



The Freebird

VOLUME I

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The Freebird is the newsletter of the Irish Fair of Minnesota. Its purpose is to keep us connected, provide updates, celebrate successes and share our stories, and to support the mission of the Irish Fair by promoting and cultivating Irish culture.

FAIR FOCUSES ON AUTHENTIC IRISH FOOD OFFERINGS: CAN YOU SAY YUM???

Beginning last year and ramping up this, the Fair making a big effort to increase the variety and authenticity of the victuals available in the Food Court and involve more local Irish businesses.

A wonderful addition to the Fair this year will be a Tussie's Tea and Sweets in the Pavilion, brought to us by Jan Loney, Julie Acton and Kathi Jones. The place is conceived as a tranquil place where fairgoers can relax and take a bit of a break from the high energy of Irish Fair. "We are striving for a genteel Irish tearoom experience for our patrons" says Jones "with small tables covered in



green fabric tablecloths topped with posy vases with fresh flowers."

"Throughout the weekend we will have classical musicians playing Turlough O'Carolan compositions on traditional Irish instruments as well as a

group singing in harmony & ballads sung in Irish--not as a concert venue but as backdrop to patrons' chat."

The highlight of the Tussie's menu will be elegant little deserts: raspberry white chocolate scones, lemon curd tarts, brownies with mint icing, and shamrock sugar cookies. As for the tea, Jones

notes "In a Minnesota August, patron interest in hot tea in the non- air conditioned Harriet Island pavilion seems a chancy thing. So, for our first year out we'll be serving iced tea with lemon slices, which is always refreshing in the heat. However, if we hear from patrons that they'd like hot tea, we'll reconsider for next year."

AN GHAELGE

Courtesy of Gaeltacht Minnesota

If all this talk about food and cooking is whetting your appetite, so much the better, for the Irish say, "Is maith an t-anlann an t-ocras."

Hunger is a good sauce!

To learn more about the Irish language, contact Gaeltacht Minnesota at <http://www.gaelminn.org/>

In the main Food Court, last year saw the addition of O'Donovan's Irish Pub (see February edition of the newsletter) and FatHead Brennan's Pie Shop, run by Tony Brennan Ayriss. FatHead's offerings included Babies' Heads (a steak and onion pudding), Irish Eggs (homemade pork sausage covering a boiled egg, deep-fried and then served the authentic way---cold, with hot mustard) and Vanilla Lemon Curd Pie, an Irish variety of Cheesecake.

"To be honest, we weren't prepared for quite so much success" says Ayriss "We sold out every day. It was very heartening to see people so enthusiastic for authentic dishes." FatHead Brennan's Pie Shop will be adding a Cheese-Onion-Potato Pie to the menu this year.

The 2005 Fair welcomes back Keegan's Irish Pub and Restaurant to the Food Court. "We'll be serving a sausage sandwich made with imported Irish bangers. They taste something like bratwurst." Says Marty Neumann of Keegan's. "We'll also have our corned beef sandwich and for the kids, hamburgers."



Here's to Irish Food!

Long-time Irish Fair participants & supporters The Liffey, The Local and Kieran's (known collectively as Cara Irish Pubs) will be adding quite a few items to their menu this year. In addition to the lamb's stew, corned beef sandwiches and fish & chips savored in previous years, Fair goers will also be able to enjoy Shepherd's Pie, Corned Beef Poppers and Pub Pies (made with puff pastry).

"We'll also have a couple of surprise dishes this year. I don't want to tip our hand too early, but we're working on some very tasty stuff." Says Peter Kellen, who organizes the Fair food for Cara Pubs. "We do take the authenticity to heart and use Irish ingredients, too, where we can. So if one of the ingredients is cheese, it'll be imported Irish cheese."

The concessions for light beverages will be run by non-profit Irish focused organizations including Failte Minnesota, Children's Program of Northern Ireland and the Ancient Order of Hibernians.

