



Sisters Peggy Boland (left) and Teresa Misener, both of Redford, got ready to enjoy an Irish meal they have prepared. They made corned beef and cabbage, boiled potatoes, Irish potato soup, soda bread and apple pie. A third sister, Della Melvin of Livonia, could not be present but also contributed recipes for the special dinner, in celebration of St. Patrick's Day this Thursday.

STEVE FECHT/Press-Photo

Irish meals are for memory sharing

By Ariane Funke
special writer

Years ago in Ireland, the three "Hynes Girls" grew healthy on fresh country air and good food.

The three sisters grew up, came to the United States and settled into domestic life with husbands, children and jobs.

But Teresa Misener and Peggy Boland, both of Redford, and their sister, Della Melvin of Livonia, never forgot the wonderful Irish potato soup, soda bread from their youth. Taking part in local Irish cultural affairs gives them the chance to share cherished memories.

"We're keeping the traditions alive in the United States," said Boland, a former member of the Irish Gaelic Athletic Club. "I'm active in the club and meet with members of the club every month. We have a lot of fun and it's a great way to share our heritage."

a typical Irish meal.

MISENER PREPARED, a meal in your small, corned beef and cabbage, served with boiled

potatoes. Melvin's Irish potato soup was a rich, creamy porridge, thickened with whipping cream. Boland baked a traditional soda bread, leavened with baking pow-

der and delicately sweetened with raisins. Rounding out the meal was warm apple pie. The sisters were born in Kin-

vara, County Galway. It is a farming community near Galway Bay, in western Ireland. The family includes five girls and four boys. All except Boland, Melvin

and Misener live in Ireland or England. "Dad was a cattle dealer," Misener recalled. "He also dredged for oysters and built houses."

Times were sometimes hard, according to Boland. Their mother was widowed at a young age. Still, they ate well — fish from the bay, stews made with lamb or veal, fresh corned beef and bacon. The family ate lots of carrots, rutabaga and, of course, potatoes. Several varieties of potato grew nearby, and people recognized each by shape and taste.

"My dad used to say it wasn't a meal without potatoes," Boland said. "Their mother baked three or four loaves of hearty whole-wheat soda bread daily to feed her hungry family. Raisin bread was reserved for holidays or special occasions."

"It was expensive to make, and raisins were scarce. Bland said Dessert was 'rubbery' cake of fresh apple pie.

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PEGGY BOLAND'S IRISH RAISIN BREAD

- 3-3 1/2 cups sifted flour
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/4 stick butter, soft
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 1/2 cups raisins
- 1 tablespoon caraway seed (optional)
- 2 eggs, beaten
- dash salt
- 1 1/4 cups buttermilk, room temperature

Sift all dry ingredients. Cut butter into flour; stir in raisins and caraway seed. Combine eggs with milk and mix until you have a nice dough. Knead for two minutes and shape into round loaf. Turn into lightly greased and floured 9-inch round skillet. Cut a deep cross on top of cake. Bake at

Authentic dishes recall heritage

350 degrees for 50 minutes. Brush with milk when done. Yield: one loaf.

TERESA MISENER'S CORNED BEEF, CABBAGE AND POTATOES

- 1 corned beef brisket (3-4 pounds)
- 2 small onions
- 6 medium-sized potatoes
- 2 small heads of cabbage

Put corned beef and onions in cold water. Bring to boil and simmer approximately three

hours. Prepare potatoes for boiling and set aside in saucepan. Wash, core and quarter cabbage. Take meat out when ready. Put in prepared cabbage and boil until tender (approximately 1/2 hour). Boil potatoes. Drain cabbage, potatoes, place sliced corned beef, cabbage, potatoes sprinkled with parsley flakes in a large serving plate. Serves 6-8.

DELLA MELVIN'S IRISH POTATO SOUP

- 6 large potatoes
- 6 small onions

- 4 sprigs parsley
- 4 sticks celery
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- dash of pepper
- 6 cups chicken stock (or 4 bouillon cubes mixed with water)
- 1 1/2 pint carton whipping cream (optional)

Peel and dice potatoes, onions and celery. Add them to stock water and salt. Add parsley and bring all to boil. Lower heat and simmer until vegetables are near soft. Blend in food processor or blender and return to saucepan. Add half carton of cream. Check seasoning, add additional to desired taste and heat gently. Whip other half of cream and lightly chop in 1 teaspoon parsley. Serve with 1 teaspoon whipped cream on each serving. Serves 6-8.

Syrup makers 'suck the sap' from trees

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All it took was the ol' groundhog crawling out of his hole and not seeing his shadow that has forecasted an early arrival of spring.

North American maple syrup makers are, at this moment, "sucking the sap" and turning out pure maple syrup faster than ever to meet the demand.

Collecting of the sap commences in the spring of the year when warm days begin to follow cool nights, causing the sap of the sugar maple to flow. During the winter, some of the starch that the tree made the previous summer and stored in its roots is converted to sugar, primarily sap containing 4-10 percent sugar.

Collected sap is boiled to concentrate the sugar and produce the characteristic flavor. Maple syrup is esteemed for its sweet taste and "maple" flavor. Interestingly, the maple flavor of the syrup is not present in the sap, but develops during the boiling.

Harvesting sap from the "sugar bush" — the strands of maple trees — is a rather picturesque operation in many locations. Quebec is the world's leading maple syrup producer, converting more than 60 million gallons of sap into more than 30 million gallons of syrup yearly.

taste buds

chef Larry Janes



THE UNITED STATES production will be lucky to tap off two million gallons, much of which will be made by small independent producers and sold as "local items."

To collect the running sap, holes are drilled into the tree about two-three inches deep and about three feet above the ground. The number of holes depends on the size of the tree — larger trees sporting four-five holes.

Into each hole, a metal spout is fitted and then a collection pail is hung below the spout. Each day, the accumulation of sap is collected from the pails, poured into a larger tank and hauled by sled or wagon to the sugarhouse.

A more modern method of collecting the sap involves a system of plastic pipelines which transports the sap from a hole tapped in a tree to the sugarhouse. Regardless of the method of collection, a good maple tree will yield between 15 and 40 gallons of sap in a single season.

Processing occurs in the sugarhouse. It is here that the sap is strained and then placed in shallow pans (evaporators) over wood, oil or gas fires.

As the sap boils, the water evaporates. When the sugar concentration reaches 66.5 percent, it is drawn off, filtered and bottled as maple syrup.

Maple sugar is produced by further boiling and evaporation of most of the water. One gallon of syrup yields about eight pounds of sugar.

A SINGULAR harbinger of spring, maple syrup is also a unique cooking ingredient. Its gift of unrefined sweetness and rich flavor, in both liquid and sugar forms, commands simple recipes, turns hams and potatoes into a regal dish, infuses bread and cake with character.

Try recipes using real, pure maple syrup.