

12-1-2004

Idun--a Women's Magazine

Elisabeth Thorsell

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag>



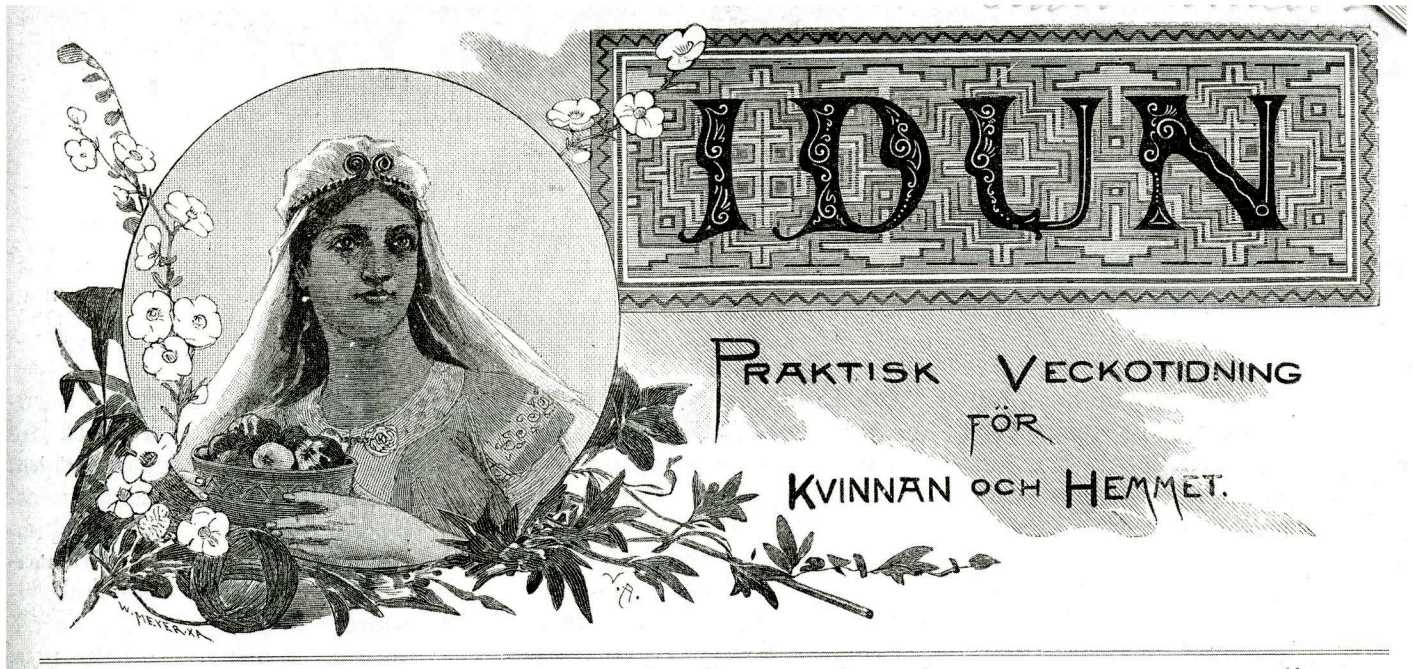
Part of the [Genealogy Commons](#), and the [Scandinavian Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Thorsell, Elisabeth (2004) "Idun--a Women's Magazine," *Swedish American Genealogist*: Vol. 24 : No. 4 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol24/iss4/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center at Augustana Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Swedish American Genealogist by an authorized editor of Augustana Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@augustana.edu.



In old women's magazines you can find many little details that give an insight into the daily life of the ancestors.

Some years ago I bought a bound volume of *Idun. Praktisk veckotidning för kvinnan och hemmet* (*Idun. A Practical Weekly for Woman and Home*) for 1890. It is most interesting, and also has a historical value. It was *Idun* which invited writers to send in their unpublished novels to a competition, and as it turned out later, this was the first sign of world famous writer *Selma Lagerlöf*. She was then an undistinguished school teacher, but still won first prize. Her entry was the first part of *Gösta Berling's Saga*.

Idun had many competitions, and one of them was on the theme "How to live on a low income," and in connection with that, one of the readers sent in a report on how she herself a few years earlier had managed her household (two adults and two children and a maid) on the sum of 50 *Kronor*/month (roughly \$10). She was then living in small country town.

She had done like this:

Meat and pork	12:-
Fish	3:-
Milk, skim, 2½ liters/day	
at 12 öre and 1 liter non-skimmed/	

day at 15 öre	8:10
Butter 5 pounds at 70 öre	3:50
Eggs	0:80
Bread or flour for baking	7:50
Groats and flour for cooking	1:75
Peas and beans	1:10
Potatoes	1:00
Coffee	1:50
Sugar, 5 pounds at 33 öre	1:65
Syrup, 4 pounds at 18 öre	0:72
Spices, dried fruit etc	0:75
Cheese and sandwich meats	1:50
Beer and other drinks	0:90
Kerosene	1:00
Soap and starch	0:90
Help with ironing	0:75
Various small items	1:58

The reader says that this was during one of the winter months, when they had more hot food for dinner than during the summer. The children often got *välling* or boiled milk with bread for breakfast. If they had a big meat dish one day, there was no soup that day. The sum for bread might seem to be very small, but she usually bought flour and baked at home. She then bought only about 15 pounds of hardtack every month. During the summer, when there was no need for kerosene, that sum could be used for more eggs and milk and more varied vegetables. She and the maid did the washing

at home and did not use any outside help for that. Ironing was done every two months and she hired an ironing woman and her ironing oven for 1:50. Otherwise she did not hire outside help, ordinary cleaning was done by the maid, and the annual big cleaning she helped to do herself.

The "various small items" were things like thread, sewing needles, stamps, writing-paper, postcards, and envelopes. Sometimes she could also save a little to be able to buy a small gift for a child who had a birthday, or something in that line.

[Editor's note I: I would think that this woman was married to a man in a lowly paid white-collar profession, such as clerk in an office, or at a railway station or something similar, and he evidently needed to go to work in a white starched shirt. *Idun* seems to have that kind of women as their target group, as the magazine is filled with household tips on how to save and make ends meet. A maid seems to have been paid 50 *kronor*/year in 1890. A subscription to *Idun* cost 4:90 for a year. *Idun* survived into the 1960s as I remember Mother reading it.]

[Editor's note II: *Idun* was a goddess in Norse mythology; she was married to *Brage*, god of bards. She was also the keeper of the apples that gave eternal youth to the Norse gods.]

Elisabeth Thorsell