TAKK: Explorations of Nordic Cafe Culture, Book Proposal

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Explorations of Nordic Cafe Culture

Coffee is Community
TAKK is a book about gratitude and gathering over coffee

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Corey Kingston

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Overview.

You know the café I’m talking about. The one where the lighting is just right, the music is just low enough, the furniture is cozy, and the coffee mugs fit perfectly in your hand. But the reason you love this café isn’t so much about the furniture or the décor as it is about the feeling you get when you spend time there. Corey Kingston and Samantha Albert knew there was something special about Nordic cafés the first time they stepped into a coffee shop in Denmark. Their book TAKK: Explorations of Nordic Café Culture tells the story of these cafes and the culture surrounding coffee in Sweden, Finland, Norway, Iceland, and Denmark.

Cafés in the Scandinavian countries are unlike any other in the world, as gathering over coffee is a sacred, time-honored tradition there. In these special spaces, candlelight flickers softly across the tables, waffles are smothered in homemade rhubarb marmalade, and steamy black coffee becomes the perfect remedy to melt the outside cold. All of these elements, along with the generous warmth of the café owners, make you feel as if you’ve just walked into your grandmother’s kitchen or your best friend’s living room—where, for those cherished moments in a busy life, you feel like you’re back home.

TAKK is the first book-length project to document and define Nordic café culture. In no other full-length publication has this rich history been explored. After a successful Kickstarter campaign, Samantha and Corey set out for Scandinavia to find out why the sharing of coffee has been such an integral part of Nordic life, one that has bound communities together for over a century. From the countryside to the city, in homes and in shops, cafés are the places where Nordic coffee traditions are upheld, revived, and innovated. The pair traveled for three months through the five Nordic countries, visiting countless cafés and coffee gatherings. Along the way, they took thousands of photographs and conducted hundreds of interviews with everyone from café owners to coffee enthusiasts to local café-goers. While Samantha and Corey explore the particulars of each country’s café culture in the book, they found the thread that connected their experiences could be summed up in a single word of gratitude: “takk.” Takk is the ubiquitous exclamation that means “thank you” in Norwegian and Icelandic, Danish (tack) and Swedish (tak). The one exception is Finnish, and we hope Fins will forgive us for not titling the book kiitos. Through Corey’s enchanting photography and Samantha’s evocative prose, TAKK captures the intangible feeling of gratitude evoked during sacred gatherings over coffee that is so ubiquitous in the Nordic countries.

The relatively new market of food-centered travel guides is booming, with audiences flocking to books and blogs that explore cities through culinary establishments. This is the first group of readers we have in mind for TAKK: those looking for a way to access Nordic culture through their taste buds. Our book offers a roadmap of cafés and coffee shops in the Nordic countries, making it ideal for travelers looking to get a taste of the culture through special spaces beyond traditional tourist destinations. More than that, TAKK captures the essence of Nordic culture through the quintessential Nordic space of the café. Right now, interest in Scandinavian culture—from design, to fashion, to food—is undisputed, and Scandinavian enthusiasts are the second group of readers we envision for TAKK. The final group of readers are the coffee nerds: coffee enthusiasts who take their interest in coffee to the next level. Fascination with specialty coffee is growing at a rapid pace, as is an interest in the Nordic approach to specialty coffee. TAKK integrates specifics of the specialty coffee movement in Scandinavia, such as roasting and brewing methods, within a larger snapshot of café life and culture in the region. Ultimately, we imagine TAKK finding an audience with readers looking for inspiration to create special spaces and intimate gatherings of their own. TAKK captures the magical quality of Nordic café culture and presents it in the familiar, cozy style we became so enamored with during our Scandinavian travels.
Samantha Albert and Corey Kingston are two good friends who share a love for the Nordic countries. Samantha was a student of film at Copenhagen University in 2006, and later lived in Iceland to work in a 100-year-old house that is now a bustling country café. Corey’s love affair began in 2011 while studying architecture in Copenhagen. During her free time she worked at a non-profit café in the neighborhood of Nørrebro where she was introduced to the Danish concept of “hygge” or “coziness.”

