ICELANDIC FOOD PRODUCE

Icelandic food production is focused on quality and fresh materials. No matter if it is freshly caught fish, free-grazing Icelandic lamb, organically grown vegetables or sea salt, made the old fashion way; the pure Icelandic nature provides healthy foods to local and global markets. Sustainability and secure production is important. For centuries Icelanders have relied on their innovation and creativity for producing, storing and preparing food. Creative mentality is leading to new, fresh products and delicious delicacies.

FISHING AND AQUACULTURE

For centuries fishing has been an essential part of both Icelandic history and culture. It has been the lifeline of the nation, both as a vital part of the diet, and the country's primary export product. In the clean waters around Iceland, cool and warm ocean currents meet to create the ideal conditions for prolific fishing grounds. Icelanders understand fish and depend on it, which is why rigorous standards are in place to ensure healthy, sustainable fisheries for future generations.

Responsible fisheries management is the single most important tool that enables the fishing industry of Iceland to provide its customers with wholesome, sustainably sourced wild seafood products for the future. With optimal treatment of the product, quality is preserved throughout the process, from the moment the fish is caught, until it arrives in markets. The fishing fleet is equipped with advanced technology and the same holds true for the processing facilities on land. The main species from wild catch in Icelandic waters are cod, haddock, saithe, golden redfish, herring, mackerel and capelin.

Responsible aquaculture has been part of life in Iceland since the turn of the last century. The primary species used for production are Atlantic salmon, Arctic charr and Atlantic cod. Iceland is the world’s largest producer of Arctic charr and leading the way. No antibiotics or other medical products are used in Arctic charr farming in Iceland and it has not been genetically modified in any way. The Arctic charr is reared in clean water using sustainable green energy.

FARMING

Icelandic farms' main occupation is raising sheep and cattle. Sheep farming is practiced throughout Iceland by approximately 2,000 farmers. The sheep graze freely in the wilderness from late spring, sustained by the Icelandic moss, wild grass and berries that grow on the loose volcanic soil and which lend the lean meat its unique, almost gamey taste. Fresh meat is available in September and October, but frozen meat is available all year round.

The Icelandic cattle are another heritage breed that benefit from the clean environment. Primarily used for dairy production, resulting in high-quality products such as Skyr – a thick, yogurt-like Icelandic speciality that has rapidly been gaining fans outside of Iceland thanks to its delicate flavour, high protein and naturally low fat content.
Other types of livestock in Iceland include poultry, pigs and, of course, the Icelandic horse – a short and hardy breed that has learnt to adapt to the environment with its own unique gait, helping it navigate the endless lava fields. Livestock in Iceland has lived in isolation on the island for centuries without contact with many diseases.

**AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE**

The rough, untamed terrain and challenging weather conditions have benefited Icelandic agriculture in interesting ways. The harshness and isolation of the terrain has been instrumental in maintaining the purity of Icelandic nature and its produce. The bountiful geothermal energy under the soil is valuable for the Icelandic farmer. This renewable energy, coupled with Iceland’s enormous reserves of clean water resources have opened up countless possibilities that are still being explored. Much of Iceland’s agricultural produce is grown indoors in state of the art, automated greenhouses, heated with geothermal energy and supported with electric lights to supplement the low levels of sunlight during the winter months.

The main produce from the greenhouses are tomatoes, cucumber, bell peppers, cabbage and strawberries. The traditional outdoor crops in Iceland are carrots, rhubarb, rutabaga, cabbage, leeks, potatoes, cauliflower and kale but in later years experiments and production of organic rapeseed and barley have been successful. Icelandic producers continue to make forays into new and exciting fields adding to the variety of produce.

Wild plants and herbs found in Iceland, such as sheep shorrel, creeping thyme, birch and dulse collected from the surf, are mostly used for seasoning or to complement dishes. The most common type of berries in Iceland are the bilberry, a close cousin to the blueberry but smaller and with a more pronounced and complex flavour, Brambleberries, redcurrants and crowberries. The crowberry blankets the land during late August and September and is rich in vitamins and antioxidants like the bilberry.

**WILD GAME AND ANGLING**

Iceland is an angler’s paradise. The glacial rivers are teeming with rainbow trout, Arctic char and Atlantic salmon. There are more than 100 self-sustained salmon rivers in Iceland, mostly catch-and-release, and attract anglers from all around the world. The Arctic char is the most common freshwater fish in Iceland and can be found in rivers and lakes all across the country. The primary types of wildfowl hunted in Iceland are geese, primarily the Greylag Goose, and Ptarmigans, a medium-sized game bird in the grouse family. These are a traditional feature of Iceland’s Christmas celebration.

A small number of seabirds are also caught in Iceland. The only local breed of game in Iceland are reindeer that were brought to Iceland from Norway in the 18th century and are mostly to be found in the east of the country. Game hunting in Iceland is strictly regulated and bird and animal populations are closely monitored to ensure their sustainability.

**ENJOY ICELANDIC FOOD!**

The Icelandic nature, the people and the culture all influence Icelandic food production and cuisine. There is a great variety of high quality restaurants in Iceland, many of them specialize in using Icelandic raw ingredients. Some choose a traditional cuisine while others choose to explore new ways of preparing the food. The Icelandic chefs, many of who hold distinguished international awards, intertwine the fresh, quality ingredients, their family’s food traditions, innovative way of thinking and their professional skills to offer memorable and delicious meals. There are many ways to enjoy Icelandic food, such as dining in Reykjavik’s restaurants, visiting an Icelandic farm to taste and learn about the produce and enjoy it as an imported good in other countries.

For further information, please contact media@promoteiceland.com or call +354 511 4000.