

Cooking and masculinity in Sweden

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In a newly published study in *The Sociological Review*, researchers from Uppsala University and Stockholm University have explored how everyday domestic cooking is part of a (self-)understanding of men in Sweden and how the expressed sociality of cooking is intertwined with masculinity.

To [cook](#) can mean more than merely preparing a dish—it can be a way to establish sociality with others: other men, women, and children. The newly published article is based on interviews with 31 men, aged between 22 and 88, from different social backgrounds and from various parts of Sweden. The men in the study expressed cooking's social functions as being for oneself, for others and with others.

The men cooked partly as a means of appreciation from others and for self-fulfillment, but also a means to give and care for others. Furthermore, cooking was not only a means to a sociable end, a meal, but it was a sociable activity in itself, one that could be shared with friends, partners and children, says Nicklas Neuman, doctoral student at the Department of Food, Nutrition and Dietetics at Uppsala University.

Cooking sociality was, to some extent, therefore expressed as part of male homosociality but even more clearly as part of cooking responsibilities associated with fathering and the building and maintaining heterosocial relationships. The authors argue that sociological studies on gender, food, and the gendered division of domestic work need to further acknowledge how cooking could serve similar social functions as those of sharing meals. In other words, people

do not only seem to enjoy the communion of eating together, but also of cooking together. That the focus is directed towards the work behind producing a meal as a sociable activity is something unusual, the authors argue, since most studies on meal sociality focus on the eating occasion whereas very few have written about cooking sociality.

The study shows that this sociality also seems to be imbued with an idea of being a "good" man in Sweden. Sweden is still a country in which women assume approximately twice as much responsibility for domestic cooking than men, and scholars have discussed whether cooking is a "fun option" for men to choose when they assume domestic responsibilities (compared to cleaning and washing clothes for example). However, much is also changing and this social change is captured both in this article and in Nicklas Neuman's dissertation "[Stories of masculinity, gender equality, and culinary progress. On foodwork, cooking, and men in Sweden](#)".

More information: Nicklas Neuman et al, Masculinity and the sociality of cooking in men's everyday lives, *The Sociological Review* (2016). [DOI: 10.1111/1467-954X.12420](https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.12420)

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