed in Europe or manuscript recipe collections (Põltsam-Jürjo 2017b: 18). Cookbooks published in Estonia since the 18th century are undoubtedly important, yet are limited sources when attempting to estimate actual foodways. It is difficult to tell to what extent recipes were used or how precisely they were followed, not to mention social norms related to food or sensual aspects thereof (see in detail Albala 2012; Notaker 2017).

The methodology used in this study involves combined thematic and critical analysis of different types of source, enabling us to reveal how economic, social, and cultural changes have influenced the production and consumption of a local raw material used for centuries, as well as attitudes towards these materials. Why was colostrum regarded as special in the past? What changes have occurred in attitudes towards it. What is the cause of its revival today? To map the 'journey' of colostrum, the article first gives a historical overview of the names and the availability of this raw material. This is followed by a description of the development of colostrum dishes in light of ethnographic as well as historical sources and cookbooks. Analysis of the 20th and 21st-century material aims to demonstrate, using the example of colostrum, the intertwining of the topics of healthy diet and national food discourse, post-industrial nostalgia and science-based mentality.

#### COLOSTRUM AS A RAW MATERIAL IN THE CONTEXT OF DAIRYING

Milk has always played an important role in Estonian foodways, until the 20th century predominantly consumed in soured form; fresh milk was mainly used for cooking, and as a drink for infants, the elderly and the sick. Drinking fresh milk in great quantities is a rather recent phenomenon related to industrialisation. Peasants used milk only seasonally: "The ways of milk mirrored the seasonal cycle of living creatures before the subversion of natural rhythms by science and technology" (Valenze 2011: 42). In Estonia the dairy foods season was also summer, when cows grazed outside and milk yield was higher. In the autumn the dry period started. When in the spring food supplies became scanty, people looked forward to the calving period when cows started to milk again. "At home the greatest spring event was that cows started to milk again. Then the whole household was fed on colostrum dishes." (KV 1321: 371)

Modern industrial milk, a product with normalised content and taste similar all year round, is a mixture of milk from hundreds of cows. On the farm, on the other hand, changes in the quality of milk were clearly visible. On the first days after calving, the milk is thicker and yellower than ordinarily, and smells and tastes different. Colostrum contains large amounts of different nutrients, such as proteins, vitamins, minerals, and biologically active substances like immunoglobulins, enzymes, hormones, and growth factors. They stimulate the growth of the newly born organism and guarantee its immunity against pathogens. It is food that is indispensable for a new-born calf, which completely lacks its own immune system at birth. Compared to human colostrum, bovine colostrum contains over 100 times more immunoglobulins, which can bind to a wide range of human intestinal and respiratory bacteria as well as viral pathogens, and can also bind to inhalation and some food allergens (Ufman et al. 2018).

The topic of colostrum was raised in Estonian public discourse in connection with reforms in dairying. In the last quarter of the 19th century the Estonian-language press started regular discussions on cattle-raising and dairying problems, as these were seen as having great potential in increasing the profitability of farms (*Perno Postimees* 1875; *Eesti Postimees* 1884). The writers were concerned about the lack of proper care for calves, and emphasised that colostrum was indispensable for them. On the other hand,

the use of colostrum for food was not considered sensible, and even a crime against calves (Leppik 1883: 3; Lillak 1891: 206; 1899: 1). The writings of the period clearly highlighted the economic interests of farms. In the era of promoting and establishing modern dairy associations, colostrum was advertised as an inappropriate raw material for the dairy industry. Livestock owners were educated by telling them that any quantity of colostrum in cheesemaking spoils the whole batch, and that butter made from colostrum spoils easily (*Pölluteadus* 1905). Therefore, dairies did not accept milk from several days before and after calving. However, in very early spring, in the calving period, cheesemakers often complained about colostrum in milk (Pommer 1910).

Colostrum also made its way to townspeople's tables, brought from the countryside, in addition to which cows were also raised in towns. In the winter of 1872, a dairy shop owner in Vaimu Street, Tallinn, advertised colostrum in a local newspaper, saying it was used to make a thick meal called *Kälbertanz* (*Revalsche Zeitung* 1872). Rapid city growth and the modernisation of society put the need for greater regulation of food supply on the agenda (cf. Atkins 2016). Poor-quality milk and dairy products caused great problems and were considered a serious threat to public health. Healthcare specialists were primarily concerned about fake or impure milk, yet problems were also caused by colostrum. As a result, Estonian and Livonian towns began banning the sale of colostrum at the beginning of the 20th century as part of the introduction of dairy trade regulations (*Sunduslikud määrused* 1906). These developments were summarised in the Dairy Law enacted in the Republic of Estonia in 1934, which prohibited the sale of milk obtained from cows 15 days before and 5 days after parturition (*Piimaseadus* 1934); the highest-quality special-choice milk had even stricter requirements (*Piimaseaduse teostamise määrus* 1934).

As milk increasingly became a commodity, in many households in the countryside diet gradually became poorer in terms of dairy products, yet the quantity of colostrum available for cooking increased; for example, in the 1930s the number of cows and their milk yield doubled in the Republic of Estonia (Rootslane 1992: 21).