After an extensive search for a book on Nordic cafe culture came up short, Samantha and Corey decided to embark on a project to write this book themselves. The pair launched a Kickstarter campaign to fund their project in early 2012, and after surpassing their $16,000 goal with the help of over 120 backers, they set out on a three-month journey through the Nordic countries. Their itinerary was partly planned and partly opened, often following tips from locals on the best cafés and coffee spots. By forming connections with local residents in each country, the pair was able to document a coffee history that is primarily accessible only through oral narrative. Along the way, they also discovered some of Scandinavia’s best-kept coffee secrets and hidden gems of cafes.

Corey Kingston is primarily responsible for the photography and design of TAKK. Corey graduated with a Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Arizona in Tucson and has been studying design for the last six years, starting at Parsons The New School for Design. She is an avid photographer, and her images have found homes with buyers across the U.S. Although she is currently working as an architect at a Seattle firm, Corey has also completed commissioned design work for various individuals and companies. She has designed websites, promotional materials including business cards and posters, and graphics for books and package designs.

Samantha Albert is originally from the Alps of Liechtenstein, Samantha Albert has traveled and studied across the U.S. and Europe. In 2011, she received her MBA from Business School Lausanne in Switzerland. Samantha has spent extensive time in the Nordic countries, studying abroad in both Iceland and Denmark and traveling through Scandinavia annually. Through her studies, travel, and work abroad, Samantha has experienced the intricacies of Nordic cafe culture from a local’s perspective. She is currently working as a creative stylist in Seattle and has been commissioned to design interior spaces and special events. Samantha is currently working to open her own Nordic-inspired cafe in Seattle.
Tourists have been flocking to the Nordic countries in record numbers over the past several years. In 2012, over twenty-nine million people visited Scandinavia. In Iceland alone, international tourism increased by fifteen percent from 2011 to 2012. Tourists are an obvious market for TAKK: Explorations of Nordic Café Culture. As evidenced by the popularity of articles such as “36 Hours in...” featured weekly in the New York Times, visitors to a new city are often overwhelmed by the vast options and are in search of an insider’s list of activities, including restaurants and cafes. TAKK will be the go-to curated guide to cafés of the Nordic countries, featuring profiles and photographs of a range of cafés, from the internationally recognized to the hole-in-the-wall, undiscovered gems.

In addition to tourists, another market for TAKK are the growing number of international, design-conscious individuals gobbling up Nordic design and culture. The enthusiasm for Scandinavian design has spiked in recent years, evidenced by the popularity of stores like IKEA, blogs such as Northern Delights and My Scandinavian Home, and Nordic fashion companies like H&M and ACNE Studios. TAKK is an insider’s look at an under-explored aspect of Nordic design: interior café spaces. It will feature beautiful and inspirational photographs of a range of Nordic cafés, presented in an approachable way so that readers might emulate the look and feel of these spaces in their own homes. Guides to creating intimate and inspired small gatherings are finding a huge audience with the popularity of publications/websites such as Kinfolk and Gathering. TAKK could easily find a market with this audience interested in the art of small gatherings.

As much as TAKK is a guidebook and design book, it is also a recipe book and coffee brew guide. Interest in coffee brewing methods and history is growing, especially with the rise of specialty coffee shops in major cities around the world. Sources on the subject are relatively scarce, and those that do exist are not focused on any one particular region. Coffee in the Nordic countries has a long history and today it is an integral part of Scandinavian culture. Coffee enthusiasts on every level, from aspiring cafe owners to home brewers to professional baristas and roasters, will be a major market for TAKK.

