A woman with blonde hair, wearing a dark green sleeveless dress, stands in a lush green forest. She is holding a woven basket in her right hand and looking off to the side with a smile. The background shows a stone wall and trees.

Nevada's Norway

Through her award-winning website “North Wild Kitchen,” Utah native Nevada Berg has become one of the most recognized and celebrated voices in Norwegian food and culture.

BY TAYLOR HUGO

PHOTOS BY NORTH WILD KITCHEN



Nevada Berg’s life sounds like the premise of a feel-good novel or movie: An American falls in love with a Norwegian while studying abroad. The pair spend the better part of a decade living in countries around the globe before settling down with their son in Norway, where they purchase an old farmstead from the 1600s.

It’s an idyllic lifestyle that Nevada gives people a peek into through her website, “North Wild Kitchen.”

Though it started as a way to satisfy her own curiosity about the food and culture of her new home, the website has an international and national audience of readers who tune in to learn more about Norwegian culture, seasonal and local recipes, foraging, outdoor cooking; and how Nevada spends her days living in a medieval valley two hours outside Oslo—whether she’s whipping up a lingonberry cheesecake or tending to her cadre of chickens, bunnies, cats

and a dog on what she and her family lovingly call “the little farm.”

A Case of Wanderlust

Growing up in Salt Lake City, Utah with a mother who loves to cook, poring over the pages of cookbooks became a therapeutic pastime for Nevada. Though she wasn’t interested in the actual process of making a meal at the time, looking at pictures of food fueled her curiosity for culture.

“I’ve always been fascinated with

food and culture, and this idea of how it's different everywhere and everyone has their own way of looking at it," she says. "I had a heart to explore and experience those things from a really young age."

Though Nevada always knew she was destined to travel, she didn't realize that her first trip across the pond as a junior in college would alter the course of her entire life. Majoring in international studies at the University



of Utah, the study abroad requirement of her degree landed her in England. That's where she met her now-husband, a Norwegian named Espen.

"Moving to England was the first time I was confronted with the idea of cooking out of my comfort zone, not having the ingredients or even knowing the names of certain ingredients," says Nevada.

One full school year abroad was not enough to cure Nevada's case of wanderlust. As soon as she completed her degree in Utah, she returned to England, where she and Espen spent a total of four years before relocating to Mozambique, in southeastern Africa, and then Rome, Italy, absorbing the local cultures and foods along the way.

While living in Rome with their young son, the couple decided it was time to retire their nomadic lifestyle

and settle down. Espen's Nordic background made Norway a logical choice. Though Nevada had "always had an affinity for being restless," the mountains—which reminded her of growing up in the southwest corner of the United States—made Norway feel like home, and a place to plant roots.

"There are certain things that ground you, and, for me, nature plays a huge part," she says. "Norway has this special quality. It's rustic, it's raw. It's this simplicity of just being and stillness. It's nice to be able to walk out the door and get fresh air."

Life on the Farm

Weeks before they moved to Norway in 2015, Nevada and Espen purchased a small farm to call home in Rollag, part of the medieval valley of Numedal. With a population of 1,400, it was a big change from the hustle and bustle of city life they were accustomed to, but the slower pace was a welcome shift.

Nevada describes the farm on the "North Wild Kitchen" website: "Within the belly of Norway, in the stillness, where rivers flow and mountains dwell, lies our small farm. The farm is first mentioned in writing in 1651, and it bears the name Koto, which is believed to mean a 'cabin' or 'small house.' [...] We have four outbuildings spaced around the main house. A barn, whose wear and tear tell the stories of hooves and plows, hard work and dedication. A *stabbur*, where food was once stored as the winter months cast their shadow over the fields. A summer barn still basking in the perfume of its previous tenants. And a smithy, where the blacksmith's hammer once clanked and the bellows made the fire dance."

"Sometimes, these farms get passed down through families, but the family left [and the farm was then sold]," says

Creamy Salmon Soup

(*fiskesuppe med laks*)

