Abstract

(Swedish text with a summary in English)

The aim of this study is to analyse the importance of social factors and social relations around food preparation.

Methods used: a questionnaire, a food diary kept by the person(s) responsible for food preparation in the family and a number of interviews. 348 families from the counties of Uppsala and Umeå with at least one child under 18 years of age filled in the formulas.

The kitchen is a working-place where women dominate as workers. Class has a considerable effect on patterns of meals, on methods used for food preparation and on the choice of food and dishes. The division of labour is also effected, members of the family are more involved in the process of food preparation when the mother is a higher non-manual employee or self-employed.

Distinctions revealed when reading the diaries with Bourdieu's conceptions in mind were of three kinds. One dimension is geographical, another dimension is that of age. The third dimension is class. Upper-class families distinguished themselves by using more extras and more elaborate ways of labelling the gravy, the vegetables, the dishes themselves. They also had more alcohol with the dinner. Still another dimension is the gender power system. The results from the interviews revealed two patterns. One is that women express in various ways that there are conflicting goals involved, hard to cope with satisfactorily. The other is that there is a great variety of ways the couples deal with the gender system - men's open or hidden domination and women's open or hidden subordination.

Key words: Food preparation, class, gender, women's work, meal patterns, social relations, distinctions.

Distribution and author's address: Department of Sociology, University of Umeå, S-901 87 Umeå or Centre for Women's Studies, University of Umeå, S-901 87 Umeå.

ISSN 1100-3553. ISRN UM-SOC-STUD--98--SE.