Soviet rule brought about a great upheaval in Estonian agriculture with collective and state farms replacing peasant farming. Dairy production became concentrated into big collective farms and plants, although about one-fifth of the milk yield still came from private households with one cow. Colostrum was not officially sold but was available from those who kept cows (KV 1321: 365) as well as from the barns of collective farms (KV 1321: 275, 301). Sometimes relatives from the countryside treated their urban kin to a jar of colostrum.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Farm Act (*Eesti NSV taluseadus* 1989) and the wave of privatisation following the dissolution of collective farms gave rise to a new group of private cattle farmers. This, economically complicated, period of time meant that it was essential to make use of everything available; rules were not so strict in the transitional society and colostrum was sold more widely. Since 1994 the number of dairy cows has decreased by more than 50%. Today milk in Estonia is mainly produced on large farms with cows who yield large quantities of milk with small-scale cattle husbandry diminishing quickly – there are quite a few villages with no cows. The production of the average Estonian cow is 9,000–10,000 kilograms of milk per year; colostrum from the first milking per cow is three to ten kilograms. Colostrum yield is considerably higher now, much more than calves need, yet, paradoxically, as a foodstuff it is less

available. Although the sale of colostrum is not forbidden by law, the quantities on the market are small as it is burdensome to gather and preserve it. From the point of view of the modern dairy industry colostrum is defective milk as the technologies used today do not enable it to be processed. (Poikalainen et al. 2012: 30) On the other hand, there are some new opportunities to add value to the colostrum that is not consumed by calves. Foreign colostrum capsules, tablets, and powder are on sale; in 2016 an Estonian company established by local scientists started the production of colostrum powder.

So, we can say that over the past one- and-a-half centuries changes occurred in the quantities, use, regulations and processing of colostrum that reflect different stages in the modernisation of society.

## TERMS AND USAGES

In Estonian literary language the fluid secreted by female mammals after parturition is called *ternes* or *ternespiim* (colostrum). The Estonian etymological dictionary presents the word as being of disputable Proto-Indo-Iranian origin (*Eesti etümolooiasõnaraamat* 2012: 525). Historically, this name was used only in northern Estonia and northern Pärnu County. The words *säärpiim* or *tsäärpiim* were used across almost all of southern Estonia (Saareste 1962: 143–144; KV 33, 50–52, 55). Colostrum was also called *värskpiim* ('fresh milk') across almost all of Estonia. The Estonian Swedes called it 'raw milk' while Baltic Germans used the names *Kälberdanz* or *Kalbertanz* and *Beestmilch* (Hupel 1780: 241; Unterberger 1853: 38; von Gutzeit 1859: 106; Sallmann 1880: 29, 33) as well as *frische Milch* ('fresh milk') (*Allgemeines* 1846: 164).

In Estonia colostrum dishes were on the table of both peasants and the Baltic German nobility. Here Orthodox south-eastern Estonia stands out as an exception with plenty of negative records (KV 51: 814; 55: 108). Orthodox Russians regarded colostrum as dirty and did not use it for food for the first 6–14 days, although after World War I this attitude gradually disappeared (EA 28: 525).

Generally, colostrum started to be used immediately after calving. Most respondents mention that the first milk after calving was suitable for food (KV 52: 546). Respondents said that the calf got its share first and the rest could be taken as food (KV 33: 1986; 50: 221). A few respondents also mention the custom of giving the first milk to the cow (KV 51: 214; 52: 1665). In Vändra, for example, the first milk after calving was put on the heel of a loaf and given to the cow "to clean the cow", then "about a calf's earful" was milked for the calf, and the rest was taken for food (KV 33: 1816).

The answers to the 1937 questionnaire reveal that, as a rule, colostrum was not used without heating it, and that it was supposed to have a laxative effect (KV 33: 1365). However, there are a few records of contrary opinions, for instance according to Kadri Õunapuu (b. 1858) colostrum was skimmed and the cream used to make butter that was meant for children (KV 33: 1816–1817). In Latvia people have believed in the healing properties of this butter (Dumpe 1998: 187). Answers to the 2017 questionnaire include a few descriptions of drinking colostrum dating back to the pre-World War II period. For example, a woman born in Järva County in the 1930s recalled that in her childhood she and her brother were given colostrum to drink, which they did not like, unlike other colostrum foods; she also mentioned that some farmers drank colostrum to gain strength while some people used it as medicine (KV 1321: 325–326).

Colostrum was used for food in the neighbouring countries to Estonia: in Latvia (Dumpe 1998), Ingria (EA 38: 405), Finland (Grotenfelt 1916), Sweden (Matkultur) and in the Nordic countries at large (Ränk 1987 [1966]). On the other hand, in Russia the attitude was the opposite, i.e. Orthodox Russian peasants regarded colostrum as dirty and threw it away or gave it to the calf (Zelenin 1927: 62). Friedrich Unterberger (1853: 38), a veterinarian from Livonia, noticed that in the Simbirsk Governorate the local people were disgusted by the first milk, although it was regarded as a delicacy in the Baltic provinces of Russia.

#### COLOSTRUM IN BALTIC GERMAN FOOD CULTURE AND HISTORICAL COOKBOOKS

The earliest known description of a colostrum dish in Estonia originates from 1777. Baltic German August Wilhem Hupel (1777: 252) wrote that in some households a thick meal called *Kälbertanz* was cooked from the first milk after calving, also mentioning that this dish was slightly disgusting (Hupel 1795: 103). *Kälbertanz* earned a similar estimation from Johann Christoph Petri (1802: 371), a German who had worked for years as a private teacher in Estonia, and who, when describing the feasts and table manners of the local nobility, pointed out, besides elaborate tasty dishes, some robust national foods that were not given to guests in those households "where good taste ruled". *Kälbertanz* – a thick porridge-like meal cooked from colostrum – seemed to him the most unpleasant one.

Georg von Oettingen (b. 1824; 1926: 129), who was brought up at Visusti manor in southern Estonia, recalled *Kalberdanz*, a dish served for supper, as an especially memorable meal from his childhood. According to Woldemar von Gutzeit (1859: 106), *Beestmilch* or *Kälberdanz*, which he described as a sort of pudding, was a favoured food; Guido Eckardt (1904: 15) also stated that this dish was very popular in certain circles, yet he himself loathed it.

