



St. Patrick's Day is upon us, and everyone is turning Irish. We're a'wearin' o' the green, drinking our Guinness and green beer, maybe an Irish whiskey or three, and oh, begorra, the food! Corned beef! Cabbage! Potatoes and carrots and onions all stewed up in the pot, with a side of tasty soda bread and black velvet puds for dessert! You can't get more authentic.

# ST. PATRICK'S FEAST

## How Irish Is Corned Beef and Cabbage?

By Lorraine Payette

In Ireland they would say otherwise.

In Patrick's time (before he became a saint), and well into the twentieth century, corned beef would have been for the very well to do. All beef was expensive, so it would have been far more likely that a boiled fatback or bacon would have been served. Not strips fried up in the pan, but good old-fashioned pea-meal bacon, boiled and sliced.

Cabbage and potatoes – more staples – might make the cut, but not as individuals. They would more likely be brought together as colcannon, and served as a fitting side dish to the boiled bacon. Mashed potatoes with shredded cabbage cooked in and a touch of green onions, served up hot and creamy with the meat and a few root vegetables would add warmth and substance to the meal.

Soda bread, surely, must be authentic – and yes, you might very well find it there. But rest assured, these are not feast day foods. Most of these foods were cheap bulk items in the new world, served to immigrant workers by bosses who would never eat them themselves.

If you go to Ireland and look for these foods on St. Patrick's Day, you'll probably get a smile, and polite directions to a tourist restaurant where you can indulge to your heart's content. Meanwhile, the Irish themselves will be tucking into the real fare for the day.

"The day is more than likely going to start out with an 'Irish Breakfast' this comprising of fresh eggs normally fried along with two sausages, two bacon (or pea-meal bacon), grilled tomatoes, black pudding,

white pudding, mushrooms and Irish brown bread," says the source at [www.streetdirectory.com](http://www.streetdirectory.com) "And then there are the puddings, sold in packages the size similar to a salami. Black pudding is really a blood sausage which is a staple across the European continent."

Definitely not for the faint of heart, but guaranteed to get a good start on your day.

"(Dinner is) not what you imagine - no corned beef and no cabbage," the site says. "Saint Patrick's Day meal is generally a joint of lamb roasted in the oven with rosemary and garlic. Served with creamed potatoes, roasted vegetable (that includes potatoes, carrots and parsnips) with peas and broccoli. The dessert is normal hot apple tart served with custard and cream. Later that evening, if you still have room, it will be Irish brown bread with cream cheese and Irish Smoked Salmon."

Even though St. Patrick's Day has been romanticised by our fondest imaginings, the love of the Irish remains. As we remember the poverty and the strife that brought many an immigrant here from the old sod, we look to this time and try to imagine times past as we toast a bright and welcoming future. The foods we love and recall may not be authentic to Ireland, but they are true to our hearts. **Erin go bragh! LH**