

Taste

A drop for the saint

Eating in
Judith Sweet



IT'S interesting that a man who died more than 1500 years ago is remembered and celebrated each year on March 17 in all the countries where the Irish live.

More than 40 per cent of Australians claim to have Irish heritage, which is why this special day is a party-day all over our country.

Patrick, a Welshman, was captured by pirates and taken as a slave to Ireland. He escaped after six years but vowed to go back to convert the "heathens" to Christianity. He did return to Ireland and, on his deathbed, urged his friends not to mourn but to celebrate as he was going into everlasting life.

My research says that his last request to them was that each of them drink a "wee drop of something" to ease their pain.

Each March 17, all those with an Irish connection and, I'd guess, many without one, comply with his wish and raise a glass in his memory. I wonder if St Patrick's Day would still be celebrated if he'd suggested a prayer or dry toast.

What drink was taken before the famous Guinness was produced I'm not sure but it is more than likely that will be the main beverage as glasses are filled today. Guinness is available in 150 countries and brewed in 50, so there won't be any shortage of the drop.

If you are planning a barbecue as a celebration meal tonight, you could use a drop, or a few, of Guinness to add to a marinade as, like wine, it helps to tenderise meat as well as adding flavour.

This beef recipe is tasty and has a topping of crispy bread with a buttery mustard finish which combines very well with the flavours of the casserole.

If you wish, you could prepare the meat part of the dish in advance and reheat it before adding the bread topping. Remember this recipe when the days grow more chilly. You can substitute red wine or beer for Guinness.

Beef with Guinness

750g trimmed topside beef cut into thin slices

1 cup Guinness

1 cup beef stock

4 medium onions, finely sliced

125g mushrooms, wiped and sliced

2 tsp brown sugar

2 tbsp oil

2 tbsp plain flour

Bouquet garni, consisting of a bay leaf, sprig of thyme and parsley

8 thick slices French stick

Butter and Dijon mustard to spread the bread

Heat the oven to 160C. Cut the meat into strips about 4cmx5cm. Heat the oil in a heavy flameproof casserole over a high heat and brown the meat in several batches so as not to reduce the temperature and cause the meat to stew. Remove the meat with a slotted spoon and add the onions to the pan, reducing the heat to medium. Follow the onions with the mushrooms and cook until the onions have softened.

Remove from the heat and stir in the flour and sugar. Return to the heat for a minute or two and stir well. Add the Guinness, stirring all the time.

Bring to the boil, then add the meat, enough stock just to cover the meat and the herbs. Season with salt and pepper. Cover the casserole and cook for 1½ hours.

Spread the bread generously on one side with butter, the other side with Dijon mustard. Remove the casserole from the oven and place the bread, mustard side down, on top of the meat and cook, uncovered, for a further 20-30 minutes until the bread is crusty on top. Serve from the dish.

SOME months back I gave a recipe for a Whisky Cake. It would be a great choice for St Patrick's Day.

The good thing about cooking with alcohol is that you are left with the flavour without the alcohol level. I haven't tried this but the cake probably would be successful using Guinness in place of whisky. Irish whiskey, of course, is the appropriate choice for St Patrick's Day but I can vouch for success with Scotch whisky. I've been given another cake recipe, recommended by Penny Heath from Guinness Australia, that combines the enticing flavours of chocolate, orange and Guinness.

Chocolate-orange Guinness cake

275g self-raising flour

225g butter at room temperature

225g soft brown sugar

150ml Guinness

4 eggs, lightly beaten

2 tbsp cocoa powder

1 tsp baking powder

Pinch salt

Finely grated rind of 1 orange

ICING:

225g soft icing sugar

110g soft butter

Juice and finely grated rind of 1 orange

Preheat the oven to 190C. Thoroughly grease two 20-22cm cake tins. Line the base with baking paper and grease lightly.

In a mixing bowl, cream together the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add the lightly beaten eggs, a little at a time. Stir in the orange rind. Sift together the SR flour, baking powder, salt and cocoa and carefully fold into the mixture. Fold in the

Guinness, being careful not to over-beat the mixture. Divide the mixture evenly between the two prepared cake tins.

Place the cakes in the centre of the preheated oven and cook for 30 minutes — until the cakes are springy to the touch and have shrunk slightly from the edges of the tins.

Remove from the oven and allow to stand for a minute or two before

turning out carefully on to a cooling rack.

While the cake is cooling, make the icing by creaming together thoroughly the butter and icing sugar. Blend in the orange rind and enough orange juice to make the icing soft enough to spread.

When the cakes are completely cool use the icing to sandwich the two cakes together and ice the top of the cake.

POWER OF PERSUASION: St Patrick meets the people at a Dublin street parade, above. On his deathbed, he reputedly urged his friends not to mourn but to drink a "wee drop of something".

cooles Save everyday

Mersey Valley Cheese is now spreadable.

NEW GREAT RECIPES See other side of pack

MERSEY VALLEY VINTAGE CLUB

SHARP AND SPREADABLE

Original CHEESE

150g

2⁹⁹ ea

NEW

Mersey Valley Spreadable Cheese 150g

Price applies until Sunday 21st March 2004.

cooles Save everyday ✓

PRICE APPLIES UNTIL SUNDAY 21ST MARCH 2004. PRICE NOT AVAILABLE AT COLES EXPRESS.

WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO LIMIT THE SALE OF THIS ITEM TO NORMAL RETAIL QUANTITIES. WHILE STOCKS LAST. SOME PRICE MAY VARY IN CERTAIN AREAS. FLYBUYS TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY - SEE FLYBUYS SHELF TICKETS IN-STORE FOR DETAILS.

TAS-1503-MERSEY-ORIG