The first Estonian-language cookbook, *Kitchen and Cookbook*, was published in Tallinn in 1781. It was a translation of Christina (Kajsa) Warg's successful handbook in Swedish, the Estonian-language edition was meant for Estonian-origin cooks working in German households, not for the Estonian peasantry.<sup>3</sup> Warg's cookbook was widely used in Baltic German circles (Viires 1985: 158) and, to make the use of the book easier for Germans, the Estonian edition had the names of dishes in German as well.

Warg's cookbook included two recipes for colostrum dishes: *terne piim* under dairy dishes (1781: 585) and *terne pima kook* under cakes (ibid.: 531). It is remarkable that their parallel names in German in the Estonian edition are *Kälberdanz*, *Kälberdanz-kuchen*, not *Best-Milch*, *Bestmilch-Kuchen*, as in the German translation (Warg 1772: 393, 364) of the book (in the original *Kalf-Dans*, *Kalfdans-Kaka*). Unfortunately, we cannot say whether the dish, already known here under the name *Kälbertanz*, was also cooked in a similar way.

To make *terne piim*, you had to take about a litre of colostrum from the third milking, and some cream from the first and all the cream from the second milking; for flavour Warg used sugar, cinnamon and cardamom. After heating it had to be like *bubert* (light and fluffy egg and semolina pudding). When the composition was appropriate,

a platter with the mixture was placed on a hot water vessel. If eaten as a warm dish, it was sprinkled with sugar and cinnamon; if cold, it was served with whipped cream. To make a cake, fresh cream, orange water, sugar, butter, egg yolks, and breadcrumbs were added to colostrum.

The first original cookbooks were published at the beginning of the 19th century. Katharina Fehre's 1816 *Livonian Cooking and Housekeeping Book* was translated into Estonian in 1824 and into Latvian in 1851, including one recipe with colostrum as an ingredient, a cake baked in the stove (Fehre 1824: 369, *törnepima-kook*) flavoured with nutmeg and cardamom; the other ingredients were flour and egg white.

In the middle of the 19th century, several German-language cookbooks were published, one of the most influential of which was Lyda Panck's *Cookbook for Russian Baltic Provinces*, 1844, meant for "bourgeois households", i.e., townspeople. The urban population was increasing, mainly due to the urban migration of Estonians, and this was probably why it was translated into Estonian in 1864, followed by numerous reprints. Since about 10,000 copies of Panck's cookbook were published in Estonian (Viires 1985: 161), her cooking instructions were probably used in many Estonian urban households. Her recipe (Panck 1844: 127; 1864: 255) was simpler than that of Warg's: the only ingredients added to the colostrum were fresh milk and salt. The ways of eating it were also similar to those suggested by Warg: warm with fresh cream and cinnamon or cold with whipped cream.

Another cookbook published in the Baltic provinces, titled *General Practical Housekeeping and Home Economics Handbook for Young Housewives in Russian Baltic Provinces*, widened the former choice of recipes: in addition to colostrum baked in the stove, to which egg yolks whisked with sugar, grated lemon peel, cinnamon, and cardamom were added (*Allgemeines* 1846: 167), it also included a recipe for colostrum noodles (ibid.: 164). In order to make these, only flour was added to colostrum. The cookbook stated that properly dried noodles could be preserved for more than a year, and tasted like freshly made ones as long as the soup was boiled a bit longer. *Livonian Housekeeping Handbook for Each Household*, which was published in Riga, provided a recipe both for colostrum groats and noodles (Daudert 1858: 182). For the latter, colostrum was mixed with water, flour, and a little butter, for the former it was mixed with water and potato starch. Henriette Daudert suggested that groats could be used to make both porridge and pudding. Martha Bielenstein's *Crises-time Cookbook*, published during World War I in Riga, also taught that colostrum could be used to make noodles instead of eggs (Bielenstein 1918: 119).

The first cookbook for farmers' wives was published by Karl Treufeldt in 1881. Treufeldt's small selection of dishes (64 recipes) also included an instruction on how to boil colostrum (Treufeldt 1881: 21), with which Treufeldt was probably following Panck's recipe – both the ingredients and the wording of the recipe refer to this. Bearing in mind the target group of the cookbook he did not recommend any fancy additions to the dish. Mai Reiwelt's *Instructions for Cooking to All Estonian Housewives and Those Who Want to Become Housewives* (1883: 63), suggests baking it in the stove and eating it with cinnamon and sugar. Calendar writer Mats Tõnisson's *Peasant Foods* (1889),<sup>4</sup> which gained great popularity among Estonians, included the first recipe for boiling colostrum in a pot, which was similar to peasants' practice (see below). Both fresh milk and water were added to colostrum from the second milking, and it was flavoured with

salt. Tõnisson (1889: 34) taught housewives that, when bringing colostrum to the boil, it had to be stirred often and not boiled too much as “this made the taste dull”. In addition to soup, Tõnisson had a simple recipe for making a colostrum dish in the stove (*ibid.*). At the same time Jaan Koor, who called himself a master chef, started to publish cookbooks containing much more sumptuous recipes. The recipe in the dessert section (Koor 1896: 356) also included rosewater, which was often used in desserts in Baltic German cuisine. Remarkably, Koor (*ibid.*: 357) has several recipes for making *mulgi korp* – small open pies – in a version of which he recommends colostrum porridge as a filling (instead of semolina porridge).

