

Traditional Irish Foods

St. Patrick's Day is just around the corner. St. Patrick's Day gets celebrated all over the world. In the United States, it looks like green beer, corned beef and cabbage, and shamrock gear.

While corned beef is not a traditional dish in Ireland, it is the most common "Irish" food Americans eat in celebration of St. Patrick's Day. When immigrants came to the United States from Ireland, they wanted to find comforting foods from their homeland. Instead of using bacon and pork, they used beef brisket brined with corn-sized salt crystals. It is also sometimes called pickled beef. Cabbage was an affordable, familiar vegetable for the Irish immigrants and paired well with corned beef. This is how the tradition of corned beef and cabbage in the United States began.

Traditional Irish food is simple yet hearty. If you want to eat traditional Irish foods for St. Patrick's Day, try some commonly found on tables across Ireland.

- Colcannon is made by mashing boiled potatoes with cabbage or kale and mixing it with butter, onions, and cream.
- Soda Bread has many different variations. Some are sweet with honey, sugar, and dried fruits, while other recipes call for bran and oats for a heartier, healthy bread. Some recipes even call for Guinness and treacle. Treacle is an uncrystallized syrup made when sugar is refined and is similar to molasses. The base ingredients will include baking soda, buttermilk, and flour regardless of variations.
- Boxty is a traditional potato pancake served with pan-fried hake, vegetables, and shellfish cream. The main ingredients are potatoes, flour, and salt. Some variations of boxty are more similar to a potato dumpling or potato bread.
- Smoked salmon is enjoyed in Ireland. The Irish government allows limited fishermen to catch Wild Atlantic salmon in Irish rivers and estuaries.
- Coddle is a meal served as a bowl filled with sausages, onion, potatoes, and bacon. The name "coddle" comes from the slow cooking, simmering way of cooking the ingredients in one pot. Historically, leftovers at the end of the week were combined to make a coddle.
- Seafood chowder is often made with fish and shellfish harvested locally. A combination of fresh and smoked seafood is usually combined with cream, potatoes, garlic, onions, and smokey bacon.
- Black Pudding is a sausage made with fat, blood, and pork meat mixed with barley, oatmeal, and suet. White Pudding is made with the same ingredients, minus the blood. The Irish like to eat a slice of each at a traditional full Irish breakfast.
- Slow-roasted lamb is cooked using a slow cooker, the oven, or braising to make the lamb tender and delicious.
- Blaa is a soft bread roll introduced to Ireland by the French in the 17th century.
- Ulster Fry is made with bacon, sausages, tomatoes, potato farl, black and white pudding, and eggs, all cooked in the same pan to let the flavors blend. Potato farl is potato bread or potato cakes made from mashed potatoes and flour.

- Irish Stew is made in one pot, with mutton, potatoes, onions, barley, and roux with stock and herbs. Lamb can be substituted for the mutton when making the stew. Mutton is the meat from a mature ewe or ram that is at least one year old and has a more robust flavor than lamb.

This St. Patrick's Day, try something new and celebrate with authentic dishes that hail from Ireland, from fluffy colcannon to crispy boxty to soul-warming Irish lamb stew. You can find recipes online or in cookbooks at your local library.

(Sources: www.bbcgoodfood.com; www.delish.com; www.ireland.com; www.taseatlas.com)