

Antti Ahlström

* 27.1.1939 † 22.2.2022



Professor Emeritus in Human Nutrition, an inspiring teacher and expert in nutrition policy Antti Gustav Ahlström died in Nurmijärvi on 22 February 2022. He was 83 years old, born in Helsinki on 27 January 1939.

Antti Ahlström studied food chemistry at the University of Helsinki and earned a second master's degree in the United States (Massachusetts Institute of Technology). He worked as Associate Professor at the University of Helsinki 1971–74 and at Tampere University 1974–77. Antti Ahlström was appointed Professor in Nutrition at the University of Helsinki in 1977 and retired from this post in 2002. Ahlström was invited to become a member of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters in 1991.

Ahlström's predecessor was Paavo Roine, the first professor in nutrition in Finland and a close colleague of A. I. Virtanen. Ahlström therefore had big boots to fill. His adjustment was made easier at least by the fact that he inherited Roine's grand wooden desk – something that Ahlström was genuinely proud of.

Ahlström wrote his master's thesis on iron metabolism and continued exploring this theme in his doctoral thesis using a rat

model. As professor, he became interested in the social significance of nutrition and particularly nutrition policy. The study of nutritional physiology was gradually pushed into the background. He also greatly enjoyed teaching, and was indeed a brilliant, fun lecturer who would provide plenty of background on topics. The basic course in nutrition held by Ahlström was particularly popular.

Behind his convivial and at times roguish manner, Ahlström had a meticulous side to him with a respect for traditions and rules. He would always emphasize to students of nutrition preparing to defend their theses that the purpose of the *lectio praecursoria* is not to focus on the results of your work, but being able to place the thesis in a wider context. He also reminded doctoral students that they should begin their speech at the post-doctoral party by thanking the university.

After retirement, Ahlström decided to study in the Master's Programme in Visual Culture at the University of Art and Design Helsinki. He was planning to continue his studies all the way to a doctoral degree, but this would remain but a dream. He was also a key contributor in the writing of the history of the Faculty of Agricul-

ture and Forestry at the University of Helsinki.

Ahlström lived for a long time in Klaukkala, Nurmijärvi, with his wife Liisa. They had six children. There was room at home for one of Ahlström's precious hobbies: he collected old horse carriages. In his home kitchen, he would also bake what he thought was the best barley flatbread in the world.

Ahlström was very patriotic and reserve officer activities were close to his heart. He

was also active in other organizations, such as the Finnish Cultural Foundation.

Upon turning 60 years old in 1999, Ahlström said in an interview with *Helsingin Sanomat*: "We have a tendency to communicate matters related to nutrients and health exceptionally actively, for example in media. A quick piece of news typically has a tiny link to nutrition, but it is not put in proportion with the bigger picture." This observation still applies after 23 years.

*Mikael Fogelholm, Marja Mutanen
and Riitta Freese*