In the early 20th century, cookbooks by Marra Korth, who operated a cooking school in Riga, were widely spread among both Germans and Estonians. They also included a kitchen calendar, in which Korth presented monthly menus. The February menu includes *Beestmilch* (Korth 1911: 111), a plentiful recipe including rosewater and crushed almonds served with sugar, cinnamon, and cream (*ibid.*: 436). In addition to cookbooks, Korth influenced local food culture through her disciples, one of whom was Adeline Tannbaum, a renowned author of Estonian cookbooks in the first half of the 20th century. Tannbaum (1924: 123) also used almonds in her recipe, but left out rosewater and, instead of cream, suggested eating colostrum with milk.

Earlier cookbooks were written for upper- and middle-class households, with colostrum in these recipes mainly used as an ingredient for desserts. Some of the recipes were repeated; however, we can also see changes that reflect adaptation to the requirements of the period as well as the target group’s needs and possibilities. In hindsight, it is impossible to estimate how precisely the recipes were followed or what the extent of prejudice against colostrum was. It is possible that some other colostrum dishes, for instance, porridge, made their way to the tables of manor people or burghers, yet we lack records to confirm this.

#### COLOSTRUM IN THE PEASANTS’ DIET

It was only in the last decades of the 19th century that cookbooks became part of common people’s reading material. Traditionally, cooking skills were taught in families and were passed on orally. Peasants’ everyday diet was quite simple until the beginning of the 20th century and usually consisted of one course only. Before the second half of the 19th century food at Estonian farms was cooked on an open fire in front of the stove in the threshing room. A large amount was cooked at a time, and this was later warmed up or eaten cold (Moora 2007: 44). Desserts were practically unknown, and colostrum was mainly used by peasants to make ‘savoury’ food.

All over Estonia colostrum was boiled for soup or porridge. When colostrum was too fatty, it was diluted with water or fresh milk so as not to be “too strong” (EA 17: 585). Colostrum was heated until it coagulated, and milk or water added at the end of the boiling process. As various grains occupied the central place in the peasants’ diet, colostrum was mainly eaten with (cold) porridge or bread (KV 50: 263; 51: 594; 52: 1535; EA 34: 319), although it was also eaten as an individual dish (KV 33: 630, 1986), especially if it was thick. In northern Estonia colostrum was boiled with hulled barley or, more seldom, with barley flour (KV 33: 1937). The groats were boiled until soft, poured

over with colostrum, boiled a bit more, and finally fresh milk was added – if available (KV 33: 1135). On Saaremaa both groats and potatoes were added to the colostrum soup (EA 30: 394). In Tartu and Võru counties, where buckwheat was grown rather extensively, porridge called *sääripuder* or *tsääriputru* was also made from unground buckwheat (Moora 2007: 128–130).

Meat was highly appreciated, yet households were continuously low on it, so either meat or milk was used when cooking, not both of them together. By the calving time meat supplies had often finished. However, in the wealthy households of Mulgi region, Viljandi County, porridge was also made with meat, adding wheat or barley flour to make it thicker (EA 32: 187, 495).

In eastern and southern Estonia colostrum was more often made in the stove; it was put into the stove in a pot or a bowl and kept until it coagulated (KV 52: 269). The Russian-type stove popular in Setomaa and around Lake Peipus was well suited for this purpose, yet colostrum could also be heated in a barn stove, for example, together with bread (KV 52: 1665). In eastern Estonia milk soup was made with stove-baked colostrum: the coagulated colostrum was cut into pieces and put into ordinary milk to thicken it (KV 55: 101; EA 37: 703–705). As in the case of several cultural phenomena, southern Estonia was more similar to Latvia than to northern Estonia in terms of colostrum foods; in Latvia colostrum was also heated in the stove, whereas porridge and soup were cooked seldom (Dumpe 1998: 188–189). To flavour colostrum, peasants used only a little salt, if any.<sup>5</sup>

Numerous beliefs and customs related to protective magic were connected with making dishes from colostrum and with eating them: for example, tree bark, silver coins or pieces of coal were put in the milk bowl (KV 50: 691–693; 52: 303; EA 42: 393); it was forbidden to blow on it to cool it (KV 52: 1899); the eaters hit each other's heads with spoons, using different formulas/addresses (cf. Kõiva 2017: 151–152). The ENM's questionnaire focused on the material aspects of food with less attention focused on rituals,<sup>6</sup> yet folklorists have described how the first milk and dishes made from it were sacrificed to guarantee luck with livestock and good milk yield (Eisen 1917: 279; Mäemets 2017: 42–43).

Colostrum food was shared with neighbours (KV 50: 1457; 52: 1086; EA 4: 559; 238: 39–40), especially with those whose cows were still in the dry period, and was given to the poor of the village (EA 238: 142). Village children were also invited to the household to eat colostrum as a rare food (EA 30: 599) and it was also taken as a special treat to faraway relatives (EA 2: 773). Dishes made from colostrum were regarded as special and tasty, and children particularly loved them (KV 33: 1053; 52: 1395).

In the last decades of the 19th century, everyday life underwent rapid reform. In new houses with a chimney and a kitchen range, cooking was quicker and easier, which contributed to the diversification of the diet. Along with traditional colostrum dishes, food was also made in a frying pan. Rising standards of living brought more meat to the table, so fried meat or meat sauce was made with colostrum (EA 19: 422). When ovens were taken into use, colostrum also started to be baked in regions where this had not been customary before. Although the methods of cooking changed, savoury dishes still predominated.

Along with these dishes, desserts started to appear in the diet in the last quarter of the 19th century. Barley flour or wheat flour pancakes were fried to treat guests or the

household on Sundays. In the calving season, colostrum was used instead of eggs (KV 33: 1816; EA 40: 551). It was used to make different oven-baked foods, such as *karask* (barley bread), *sepik* (wholemeal bread), and *sai* (white bread) (KV 33: 483, 1176, 1514; 50: 574; EA 18: 596); added to the dough of fine rye bread to make it fluffy (KV 33: 1816). In Mulgi region, where small open pies (*korpp*) were traditionally made, colostrum was used as filling (KV 51: 301; 52: 1749).

