

Stockholm restaurateur Stefano Catenacci of Operakällaren has been appointed to be in charge of the royal wedding banquet on June 19, 2010

The restaurateur for the banquet at the wedding between Crown Princess Victoria and Mr. Daniel Westling has been announced. Stefano Catenacci, Chef des Cuisines at the restaurant Operakällaren, will be responsible for the dinner at the wedding banquet, June 19, at the Royal Palace in Stockholm.

Stefano Catenacci, gracefully granted me an interview following this important announcement. It is my honor to provide you the following story about him and Operakällaren.



Wedding Couple
Photo: Scanpix

What do you think was the reason for selecting you and Operakällaren?

“ I believe that we were chosen because we have had a long and solid relationship with the Royal Court during the last 35 years, and I have personally been responsible for all Royal banquets during the last 13 years.”



Stefano Catenacci
Photo: Max Plunger

Who is Stefano Catenacci?

He was born in Stockholm 44 years ago and is the Head Chef at Operakällaren, Stockholm. He is married to Therese and they have four children.

Stefano's Chef training: On-the-job school with my Dad, Vincenzo, in various restaurant kitchens. As part of my training for the mission as head chef at Operakällaren I have also practiced in high-class restaurants, in Italy and in France and Belgium; Restaurant "L'Gualtiero Marchesi Di Albereta" outside Milan in the autumn and winter of 1994, "Carré des Feuillantes" and "Le Divellec" in Paris in autumn 1995, and "Comme Chez Soi in Brussels winter 1996. I received my Sommelier Diploma in June of 2000.

Source of inspiration: The gastronomic depth of the kitchen at the Operakällaren where we have cooks representing several generations, as well as working in restaurants abroad and with skilled colleagues.

Stefano about being a chef: I was very young when I decided to follow in the footsteps of my father. When I was 14 years old I began to work as a cook in my parents' Italian restaurant in Stockholm, the Caina. At that time there were only three persons working in that restaurant, my parents and myself. There has never been any alternative profession in my mind ever since.

Advantages of the profession: The privilege of cooking excellent food every day. The creativity and continuous development of the art of cooking

How significant is this banquet for you?

“ This Royal wedding dinner will be one of the most important dinners that I will ever do.”

How would you best describe a successful banquet?

"To know that communication in the kitchen is 100 percent, despite the stress and many tasks, while the dining room is filled with happy and satisfied guests."

Maybe these are the main reasons why Stefano and restaurant Operakällaren have received so many awards and distinctions.

Stefano himself has an impressive set of memberships and distinctions that clearly set him apart in the gastronomical scene in Sweden:

- Five red "Couvert symbols" (crossed forks and spoons) in the Michelin Guide since 1998
- Winner of the Silver medal in the Swedish contest "The Chef of the Year" in 1999
- Winner of the Gold medal in the Nordic championship in 1999
- 4th place in the European championship in Bordeaux in 2000
- Elected "Chef of the Chefs" by all the major Swedish chefs in 2000
- Award of the Swedish Gastronomic in 2003
- "The Spoon of Taste" 2007 by Lilla Sällskapet
- "This year's Werner" awarded in 2008 by Restaurants & Catering
- Member of Euro-Toques ("Artisans Chefs serving healthy food!")



Photo: Frida Lenholm

I understand you are not able to reveal the menu, but could you share what some of the popular dishes are?

"The menu is a close secret until the wedding, but typical dishes here at Operakällaren includes; at the "The Hip Pocket" (Bakfickan); Meatballs with cream sauce, potato purée, lingonberries and pickled gherkin, and in the Main Dining Room; pepper-glazed veal-shank with potato-soufflé and a "Guinness-sauce" followed by a dessert of Cloudberry-soufflé, as a couple of examples to whet the appetite."

To add a bit more; a common view expressed among other well-known Chefs in Stockholm indicates that they expect either spring lamb, veal or maybe some game as the King is an avid hunter.

But most likely no soufflé; During The Royal Couples wedding dinner, in 1976, the photo session was significantly delayed as the master photographer, Lennart Nilsson, wasn't satisfied with the pictures. The entire schedule was upset with over 100 dinner guests waiting. The then head chef responsible for the dinner, Werner Vögli, was tearing his hair out as over 100 soufflés collapsed. Nobody wants that again.

I have heard estimates of about 300 guests. How many other chefs and line cooks will be required to complete this banquet?

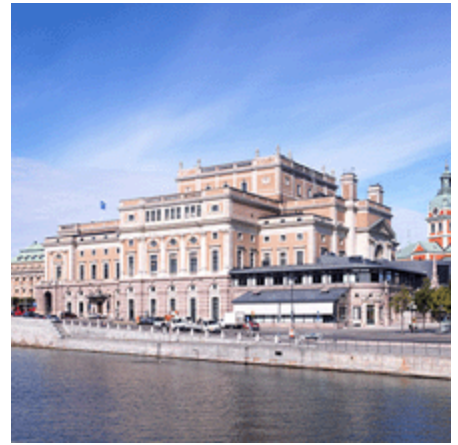
"I'm responsible together with my Pastry Chef, Daniel Roos," in managing a team of about 35 Chefs and Line Cooks to deliver a successful banquet."

