



Welcome to Salve Restaurant

The history of Salve Restaurant is closely related to the history of the entire Kamppi neighbourhood and especially of Hietalahti.

In a map of Helsinki, drawn in 1838, the rocky terrain of the shoreline still stretched up to Hietalahdenkatu. The shipyard in Hietalahti started its operation in the 1860s. When the railway line to the harbour was completed in the 1890s, Hietalahti started to develop in earnest into a real harbour. An eighty metre long pier, including a swing bridge, was built.

In the corner of Hietalahdenranta and Hietalahdenkatu a graceful two-story, one-family wooden building was built at the end of the 19th century. In the beginning it was owned by the merchant Mr. Paul Sinebrychoff and later by the manufacturer of sweets Mr. Max Fazer or Sugar Fazer. The house stood there until the 1920s. In this house the first part of Restaurant Salve began in 1897 as a kind of a take-away food shop catering mainly to sailors buying food and tobacco.

In 1927 the present stone house was built. In this building Salve, under the name of Uusi Salve (New Salve), was established as a typical sailors' joint. Here it remains in almost its original form. Only the sailors are mostly gone.

The popular Finnish writer Armas J. Pulla writes in his book *The History of Helsinki* that Hietalahti was the Wild West of Helsinki. Hermanni, another Helsinki suburb, enjoyed the same reputation - life in Hermanni resembled life in California. In those days life in California was pretty rough and tough, full of guns, whisky, bar fights and women of easy virtue. A clear sign of what Helsinki thought of Hermanni.

Nevertheless, Helsinki had its own "Californias" much before Hermanni even appeared on the map - the neighbourhoods of Punavuori, Kamppi, Ruoholahti and Hietalahti had a similar reputation. In 1926 Salve published an advertisement in the magazine *Seura*: "Uusi Salve. Excellent food. Good coffee. Orders accepted. Home deliveries." The last promise did not mean that customers would be delivered home, though such a service could have been of much use.

Väinö Tanner, the well-known Finnish politician and statesman, spent his youth in Kamppi. Was he thinking of Salve when he wrote in his memoirs about restaurants in Helsinki around the turn of the century: If the poor wanted to meet each other over a glass of soda, their choice was limited to common sub-standard joints. They were a constant plague to their environment. I have many times when passing by heard through an open door what kind of noisy life they lead and how smoke filled they were. Or you could see how from joints like this the bouncer - usually a robust and heavy-handed fellow - threw the men out so carelessly that they fell senseless to the pavement or the street.

The history of the Salve city block is fairly clean. The neighbouring block on Lönnrotinkatu was not so bright and clean. It housed the liveliest brothels of the city. According to the city social workers of the time it was a murky place. The curtains in the windows of the house of ill repute hung in a special way all day long. The curious arrangements decorating the windows were supposedly an easily recognizable sign to people harbouring certain kinds of thoughts, according to a leaflet published in 1904 that opposed this kind of life.



Salve Wedding Engagements

Sailors met their girlfriends at Salve where girls sat waiting for their fiancés while drinking at their expense. Tradition has it that they were engaged in the morning, went steady for the rest of the day and then on account of various kinds of intrigues broke off the engagement the very same evening.

During prohibition alcoholic drinks were not served. But the clients did not desert the restaurant. Clients brought with them their own sparrow - a quarter canister of spirits. The name sparrow came from the song book of the Friends of Temperance or Varpuinen. Prohibition did not prevent the restaurant keepers and the authorities from keeping moral high. Nobody wearing his work clothes was served after 4 in the afternoon. He had to first go home where it was up to the wife if he could leave the house and head for the pub. Uniformed car drivers were likewise denied service.

Salve continued as a sailors' pub all the way into the 1970s. After a year at sea the sailors had their vacation of a few days ashore during which time they spent the money they had put aside for a drinking spree. After long white table cloths were introduced to Salve, celebrations could take place in shifts. If the old salt got a little tired he could quietly slip under the table for a quick nap without anybody noticing. Refreshed, he could then start his second or third shift. Old clients remember that even though Salve did see some serious fighting, honesty prevailed. Change could safely be left on the table without fear of it being touched.