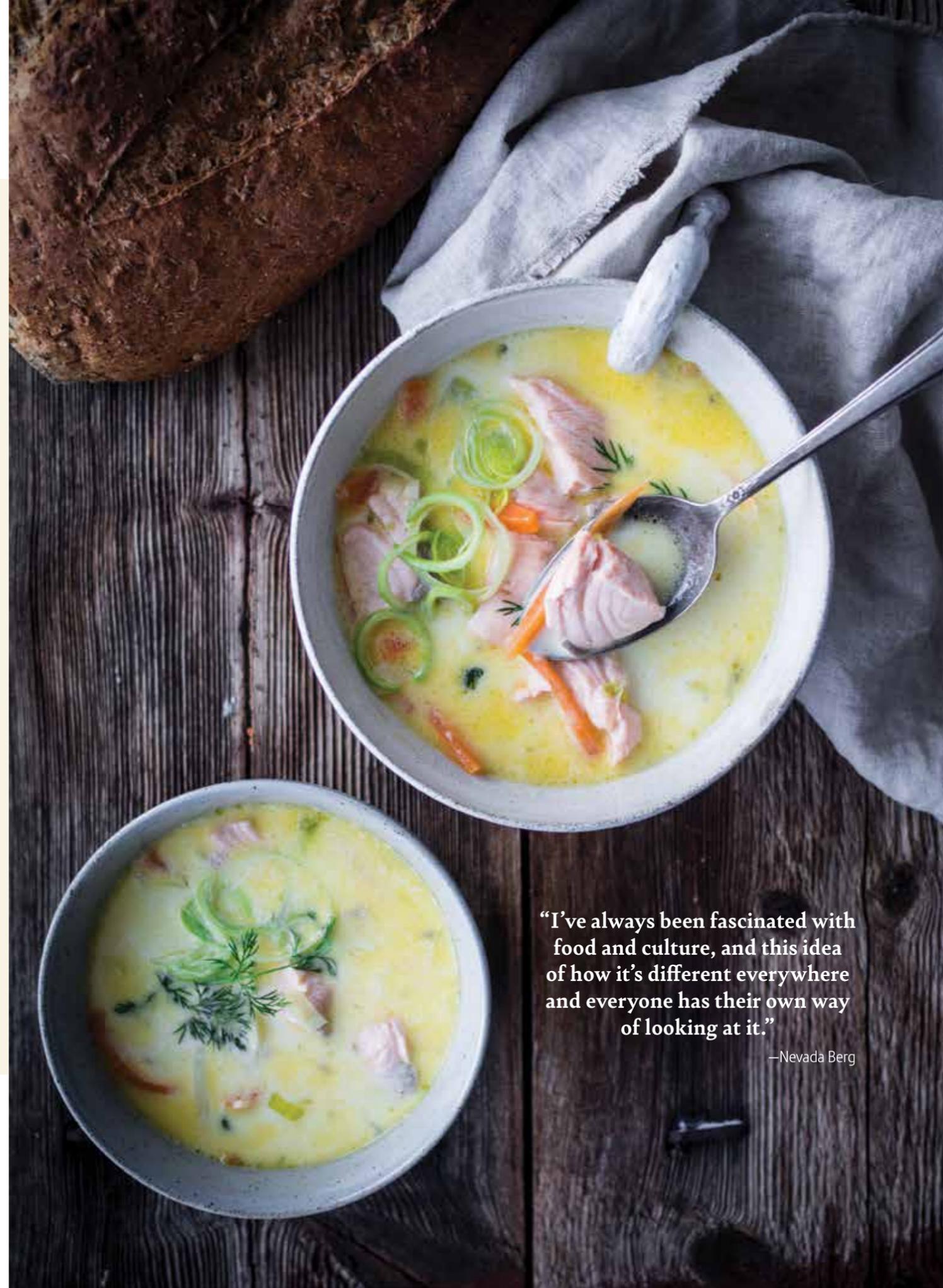
Serves 4 to 6

4 Tbsp. butter
2 carrots, peeled and cut into thin, short strips
1 fennel bulb, trimmed and cut into thin, short strips
1 parsnip, peeled and cut into thin, short strips
1 large leek, washed and thinly sliced, divided
5 ¼ cups fish stock
18 ounces Kvarøy Arctic salmon filet, cut into pieces
1 ½ cups heavy cream
Salt and pepper
Finely chopped dill or chives, for serving
1 lemon, cut into wedges, for serving

In a large, heavy pot, heat the butter over medium-high heat. Add the carrots, fennel, parsnip, and ½ of the leek. Sauté for 5 minutes or until softened but still firm. Add the fish stock and bring to a gentle simmer. Add the salmon and cook for 5 minutes or until cooked through. Stir in the heavy cream and season to taste with salt and pepper.

Divide the soup among bowls and top with the remaining leek. Sprinkle with the dill or chives and serve immediately with the lemon wedges.

PHOTOS BY PHOTO BY NORTH WILD KITCHEN



"I've always been fascinated with food and culture, and this idea of how it's different everywhere and everyone has their own way of looking at it."