Samantha and Corey have created all the marketing, branding, and advertising for TAKK themselves, and their blog chronicling their travels already has a huge following with over 30,000 page views (http://takktravels.blogspot.com/). The TAKK project has been featured on Scandinavian websites such as nordiccoffeeculture.com, cornerofthecafe.com, and visitsweden.com, and newspapers in Copenhagen, Oslo, and Bergen have all interviewed Corey and Samantha. John D. Stoll, Nordic and Baltic Bureau Chief from The Wall Street Journal, also interviewed the pair for an article on the current state of the Scandinavian specialty coffee market. Readers from around the world have clearly responded to the pair’s design sensibility and approachable style in documenting Nordic café culture, as well as their insider knowledge on the subject, meaning there is already a built-in audience base for TAKK.
The world of Scandinavian design books and publications is saturated with quality titles. There are also a handful of useful and well-designed food travel guides, some with a focus on the Nordic countries (Magnus Nilsson’s Fäviken and René Redzepi’s Noma). In the past few years, the popularity of books on coffee techniques (The Blue Bottle Craft of Coffee) and on the art of small gatherings (Kinfolk) has also spiked. Despite the number of articles and books that have been written, however, there is not one book that functions as travel book, recipe book, and inspirational lookbook for the Nordic countries. There are excellent titles that satisfy these three purposes, but no single book that addresses them all in a unified manner. The following table lists some of the principal books with their foci, strengths, and weaknesses.

Additionally, combining all of these functions into a single book poses its own challenges. TAKK will present information and images in a beautifully designed, accessible, and organized manner. It will include hand-drawn maps, a selection of gorgeous original photographs, and coffee brew guides, making it both a useful, practical guide and a beautiful object in its own right.

TAKK is designed to be the preeminent guide to the history and culture surrounding coffee in the Nordic countries. The look will be in the relaxed yet beautiful style that Corey and Samantha found so appealing in the Scandinavian cafés they visited. TAKK presents the authors’ edited list of favorite Nordic cafes alongside interviews and brewing methods direct from the cafe owners, in a sleek format with gorgeous photographs. TAKK will be more than just a coffee table book on coffee, it will be a valuable addition to the documentation of Nordic history and culture that will inspire readers to recreate the feeling of takk in their own homes.
## Exploration of Place Through Food

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title &amp; Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polpo: A Venetian Cookbook (of sorts)</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Bloomsbury</td>
<td>Cookbook and Guidebook</td>
<td>Beautiful layouts with approachable and delicious recipes.</td>
<td>Large format makes it difficult to travel with.</td>
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<td>Russell Norman</td>
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<td>Mark Bitterman</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Suitcase and a Spatula: Recipes and Stories from Around the World</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Ryland Peters &amp; Small</td>
<td>Cookbook and Memoir</td>
<td>Charming illustrations. Successful blog turned into book.</td>
<td>Feels scattered with no in-depth exploration of one single place. Insular POV.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tori Haschka</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cereal Magazine: In Pursuit of Food and Travel</td>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>Self-published</td>
<td>Quarterly Food and Travel Magazine</td>
<td>Beautiful layouts</td>
<td>Feels stark and cold.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rosa Park</td>
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## Scandinavian Culture

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<tr>
<th>Title &amp; Author</th>
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<th>Focus</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noma: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Phaidon Press</td>
<td>Cookbook and Design Book</td>
<td>Beautiful photography and successful layouts that capture the ‘feeling’ of Scandinavia. Book is an art object.</td>
<td>Insular POV and expensive. Complicated recipes that are hard to recreate at home.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rene Redzepi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emma Fexus and S. Ehmann</td>
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### Gathering

