

# Here's an Irish meal fit for St. Patrick's Day

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It is kept completely immersed in liquid during the process.

Microwave cookbooks suggest about 10-12 minutes per pound, but for the most tender product, yours truly suggests about 15 minutes per pound. If you are thinking about brock potting it, turn the crock pot up to its highest setting and, again, making sure the brisket is totally submerged, figure on about seven-eight hours for fork-tender results in the old crock pot.

It is practically impossible to give an accurate timetable for cooking the meat because corned beef varies in thickness and weight. As a general rule of thumb, simmering at a good rolling boil will cook a six-pound brisket in just about two hours.

Corned beef that is cooked way ahead of schedule can stand immersed in its stock for a few hours with little problems. However, be aware that the vegetables are best when cooked just before serving, so if you are anticipating a sit-

down St. Patty's Day celebration, toss the vegetables in 30-45 minutes before eating.

**WHEN FLAVORING** your corned beef and cabbage dinner, combinations abound that can add interesting tastes and textures to the St. Patrick's Day treat. My cooking library mentions noticeably different recipes for cooking corned beef and cabbage. One recipe calls for using pickling spices, dill, peppercorns and garlic while yet another calls for no garlic, clove-studded onions, a bay leaf and just a few peppercorns.

Since I am not a big fan when it comes to dirtying dishes, I will drop my garlic cloves, peppercorns, bay leaves and dill in a clean white, kid's sock or, if I can find it, some cheesecloth. Purists will make these bouquet garni bags so that the

broth won't need to be strained and, more importantly, folks like you and me won't chip a tooth biting into a peppercorn. They (the peppercorns) do have a way of slipping behind cabbage leaves.

All my sources indicate the use of only green or white cabbage, probably for tradition's sake, but I have experimented with the use of bok choy, purple cabbage, fresh Brussels sprouts and assorted greens for unique variations. To keep your cabbage leaves from falling apart during the cooking process, leave a good section of the core attached when the whole cabbage is quartered, then eighth.

Onions, carrots and celery will im-

prove the flavor of the broth and add important color to the plate presentation. Of course, the dinner wouldn't be Irish without the addition of the proverbial potato. The potato is an Irish staple and also serves as a salt-minimizer by absorbing the brine. As the potato cooks, it slowly breaks down and adds a starch that allows the broth to begin to thicken naturally without the addition of flour. This hearty, stick-to-your-ribs type of a broth can easily stand alone as a great soup.

Even though the vegetables add an important flavor to the corned beef during cooking, the vegetables can be cooked separately. This process will allow the shamrock-embellized

chef to exercise complete control over the crispness of the vegetables and their accompanying flavor.

**SAUTEING THE CARROTS** in a few drops of olive oil and then sprinkling generously with sesame seeds imparts a sweetness and retains the crunchiness. I can remember eating corned beef and cabbage at Momma's when the vegetables were cooked almost beyond recognition, some to the point where you didn't even need teeth to chew.

I'm a firm believer that the corned beef brisket itself needs the flavor of an occasional carrot, onion and hunk of cabbage, but you can steam, saute, parboil, microwave,

stir fry or brase the vegetables with a multitude of herbs and flavorings for a unique approach. Traditionalists could even pre-cook the vegetables in a favorite way and then, just before serving, toss them into the corned beef pot to marry the flavors and soak up some of the great broth.

Last but not least, for the uninitiated, after the brisket has been removed from the pot with the vegetables, remember to carve the brisket across the grain into as thin a slice as possible. Cutting with the grain will cause the brisket to crumble. Here's where a good sharp carving knife can really do its job. Of course, for the neo-traditionalists, an electric knife will suffice nicely.

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Twenty minutes before serving, bring 1 cup of water to a boil in a large frypan. Add cabbage, carrots; reduce heat, cover and simmer 15 minutes. Pour off liquid. Combine butter and mustard, add to vegetables, tossing lightly to coat. Sprinkle with parsley. Place the brisket of beef flat side up on a broiler pan so surface is 4 inches from heat source. Brush melted jelly over brisket and broil 5 minutes or until brisket is glazed. Carve brisket across the grain into thin slices and serve with the vegetables.

## TRADITIONAL CORNED BEEF BOILED DINNER

- 6 pounds corned beef
- 1 onion, cut in half, studded with 4 cloves
- 6 carrots, peeled and cut into large pieces
- 2 celery stalks, cut into large pieces
- 6 peppercorns
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 head cabbage, cut into wedges
- 8 medium potatoes

Place the meat in a large pot with water to cover. Bring the water to a boil and skim off the scum that rises to the surface. Add the onion, carrot, celery, peppercorns and bay leaf, simmer for 1 hour 30 minutes. Add cabbage, potatoes and other 4 carrots and cook for 30 minutes. Do not add salt. Serve the corned beef on a large platter surrounded by the vegetables.

## BRAISED CORNED BEEF

- 3 pounds corned beef brisket
- 3 cups dry red wine
- 4 tablespoons oil
- 1 large onion
- 2 carrots, cut up
- 2 celery stalks, cut up
- 6 peppercorns
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 tablespoon parsley
- 3 medium potatoes
- 1/2 head cabbage, quartered

Drain and rinse corned beef brisket. Place in a glass bowl and cover with red wine. Add the peppercorns, bay leaf, garlic and parsley. Turn marinating beef once during the marinating period. Remove from marinade. Reserve marinade. Pat dry the brisket and lightly coat with flour. Heat oil in a large dutch oven or frypan and brown the brisket for 3 minutes on all sides. Return the meat to the marinade and add enough water to cover. Cover and bring to a boil and boil for 1 1/2 hours. Add vegetables, continue cooking until meat is fork-tender, about 30-45 minutes.

## SPICED CORNED BEEF

- 9 pounds corned beef brisket
- water
- whole cloves
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup dry bread crumbs
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard
- grated peel and juice from 2 oranges
- grated peel and juice from 2 lemons
- 2 cups cider or apple juice

Cover meat with cold water; bring to a boil and remove scum. Cover and simmer slowly for 3 hours. Cool in cooking liquid. Place drained corned beef in baking pan; score fat and stud with cloves. Combine brown sugar, crumbs, mustard and grated peels. Pat meat with crumb mixture. Place in a 350-degree oven to brown, basting frequently with a mixture of orange and lemon juices and cider. Continue baking for 30 minutes or until heated throughout. Serve with fresh vegetables.

## clarification

The Shopping Center Market is in West Bloomfield, not in Farmington, as was mentioned in the story about a supermarket shopping tour, in the Monday, March 5, pages of Taste. Another Shopping Center Market is in Northville. The same company also operates the Food Emporium in Livonia.

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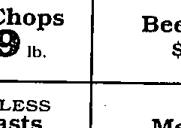
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