—Nevada Berg

No-Churn Brunost and Raspberry Swirl Ice Cream with Brunost-Dipped Waffle Cones

Serves 12

For the raspberry compote:

10 ½ ounces raspberries
¼ cup granulated sugar

For the brunost sauce:

7 ounces Ski Queen/Gudbrandsdalen, sliced or grated
1 cup heavy cream
4 Tbsp. mild honey
12 waffle cones

For the no-churn ice cream:

2 cups heavy cream
7 ounces condensed milk

Directions:

For the raspberry compote:

In a small saucepan, combine the raspberries and sugar and bring to a gentle simmer over medium heat. Stirring often, cook until the mixture has reduced some and slightly thickened, about 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from heat and cool completely.

For the brunost sauce:

In a small saucepan, bring the brunost, heavy cream and honey to a simmer over medium-high heat. Cook until the mixture is thoroughly combined, whisking frequently and has thickened to a caramel sauce consistency (somewhat thick, but still a little runny), about 8 to 10 minutes. Set aside to cool. Once slightly cooled, dip the tops of each waffle cone in the brunost sauce, place them upright in something sturdy, and leave in a cool place or refrigerator to set.

For the no-churn ice cream:

In a large bowl or stand mixer, whip the heavy cream until stiff peaks form. Pour in the condensed milk and gently fold with a spatula to combine.

Using a large loaf tin, pour ½ of the whipped cream mixture inside. Dollop spoonfuls of the raspberry compote and the brunost sauce on top. Using a knife or toothpick, gently swirl the mixture to form an even pattern. And the remaining whipped cream mixture on top, followed by the raspberry compote and the brunost sauce, using as much or as little as you desire, and swirl again. Cover tightly and place in the freezer for at least 4 hours before serving.

When ready to serve, remove the ice cream from the freezer and leave out at room temperature for a couple of minutes to soften slightly. Scoop some ice cream into each of the waffle cones and serve immediately.



Step inside Nevada's
"North Wild Kitchen"
at northwildkitchen.com
or on Instagram
[@northwildkitchen](https://www.instagram.com/northwildkitchen)

Nevada, referring to the late-19th-century migration of Norwegians to America. "So now here we are on this lovely little farm, and it's really adorable and inspiring."

So inspiring, in fact, that Nevada has built an entire career out of life on the farm, combining her passions for writing, photography, history and storytelling into "North Wild Kitchen," which she launched in 2016. There she aims to not only share her twist on classic Norwegian dishes but the traditions behind them, as well as stories from local food makers and cultural guides on embracing the Nordic lifestyle—think: "Beginner's Guide to Spring Foraging" and "10 Norwegian Tales to Read by the Fire."

Nevada's expat approach to her new home's culture struck a chord with her audience and the food industry alike. Nine months after launching "North Wild Kitchen," it won *Saveur* magazine's coveted "Blog of the Year" and "Editors' Choice: Best New Voice" awards. That led to an internationally published cookbook, named one of 2018's best cookbooks for fall by *The New York Times*.

"I felt the extraordinary responsibility to deliver a book that was worthy of being called a Norwegian cookbook," Nevada says of "North Wild Kitchen: Home Cooking from the Heart of Norway," which features everything from Bergen cinnamon buns to Nordic-inspired hot dogs. "When you're writing about a culture that's not your own, the most important thing is, how will the Norwegians respond, and does it do them justice? I'm an outsider looking in, so I'm happy that I had people coming to me and saying, 'I read it, and it brought tears to my eyes.' Norwegians don't always recognize how special their food culture is, so that was the best compliment I could ever get."



Continually Inspired

The past five years of running "North Wild Kitchen" have allowed Nevada to foster deep relationships within the Nordic food community. She's currently working with Kvarøy Arctic Salmon and TINE Brunost cheese, partnerships that give her free rein to experiment with iconic Norwegian foods to develop new recipes, like her brunost burger. Even Nevada's Norway-native husband was skeptical of a burger topped with lingonberry-bacon jam, sauteed onions and brunost—a sweet brown cheese that's typically sliced to enjoy with bread.



"It takes a little bit to convince Norwegians to try something new, especially when it comes to something that's traditional," Nevada says, "But then once he tried it, he goes, 'Oh, it's actually really good.' That's what's kind of fun—helping people see a newer way of using these ingredients."

Though Nevada is currently a one-woman show, she hopes that will change in the near future. She recently moved into a studio space inside an old train station in town, where she plans to offer food courses and workshops, a community garden run by kids and a boutique filled with handmade goods from Norwegian producers. Also in the works: a second cookbook.

"The most fun is when I get to visit people, and learn about what they're making and doing, and tell their stories," Nevada says. "To inspire Norwegians to look at their food culture and continue to highlight it is exciting. I'm inspired by them as well. It's really incredible." ❖