

# Comfort Foods of Ireland to Round Out Winter

IRISH SOUP, STEW AND A TOUCH OF GUINNESS HIT THE SPOT

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Shane Diggin, Irish-born chef and general manager of The Towne House

AS WE RIDE OUT THE FINAL WEEKS OF WINTER, few cuisines speak to us as clearly as Irish food for hearty comfort food on a chilly day. Fortunately for us, the March 17 celebration of St. Patrick's Day isn't the only time we can enjoy the authentic tastes of Ireland, such as rich pot pie, savory stew, creamy Guinness and butter-worthy soda bread.

A prime option for satisfying your yearning for the tastes of the Emerald Isle is **The Towne House** in Media, with five dining rooms, including one called The Shebeen. This intimate pub is a top desti-



nation, attracting diners with a menu stocked with traditional Irish favorites. "We know what our food is supposed to look and taste like," said Shane Diggin, Towne House's Irish-born and bred chef and general manager. "It's the old-school cooking we expect from home — you get the taste of Ireland here."

In addition to Towne House's beloved beef and lamb shepherd's pie with root veggies, they offer a vegan version featuring quinoa, lentils and sweet potatoes. "It's a nice, hearty, feel-good dish, and you don't have to be a vegetarian to enjoy it, since it's a nice hearty meal for everybody," Diggin said.

In West Chester, try **Kildare's Irish Pub** to warm up with an Irish coffee or bowl of potato leek soup. Then order their classic Reuben sandwich on rye featuring corned beef topped with sauerkraut and melted Swiss cheese, plus a special dressing to bring all the flavors together. Keep in mind that Kildare's is in a college town, so expect a lively St. Patrick's Day there. "Everyone is happy and ready to have a good day — it's the best day of the entire year," said Ryan Vickers, a bartender who's worked at this family-friendly pub for over five years.

At **Molly Maguire's Irish Restaurant & Pub** in Phoenixville, they've been planning for their St. Patrick's Day celebration for a full year, according to Marjorie Hasiak, the event planner. The pub is owned by Declan Mannion and Conor Cummins, both from Ireland, and will host bagpipers, dance groups, live bands and feature specials on drinks and food for the big day. For a one-dish collection of tastes from Ireland, order their Dublin Trio Sampler with shepherd's pie, chicken pot pie plus steak and Guinness pie, all served up with a side of Irish soda bread muffins.

Read on for inspiration from Media's Towne House and others to create authentic tastes of Ireland from the comforts of your own home.

## Vegan Shepherd's Pie

Savor the feeling of home on a cold day as you tuck into this shepherd's pie with a different profile, including a sweet potato layer on top. Both Towne House's vegan and meat versions pair well with brown soda bread and a tall glass of milk.



Serves 4 to 6

### For the lentil and quinoa base:

- 1 T. extra virgin olive oil
- 1½ C. green lentils (or brown)
- 1½ C. quinoa
- 3 large yellow onions, diced
- 8 cloves garlic, minced (or fewer to taste)
- ¾ C. vegetable broth
- 1 T. soy sauce
- 1 T. good quality balsamic vinegar
- 2 tsp. vegan Worcestershire sauce, optional
- ¼ C. browning & seasoning sauce, such as by Kitchen Bouquet
- ½ C. dry red wine, such as pinot noir or malbec
- 3 T. tomato paste
- ¼ C. smooth tahini
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 T. fresh thyme leaves, roughly chopped
- 2 tsp. fresh rosemary leaves, roughly chopped
- 1½ tsp. sweet or hot paprika
- 1 tsp. kosher salt (more to taste)
- 1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- Fresh parsley, chopped for garnish

### For the sweet potato topping:

- 4 large sweet potatoes, peeled, boiled and mashed
- 1 T. extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

### To make the lentil and quinoa base:

Place olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add lentils and quinoa and saute for 3 to 4 minutes.

Next, add the onions and garlic, stirring occasionally and cooking until onions are translucent.

Add vegetable broth, soy sauce, balsamic vinegar, vegan Worcestershire sauce, browning and seasoning sauce, red wine, tomato paste and tahini. Stir to combine.

