Jatku leiba (Margit, Estonia)

Jätkö leipä is more than a polite phrase. It's a small piece of Estonian worldview. Literally, jätkö leipä means may bread continue.

And bread we mean there are dark rye bread. It has been said for centuries when someone starts eating or shares food. At its heart is the quiet hope that there will always be enough, not abundance, not excess, but continuity.

Throughout the history, bread was made with effort, patience and respect for nature. So wishing jätkö leipä also meant may the household not go hungry and may life remain steady and dignified. Bread was never just food.

It was work, land, family, identity. The phrase carries a gentle wisdom, eat with gratitude, live with moderation and wish continuity rather than plenty. And of course, it had an economical and practical reason.

As meat was hard to get, vegetables were seasonal, so bread had been the side dish for everything to fill the stomach. Today, the phrase is still widely used, but mostly means bon appetit. Jätkö leipä.