Dumpling soup was a new and highly appreciated dish in the peasants' diet, and there are many records of using colostrum instead of eggs to make dumpling dough (KV 33: 215, 483; EA 36: 641).

In peasants' traditional food culture colostrum was an appreciated seasonal food that was used to make special dishes or as an addition to flavour staple foods. The rise in living standards, new cooking conditions, and increase in milk yield resulted in the diversification of colostrum foods.

#### MILK AND COLOSTRUM AS PART OF A BALANCED DIET IN THE 1920S–1930S

In the Republic of Estonia (1918–1940) numerous cookbooks were published and, more than before, dietary advice and recipes appeared in the media. Home economists and nutritionists advocated healthy and balanced, as well as economically viable, diets in the media and in handbooks (Ottenson 1931: 65; Martin 1934; Sild 1938). As the conscious shaping of the family's dietary habits and menu planning were regarded as essential, several magazines started to publish monthly recommended menus with detailed advice on using seasonal foodstuffs.

Attempts were made to influence people's dietary habits with state-organised campaigns. At the end of the 1920s and even more in the 1930s milk became a nationally important topic. "Good healthy milk is of primary importance in the nation's healthy diet, healthcare, and fight against epidemics," Estonian politician August Arras (1927: 3) said in a brochure published within the national healthcare campaign. He argued that milk was vital for each nation as it was the cheapest and most available food for poorer people. "Use more milk, and you will spare expenses on your food!" the newspaper *Postimees* announced during dairy week in 1930. It was important that using milk also supported local agriculture and the national economy (Kärk 1930). Analogously to several European countries (Burnett 1999: 42; Jönsson 2019) a special Milk Promotion Board was established in Estonia in 1935 to encourage milk consumption. Milk was advertised as an ideal food, saying that it was high in nutrients and easily digestible, and at the same time economical. Milk and dairy dishes were regarded as especially important for the health of children and schoolchildren (Ottenson 1938). The systematic introduction of milk as a foodstuff also helped to highlight the values of colostrum.

Recommendations about how to use colostrum in larger quantities and more diversely were targeted at country people, who often had so much colostrum when cows started milking that they "did not know what to do with it" (*Ühistegelised Uudised* 1936: 13). These recommendations said that calves did not need all the milk, so it was possible or even obligatory to use it for cooking, as colostrum was more nutritious than ordinary milk and contained large amounts of necessary minerals.

Colostrum played an important role in seasonal diet. Calving took place in spring when meat supplies had diminished considerably and eggs were in short supply. Colostrum, due to its high protein content, could replace both meat and eggs. Eggs were valued highly in spring, so it was practical to sell them and use colostrum in their stead at home. Colostrum foods were regularly suggested items in the recommended winter and spring menus of the magazine *Taluperenaine*.

During the interwar period recipes for both simple and fancier colostrum dishes from soups (Põld-Riives 1926: 21) to rich desserts were published (Sild-Kutsar 1941: 215). As more unusual examples we could mention a spread made from Baltic herring and colostrum (Vitismann 1931: 20–21), blood bread (*Ühistegelised Uudised* 1933), and cottage cheese (with caraway seeds) (*Ajakiri Kõigile* 1940: 334). The recipes also included a dessert similar to *crème brûlée*, which was served with different ingredients: cinnamon and sugar, as well as vanilla, bitter or sweet almonds, raisins, nuts, dried fruit, and candied apples. While older cookbooks had recommended it mainly with (whipped) cream, now also juice sauces and jams were suggested. In addition to salty colostrum soups, recipes for soups flavoured with cinnamon and sugar appeared.

There were plenty of recipes in which colostrum was not the central ingredient but rather acted as a replacement for eggs. This was recommended for wholemeal bread, pancake batter, cake dough as well as for dumplings, and especially for casseroles. The latter became widely popular in the 1930s as cheap, nutritious, and easy-to-make dish (*Maamees* 1933; Kaisla 1939). Colostrum was ideal for casseroles (Bachmann 1935: 71) and complied with the era's requirements for thrifty housekeeping. Colostrum recipes included carrot, cabbage, pumpkin, and apple, as well as onion and onion sprouts. When in the 1930s the preference was to use local produce, recipes for Baltic herring casseroles with colostrum appeared (Vitismann 1931: 28; *Taluperenaine* 1935; Purres 1939: 7–8, 16).

Archival sources show that in the 1930s colostrum was widely used in the countryside. Traditional salty dishes were made, yet in colostrum soup rice and semolina started to replace hulled barley. An ordinary food was a sauce similar to scrambled eggs with pieces of pork fat, usually eaten with potatoes (EA 16: 81). Different savoury casseroles were made, for example with pieces of pork fat, barley groats (EA 204: 282; 211: 455;), Baltic herring, and vegetables (KV 1321: 308–310).

Increasingly, colostrum started to be used to make desserts. Pancakes and different oven-baked foods were popular; colostrum pudding was flavoured with sugar or sugar and cinnamon, more seldom with almonds or raisins (KV 50: 861). Sweet pudding was eaten with milk or jam (KV 52: 1479). Changes in the food culture of the period are clearly visible in the material collected in the second half of the 20th century. For example, ethnographer Endla Lõoke (Jaagosild) noted in 1959 that in Karula parish, Valga County, the custom of boiling colostrum had started to disappear 30 years before (EA 70: 181). While the answers to the first questionnaire distributed in Järva County talked about boiling colostrum, in material about the pre-war period collected in the same region in the early 1990s (EA 235; EA 241) casseroles, sweet oven-baked cakes, and pancakes dominated.

