



## Norwegian Foodways

Gerd (pronounced "Gaird") Klaveness was born in Trondheim, Norway in 1920 and immigrated to the United States with her family at the age of three and a half. As an adult, she returned to Norway for five years as Executive Director of the Fulbright Exchange Program at the American Embassy in Oslo. In addition to Norwegian and English, she speaks Swedish and Danish. Gerd is a teacher, principal, and district superintendent, she holds a master's degree in education.

A long time Louisiana resident, she remains dedicated to preserving and maintaining her Norwegian heritage. Gerd's specialty is traditional Norwegian dishes, especially baking and decorating the *kranssekake* or ring cake, which is the traditional Norwegian wedding cake. She is also known for her skill of making Norwegian cookies and pancakes. She learned to make these pastries from her mother and other Norwegians and from "experimenting with Norwegian recipes." She has been cooking various types of Norwegian foods since she was a child. She says, "I make hundreds of the ring cakes each year." She makes these delicacies for the Norwegian Seamen's Church in New Orleans, as well as for the Norwegian consul several times a year: "The consul maintains that mine is the best in the world!" Ms. Klaveness uses a set of 18 different sized rings for making the *kranssekake*. The rings are assembled and decorated with miniature Norwegian flags.

Ms. Klaveness' business card features a drawing of a Viking ship next to a ring cake. She notes that, "The Viking ship has a special meaning in our family. Actually, there are two famous ships in the Viking Ship Museum in Oslo. One is the Gokstad ship, the other the Ekeberg ship. My father's family is the Gokstad branch of the Klaveness family. The Gokstad ship was excavated from my grandfather's estate in Sandefjord, Norway at Gokstad, his home."

Gerd Klaveness received an Image Award from the Norwegian American Chamber of Commerce.

Updated February 20, 2017 by Natchitoches-NSU Louisiana Folklife Center Staff