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Crain's Blogs On Dining
Where to get your Irish on
March 12, 2014
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Declan's in Old Town.

The Irish in Chicago celebrate St. Patrick's Day in Irish-American style. They eat corned beef, an American invention not found in Ireland, and drink with abandon on a day that, back home, is a holy day of obligation meant for reflection and quiet. Aw, Hell's bells, we do St. Patrick's Day better here in Chicago. If you're looking for the most authentically Irish culinary experiences in town, here's how to plan your day.

Breakfast
Winston's is a South Side tradition that includes **Winston's Market in Tinley Park** and **Winston's Sausage in Chicago**. Both sell Irish sausages, bangers, meat pies and imported Irish goods. **Winston's Ashford House restaurant in Tinley Park** serves a full Irish breakfast that includes blood

pudding, white pudding, bangers and beans. They also cure their own corned beef and expect to sell 40,000 pounds of the stuff this year.

Nick Spencer moved from England to Chicago and couldn't find sausages he liked, so he made his own. "The difference between American sausages and the style we like in England and Ireland is mainly texture and salt content," says Mr. Spencer, who owns **Spencer's Jolly Posh Foods** in Lakeview, where he sells his sausages and back bacon along with more than 400 items imported from England, Scotland and Ireland.

Three sisters from **Galway** make scones for Galway Bakers "the way our mother made them with her mother at the fire hearth back home," says Gretta Yore, one of the three sisters. The trio sell their light and airy baked treats at the **Irish American Heritage Center gift shop** in Jefferson Park. See **Conan O'Brien's visit** to the center.

Lunch

At the **River Valley Farmer's Table** in Lincoln Square, owner Jason Rose is preparing at least 600 pounds of house-cured corned beef. "We do a five-day pickle, then smoke the brisket with some whiskey barrel staves to give it a rich flavor," he says. Try their corned beef and cabbage meals or a reuben on rye.

Food tastes so much better after Mass. This year, **Old St. Patrick's Church** in the West Loop continues a tradition with a luncheon buffet. Bagpipers and Irish dancers will provide entertainment. On Saturday the 15th, brunch follows 9 a.m. Mass. On Sunday the 16th, the brunch is after 1:00 p.m. Mass.

Marshall Waksmundzki, managing partner at Declan's Pub in Old Town, has a lovely Irish mother who taught him how to brine corned beef. Get to Declan's the weekend before St. Patrick's Day and you may taste some of Mr. Waksmundzki's barrel-cured corned beef – the throng of partiers eat up the homemade stuff quickly.

Tea Time

For tea at home, stop at Winston's, Spencer's or the shop at the Irish American Heritage Center store and pick up some of your favorite Irish biscuits (Custard Creams, Hob Nobs, or Jaffa Cakes) fruit jam and proper Barry's Irish tea.

Dinner



Brisket pot pie at the Gage.

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Owned and operated by the Lawless family from Galway, the **Gage**, a stop for Irish diplomats and politicians – the Irish president has dined here in the past – is serious about St. Patrick's Day. On the menu this year: Irish potato ale soup, Guinness braised brisket pot pie and house-made corned beef. That's in addition to the restaurant's spot-on fish and chips.

St. Patrick's Day at **Palmer Place** in La Grange is more like St. Patrick's week, with a non-stop party raging from Friday the 14th through Monday the 17th. Irish music, Irish dancers and visits from the Shannon Rovers Irish Pipe Band create plenty of atmosphere. Palmer's specialty is an Irish beer list that includes Guinness, Smithwicks, Kilkenny, Wexford and Murphy's. Try the Jameson Irish Whiskey cupcakes topped with Guinness icing.

If you're shopping for a side of corned beef, keep an eye out for Chicago's own **Vienna Beef**. Each year, Vienna retools its Bucktown plant and hires seasonal help to produce 100,000 pieces of corned beef. Pick yours up at the Vienna Beef Factory Store in Bucktown and serve it with traditional Irish brown bread made by the Galway Bakers.

After-dinner

Finding an Irish pub in Chicago is not difficult, but the **Abbey Pub** on the North Side does a lovely job of pouring a good Guinness at the right temperature and hosting Irish music. It's a fantastic spot to round out an all-Irish day in Chicago.

—**Miriam Carey**

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BARBARA S. 7 days ago

I recommend Bridie McKenna's in Highwood--good fish and chips, excellent shepherd's pie, good beer and ale, and Irish entertainment this weekend.

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JAMES F. 7 days ago

I would recommend Fitz's Pub in Elmhurst as a good place to celebrate. The Fitzharris' roll out the green carpet all year long. The food is great and the Guinness is poured right. Celebrating St. Patrick's day the entire long weekend.

I think the Irish are coming around on the celebrating.

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DION K. 7 days ago

In Ireland St Patrick's day is a Holy Day of obligation; you have to go to Mass. Not get drunk.

Reply

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