The answers to the 2017 questionnaire about pre-war food culture featured flexible and pragmatic use of raw material. This proceeded from the needs and possibilities of each household, as well as from the raw material itself. For example, colostrum from

the first milking was used to make desserts in the oven, and later for soups (KV 1321: 372) or pancakes (KV 1321: 320); a mother with many children boiled soups for nearly a whole week because they cooked quickly (KV 1321: 375); in another household only colostrum from the first milking was used for food and the rest was given to domestic animals (KV 1321: 355).

So the more diverse use of colostrum during the interwar period shows the rise in living standards as well as the modernisation of food culture, along with the increasing influence of dietary experts and the press.

#### FROM NATIONAL FOOD TO FUNCTIONAL FOOD: COLOSTRUM AFTER WORLD WAR II

In the second half of the 20th century, fewer and fewer colostrum food recipes were published and nothing principally novel was added, although during the same period dishes made from colostrum started to be defined as national. A cookbook compiled by local authors in the mid-1960s has a subsection on colostrum dishes, and the authors suggest that colostrum can be used as a replacement for an egg and milk mixture in casseroles (Eesmaa et al. 1966: 163). A cookbook from 1984 no longer recommends this as the issue is not topical – eggs were available, yet colostrum was in short supply –, although there were a few recipes using colostrum in this cookbook (Masso 1984: 146, 399).

The 1937 ENM questionnaire included questions about, among other things, old national foods and the region's favourites. A few respondents offered colostrum soup as their favourite dish (KV 33: 1419; 51:1763), yet no-one called it a national dish. However, it is interesting to note that at the beginning of the 19th century penman Petri (1802: 370–371) called *Kälbertanz*, along with some other local specialities, “national food”, opposing them to examples from German, French, Swedish, and Russian cuisines in the Baltic German diet.

The late 1930s saw an emphasis on some national dishes, such as *mulgikapsad* (sauerkraut with pork and barley groats) and *kama* (mixture of roasted barley, rye, oat, and pea flour), with the importance of using domestic foodstuffs being stressed. During the Soviet period the promotion of the diversity of national cultures to some extent forced these cultures to be invented. In 1955, the Estonian edition of the translated *A Book about Tasty and Healthy Food* (Rus. *Kniga* 1953, Est. Masso 1955)<sup>7</sup> ends with a chapter on national dishes, including a version of colostrum soup with sugar (ibid.: 377). Paradoxically, sugar at that time was in short supply and people had to queue up even for limited amounts. A cookbook translated from Latvian into Estonian in the 1960s was supplemented with a chapter on Estonian national dishes that included colostrum soup (Peterson and Pasopa 1968: 289); a recipe for oven-baked colostrum was already in the original version of the book (Pētersone and Pasopa 1957: 255). Silvia Kalvik, the author of the *Estonian National Dishes* cookbook (1981), based her book on museum collections, probably also using recipes from the pre-war period. The dozen recipes for colostrum dishes include, in addition to traditional farm foods, some newer recipes, although Kalvik's selection is still ‘rustic’, i.e. it had no desserts with foreign flavourings (ibid.: 41, 98, 100–102).

In 1947, Else Rabadik published a cookbook in Stockholm that was supposed to help Estonian housewives make their customary dishes in the exile.<sup>8</sup> The chapter on desserts includes a typical pre-war recipe for colostrum pudding with cinnamon and almonds (Rabadik 1947: 151). Descriptions can be found in diasporic media, in which colostrum was clearly perceived as something national. For example, journalist Heino Jõe commented on a Toronto display of different peoples' Easter dishes in a Canadian Estonian newspaper and was upset that one of the dishes on the Estonian festive table was pashka. He argued that a colostrum dish could have represented Estonian cuisine much better, and advised the "city ladies" where they could buy colostrum (*Vaba Eestlane* 1967). When the Estonian Ethnography Society in Canada called for the recording and preservation of 'old folk art', colostrum was presented as "ethnographically national" in addition to *sõir* (curd cheese) and mead (*Vaba Eestlane* 1974).

After World War II, colostrum continued to be a valued foodstuff and was used widely in different dishes. According to some reminiscences (EA 204: 295), casseroles promoted at country women's courses in the first period of the Republic of Estonia became widespread during the Soviet period under the influence of a popular TV cookery show called *Look into the Kitchen* (1971–1992). Answers to the 2017 questionnaire describe the post-war years and the first years of collective farms. Food reminiscences of the Soviet period mainly highlight the deficiency of food and problems obtaining it (Bardone and Kannike 2020). When milk was not available, colostrum boiled with water, and pancakes made from colostrum, tasted very well (KV 1321: 284–285). When recalling the Soviet period, respondents also described resourcefulness in cooking, for example, as cinnamon was rarely available, colostrum was flavoured with cocoa powder (KV 1321: 290).

Over time the use of colostrum as food started to decrease. The number of cow owners diminished, and those who did keep cows did not consume colostrum themselves but fed it to domestic animals. When the urban population increased and urban-born generations appeared, the number of people for whom colostrum was unknown increased. Yet, in economically difficult years that followed the end of the Soviet period quite a few people, who had no experience in this area, learned how to use it in cooking. Some farmers made attempts to trade colostrum products at that time, with little success (KV 1321: 326).

In the post-Soviet economy, formerly homogeneous foodways were replaced with diverse patterns of consumption along with the stratification of lifestyles (Keller 2004; Bardone and Kannike 2020). The rise in living standards and the choice and availability of products after the mid-1990s entailed another change in the status of colostrum – this time it became a rare product that generally received attention in the context of regional food heritage.

