



I decided I wanted to add some Irish dish for Paddy's Day. I originally planned on doing a Beef and Stout Stew which is yummm and I've never made one myself so it is something I plan to do but looking around at all the different recipes I realised there's millions of them out there and it's perfect as it is so I didn't think my getting some of the ingredients wrong was going to improve it any - which honestly is an accidental but almost guaranteed occurrence. Then I thought about making Stout and Treacle Bread which is so good - especially with Seafood Chowder - but then I'm feeling quite lazy this week and any recipe I've ever read for that just sound a bit - not exactly difficult, but still definitely the sort of thing I'm going to need a few goes at to get right.

And then there's Irish Stew hmm...

Have you ever seen Christmas in Connecticut? There is a Hungarian Cook character and there is this Irish housekeeper whose food is clearly awful. He tastes her stew, is disgusted and starts adding loads of stuff, paprika etc. to give it some taste. It's not one of my favourite film or anything but I love that bit because while we have some great stuff here I think Irish Stew is just one of the blandest, most tasteless dishes you'll ever taste. Well, traditional Irish stew is. Most times you see Irish stew on a menu these days you can reasonably sure that they've strayed from the original recipe which is just lamb (actually I think the real original recipe uses mutton) stewed with onion, carrot, potatoes and some thyme. It's awful. But it dates back to a time when this stuff was all that was generally available in this country (presumably, otherwise there's no excuse for it). Thankfully we now live in a world where we have a lot more choice in what we can add to our dishes (long may it continue).

And I've added a lot to this stew - it's taken something from every continent, kind of like the new Ireland, get it? Corny idea I know, but I'm a corny person so there you go. A whole bunch of stuff but actually it goes together very well. And it seems fitting to use it for St. Patrick's Day since St. Patrick wasn't Irish, I think he was Welsh or British-Roman - actually some people say that St. Patrick is an amalgam of two 15th Century Christian missionaries who were both called Patrick. In any case, I don't think either of them was Irish, but I do think they brought something beautiful with them. Also, the actual celebration of St. Patrick's Day has been improved a lot by outside influences. I remember as a child going to a dismissal parade in Ballina in the early 80s. To give you an idea the only float I can remember was a long white one with the letters NCF (a milk producer) on it. It was so boring. It rained - it usually rains on Paddy's Day - and we came home and on the TV they were showing parades going on in different cities - New York's looked great - they had cheerleaders, batton twirlers, things that actually looked fun. Every country outside of Ireland seemed to do a better job of celebrating our national day then we did

ourselves. It was really annoying - and so eventually we copied the rest of you - and now I think Ireland probably is the best place to be for the day. Maybe. It still usually rains.

I looked through a few different recipes before coming up with this but the one that helped the most was [this one](#) from Gin and Crumpets.

By the way the ale was a bit of a discovery I thought I hated beer but I used O'Hara's Red Ale and it's actually really tasty.

The way I make *this* Irish stew is



Ingredients

Serves 2 - 4

- 500g lamb pieces
- 400ml ale
- 250ml vegetable or lamb stock
- 1 tbsp of runny honey
- 1 medium sized turnip, cut into bite-sized chunks (***make sure they're not too big, turnip can take a while to cook***)
- 4 medium-large carrots, chopped
- 1 large onion, chopped roughly
- 2 large parsnips, chopped roughly
- 2 large garlic cloves, crushed
- 1-2 inches fresh garlic, grated finely
- 1 large parsnip, chopped roughly
- 1 tbsp paprika
- 1 tsp cumin

- 1/2 tsp ground coriander
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- good pinch salt
- pinch ground black pepper
- fresh thyme, chopped
- 1 tbsp salted butter
- 1 generous tbsp plain flour
- fistful of stoned prunes (optional)

Instructions

1. Turn on the oven to 175C/ 350F/ Gas Mark 4.
2. Heat some oil in a large pan that you can transfer to the oven. When the oil is hot add the lamb pieces quickly browning on all sides, add the onions, garlic and ginger. Throw in the paprika, coriander, cinnamon, cumin, salt and pepper and stir around well and quickly. Reduce heat to low, cover the pan and leave for a couple of minutes.
3. Add the turnip, parsnip, carrots and thyme, stir around well making sure all the veg is covered in the spice mix. Cover the pan and leave for another couple of the minutes.
4. Add the beer, stock and honey and stir around. Put the heat back on high and bring to the boil. Once it starts to boil, cover and transfer to the oven and leave to stew for an hour.
5. Take out from the oven and place back on the hob. With a slotted spoon remove all the veg and meat to a bowl. If you are adding the prunes throw them into the bowl also and mix around gently.
6. Mash the butter and flour into a paste and whisk it into the juice/stock left in the pan. Turn up heat and whisk until you have smooth thickened sauce. Check the seasoning and add salt and pepper if necessary.
7. Remove from the heat and add back in the veg and meat.

Serve with crusty bread or mashed potatoes or crisp buttered cabbage – or by itself is good too.

La Fhéile Pádraig sona do gach daoine! - Happy St Patrick's Day Everyone.