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Norwegian skrei season returns, bringing premium winter cod to global tables

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January marks the return of the much-anticipated Norwegian skrei season, a short but celebrated period that runs through April. Revered for its delicate flavour, silky texture and snow-white flesh, skrei, often referred to as Norwegian winter cod, is a highly prized seasonal fish sourced exclusively from Norway.

What sets skrei apart is its extraordinary 1,000-kilometre migration from the Barents Sea to spawning grounds off northern Norwayâ??s coast. This demanding journey results in a lean, firm fish with dense, flaky flesh, making it a favourite among chefs worldwide for both its versatility and premium eating quality.

In 2025, skrei quality was officially recorded as â??excellentâ? by those overseeing quality control. Denmark, Spain and Sweden remained the largest export markets, while France and Germany also showed strong demand. Across Europe, chefs continue to interpret skrei through their own culinary traditions, underscoring the fishâ??s international appeal long after it reaches shore.

A heritage of quality and control

Skrei fishing dates back nearly a thousand years and remains one of Norwayâ??s most important fishing traditions. Carefully managed catch quotas help ensure the long-term health of the stock, while rigorous handling and inspection protocols protect quality from sea to market.

Only fish that meet strict standards are permitted to carry the official â??Norwegian Skreiâ?? quality-approved trademark. Independent third-party system and product controls guarantee origin, handling and export standards, ensuring consistency across global markets.

Oversight is led by the Skrei Patrol, operating on behalf of the Norwegian Seafood Council and Norges RÃ¥fisklag. The Patrol monitors preparation immediately after catch, checking for bruising or blemishes and ensuring rapid chilling. Packaging,

facilities and transport hubs are also inspected throughout the season.

Looking ahead to 2026, Jonnette Braathen of the Skrei Patrol says standards remain uncompromising. â??The quality should be excellent as always, the standard stands firm. Maintaining close dialogue with producers is essential to ensure skrei is correctly selected and labelled.â?•

Sustainability meets consumer demand

As sustainability increasingly influences dining choicesâ??particularly among younger consumers skreiâ??s well-managed provenance resonates strongly. Nearly two-thirds of diners aged 18 to 34 consider sustainability when choosing where to eat, according to industry data.

â??Consumers today are increasingly attentive to origin and fishing methods,â?• says Eulalie Rus, a fishmonger in Provence, France. â??Knowing skrei comes from a globally recognised sustainable fishery builds confidence.â?•

Renowned chef Michel Roux echoes this sentiment, calling skrei â??a beautiful white, pearly codâ?• and a prime example of responsible fisheries management in Norway.

A culinary journey across borders

From traditional Norwegian skrei mÃ¸lje with liver and roe, to European dishes incorporating chickpeas, spinach and chorizo, skreiâ??s versatility has earned it a place in diverse cuisines. In Spain, chef Pepa MuÃ±oz of El QÃ¼enco de Pepa describes it as â??one of the highest quality and most versatile fish available,â?• equally suited to baking, grilling, steaming or serving almost raw.

Low in calories yet rich in protein, omega-3s, and essential vitamins and minerals, skrei combines nutrition, sustainability and heritage making its annual return a highlight for chefs and consumers alike.