In the 2000s, the consumption of food began to be based on lifestyle choices, often highlighting the natural, the organic, and the healthy. Furthermore, in contemporary urban food discourse, traditional foods and dishes generate nostalgic associations that make our contemporary urbanised food culture more authentic and local (cf. Amilien 2003; Trubek 2008; Bardone 2013). When speaking of memories associated with colostrum, ENM correspondents and contemporary food bloggers evoked their childhoods, especially time spent in the countryside on grandmother's farm with the extended family, or special treats cooked by granny (*Ternespiim* 2012; *Ternespiimast* 2011; KV 1321).

These associations trigger the feelings of excitement related to a special event, i.e. the birth of a calf, bringing back certain smells:

This food was very special. I remember how my parents bustled about in the barn, and there was a kind of nervous expectation in the air. Then children were let into the barn to see the tiny calf. And at the end of the day, a dessert smelling of cinnamon, covered with a brown crust, was taken out of the oven. (Tuvike 2018)

Today's foodies experiment with colostrum dishes to bring back tastes of childhood that have become rare today: "I am ready to give half a kingdom for a small jar of colostrum" (*Värske piima vorm* 2018). Yet, sometimes people have to admit that it is not easy to revive the taste of the golden past: "I have tried to make such a casserole now, but it has never been as tasty as it was then" (KV 1321: 308–309).

On the other hand, colostrum does not evoke nostalgic moods in everyone; for example, one woman (FM: Marika) related it to the haymaking obligation each summer; moreover, she did not like oven-baked colostrum as it tasted too fatty. Some others have also considered it too nutritious (FM: Peeter). According to one blogger, she had heard such conflicting reactions, from admiration to disgust, to colostrum that she described the dish as "extreme" (*Ternespiimast* 2011). This indicates a change in opinions about tasty and healthy food. In contemporary Estonia, eating is increasingly characterised by concerns over health and well-being. A certain role is also played by the declining reputation of dairy products in recent decades, as well as a warning by some reputable doctors about the health risks related to cow's milk (for example, Levin 2014: 180–184; Bürkland 2016: 160–161). Furthermore, the number of people suffering from lactose intolerance is increasing (because, among other reasons, it is possible to diagnose it much better than some decades earlier) and questions about the ethics of dairy farming in general are voiced by a growing community of vegetarians. However, compared to some other European countries, for example Sweden (cf. Jönsson 2005; 2019), general attitudes towards milk are more positive and the demand for milk products on the local market is relatively high. In 2009, Estonia (with Ireland) leads the European dairy product consumption chart (Milk, Estonian Food).

Today, colostrum is little known and hardly available to the urban population, and decreasing in the countryside, too, due to diminishing individual cow ownership. As most middle-aged and younger people are estranged from traditional food, they do not know what to do with these foods even if they should have positive attitudes to it. Liisi (FM: Liisi) described how her next door neighbour brought her a jar of colostrum after her daughter was born, but as she did not know what to do with it, the valuable gift just went off.

In popular Estonian food blogs, traditional peasant dishes are usually interpreted in a gourmandised form of cooking and serving. Food bloggers mainly make a dessert similar to *crème brûlée* from colostrum, experimenting with its ingredients and methods of cooking, striving for a possibly beautiful, tasty, and healthy outcome. For example, Tuuli, who in the beginning followed her mother's example and stated that despite the same good taste as in her childhood, the result was not good enough to photograph, kept testing until she finally achieved something that was "presentable, creamy, and pleasantly tasty" (*Ternespiimast* 2011). Only one of the colostrum dishes, initially of elitist origin, continues, while others (soups, savoury sauces, casseroles) are now in the

background. Such adaptation of a traditional dish to today's taste often occurs in the modern interpretations of food heritage. Although the public representation of Estonian food is predominantly based on peasant food culture (see Bardone and Kannike 2021) and local and seasonal raw material is valued, recipes are chosen and adapted to the modern taste. Such an approach is characteristic of Estonia's top restaurants as well as of attempts to shape the 'official' image of Estonian food, for example, on the website managed by the Ministry of Rural Affairs, where one can find only gentrified recipes for traditional dishes (Eat like an Estonian).

In the 21st century, Estonians have again started to rediscover and value the regional diversity of our food culture. This is supported by, among other things, the annual nomination of an Estonian food region by the Ministry of Rural Affairs, which is accompanied by special attention to, and promotion of, that region's cookery. Numerous recently published regional cookbooks also offer recipes for colostrum dishes as representing local food heritage. A cookbook with recipes from Võru County describes different methods for making colostrum dishes (Guerrin and Karu 2014: 144), although it presents a recipe for buckwheat porridge as characteristic of this region (*ibid.*: 131). A cookbook with recipes from Hiiumaa Island presents a recipe for a newer dessert, a cake including colostrum and fresh and sour milk (Laksberg 2017: 191). There are also a few examples of the use of colostrum in modern food and tourism marketing, for example, Nopri farm, the biggest farm specialising on dairy products in southern Estonia, has treated its visitors during Open Farm Days and other events to oven-baked colostrum. In contrast, colostrum dishes are not found in cookbooks dedicated to Estonian (national) dishes in general, unlike those from Latvia, which present several recipes for both savoury and sweet Colostrum dishes (Šelvaha 2012). In Sweden, sweet colostrum cakes and puddings (*kalvdans*) are among the five dishes included in the Ark of Taste catalogue of endangered heritage foods maintained by the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity in 2008 (*Kalvdans: Ark of Taste*).

