

FOOD & DINING

Celebrate St. Patrick's Day with a staple of Irish pub fare

St. Patrick's Day may be a celebration of the man who brought Christianity to Ireland, but one need not be Irish to don green and enjoy the festivities each March 17. Irish culture is on display each St. Patrick's Day, and few can resist the opportunity to indulge in some green-clad revelry.

While parades and music garner much of the attention on St. Patrick's Day, food also plays a big role. Cottage pie, often referred to as "Shepherd's pie," traces its origins to the United Kingdom and Ireland. The dish can now be found on the menu at many Irish pubs, but St. Patrick's Day celebrants can prepare from the comforts of their own kitchens thanks to the following recipe from Laurie McNamara's "Simple Scratch: 120 Wholesome Homemade Recipes Made Easy" (Avery).

COTTAGE PIE

Serves 6

For the filling:

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 cups diced yellow onion
- 1 cup diced carrot
- 1 cup diced celery
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 1/2 pounds ground round
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 2 tablespoons unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup Pinot Noir (or any good dry red wine)
- 2 cups beef broth
- 1/4 cup Worcestershire sauce
- 4 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup frozen peas

For the mashed potatoes:

- 3 1/2 pounds russet potatoes, peeled and cut into large pieces
- Kosher salt
- 1 1/4 cups whole milk
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 3/4 cup grated sharp white cheddar cheese
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme leaves

TO MAKE THE FILLING:

In a Dutch oven, melt the butter over medium-low heat. Add the onion, carrot and celery. Stir to coat the vegetables in butter, cover, and cook, stirring occasionally, for 15 minutes, until soft. Add the garlic and cook for 1 to 2 minutes more. Use a spoon to transfer the cooked vegetables to a bowl.

In the Dutch oven, cook the ground beef over medium heat, breaking it into small crumbles as it cooks, until cooked through. Return the vegetables to the pot and stir in the tomato paste and flour. Pour in the wine and cook for 2 to 3 minutes. Pour in the broth and Worcestershire sauce and add the thyme sprigs and bay leaf. Season with salt and pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, for 30 minutes. Stir in the peas and pour the filling into a 3- to 4-quart baking dish.

While the filling is cooking, make the mashed potatoes. Preheat the oven to 400 F.

Place the peeled potatoes in a pot and add cold water to cover by about 2 inches. Add a generous pinch of salt, cover, and bring to a boil. Crack the lid and cook the potatoes for 15 to 20 minutes, or until fork-tender.

With the lid askew, carefully drain the water from the pot with the

potatoes. Return the pot to the stove over low heat. Add the milk and butter to the potatoes, cover, and simmer the potatoes in the milk and butter for 10 to 12 minutes. Season the potatoes with 3/4 teaspoon of salt and mash with a potato masher or mix with a hand mixer. Add the cheddar and stir to combine. Taste and season with more salt if needed.

Use a spatula to spoon the mashed potatoes over the filling in the baking dish and spread them out evenly. Use a fork and drag it along the top of the mashed potatoes to make ridges. These will crisp up and brown in the oven.

Place the cottage pie on a rimmed baking sheet and slide it into the oven. Bake for 20 minutes, or until the top of the potatoes is golden and crispy and the filling is bubbling.

Combine the minced parsley and thyme.

Serve large spoonfuls of the cottage pie in bowls with a sprinkle of the parsley and thyme.



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