

Ulf Larsson: "How to describe menus"

## ABSTRACT

Linguistically, the restaurant menu is a multifunctional text. Its main purpose is to give objective information – what exactly will you be served if you order *kalakukko*, *skyr*, *rjómi og rifsber*, *kroppkakor*, *oksekæbe* og *julesalat* or *rakefisk*? But the functions of a menu text would also be to express unique qualities and competences, to persuade the guest to order, to give aesthetic enjoyment to the guest as well as suggesting and showing new and exciting culinary and conceptual combinations and territories. This paper will exemplify and discuss some such text functions in menus, illustrated with authentic menus from different Scandinavian restaurants and canteens (mostly Swedish). The paper will also, from a lexical and cognitive semantic point of view, define, exemplify and discuss linguistic dimensions in the menu texts. Some such dimensions would be the scales *general – specific*, *objective – subjective*, *well-established words – neologisms*, *lexical – phrase – story* and the *sensory dimension*. A model based in lexical and cognitive semantics - the semantic frame theory – will be presented as an aid to both analyse and produce menu texts. Aiming for high aesthetic values, information optimizing and efficiency in the writing process, can a semantic frame-based language model be inspiring and of assistance, both when it comes to sensory and non-sensory descriptors?