About how many large events are you responsible for in a year?

"Operakällaren has performed several State and Royal dinners per year over the past 35 years following in the footsteps of the famous Head Chefs Tore Wretman and Werner Vögli. I have myself done the same since I took over from Werner Vögli in 1996."

What is Operakällaren?

During the 1950's Restaurant Operakällaren was worn and was running significant financial losses. Then, a group, primarily of restaurateurs, including Tore Wretman (who already owned Riche and Stallmästaregården), took up the challenge and got the national treasure rebuilt to their liking. This meant including a new modern kitchen, a wine cellar for the regulars and a new terrace in front of Café Opera (which at that time was called The Opera Grill). In addition, a new banquet room was constructed in the open terrace, and Bakfickan (The Hip Pocket) saw the light, a small fast service, similar to the "back pocket" Tore Wretman had seen in restaurants during his time in New York.



Operakällaren
Photo: Operakällaren

Stefano Catenacci took over as Chef des Cuisines (Head Chef) at Operakällaren following the world renowned Chef, Werner Vögli, in 1996. Under his gastronomical leadership Operakällaren has obtained many awards and distinctions, setting the restaurant apart in the Swedish gastronomical scene.

Operakällaren became the overall winner in the White Guide 2010, "Årets Bästa restaurang – Totalupplevelse, Operakällaren, Stockholm" (This year's best restaurant—total impression, Operakällaren, Stockholm)

Main Dining Room

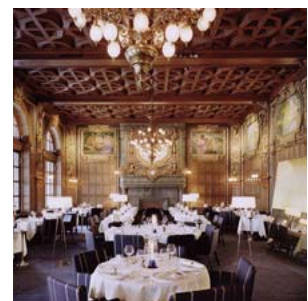
Many find Operakällaren's Main Dining Room one of Sweden's most beautiful with its original interior of wall paintings, gilded oak panels, suspended panel ceiling and impressive chandeliers. With the addition of large mirrors, new furniture and fixtures, it has been transformed into a world class modern restaurant.



Main Dining Room 1895

The Main Dining Room serves international haute cuisine, created by Stefano Catenacci. The wine cellar has an extensive, exquisite selection from around the world. Operakällaren has its own champagne, calvados, whisky and aquavit.

Operakällaren has been honored with membership in the prestigious association of restaurants "Les Grandes Tables du Monde/Traditions & Qualité" and has been rewarded in The Michelin Guide with five red 'Couvert symbols'.



Main Dining Room today
Photo by Max Plunger

Café Opera and Opera Lounge (Operabaren)

The Opera Lounge, next to Café Opera, opened in 1905. Its interior is a mixture of Art Nouveau and an aristocratic gentlemen's club.

The Opera Lounge has been and still is the meeting place for all kinds of people, a classic hangout for more than 100 years. Artists and intellectuals mix with business people who come to the Opera Lounge for lunch, dinner, or perhaps just a beer and a chance to relish the cultural ambiance and enjoy the view over the Royal Park Kungsträdgården.

The dynamic duo, Tore Wretman and Werner Vögli, worked side by side for decades, from the reopening of Operakällaren in 1961 and onwards. One issue they asked themselves was what could we do so the regulars would feel comfortable. Tore and Werner found out that those who eat out every day easily become tired of gastronomic dishes, what they want is home-cooked dishes (*husmanskost*). So that's why Operakällaren is serving Swedish home cooking. Stefano and his team are continuing this tradition.

The Hip Pocket (Bakfickan)

Adjacent to the Opera Lounge is the popular Bakfickan (The Hip Pocket), a small and intimate counter restaurant which seats only 28 guests, either at the bar or at the narrow tables set-up around.

"The Hip Pocket" opened in the spring of 1962 and specializes in presenting traditional Swedish quality cooking at a reasonable price. In the summertime, open air seating is also available facing Jakobs Torg and the grand Royal Park Kungsträdgården.

Operakällaren also has two banquet rooms: *Operaterrassen* and *Entresolvåningen*, and *Vinkällaren Nobis* (Vine Cellar Nobis)

What does this appointment mean for you and Operakällaren?

"We are very proud to have the responsibility for the wedding banquet and to be involved in writing the history of the Crown Princess' wedding."



Opera Lounge about 1910
Photo by Frans Gustaf Klemming



Opera Lounge today
Photo by Max Plunger



Bakfickan (The Hip Pocket)
Photo by Operakällaren



The Hip Pocked
Photo by Max Plunger

I understand you are writing some cook books.

“ I have two new cook books under development, but you can also find my recipes on the internet.

Written by Leif Rosqvist, the editor of New Sweden Heritage Society newsletter. The story is based on information from my interview with Stefano Catenacci and information from Operakällaren.

References and more reading and information:

About Stefano Catenacci, go to Google Search and type in Stefano Catenacci

About Operakällaren, go to Google Search and type in Operakällaren

Go to Google Search and type in Operakällaren-Wikipedia

Recipes, go to Google Search and type in http://www.recept.nu/1.17910/stefano_catenacci