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★ 15

taste buds

chef Larry James



Potatoes stretch paychecks

The closest I can come to being Irish is the fact that while living Downriver, I was a "regular" at Patty's Pub.

The Jones Gang never really seemed to get into the Irish spirit while I was growing up. We never taped cardboard cutout shamrocks to our front door two weeks before March 17.

As a matter of fact, we kids would stand in awe while the folks at Caballan's Drug Store went wild painting all their windows green, and on St. Patrick's Day, throwing an in-store party that would have rivaled a Jones Gang New Year's.

I CAN remember one St. Patrick's Day, however, that wasn't ended in the traditional corned beef and cabbage cooked to death in the Nesco roaster. I must have been around 14 or so and remember not going to work for a few weeks because of something called a "hayoff."

Being a staunch union man, dad rarely complained, but I can remember a few months where dinner consisted simply of vegetables and potatoes.

I can remember a tummy warming potato soup and bread dinner, another with simply scalloped potatoes and stewed tomatoes put up from the year prior's garden, and on Friday's when meat was never allowed in Catholic homes, potato pancakes.

Potatoes were first grown on a large scale in Ireland hence the name — Irish Potato. It was during a famine that the spuds were found to be plentiful and easy to grow, especially in the moist, sandy soil.

Many Europeans viewed potatoes negatively because of their familiarity with the "nightshade family" (grown underground) which during the 16th century was known as "poison."

It really didn't help that there was no mention of potatoes in the Bible either.

POTATOES WERE first brought to North America in 1719 by Irish immigrants. As in Europe, North Americans were slow to adapt and potatoes were not grown on a large scale until the depression era of the 19th century.

Since 1950, the consumption of fresh potatoes has declined steadily while the use of processed potatoes has risen. Now more than half the total crop is processed.

Potatoes are used in starches and flour, canned soups, stews and hash, frozen food entrees, frozen French fries, dehydrated boxes, and made into chips and shoe strings.

Sometimes when cutting into a delectable, steamy spud, you will notice a slightly green tinge to the skin or a "hollow heart" or "blackheart" somewhere throughout the spud.

"Greening" occurs when the spuds are exposed to natural or artificial light for long periods of time. You will usually notice this for potatoes "held over" after the growing season is long over.

"HOLLOWHEART" IS the formation of a hollow cavity or hole inside the spud and usually requires only minor trimming.

"Blackheart" is a rotten spot that is easily trimmed and should be discarded.

High quality control by wholesalers, shippers and retailers make these problems few and far between.

Don't buy or use potatoes that are very green, wrinkled or spotted because they can contain harmful amounts of a toxic alkaloid called Solanine.

Never eat the potato "greens" from the plant, and make sure to trim off all sprouts as they also contain this toxic alkaloid.

Potatoes are great family meal alternatives, and in the event of a budget crunch, great paycheck extenders.

See recipes inside.



Anne Curley-Poppe (left), Kitty Heinzman and Rosaline Brennan talk about their favorite Irish foods over a cup of tea, freshly baked Irish soda bread and scones. All three were born in Ireland.

'The Fry'

Friends reminisce about their favorite homeland foods

By Joan Boram
special writer



All that's lacking is the soft glow of a peat fire: Three Irish ladies chatting amiably over tea and scones, brown bread and thick-cut Irish marmalade, occasionally bursting into

hearty laughter.

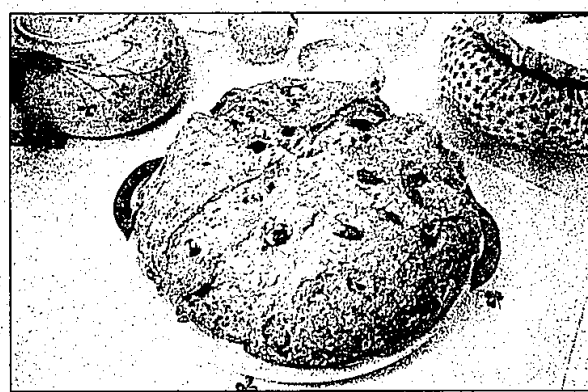
They're American citizens now. Kitty Moran Heinzman, formerly of Westport County Mayo, now of Livonia, pours black Irish tea into translucent Bellok cups for guests Rosaline O'Sullivan Brennan, a West Bloomfield resident born in County Kerry, and Anne Curley Poppe.

Poppe came from Tipperary to the states seven years ago to work as a nanny, and met and married Jeff Poppe. The couple lives in Redford.

AS SO often happens when friends get together, the conversation turns to food. Someone mentions "The Fry."

"Every Irish person knows what 'The Fry' means," said Heinzman, slathering a raisinsauce with marmalade. "The classic Irish breakfast is eggs, brown bread, rashers (bacon) and sausages. The sausages are of two kinds: black pudding (what you call blood sausage), and white sausage, very fat and meaty. These sausages are what we call 'The Fry.'"

Obviously, cholesterol is not a ma-



This slightly sweeter version of traditional Irish soda bread, commonly called "brown bread" is made with white flour and raisins.

for issue in Ireland.