After the work shift system of the sailors changed to two months at sea and then two months on land there was not enough money to spend on drinks in the pub. Money had to be put aside for a house or a flat, for a place to stay during the months ashore.

The interior decoration of Salve has kept its basic look for more than 80 years, thanks to its sailor

clientele. The walls are hung with photographs of ships and with paintings of ships and of the sea that clients have brought, in addition to 11 miniature models of sailing ships. Some of the photos come from a sea captain whose daughter knew that her father frequented Salve. She was here for the first time when she brought the photos, which she says belong here.

The People of Salve

Typical for Salve have been its both upstairs and downstairs clientele. When you enter Salve the downstairs saloon opens before you. Up until this day the "men of the trade" have mostly occupied this space with their glasses. As you ascend three steps to the upper part you find an area where you can concentrate on your food and your drink in a more tranquil ambience. Next to these steps you find an impressive compass, brought to Salve from a place unknown. Original ships bells hang from the ceiling. The wall of the upper room is decorated with a splendid, thick rope, snatched in the darkness of the night, from another place unknown, and brought by sailors to hang on the wall in their own living room, that is, Salve.

Restaurant life after the Second World War was subject to many controls such as the so-called compulsory sandwich. To be served three beers the client had to eat at least one sandwich. The rule was respected and circumvented at Salve. Not always an attraction during drinking sessions, the sandwich was often left untouched on the table. To avoid this terrible waste the restaurant sold the same sandwich many times over. In response the clients pushed a match into the sandwich to see how many rounds it had made.

The decrease in the number of sailors among its clientele saw an increase in a new group of customers. People began to drift in during the day from the offices of the publishing company Yhtyneet Kuvalehdet located next door. A separate telephone line was installed in the restaurant to take care of their business and a big painting of them hangs on the wall of the



restaurant. Jatta Heino, who was formerly in charge of Salve, says that some reporters came directly to Salve without even having entered their office first.

The move of the publishing company Yhtyneet Kuvalehdet to Pasila resulted for a short while in Salve facing a difficult time. Today the clientele includes a variety of people. Nowadays artists, writers, workers, gentlemen, and to an increasing degree also ladies, all like to meet at Salve. The nearby shipyard has also brought its international customers to Salve. Table reservations have been made as far away as from Switzerland. The Salve Summer Terrace is enlivened by the open air market on the Hietalahti Square.

The Baltic Herring of Salve

Among the most famous guests and customers of Restaurant Salve was Eddie Constantine, who fitted very well into the picture. Also Irwin and Vexi Salmi enjoyed sitting many long days in Salve. On the restaurant wall hangs the gold record awarded to Irwin for the song "Rentun Ruusu". Salmi's book *The Shoreside Restaurant (Rantaravintola)* tells about Salve. During his years as Prime Minister, Harri Holkeri could drop in on his jogging tour, dressed in his jogging suit, to eat Baltic herring.

The history of Salve begins with food that was served over the counter. At the end of the 19th

century and the beginning of the 20th century, it was possible to eat very well in restaurants. The food was fat, cholesterol rich and certainly salty: fried pork gravy, broiled and fried Baltic herring, meat soup, pea soup, black pudding, salted herrings and salted potatoes. Still today the fried herrings of Salve are a special concept. During the golden age of the sailors, Salve made restaurant plate history – Salve's pyttipanna (hashed meat with a fried egg). It contained many ingredients: fried potatoes, a large pork filet, choron sauce, a fried egg, and because the sailors were always hungry, a fried sausage was added. The popular plate is still on the menu. Today some vegetables are added, as eyewash.

Award-winning Salve

Salve's unique character, appetising milieu and tasty food have attracted positive attention in several restaurant business competitions. In 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2011, Salve ranked among the best Finnish restaurants in the competition organised by the Viisi tähteä (Five Stars) magazine. The jury consisted of restaurant business professionals. In 2008, Salve was among the top ten in the City magazine's large restaurant vote, ranking number one in the "Best Restaurant" vote of Helsingin Uutiset.