The Pratie Bunch started out as a stand when the Fair was at St. Thomas by Chad and Katie Gilliard and a host of relatives. "I was volunteering at one of the stages over the weekend and thinking we needed more Irish food. A coffee-loving friend felt we needed more coffee at the Fair. So we put it together and created a coffee-and- baked potato stand." This year the Pratie Bunch will be adding a carvery plate.

"When we were in Ireland we just loved going to the local carvery, so we thought "let's bring this to the Fair." The carvery plate will include a choice of roasted pork or chicken and a baked potato.

**GAEILGE GALORE: A REPORT FROM
GAELTACHT MN'S IRISH LANGUAGE
IMMERSION CLASS**



The Irish language is experiencing a growth of interest in

both Ireland and the United States. New pride in a distinctly Irish identity, coupled with modern, more enjoyable language teaching methods are leading to the creation of Irish language immersion schools in Ireland as one way to instill the knowledge of the language in the current generation. In April, I had the delightful experience of participating a local, small- scale version of that by attending an Irish language immersion class organized (*well-organized!*) by Gaeltacht Minnesota, a not- for- profit volunteer organization dedicated to spreading knowledge of the Irish language.

"We get a number of interesting people in the classes." Says Will Kenny, who arranged the event. "All kinds, beliefs and backgrounds, focusing on the shared interest in the Irish language."

There were 37 people signed up for the event; 22 beginners, 6 intermediate level students, and 9 in the advanced class. Most students came from the Twin Cities, but some came from Wisconsin, Iowa, and South Dakota.

My own previous experience with the language was tuthree decades ago for a few weeks in Detroit at the Irish American Club there before it burned down. I recalled from that enough to remark on a variety of weather conditions, which, while always appropriate in Minnesota is somewhat limiting in conversational scope. I was eager to not just to learn more useful vocabulary, but also to get a feel for the *sound of the language*. It doesn't set right with me that most European languages are more

familiar to my ear than the language of my ancestors. Secondly, I wanted to know more of the structure of the language. This may sound dull, but it's my experience that the way a language is put together can reveal a subtle, telling difference in the perspective of its native speakers. I did learn a couple instances of this through the class. For example, in describing mood the Irish say "Sadness is upon me" instead of saying "I am sad", giving a feel for the ephemeral state. Also, there is no word for 'yes' or 'no' in Irish, but these concepts are expressed in other ways.

Thirdly, I wanted more insight into the pronunciation of Irish. Through personal circumstances I learned to pronounce and spell 'Siobhán' at the tender age of 5 (its my name) but the inscrutability of how to pronounce the names of characters in Irish myths (*Fionnghuala?* *Meadhbh??*) and place names (*Dun Laoghaire?*) remains challenging.

Our Beginner's Class, most ably taught by Mary Roguski, a graduate student in Linguistics at the University of Minnesota, gave a great leg up on all of these elements. I was most satisfied with the experience---as are 90% of the attendees of the immersion classes who, according to surveys collected by Gaeltacht Minnesota, say they "Definitely" or "Probably" would attend another workshop.

Fintan Moore led the intermediate class. Fintan is from Dublin, and teaches the Irish classes at University of St. Thomas, as well as teaching summer classes in Carraroe, Ireland. In an all-class interlude, Fintan taught us in Irish a tongue-in-cheek song about jealousy and revenge, enhanced with his dry-witted commentary.

The advanced section is taught by Dr. Nancy Stenson, a well-respected professor of Linguistics and Irish at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Stinson was among several vastly interesting people seated at my lunch table, and we chatted a bit about the current proposal to include Irish as an official European Union language.

All in all, I was impressed by not only the enthusiasm, but the caliber of the event. One can only get so much in the skull over the course of a day, yes, but this is an excellent way to either get a flavor for the Irish language or begin a foundation to learn more.

The Winona workshop, the next Gaeltacht Minnesota Irish language immersion event, is scheduled for July 15-17, and a registration form is available for download from the web site at www.gaelminn.org.