"As far as I know, the only store in the States that imports these sausages is Irish Imports, in Dearborn. The owner, Jack Derrick, is from Westport, my hometown."

Anne Poppe speaks lovingly of "The Fry," also, "I go back home once a year, and I bring enough sau-

sage back to fill the freezer. That's all I eat for breakfast for three months after I return. My husband won't touch it."

ROSALINE BRENNAN recalls that Ash Wednesday and Good Friday were "Black Days," gastronomically speaking, in Ireland.

"On the black days, we had black

tea or coffee, no cream or sugar, no butter on our bread, and no meat. We had colcannon for dinner: Boiled new potatoes, mashed with chives, salt and pepper, lots of butter, baked until the top was light brown. That was our dinner on Black Days. (Dinner the main meal, is traditionally served at 12:30 p.m. in Ireland).

In Westport, recalls Heinzman, another potato dish, barmy was a staple during the six weeks of Lent.

"We only had meat once a day, if at all, and for the evening meal we often had barmy."

Heinzman's daughter, Elizabeth, is eager to learn Irish cooking, but traditional cookery is likely to rely on "dabs" and "pinches," and is difficult to write down in exact terms.

"I do love American potatoes," said Heinzman. "Especially the Idaho's. We don't have them in Ireland."

In the American mind, two items are generally associated with Irish cooking — corned beef and cabbage, and Irish soda bread.

All three of the ladies are quick to point out that there's no such thing as corned beef in Ireland — the authentic Irish dish is Irish ham and cabbage.

"In Kerry, ham and cabbage is a traditional meal," said Brennan. "Corned beef is the closest you can come to meaty, salty, Irish ham here in the States."

"THE DISH I most associate with home is ham and cabbage," said Poppe. "My mother made it twice a week, and you could smell it as soon as you walked in the door. I hated it."

So much for nostalgia!

Whole meal soda bread, commonly called "brown bread," is a true Irish staple, served at every meal. A slightly sweeter version is made

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Irish spirits are not blarney

By Eleanor and Ray Heald
special writers

Who invented the green beer served on St. Patrick's Day? Not the Irish. There are only two Irish beers (and they are not green) readily available across the United States. They are Harp Lager and Guinness Stout.

Harp Lager is amber-golden in color with intense barley aromas. It's a medium-weight brew that's fully flavored with a solid finish. Guinness Stout is a very dark, very malty tasting ale. Both the flavor and color come from the addition of roasted barley to the brew. Its appeal is the refreshing, slightly bitter finish.

The term whiskey is Gaelic in origin and there's no doubt that the Irish make some of the most distinctive. There is a common misconception that Irish whiskey is a potato whiskey. The Irish do refer to moonshine as pelen, but this word refers to the small, easily dismantled pot still, not potatoes.

Similar to Scotch whiskey, Irish whiskey is distilled from a fermented mash of grains such as malted and unmalted barley, corn, rye, wheat and oats. By Irish law, it must be aged for a minimum of five years in previously used cooperage (such as sherry casks).

HOWEVER, IT is usually aged for seven or eight years and up to 12 years or 15 years for the heavier distillates requiring extended time to achieve roundness, and the essential smoothness.

Prestige Irish whiskeys are pot still single malts with a small amount of single grain whiskey added to enhance the malt character. They are distilled three times as compared to the double distillation used to make Scotch whiskey.

Since 1608, in the small village of Bushmills, Ireland, the art of whiskey distilling has flourished in the Old

Bushmills Distillery, home of both Black Bush and Bushmills Irish whiskeys. While they have the same home, they are different and appeal to different audiences.

If you unfamiliar with either, our recommendation is to start with Bushmills. Drink it neat in a snifter. It's lighter and gentler with an elegant, fine-tuned finish. Once you've gained some experience, try Black Bush served the same way.

You'll notice the bigger, bolder aromas and flavors, many of which originate in the hand-picked sherry casks used during the aging year. If you like cognac, armagnac or single malt scotches, you'll take to Black Bush immediately.

ENHANCE THE aroma appreciation of both of these whiskeys with a few drops of water added to the snifter after the whiskey has been poured. Irish whiskeys may also be served on the rocks.

The big difference in taste between Scotch whiskey and Irish whiskey stems from the fact that in Scotland the barley is dried over peat. The smoky or peaty character of Scotch whiskey is absent in Irish whiskey.

Irish Mist is a blend of spicy-flavored Irish whiskey and heather honey liqueur from Tullach Mhor. In 1692, the tale goes, the original recipe was lost during an exodus of warriors. Some time later, it was discovered in Austria and returned to Ireland.

Today, Irish Creams originating in Ireland, are very popular as after-dinner pours. Fresh cream is blended with whiskey and stabilized so that it does not need refrigeration on the shelf.

Bulley's is the original Irish Cream. After it was first released, it was so popular that new cream liqueurs



The Irish are famous for their beer, whiskey, cream and tea. The term whiskey is Gaelic in origin.

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