

Celebrate St. Pat's Day With Irish Cooking

St. Patrick's Day, March 14th, calls for a special Irish meal. I immediately think of corned beef and cabbage. But then I remember more – fresh fish, spring lamb, potatoes, hot soda bread, soups, stews, salmon, and Finnan haddie (smoked haddock). The list goes on. Whether it's fish and chips, a classic soup or stew, cabbage, and various root vegetables, or pub fare, there's plenty of good eating and celebrating to be done as you sample some Irish heritage foods. Set out a platter of assorted cooked sausages (be sure to include some Irish bangers), Irish cheeses, along with soda bread and other dark breads, whole-grained mustard, gherkin pickles, and plenty of Irish beer, if desired, for some classic pub fare. Or try some of the other dishes in this week's recipe column.

Stuffed Mussels

Mussels and other seafood have long been a staple of Irish cooking. These tasty morsels would be a nice appetizer or lunch. 6-8 servings.

Ingredients:

- 48 mussels
- white wine and water, about 1 cup combined
- 3/4 cup butter, slightly softened
- 4-6 garlic cloves, crushed
- 2 cups fresh bread crumbs
- lemon wedges

De-beard and scrub mussels if not already done. Steam open mussels in a little wine and water; discard any that remain closed. Drain and remove top shell. In a bowl, add crushed garlic cloves to butter and work in bread crumbs until well-blended. Put a dollop of the butter on each mussel; place under broiler and heat through, until nicely browned. Serve hot with lemon wedges; add a green salad and bread, if for lunch.

Mashed Potatoes with Kale

Kale seems to be a favorite vegetable these days. Combine it with creamy mashed potatoes, instead of the more traditional cabbage, for a nice side dish. Makes 4 servings.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup milk
- 4 tablespoons butter, divided
- 1 small carrot, peeled and diced small
- 1 small bay leaf
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 4 cups kale, rinsed, tough ribs removed, and leaves coarsely chopped
- 2 lbs. russet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces

Combine milk, 1 tablespoon butter, carrots, and bay leaf in medium saucepan; bring to simmer. Remove from heat; let steep while preparing kale and potatoes. Melt 1 tablespoon butter in a Dutch oven or heavy pan over medium heat. Add onion; sauté until light brown, about 5 minutes. Add kale; cover and cook until tender, stirring often, about 20-25 minutes. Meanwhile, cook potatoes in boiling water until tender. Drain well; return to same pot and mash with hand masher. Add kale mixture to potatoes. Strain in enough milk to produce moist, fluffy potatoes; season with salt and pepper. Melt remaining butter in small saucepan. Mound potatoes in large bowl. Using spoon, make a well in top of potatoes; put melted butter into well and serve hot.

Peppery Cabbage and Noodles

This quick side dish is a welcome addition to many meals, with lamb, pork, fish, or poultry. Makes 6 servings.

Ingredients:

- 3 tablespoons butter, melted
- 3 tablespoons canola oil
- 6 cups shredded cabbage
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- salt and lots of freshly ground black pepper
- 12 oz. thin egg noodles, freshly cooked

Combine butter and oil in heavy large skillet over medium high heat. Add cabbage and sauté until lightly browned, about 8-10 minutes. Mix in sugar, salt, and pepper. Add noodles and toss to combine. Reduce heat to low and stir until warmed through. Serve immediately.

Mom's Irish Soda Bread

A family favorite enjoyed with corned beef and cabbage dinner or other Irish favorites, such as soup, stew, salad, and pub platter.

Ingredients:

- 2-1/2 cups flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 cup butter
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1-1/2 cups buttermilk
- 1 cup raisins
- 1 or 2 tablespoons caraway seeds
- melted butter
- sugar (optional)

Sift together the flour, baking powder, salt, and baking soda; set aside. Cream butter and sugar in a large bowl. Add egg and buttermilk, mixing well. Add liquid to dry ingredients until just mixed. Fold in raisins and caraway seeds. Place bread in round baking dish (cut an "X" on the top with a sharp knife) or loaf pan. Brush top with melted butter and sprinkle with a little sugar, if desired. Bake at 375 degrees for 30 minutes; lower temperature to 325 degrees and bake 30 minutes longer.

Cooking Corner

with Nancy Adams



Irish Salmon Chowder

Other fish, such as smoked or plain trout or haddock, could be substituted for the salmon in this hearty chowder. Serve with Irish soda bread or savory scones, if desired. 4 servings.

Ingredients:

- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1-2 tablespoons butter or vegetable oil
- 2 cups potatoes, peeled and sliced 1/8-inch thin about 1-1/2 cups water or fish stock
- 3 cups milk or 2 cups milk and 1 cup half and half
- 3/4 lb. boneless, skinless, fresh salmon, cut into 1/2-inch chunks
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1/2 cup fresh parsley, finely minced
- 3 tablespoons chives, minced

In a heavy pot, sauté onion in butter over medium heat until golden. Lower heat and arrange potato slices on top of onion in layers. Pour on just enough water or fish stock to barely cover potatoes. Cover and simmer 30-40 minutes, or until potatoes are very tender and starting to fall apart. Add milk, stir, and heat mixture through, uncovered. As soon as it is hot, stir in salmon. Continue to cook 5 minutes or so, but don't boil the liquid. When the fish is cooked through (starting to fall apart), season with salt and pepper and add herbs. This chowder can be made a few hours ahead of time and refrigerated to blend and intensify flavors; reheat gently until hot, but don't add herbs until serving time.

Saucy Lamb Chops

Lamb has long been associated with pastoral Irish scenes and cooking. These flavorful chops would go nicely with mashed potatoes and kale or peppery cabbage and noodles. 2 servings.

Ingredients:

- 4 lamb rib chops, trimmed of fat
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled and halved
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- salt and pepper
- 1 cup beef broth
- 1 cup (12-z. bottle) lager or ale
- 1 tablespoon molasses
- 1-1/2 tablespoons grainy mustard
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch

Rub lamb chops with one of the garlic halves and brush tops with oil; season with salt and pepper. Brown chops well in skillet over high heat, about 2 minutes each side. Remove chops to ovenproof dish and roast in preheated 400-degree oven about 10-15 minutes, or until desired doneness. Meanwhile, pour beef broth and 1 cup of the beer into skillet; add molasses and rest of garlic. Bring to a boil and cook over medium-high heat until liquid is reduced by half. Remove garlic pieces and stir in mustard. In small bowl, combine cornstarch and 2 tablespoons of the beer; add to sauce in pan and whisk until slightly thickened. (I guess you get to drink any remaining beer!) Pour sauce over chops and serve immediately. You'll probably have more than enough sauce, so if you feel flush, buy 8 lamb chops for 4 servings.

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