Bring to a simmer on medium-low heat. Add bay leaves, thyme, rosemary and paprika. Continue to simmer for about 45 minutes, uncovered, to reach a stew-like consistency.

Set aside on low heat while you prepare the sweet potato topping.

### To make the sweet potato topping:

Peel and boil sweet potatoes in a large pot. Once finished cooking, remove from water, mash and add olive oil, salt and pepper.

When ready to serve, fill an oblong au gratin dish or shallow bowl with the stew and top with a layer of sweet potato mash.

Garnish with parsley.

## Overnight Guinness Short Ribs

This popular short rib recipe from the Towne House lets the Guinness shine and gives you the chance to prepare your main dish a day ahead. Pairs perfectly with mashed potatoes and gravy. And, of course, more Guinness.



Serves 8 to 10

- 1 C. extra virgin olive oil
- 10 lbs. chuck flap short ribs
- 1 bunch celery, medium dice
- 4 large carrots, medium dice
- 3 yellow onions, medium dice
- 1 C. beef paste
- 4 T. tomato paste
- 1 T. salt
- 1 T. whole black peppercorns
- 4 sprigs rosemary
- 8 sprigs thyme
- 6 garlic cloves, peeled
- 6 basil leaves, kept whole
- 48 oz. Guinness stout

In a large saute pan or cast iron skillet, heat olive oil. When oil is hot enough for frying, place chuck flap on skillet and pan sear on both sides (do not fully cook, leave rare).

After short ribs are seared, place them into a baking pan. Add celery, carrots, onions, beef paste, tomato paste, salt, peppercorns, thyme, garlic cloves and basil. Place all these ingredients around and on top of the short ribs.

Add the Guinness. The base and Guinness liquid should reach slightly over the short ribs. Cover with foil and place in the refrigerator to marinate overnight.

When ready to cook, preheat oven to 350°. Roast, covered, for 3 hours.

Remove short ribs and set aside. Drain the juice from the vegetables into a strainer, saving the juice in a bowl. Place juice back into the pan and add short ribs to the pan.

Discard veggies (optional to keep them in the pan).

## Towne House's Potato Leek Soup

*This gluten-free soup is an old Irish favorite that's finished off with cream and butter.*

Serves 4 to 5

### For the soup:

1 T. extra virgin olive oil  
1 yellow onion, diced  
4 C. water  
5 medium white potatoes, unpeeled and diced  
6 medium leeks (about 6 C.), cleaned and chopped



2 shallots, peeled and finely chopped  
4 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
2 tsp. dry thyme  
1 tsp. kosher salt  
1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper  
Salt and pepper to taste, if needed  
Grass-fed European butter, such as Kerrygold, reserve as finisher  
Heavy cream, reserve as finisher  
Parsley, chopped for garnish

### For the thickener:

1 C. water  
½ C. pure cornstarch

### To make the soup:

In a large pot, saute onion in olive oil until translucent. Add water and diced potatoes to the pot, along with the leeks, shallots, garlic, thyme, salt and pepper.

Bring to a simmer over medium-low heat, about 30 to 40 minutes, until the potatoes are cooked all the way through (but kept chunky).

### To make the thickener:

In a small saucepan, bring water to a boil and add cornstarch. Turn heat down to medium and whisk until thickener is a loose, mashed potato consistency.

Add the thickener to the soup pot and stir to combine. Cook on low heat for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add more salt and pepper to taste.

When ready to serve, finish each bowl with a small swirl of heavy cream, a pat of butter and garnish with chopped parsley.

## Irish Colcannon

*This classic Irish side dish combines creamy mashed potatoes with either kale or cabbage for the green coloring. And, of course, plenty of butter.*



Serves 4

4 Idaho potatoes, peeled and cut into large chunks  
2 tsp. kosher salt, divided  
1 stick European butter, such as Kerrygold, plus more for serving  
3 C. kale or cabbage, chopped after removing leaves from the stems  
3 green onions, finely chopped  
1 C. whole milk

In a skillet over medium heat, melt a stick of butter and add kale or cabbage. Saute until wilted, around 3 to 4 minutes.

Add green onions and stir to combine. Set aside.

Place potatoes in a large pot of boiling water with a pinch of salt. Boil potatoes for about 15 minutes, until fork-tender. Drain after cooked.