Since the 1990s new types of food designed to promote health or to reduce the risk of disease, known as functional foods, have been entering the market. In 2016 three Estonian milk and meat technology scholars founded Teadus ja Tegu, a company specialising in the production of innovative science-based products. Using novel freeze-drying technology they produce colostrum powder and capsules that they recommend as bioactive food. They argue that the value of colostrum has been rediscovered in a situation where pathogenic microbes resistant to antibiotics are spreading. The producers suggest that the powder is effective for fighting against or avoiding bacterial and viral infections, but can also be used to make traditional colostrum cake. In their promotional texts and interviews (Raamets 2018; Traks 2018; Teadus ja Tegu 2019) the producers combine arguments based on tradition and natural and pure raw materials with the authority of modern research and technology. They recommend their product to strengthen immunity in people with allergies and autoimmune diseases, and to help active people recover from their efforts or injuries.

Teadus ja Tegu also responded to the current coronavirus pandemic. Firstly, they recommended the powder in increasing resistance to this disease, and also to fight skin irritation caused by excessive use of disinfectants by adding it to creams (Teadus ja Tegu 2020). In 2021 an innovative product, the nasal spray BioBlock, came to the market containing bovine antibodies against SARS CoV-2 as a result of cooperation between

Teadus ja Tegu, scientists at the University of Tartu, and the pharmaceutical company Chemi-Pharm (Bioblock 2021).

Teadus ja Tegu products are not cheap because of the limited availability of the raw material, complicated logistics, and energy intensity of production, yet the prices are considerably lower than those of similar imported capsules. The appearance of this product reflects the global trend in anti-modern health foods, as part of which the wholesomeness of natural and unrefined foods has been highlighted (Jönsson 2005), combining it with the authority of science and new technology. Consequently, we can speak of a heritage food with added value.

How do consumers relate to such functional food packed like any other pharmacy medicine? Is it possible that a cake made of this powder still fosters nostalgic feelings among those who ate colostrum cake at grandma's 50 years ago? Social media reflects reactions of joy and enthusiasm, and technologically the powder works well for cooking (*Värske piima vorm* 2018), but there are also sceptical attitudes (KV 1321: 331–332). Feedback from consumers shows that most people use it as a food supplement either separately or by mixing it with porridge, ice cream or other foods, and are happy with the results. However, there has been little demand for colostrum powder for culinary uses, probably due to both the high price and the fact that the beneficial bacteria lose their effect at high temperatures (FM: Lembit). At the same time, consumer interest in the nasal spray has been high.

Thus, we can see that new contexts of production and consumption also give novel meanings and values to heritage-associated foods. Despite its marginalisation in the modern food system on the one hand and the new meanings it has acquired on the other, colostrum remains a controversial product.

## CONCLUSION

The complementary use of diverse sources has enabled us to examine in detail change in the uses and the status of colostrum in Estonian food culture. In a broader context, this article highlights the characteristics of this foodscape as a heterogeneous network of culinary encounters. Whereas older ethnographic descriptions in the ENM archives allow us an overview of this topic from a rather limited viewpoint – 19th-century peasant culture as seen in the 1920s–1930s –, other sources such as cookbooks, the media, legislation, contemporary social media, and interviews have enabled a more holistic reconstruction of the broader picture over a longer timeframe. Individually expressed attitudes and values related to this exceptional food were studied in the broader context of food production and consumption from feudal peasant society to modern urbanised foodscapes.

Before World War II, the media mainly discussed colostrum as animal food, something that was considered problematic from the viewpoint of milk industry and milk trade. The peasantry and the Baltic German elite both consumed colostrum dishes while the ordinary folk eating savoury food and the nobility desserts. Colostrum became more highly valued in the 1930s in the context of rational and economic housekeeping and the discourse of healthy eating. In the second half of the 20th century colostrum acquired a new significance as a national food highlighted by the Soviet ideology of promoting

the diversity of national cultures. In today's urbanised society, people are largely alienated from peasant food, although there is a growing interest in regional food heritage; in some case traditional dishes are being adapted to meet the needs of gourmet cuisine. Furthermore, colostrum has been highlighted as functional food in which "the wisdom of our ancestors" is now combined with science and modern technology.

## NOTES

1 For more detail see Kannike et al. 2021.

2 The correspondents' network for collecting ethnographic material was established at the ENM in 1931.

3 The cookbook was translated by Johann Lithander, a pastor of Swedish origin working in Estonia.

4 Published in four editions (1889, 1892, 1895, 1898) and 16,000 copies.

5 For example, Petri (1802: 160) remarked that Estonian peasants did not know any spices other than pepper and salt. In 1867 the newspaper *Perno Postimees* introduced cinnamon and nutmeg to Estonians as exotic, expensive, and strong substances that only noble people used (*Perno Postimees* 1867: 386).

6 Material relating to this can be found in the collections of the Estonian Literary Museum folklore archives.

7 The first edition was published in 1939. From 1952 it was published in large editions; the Estonian translation is based on the 1953 edition.

8 In 1944, about 80,000 Estonians fled to the West to escape the Soviet occupation.

## SOURCES

EA – Estonian National Museum Ethnographic Archive

EA No. 2, 4, 16–19, 28, 30, 32, 36, 37, 38, 40, 42, 70, 204, 211, 235, 238, 241

KV – Estonian National Museum Correspondents' Archive

KV No. 33, 50–52, 55, 306, 502, 1321

FM = The authors' fieldwork materials.

FM: Peeter = Interview with Peeter (b. 1961), March 23, 2018, transcript at the authors' disposal.

FM: Marika = Interview with Marika (b. 1965), April 2, 2018, transcript at the authors' disposal.

FM: Liisi = e-mail from Liisi Jääts (b. 1970), December 1, 2017.

FM: Lembit = e-mail from Lembit Lepasalu, February 19, 2021.

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