FOCUS ON LOCAL IRISH FAIR MUSICIAN: AMY KORTUEM, HARPIST



*Amy Kortuem and friend Jack McGowan
Courtesy Pat Christman*

Fondness for the Irish and her love of harps are intertwined for Irish Fair performer Amy Kortuem. Amy was

first introduced to the harp through the generosity of a childhood neighbor, Irishman Jack McGowan. Amy had known Jack since she was ten, and always enjoyed his love of life and creative spontaneity.

In one such spontaneous moment in 1988, Amy got a call from Jack to meet him over at the Ren Faire. Apparently Jack's eye had been drawn to a lovely walnut Woodsong Celtic harp, and he thought of Amy, already a gifted pianist. Amy was entranced with the instrument, "From the moment my fingers hit the strings it just felt *right*." Jack proceeded to buy the harp with the intention the 2 of them would share it from week to week so that both could learn to play. In time, Jack gave the harp to Amy for her own. In gratitude for this wonderful gift Amy dedicated her second CD, "The Harp Her Soul Required", to

Jack. A sample this Celtic harp music played on that original folk instrument can be heard at <http://cdbaby.com/cd/kortuem>.

Of the Irish music repertoire Kortuem says "Harp music in Ireland was originally from the bardic tradition. Dance music was played on the fiddle or tin whistle, but now, much of the dance music is also played on the harp. I select songs to play that resonate with me, either because of the melody or the meaning or for some reason. I love to engage the audience in that connection I have with the music, talk about it a little before I play to bring them into the piece further with me. Everyone, from young babies to the geriatric crowd, seems feel a fascination for this archetypal instrument."

The Gateway Stage at the Irish Fair provides an intimate setting for that type of sharing, says Kortuem, who will play there on Sunday, August 14th, the last day of the Fair.

IRISH MUSIC LEGEND TOMMY MAKEM AT FAIR AND SUMMER SCHOOL



Tommy Makem, aka, 'The Bard of Armagh' or 'The Bard *Himself*' is regarded by many as the modern Godfather of Irish Music.

Tommy is a gifted Songwriter as well as singer, storyteller, actor and bard.

His compositions "The Rambles of Spring," "Farewell to Carlingford," "Gentle Annie," "The Winds are Singing Freedom," and "Four Green Fields" are standards in the Irish repertoire of folksingers around the world.

All this might make Makem sound daunting and unapproachable, yet he is anything but; Makem is also known as a "riotous performer with lusty vocals and an irreverent wit" (Calgary Herald) and for his personal warmth and enthusiasm.

Tommy is heir to an intensely musical Irish



family. His mother, Sarah Makem (see photo, left) was a legendary source singer who contributed a number of fine songs to the BBC and other collections of authentic folk music. Tommy's father, Peter, was a fiddler and brother Jack also a musician. As well as

singing, Tommy plays whistle, bagpipes, banjo, drums, piccolo and guitar.

Tommy's ambition to perform took him to New York where he teamed up with Liam, Tom, and Paddy Clancy. Folk music was the "In" music in 1961 and when Tommy appeared at the Newport Folk Festival, he and Joan Baez were chosen the two most promising newcomers on the American folk scene.

Together with the Clancy Brothers, Tommy appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show, the Tonight Show, the Morning Show, PM East and PM West, and on every major television network show in the United States. They soon became the four most famous Irishmen in the world.

Makem has received numerous awards and been counted a numbered among Irish America's Top 100 for years, as well as having been elected to the Irish America's Permanent Hall of Fame for his contributions in expanding and reshaping the boundaries of Irish Culture and for infusing a pride in Irish culture and a quest for knowledge in countless people.

Tommy Makem will appear at the Irish Fair of Minnesota Summer School on Thursday, August 11th and at the Fair on Friday August 12th and Sunday, August 14th. For more information visit the Fair website in the coming months <http://www.irishfair.com/>.

