THE CONSCIOUS MEAL
– ideas for studies in a PhD-thesis
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SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS
New skills and influences affect our approach to the meal of today. Developing the concept of The Conscious Meal could give tools for use in information, eating guidelines, advice and planning about food and meals in a holistic way. This may raise the awareness both in public and private meals. The Conscious Meal could be a concept for promoting health and well-being by cooking and serving sustainable, palatable and attractive meals for all the senses.

INTRODUCTION
The concept of The Conscious Cooking was created in the late 1980’s in Sweden and it is a description of a meal containing a combination and a balance of flavor, nutrition and aesthetic presentation. This holds for the subject of Culinary Arts and Meal Science and it's still today the base for the culinary teaching at The School of Hospitality, Culinary Arts & Meal Science at Örebro University, Sweden. The Conscious Cooking is described as a cuisine based on both science and proven experience. The concepts idea includes recipes, menu planning, cooking techniques, ingredients and nutritional aspects. The hypothesis is to extend the concept and develop it to an updated more complex concept called The Conscious Meal.

AIM
The aim is to study and discuss the concept of The Conscious Meal and see how the original idea can be transferred into today’s current knowledge in the field of public and private meals.

The general research issues are:
• what does the term The Conscious Meal stand for today?
• is it possible to deepen, develop and consolidate the concept for use in information, advice and planning about food and meals?

METHODS
The study has a qualitative approach and consists of two stages:
Research circles. The same participants meet several times to discuss and develop the concept of The Conscious Meal. The participants are the colleagues from The School of Hospitality, Culinary Arts & Meal Science, Örebro University, Sweden. The participants are a mix of skilled professionals from the discipline culinary arts & meal science which includes craftsmanship, aesthetics and science. In research circles, the participants gather around a common meal in the spirit of The Conscious Meal. This applied method is a way to staging the concept of The Conscious Meal. The idea is to give the participants a tool for reflection of meal experiences.
Focus groups and interviews. Interview data will be based on the results from the research circles in the first step, in order to test the concept in other contexts. The selection of participants for the focus groups and interviews will be a selection from persons working in the field of public and private meals.

FIRST RESULTS
The initial findings of this ongoing study indicate that today’s The Conscious Meal also includes discussions of ecology and ethics, a sustainable approach for foods. The original concepts idea of a meal containing a combination and a balance of flavor, nutrition and aesthetic presentation need today an additional factor of sustainable foods.

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Figure 1 The original concept of The Conscious Cooking extended into today’s updated concept The Conscious Meal

The first results show the importance of a holistic approach to the meal. It also indicates the importance of “consciousness” in all stages of the meal:
• Food production, transport and storage
• Selection of raw materials
• Nutritional aspects
• Menu composing
• Cooking methods
• Aesthetic presentation
• Design of the dining environment