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<th>Title &amp; Author</th>
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<th>Focus</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The Kinfolk Table: Recipes for Small Gatherings</em>&lt;br&gt;Nathan Williams</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Artisan Cookbook, Entertaining</td>
<td>Beautiful, approachable, and inspiring.</td>
<td>Concept of book is strong, but content jumps around.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A Delicious Life: New Food Entrepreneurs</em>&lt;br&gt;Marie Le Fort, Sven Ehmann, and Robert Klanton</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Gestalten Food and Beverage Business</td>
<td>International, inspiring for new entrepreneurs.</td>
<td>Feels scattered, no in-depth exploration of any one person or place.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Set Table: The Art of Small Gatherings</em>&lt;br&gt;Tori Haschka</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Cicada Entertaining, Cookbook</td>
<td>Great layouts and photographs.</td>
<td>No one particular aesthetic or ‘feel’ emphasized.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Gather Journal</em>&lt;br&gt;Rosa Park</td>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>Gather Media Bi-annual publication dedicated to gathering</td>
<td>Beautiful photography and graphics. Inspiring stories, recipes, and how-to’s</td>
<td>Contrived</td>
<td></td>
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### Coffee

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<tr>
<th>Title &amp; Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The Blue Bottle Craft of Coffee: Growing, Roasting, and Drinking, with Recipes</em>&lt;br&gt;James Freeman, Caitlin Freeman, and Tara Duggan</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Ten Speed Press Cookbook Coffee How-To</td>
<td>Comprehensive and informative</td>
<td>Lacks any historical or cultural context about coffee. Highly technical with complicated recipes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nice Coffee Time</em>&lt;br&gt;Liz Clayton</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Presspop Coffee Travel Documentary</td>
<td>Beautiful Photography</td>
<td>Insular POV. Not functional as a cookbook or as a travel book.</td>
<td></td>
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TAKK is modeled on beautiful, approachable books such as Russell Norman’s POLPO and Leslie Williamson’s Handcrafted Modern, which present curated collections on a specific subject in a way that is both well-designed and intimate.

The book will begin with a foreword by Chris Kolbu, the 2008 Norwegian Barista Champion and the Editor-in-Chief of the widely respected Nordic Coffee Culture blog. It will continue with an introduction where we define our project, discuss the timeline of specialty coffee and café culture, and answer the big question: what is Nordic Café Culture?

A brew guide; detailed descriptions of the brewing methods discussed in the book, will follow the introduction. These step-by-step “recipes” for four of the most commonly used filter-brewing methods in the Nordic countries were provided by the most well known Nordic roasters and indulge readers with an insiders “how-to.”

TAKK will be divided into five core chapters: Sweden, Finland, Norway, Iceland and Denmark. An introduction to each chapter defines the country’s coffee culture and is followed by exposés of the country’s best cafés. Each café is shown through photographs of its interior, as well as a written text, which illuminates the uniqueness of the café. In addition, other coffee-drinking traditions like Swedish “Fika”, “Hiking-Coffee” in Norway, and “Pancakes and Coffee” in Iceland, are shown in a similar way.

The book will end with a photo series of our more personal moments traveling through the Nordic countries on our quest to discover Nordic Café Culture.

Proposed Table of Contents

* Forward
* Introduction
* Brew guide

Chapter 1: Sweden
Introduction to Sweden
Drop Coffee
Parlans
KaffeVerket
Sturekatten
Bar Centro
Da Matteo
Koppi
Fika
Chapter 2: Finland
Introduction to Finland
Good Life Coffee
Farmors Cafe
Toripojat
Cafe Regata
Lippa Kiska
Cardamom Coffee

Chapter 3: Norway
Introduction to Norway
Stockfleths
Leibling
Java
Tim Wendelboe
Fuglen
Coffee at Maemo
Kafeen
Kaffemisjonen
Hiking Coffee

Chapter 4: Iceland
Introduction to Iceland
Simbahollen
Litlabær
Kaffesmidja Islands
Mokka
Tiu Dropar
Swimming Pool Coffee
Pancake Party

Chapter 5: Denmark
Introduction to Denmark
La Glace
Bang & Jensen
Unnamed Cafe
LOS
Superkaffeforsyngnen
Coffee Collective Jaegersborggade
Coffee Collective Torvallherne
Coffee Collective Fredericksberg
Coffee and Cigarettes

Photo Collage

The End