
Discovering Swedish



EPISODE 9

**“Tag questions”
and
“Asking for opinions”**



Dialogue

Swedish

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- Programledare:** Hej och välkomna till Gårda Småprat*. Idag har vi två gäster i studion: José och Anna. José, du kommer ifrån Spanien, eller hur**?
- José:** Ja, det gör jag. Jag kommer ifrån Spanien.
- Programledare:** Och Anna, du kommer ifrån Tyskland, eller hur?
- Anna:** Ja, precis.
- Programledare:** Idag ska vi prata om svensk mat och dryck. José, vad dricker svenskar?
- José:** Ja, det gör de. Svenskar dricker, ja.
- Programledare:** Nej, jag sade: "vad dricker svenskar?"
- Anna:** De dricker vatten, ibland juice... åh, mycket kaffe och...
- Programledare:** Och alkohol. Vad tycker ni om Systembolaget***? I Sverige kan man ju bara köpa alkohol på Systembolaget.
- José:** Ja, det kan man. I Sverige kan man bara köpa alkohol på Systembolaget, det är mycket bra att du säger det, ja.
- Programledare:** Men vad tycker ni om det?
- Anna:** Jag dricker inte alkohol.
- Programledare:** Det gör du inte, nej... okej... Vad äter svenskar?
- José:** Ja, det gör de. Svenskar äter, ja.
- Programledare:** Nej, jag sade: "VAD äter svenskar"!
- Anna:** Bröd, potatis, flingor... köttbullar!
- Programledare:** Okej. Köttbullar och potatis är typisk svensk mat, eller hur?
- José:** Ja, det är det. Det är typisk svensk mat, ja.
- Anna:** Mycket typisk, ja.

Programledare: Ja...

Anna: Men brun sås är också viktig!

Programledare: Brun sås? Ja! Precis, brun sås är mycket viktig! Och det är kanske också mycket viktigt att äta lingonsylt**** till köttbullarna?

José: Det är inte så viktigt.

Anna: Är det inte?

José: Nej, det är inte så viktigt. Det viktiga är att äta den där typiska svenska sylten till köttbullarna.

Programledare & Anna: Huh?!?!

English

The host: Hello and welcome to Gårda Småprat. Today we have two guests in the studio: José and Anna. José, you are from Spain, aren't you?

José: Yes, I am. I am from Spain.

The host: And Anna, you are from Germany, aren't you?

Anna: Yes, exactly.

The host: Today we are going to talk about Swedish food and drink. José, what do Swedes drink?

José: Yes, they do. Swedes drink, yes.

The host: No, I said: '**What** do Swedes drink?'

Anna: They drink water, sometimes juice... oh, a lot of coffee and...

The host: And alcohol. What do you think about 'Systembolaget'? In Sweden you can only buy alcohol at Systembolaget.

José: Yes, that's true. In Sweden you can only buy alcohol at Systembolaget, it is very good that you mention that, yes.

The host: But what do you think about it?

Anna: I don't drink alcohol.

The host: You don't, no... okay... What do Swedes eat?

José: Yes, they do. Swedes eat, yes.

The host: No, I said: '**WHAT** do Swedes eat!'

Anna: Bread, potatoes, cereals... meatballs!

The host: Okay. Meatballs and potatoes is typical Swedish food, isn't it?

José: Yes, it is. It is typical Swedish food, yes.

Anna: Very typical, yes.

The host: Yes...

Anna: But brown sauce is also important!

The host: Brown sauce? Yes! Precisely: Brown sauce is very important! And it is perhaps also very important to eat lingon jam with the meatballs?

José: That is not particularly important.

Anna: It isn't?

José: No, that is not particularly important. The important thing is to eat that typical Swedish jam with the meatballs.

The Host & Anna: Huh?!?!
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Notes:

- * 'Gårda Småprat' is the name of a fictitious radio show. 'Gårda' is the name of a Gothenburg suburb, and 'småprat' would be 'small talk' in English.
- ** 'eller hur' functions like a tag question in Swedish. It serves pretty much the same function as the 'right?' that is often attached to the end of sentences in English when the speaker wishes to receive confirmation that what she/he has just said is correct.
- *** 'Systembolaget' is the name of a government-owned liquor store. In Sweden it is not possible to buy alcohol anywhere else than at Systembolaget.
- **** 'Lingonsylt' is traditional Swedish jam made on lingon, a type of red berry similar in size that blueberries (the small, scandinavian variety, not the big blueberries found in some other parts of the world). It is traditional to eat lingonsylt with meatballs, potatoes and brown sauce.

