



A taste of Denmark

The Danish diner Havnens Perle in Aarhus harbour is the perfect place for tourists to experience proper Danish culinary classics. Far from the high-end exclusivity of Noma and the new Nordic kitchen, Havnens Perle lets diners sink their teeth into national favourites such as cracked pork burgers, traditional open sandwiches and main meals from the old-school Danish kitchen. They do so in unpretentious, friendly surroundings and at very reasonable prices. They're undisputed experts: Havnens Perle has been open since the '60s and has won five awards for being best in the business in recent years.

By Louise Older Steffensen | Photos: Havnens Perle

You would be hard-pressed to find a Dane who would turn down a visit to the undisputed king of Danish street food, the 'pølsevogn' (literally meaning 'sausage wagon') and their larger immobile cousins, the 'grill-bar'. These can be found across all self-respecting towns and villages in Denmark and have been handing out Danish burgers, French hot-dogs and other delicacies since the '60s. Havnens Perle was one of the first of its kind and is possibly the oldest surviving 'pølsevogn' still going.

"My grandparents opened up in 1962 and I took over from my parents in 2007," says

Peter Lerdrup, the current third-generation owner. The decades saw Havnens Perle become increasingly popular – and busy. "We had a period during my parents' reign where we just didn't have time to clear the tables properly and it looked a bit of a mess," Lerdrup muses, "so locals wryly named us 'Pearl Harbour'. We beautified it and became 'Havnens Perle': Pearl of the Harbour."

Havnens Perle moved to Aarhus's waterfront in 2007 and expanded to its restaurant-size diner-style splendour. It was a winning recipe: The Danish diner has won 'best pølsevogn' in Aarhus three times

since 2007 and its 'bøfsandwich', a burger-like specialty served with pickled condiments and stupendous amounts of gravy, was declared Denmark's best in 2012 and 2014.

Havnens Perle is a thoroughly modern concept, however, and unlike fast-food vendors, the diner's own chef cooks their food from scratch. "We even make our own sauces," Lerdrup explains. "It takes a good 24 hours, but it's much healthier, tastier and we can make everything exactly to order." The professional kitchen means that Havnens Perle serves up proper, traditional home-cooked Danish dishes too, including crispy pork with potatoes and parsley sauce, the newly-elected national dish. With its welcoming, casual atmosphere, central location and extensive menu, Havnens Perle is the place to go to (re)kindle your love for Danish cuisine.

For more information, please visit:
www.havnensperle.dk