REVIEW OF IRISH COOK BOOKS

BY *FATHEAD BRENNAN OF THE IRISH FAIR FOOD COURT*

The best and most useful cookbooks have great color pictures. I once attempted to make a Haggis without the benefit of a picture; it turned out a sickening gray (that may not have been the only problem; it exploded and even our dogs wouldn't eat the scrapings that survived the blast). The Kilkenny Cookbook comes loaded with beautiful photography whereas Celtic Folklore Cooking has a few pencil scribbles that puts one in mind of stick people. Consequently, it comes as no surprise that these two cookbooks are as alike as chalk and cheese.

The Kilkenny Cookbook, published by Real Ireland Design Ltd, is named for the Kilkenny Design Workshop that was founded in 1964 by the Irish Government and located opposite Kilkenny Castle as an outlet for innovative crafts and design. As the idea grew, the original intention of craftspeople only displaying their products expanded to a fully-fledged retail outlet. The Kilkenny Group flourished and a retail exhibition centre was opened in Dublin. The restaurant in the Design Center became a huge success and, after constant requests for their recipes, Kilkenny finally published this book. This cookbook epitomizes all that is *new* with Irish cuisine; don't expect to find just Corned Beef and cabbage here. The rest of the gastronomic world has seemed to have found Ireland. Or maybe vice versa. The absolute last thing one would expect to find in an Irish cookbook? Tabbouleh, Chickpea and Couscous salad, Chicken Tikka Masala? Maybe twenty years ago, but not today. More recognizably Irish dishes, such as Kilkenny Irish Stew and Beef Casserole with Stout do make an appearance, just to keep you grounded in the auld sod.

After trying four or five of these recipes I have to say that *right now this is one of my favorite cookbooks*, the excellence of the photography draws you in and the simplicity of the directions allows you to recreate what you see. Another nice feature are the wine recommendations especially the little wine bottle logos that appear with each dish. I strongly recommend the Tomato, Artichoke, and Gruyere Frittata, the Carrot and Coriander Soup and the Bean and Lentil Salad, dishes that even the most inexperienced cooks could manage. Because of its originality, quality of design, and ease of use this cookbook would make an excellent gift for anyone who eats, a very nice cookbook altogether.

At the other end of the spectrum we have Celtic Folklore Cooking, Joanne Asala, published by Llewellyn Publications. It is unfair to view this book purely as a cookbook (although recipes are included from Scotland, Ireland, Wales and Cornwall, also a few from Brittany and Galicia), but as the title suggests this is also a comprehensive guide to Celtic Folklore. So it is not only full of traditional recipes but also packed with ancient lore, stories, proverbs, cures (for ailments, as well as from spells!), and info on old Celtic holidays and the customs and food that pertain to them.

The depth of research needed to put together so much information and the wealth of knowledge contained is impressive. Among other things, I learned why the salutation that accompanies a drink is called a 'toast', why they have a cheese rolling competition in Gloucester every year and even the missing verses of tunes and ditties that my Dun Laoghaire-born mother used to sing.

Many of the recipes are unlike any you've seen elsewhere, such as the 17th century instructions on making 12 gallons of White Methglin (a herbal drink) whose instructions include "put in as much honey as will carry an egge to the breadth of a sixpence at least". I'll donate a copy of the book to anyone who can explain what that means. Also a lot of ingredients may be hard to find: Cowslip and gillyflowers for Flower Pudding, Bistort and dandelion leaves, nettle tops, and Lady's Mantle for Spring Pudding, Muggies (fish stomachs), Dulse and Sloke (seaweed), Mugwort, feverfew... and have you got a few *clivers* on hand?

Among these oddities, there are many more recognizable dishes such as Turkey Breast with Cherry Sauce, Stuffed Braised Beef, Ginger and Rosemary Pike and Mushroom and Scallop Pie (very tasty). Altogether a totally different experience as far as cookbooks go, but great, enlightening entertainment nonetheless.

There is also a recipe for Haggis, but, as expected *no pictures*.

For copies of these cookbooks, check with your favorite Irish specialty store or with Irish Books and Media <http://www.irishbook.com/>

Until next month,
Best Regards from the
Irish Fair of
Minnesota