Return the potatoes to the pot and mash. Add the kale and onion mixture, along with the milk. Continue mashing. Stir with a spoon until creamy. Salt to taste and add more butter for serving.

Refrigerate leftovers in an airtight container for up to three days.

## Irish Apple Cake

*Inspired by Gemma Stafford, an Irish-born chef and host of Bigger Bolder Baking, this Irish apple cake is topped with a traditional streusel. The result is a moist, coffee-like cake made with thinly sliced tart apples and dusted with powdered sugar.*

Serves 8

### For the cake:

1 C. plus 2 T. all-purpose flour  
1 tsp. baking powder  
1 tsp. ground cinnamon  
½ tsp. ground cloves  
¼ tsp. salt  
½ C. unsalted butter  
⅓ C. granulated sugar  
⅓ C. brown sugar



2 large eggs, room temperature  
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract  
3 T. whole milk  
3 medium tart apples, such as Granny Smith, peeled  
Confectioners' sugar for dusting

### For the streusel topping:

¼ C. all-purpose flour  
¼ C. brown sugar  
1 tsp. ground cinnamon  
1½ T. butter, cold and cubed

### To make the cake:

Preheat oven to 350°. Grease an 8-inch round cake pan.

In a medium bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder, cinnamon, cloves and salt.

In a separate bowl, cream the butter and sugars together until fluffy. Beat in the eggs, one at a time. Add the vanilla. Add the dry ingredients and milk alternately. Mix to thoroughly combine, but don't overmix.

Spoon the thick batter into the pan and spread evenly to the edges.

Cut peeled apples into ¼-inch slices, then cut in half for smaller pieces. Scatter apple pieces evenly over the top of the batter. Lightly press the apples into the batter.

### To make the streusel topping:

In a medium bowl, add dry ingredients for the streusel topping. Then add cubed butter. Using your hands, combine the ingredients until large crumbs are formed.

Sprinkle the streusel topping evenly over the apple batter.

Bake for 50 to 60 minutes. Use a toothpick to test for doneness in the center of the cake. When done, remove the cake from the oven and let it rest for 10 minutes before removing from the pan.

Dust the cake with confectioners' sugar just before serving.

Place leftovers in an airtight container for up to three days at room temperature.

## Irish Coffee

*This classic cocktail features Irish whiskey, such as Jameson, and is topped with homemade whipped cream. It definitely shouldn't be reserved only for St. Patrick's Day.*

Makes one cocktail  
3 T. Irish whiskey  
1 to 2 tsp. maple syrup  
(or 1 tsp. granulated sugar and 1 tsp. brown sugar, packed)  
6 oz. freshly brewed hot coffee (your favorite roast)  
Whipped cream  
(best if homemade using heavy cream)



## Perfect Irish Beer Pairings

While classic Guinness makes appearances in many Irish recipes as an ingredient, when it comes to selecting the best type of Irish beer to accompany traditional Irish dishes, here's a short guide to give you an opportunity to bring out the best flavor notes in the Irish dishes we know and love.

**Irish Stew:** Irish stout, such as Murphy's or O'Hara's, because of its roasted and malty flavors that complement the savory and earthy notes of the stew.

**Corned Beef and Cabbage:** Irish red ale because of the caramel flavor of the beer that complements the saltiness of the corned beef.

**Fish and Chips:** Lager because of its light and crisp qualities that don't compete with the delicate nature of the fish.

**Roasted Leg of Lamb:** A porter, stout or ale because they have rich and dark flavors that complement the earthy flavor of lamb.



In a coffee mug, add whiskey, sweetener and coffee. Stir to combine. Add more sweetener to taste, if necessary. Top with homemade whipped cream. ♦

*Courtney Diener-Stokes is an award-winning journalist, author, food writer, photographer and food stylist. Most recently she co-authored the Kimberton Whole Foods Cookbook and Farmhouse Manna: Nourishing Recipes and Rituals for Head, Heart, Hands & Soul. She lives in the Oley Valley countryside with her husband, three children, two Babydoll Southdown sheep, a flock of bantam chickens and a Bernedoodle named Daisy.*



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