

On Ukraine's National Day, Hotel Manager Hands the Kitchen Over to His Ukrainian Staff: "This Night Shall Be Theirs"

By: Mikkel Kjerri, freelance journalist // **Photo:** M4M Holding ApS

DJURSLAND: On August 24th, Hotel Marina in Grenaa will set the stage for a Ukrainian theme night, where the hotel's own employees will be responsible for the menu, culture, and stories. The goal is both to gather Ukrainians from all over Denmark and to invite local Danes to an evening centered around community, integration, and reflection.

When the war forced them from their homes, several of them found a new working life in Grenaa. Now, they are getting the stage.

On August 24th – Ukraine's Independence Day – the scent of borscht, varenyky, and home-baked goods will fill Hotel Marina in Grenaa. But this time, it is not the hotel's head chef who decides the menu. The hotel's Ukrainian employees are in charge.

They are leading a theme evening where they will not only serve food from their homeland but also invite guests into their culture through music, storytelling, and traditions. The event also marks Ukraine's National Day, celebrated annually on August 24th. The day has taken on a special meaning since the Russian invasion, becoming a symbol of freedom, unity, and hope for many Ukrainians.

The initiative comes from Hotel Manager Jess Kallesøe, who wanted to move away from traditional theme nights and instead let the hotel's own staff tell their stories.

"We have talented employees from many different countries. They are part of our everyday life, but their culture rarely takes center stage. We want to change that. This night is theirs. They choose the menu, they set the mood, and they show the guests a piece of the Ukraine they miss," says Hotel Manager Jess Kallesøe.

Hotel Marina employs staff from diverse national backgrounds, and according to Jess Kallesøe, diversity has become a strength in daily operations. However, it has also required new solutions. Language barriers have been met with short instructional videos and visual work guides, allowing new employees to become part of the community more quickly.

"If we expect people to succeed in a workplace, we must also give them the right tools. Short video guides have made a big difference. They create security, reduce misunderstandings, and make it easier to become part of the team," he says.

The hotel manager hopes that the event will be much more than just another dinner. He would like to see Ukrainians living across Denmark use the day to meet in Grenaa. At the same time, he hopes local citizens will choose to participate. Not just for the food, but for the people.

"I hope many Danes will choose to come. Integration is not just about work. It is also about meeting around a table, getting to know each other, and showing that we stand together. At the same time, it will be an occasion to remember the people who have lost their lives as a result of the war in Ukraine."

According to Jess Kallesøe, he is unaware of any other Danish hotels hosting a similar CSR event, where employees with a refugee or immigrant background develop and run a national theme night themselves. He hopes the initiative can inspire others.

"A hotel is much more than rooms and a restaurant. It is also a workplace with people, stories, and cultures. If we can open the doors and let the employees show who they are, we create something that reaches far beyond an ordinary dinner."

If the Ukrainian evening is a success, the concept could be the beginning of a series of international cultural nights, where the hotel's other employees will have the opportunity to present their homelands through food, music, and traditions.

Hotel Marina is part of the 'Danske Hoteller' chain and is Green Key certified. In recent years, the hotel has worked purposefully with both sustainability and local engagement, as well as workplace development.

Facts

Ukrainian Theme Night

- *Held on Sunday, August 24th, which is Ukraine's National Day.*
- *The menu is developed and prepared by Hotel Marina's Ukrainian employees.*
- *The program will also feature Ukrainian music, culture, and stories.*
- *The event is aimed at both Ukrainians living in Denmark and local citizens.*

About Hotel Marina

- *Located at Kystvej 32 in Grenaa.*
- *Part of Danske Hoteller.*
- *Green Key certified hotel.*
- *Manager: Jess Kallesøe Nielsen.*

Three Alternative Headlines

- ***Local Media:*** *Grenaa becomes a gathering point for Ukraine's National Day: Hotel Marina gives the floor to its own employees*
- ***Regional Media:*** *Hotel in Grenaa turns integration into an experience: Ukrainian employees invite all of Denmark to National Day celebration*
- ***National Media:*** *Danish hotel turns CSR upside down: Employees given responsibility to celebrate their own homeland*