

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a green dress with a white lace collar, is seated at a table. She is holding a newspaper in her left hand and a small white bowl in her right. The table is set with a meal including a glass of orange juice, a pink mug, and a plate of food. In the foreground, there is a green plate of decorated cookies and a vase of green flowers.

🍀 Happy Saint
Patrick's Day 🍀

Lynn Steir

Get ready, beautiful peeps, because March 17 is St. Patrick's Day, the most popular holiday in the world!

I have been very blessed with a lot of travel. My favourite country without a doubt was Ireland. The entire length of the country can be done in less than a day and the width of the country in just a few hours, but who ever would want to do such a thing?

After all, this is the homeland of River Dance, rolling green fields, the best old pubs and happy little red-headed dudes.

It is much more fun to get into the rhythm of the island, go with the flow and enjoy the green.

However, there's a bitter history to eating green

During the Irish Potato Famine of the 1840s, mass starvation forced many Irish to flee their homeland in search of better times in America and elsewhere. Those who stayed behind turned to desperate measures.

"People were so deprived of food that they resorted to eating grass," "In Irish folk memory, they talk about people's mouths being green as they died" says Kinealy, the founding director of Ireland's Great Hunger Institute at Quinnipiac University in Connecticut.

At least 1 million Irish died in the span of six years.

Which is why for Kinealy, an Irishwoman who hails from Dublin and County Mayo, the sight of green-tinged edibles intended as a joyous nod to Irish history can be jolting.

"Before I came to America, I'd never seen a green bagel," she says. "For Irish-Americans, they think of dyeing food green, they think everything is happy. But really, in terms of the famine, this is very sad imagery."

That's not to say that the sight of green-dyed food is offensive to the Irish.

After all, the colour green is closely linked with Ireland, known as the Emerald Isle because of its strikingly verdant countryside. In the 19th century, Irish nationalists and republicans adopted the colour — as Ireland's.

The Journal points out, this was likely to distinguish themselves from the reds and blues that were then associated with England, Scotland and Wales.

Some say this international affinity for all things green is because there is a little Irish in all of us.



The idea that has nothing to do with bloodlines but, instead, evolves around our innate desire to root for the underdog. Quite clearly, history has shown us there is absolutely no such thing as the “luck of the Irish.”

Finding a “pot of gold” while digging for potatoes is total irony. Even the “lucky ones,” who fled the potato famine and escaped to America were discriminated against and treated very badly.

Success had nothing to do with “good luck, ” but, rather, their tenacity to persevere.

Luckily, a merciful God rewarded their hard work and gave the Irish an amazingly beautiful country to enjoy—for free—along with some of the finest and friendliest people you will ever meet in your travels.

If you stop and ask directions on a country road, be prepared to chat. Start up a conversation in a pub, and you will probably be singing into the wee hours of the morning with some new friends who celebrate every day like it was St. Paddy's Day.

Many countries have long embraced St. Patrick's Day traditions.

Think about it: we don't celebrate Bastille Day with the French, Saint Theodore Day with the Greeks, and they don't care about American Thanksgiving Day. However, come March 17th, from New York to New Zealand, people will be wearing green, drinking green beer, dancing in the streets, and spending the green to honour St. Patrick, Ireland's most beloved saint!

For instance, St. Paddy's Day Parades?

Those originated in the late 1700s. (George Washington was known to give his Irish soldiers the day off so they could join the celebrations).

And that quintessential dish of March 17th, corned beef — it may be delicious, but it's most definitely not Irish.

As Smithsonian.com noted, in Gaelic Ireland, cows were a symbol of wealth and a sacred animal, kept more for their milk than their meat — which was only consumed once an animal's milking days were over. In the Irish diet, meat meant pork. It wasn't until Britain conquered most of Ireland that Irish “corned beef” came into existence — to satisfy the beef-loving English.

“Ironically, the ones producing the corned beef, the Irish people, could not afford beef or corned beef for themselves,” Smithsonian notes.

Funny enough, the Irish didn't learn to love corned beef until coming to America, where they picked up the taste from their Jewish neighbors in the urban melting pot of New York City.

But these days, even the Irish back in the homeland have made accommodations for this Irish-American dietary quirk, Kinealy says. As tourist season revs up and Americans visitors come to celebrate St. Paddy's Day, she says “a lot of pubs in Ireland will offer corned beef because they know the tourists like it. It's come full circle.”

CORNED BEEF

Corned Beef: The term “Corned” comes from putting meat in a large crock and covering it with large rock-salt kernels of salt that were referred to as “corns of salt” This preserved the meat.

By keeping the meat submerged below the brine's surface, and in an anaerobic (oxygen-free environment) it safely cures.

6 cups water
3/4 cup Himalayan salt
6 cloves garlic
6 bay leaves
1 stick cinnamon
2 tablespoons whole coriander seed
2 tablespoons whole black peppercorns
1 tablespoon juniper berries
4 cloves
2 ½ to 3-pound beef brisket

Bring water and salt to a boil. Let cool.

Place spices and brisket in a deep pot, wide-mouthed gallon glass jar, or a non-reactive container. Cut the meat in half, if necessary, to fit into the container.

Cover the meat with the cooled brine. To keep the brisket submerged, weigh it down with clean rocks or a water-filled, tightly capped jar. Cover the container. Cure in the refrigerator for one week, turning the meat after 3 days.

Drain and discard the brine. Soak the meat in fresh water for 10 to 15 minutes to reduce the salt. Discard soaking water. Place the meat in a deep pot, cover with fresh water and (optional, add an onion, carrot, celery stalk and fresh spices such as those used in the brine) simmer for 2 ½ to 3 hours or until fork tender.

Remove the meat; to serve some hot, slice very thin as it's concentrated. Reserve the broth for use as a stock and discard the onion, carrot and celery. Press the remaining meat into a container into which it just fits; cover and refrigerate with a weight (like a jar filled with water) pressing down upon it. The moisture pressed from the meat forms a delicious jellied coating. Refrigerated, corned beef holds well for up to a week.

Once fermented and then cooked, slice corned beef very thin and serve with horseradish sauce or mustard.

Or, use on sandwiches or as an ingredient in soups and stews. Grandma loved to share Labskaus – A dish made from corned beef, herring, mashed potatoes, and beetroot, served with a fried egg and a pickled cucumber.

- For a delicious corned beef, add a small onion, one dessertspoon of rapadura, one dessertspoon of apple cider vinegar and some fresh mint to the water the meat is cooked in.

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