Key vocabulary

Swedish	English
eller hur?	right? [Usage: Used as a tag-question.]
välkommen	welcome
idag	today
imorgon	tomorrow
igår	yesterday
precis	precisely
äta	to eat
dricka	to drink
dryck	drink, beverage
mat	food
köttbullar	meatballs
alkohol	alcohol
typisk	typical
brun	brown
sås	sauce
sylt (t.ex. hallonsylt)	jam (e.g. raspberry jam)
viktig	important
studio	studio

Key sentences

Swedish	English
Vad sade du?	What did you say?
Vad tycker du om ____? Exempel: Vad tycker du om Systembolaget?	What do you think about ____? Example: What do you think about Systembolaget?
Jag äter lingonsylt till köttbullarna.	I eat lingon jam with the meatballs.
Vad är traditionell svensk mat?	What is traditional Swedish food?
Tycker du om ____? Exempel: Tycker du om lingonsylt?	Do you like ____? Example: Do you like lingon jam?

Grammar Explanations

Asking for opinions & likes/dislikes

When asking for opinions on something, a common sentence structure is: 'vad tycker du om ____?' (what do you think about ____?). A very similar phrase is used to ask for or stating likes and dislikes.

Compare:

1) **Vad tycker du om lingonsylt?**

2) **Tycker du om lingonsylt?**

In question one, the speaker want to know what you think about lingonsylt (lingon jam). In the second question, the speaker asks if you like lingonsylt. The difference here is very slight, yet can be important. Question one, for example, you could answer by saying that you think lingonsylt is very healthy food, whereas question two asks for a yes or no. Also note that you cannot answer yes/no to question one.

A keyword in both sentences is 'tycka om', a multi-word verb which is used either as 'to like' (sentence two), or 'think about/opinion on' (sentence one). If you find it difficult to distinguish between the two sentences, it may help to look to the word 'vad' (what). A question that begins with 'vad' (what) can never be answered with a simple yes or no.

Sentence 1:

Vad

What

tycker du om

do you think about

lingonsylt?

lingon jam?

Sentence 2:

Tycker du om

Do you like

lingonsylt?

lingon jam?

Stating opinions When giving your opinion on something, we use 'tycker' without the particle 'om'. For example: 'jag tycker att det är kallt' (I think/in my opinion it is cold).

Example of stating an opinion (positive):

I	consider that the food in Sweden	is expensive
Jag	tycker att maten i Sverige	är dyr

A proper, not-literal, translation would be:
'In my opinion the food in Sweden is expensive'

Example of stating an opinion (negative):

I think not that that the food in Sweden is expensive
Jag tycker inte att maten i Sverige är dyr

A proper, not-literal, translation would be:
'In my opinion the food in Sweden is not expensive'

Note that the negation, the word 'inte', follows immediately after 'tycker'.

Stating likes and dislikes When stating likes and dislikes, the particle 'om' is included: 'jag tycker om lingonsylt' (I like lingon jam).

Example of stating a like:

I	like	Swedish food.
Jag	tycker om	svensk mat.

Example of stating a dislike:

I	do not like	Swedish food
Jag	tycker inte om	svensk mat.

Note that the negation once again is placed directly after the word 'tycker', and that the particle 'om' is thus postponed.

The tag-question 'eller hur?'

In English, tag-questions are often added to the end of a sentence when the speaker wishes to elicit confirmation that what she/he has just said is correct.

Tag-questions in English:

You are Mark, **aren't you?**
The weather is cold, **isn't it?**
You have a car, **haven't you?**
You like me, **don't you?**
You robbed the bank, **didn't you?**
You can sing, **can't you?**

Attaching tag-questions in English can be quite tricky, as you can see in the example above. In Swedish, you simply add 'eller hur?' to the end of the sentence. In English, the word 'right' can be used as a tag-question in much the same way. Let us have a look at the sentences again:

Tag-questions:

Du är Mark, **eller hur?**

Vädret är kallt, **eller hur?**

Du har en bil, **eller hur?**

Du tycker om mig, **eller hur?**

Du rånade banken, **eller hur?**

Du kan sjunga, **eller hur?**

You are Mark, **aren't you?**

The weather is cold, **isn't it?**

You have a car, **haven't you?**

You like me, **don't you?**

You robbed the bank, **didn't you?**

You can sing, **can't you?**