



^{IRISH} COUNTRY LIVING food Spring

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PEAKS & TREATS

Whip up some Easter showstoppers – from fishy dishes to the perfect dessert





Nature's Secret for Joint Health

When Conor and Jayne set out on their travels, little did they know that would inspire a life-changing solution for so many people. After exploring the vibrant cultures and ancient healing practices of India and Asia, they discovered how powerful root herbs and spices combined with botanicals and vitamin C can play such an important role in joint health. This led to the creation of Spoonful Botanical — a revolutionary health food product designed to naturally support joint function, mobility, and comfort.

A PERSONAL MISSION TURNED GLOBAL

Spoonful Botanical was born out of love and a commitment to family. In the early days Conor and Jayne were determined to help Conor's granny, without relying on harsh chemicals or temporary fixes. Inspired by the centuries-old wisdom of Ayurvedic remedies, which rely on natural ingredients, they discovered whole root ingredients that would nourish and soothe the body.



Conor Grimes and Jayne Gavin

After learning from the diverse herbal traditions of India and Asia, they blended the best botanicals into a powerful formula that not only nurtures joints but also supports overall vitality. Their research led them to the perfect combination of ingredients, ensuring that Spoonful Botanical is as effective as it is natural.

THE POWER OF NATURE IN EVERY SPOONFUL

Conor States "At Spoonful Botanical, we believe in the power of nature. Our carefully selected blend of natural ingredients is designed to provide your joints with the support they deserve. Packed with properties and nutrients that aid Joint, Bone and Cartilage health, Spoonful Botanical helps improve flexibility, reduce stiffness, and support healthy joint function — all in one simple, daily dose."

Whether you're an athlete looking for enhanced performance, someone experiencing age-related joint concerns, or anyone in between, Spoonful Botanical can be your trusted companion on the journey to joint comfort. Each spoonful is a step toward a more active, and free lifestyle.

THE POWER OF FERMENTATION

The innovation doesn't stop there, One of the key elements that makes Spoonful Botanical truly unique is the couples commitment to fermentation.

Jayne states "By fermenting our whole root ingredients and botanicals, we enhance their bioavailability, allowing your body to absorb the beneficial compounds more effectively. This process not only boosts the potency of the ingredients but also creates a more easily digestible product."

Fermentation has been used for centuries in various cultures for its health benefits, and Conor and Jayne have embraced this ancient technique to unlock the full potential of Spoonful Botanicals natural formula. The result is a more powerful, nutrient-rich supplement that works in harmony with your body to support joint health and overall wellness.

WHY SPOONFUL BOTANICAL?

- **Whole Root Ingredients:** Inspired by traditional practices, Spoonful Botanical features a unique blend of botanicals and herbs from Asia and India, revered for their joint-supporting benefits.
- **Natural and Safe:** We pride ourselves on creating a product that's free from synthetic additives, preservatives, and chemicals. Pure, clean, and effective.
- **Sustainable Wellness:** Our mission is not only to support your health but also to help protect the planet. Spoonful Botanical is crafted with sustainability in mind.
- **Family-Owned with Heart:** As a family-run business, we put care into every batch. We created Spoonful Botanical because we wanted the best for our own granny — and we want the best for you, too.

JOIN THE SPOONFUL BOTANICAL MOVEMENT

Discover the difference a spoonful of nature can make. With Spoonful Botanical, you can support your joints, reduce discomfort, and embrace a life full of movement. Inspired by tradition, designed for today's world — Spoonful Botanical is here to help you live your best, most active life.

Take a spoonful and feel the power of nature working for you. Your joints will thank you!

'I will never tire of growing flowers, fruit and vegetables in my garden'

Springtime in Ireland is a delight. You might not agree — after all, it can be a particularly mucky time of year (especially if you live on a farm), but I can always see past the muck in favour of the many other moments of joy.

You don't always realise how the dark days of winter affect your mood. In February, you start to notice the sun setting a little bit later in the day. Suddenly, on those rare occasions when the sun comes out, it feels warmer. Bit by bit, spring comes to call. You wake up to the birds singing instead of your phone alarm. Your mood lightens and you realise you had actually been trudging through those final weeks of winter. Now it's April, and we have at last arrived.

One of my biggest sources of springtime joy is watching my garden come back to life. I start my tomato seedlings in early March and keep them in a sunny spot in my house. When they are strong enough, I start to introduce them to the polytunnel.

Last year, I made every mistake in the book with my tomatoes ("Your biggest being going to Canada for two months in the summer," I can hear *Irish Country Living* editor, Ciara Leahy, quip with a laugh).

Yes, I fully neglected my tomatoes during the months of July and August. And yet, I am still enjoying the crop which came from all of those mistakes — though, these days, it is in the form of green tomato chutney. I will never tire of growing flowers, fruits and vegetables. Being able to share that bounty with friends and family is another absolute joy, which is rekindled each spring at our Easter table.

This year, I will be hosting my brother, his wife and their two daughters for Easter and as Canadians it will be their first "Irish" Easter experience. I am excited to roast a leg of lamb and serve it with all the trimmings — some colcannon, perhaps (to make the most of our springtime greens), buttery roasted turnip and some glazed carrots.

One thing we will definitely do this Easter is indulge in some Irish seafood and take advantage of some of the recipes shared in this edition of *Irish Country Living Food*, starting on page 12.

You may notice that this magazine has had a bit of a makeover — for that, we have art director Audrey Kane to thank, who took our vision for a re-brand and created something very special. We hope you like the new design, and that you get as much out of the content as we think you will. From practical "how-tos" to our Taste Tradition series and, of course, the best wines and Irish ingredients to indulge in this spring, there is a little something for everyone.

From all of us at *Irish Country Living Food*, I want to wish you a happy Easter.

Editor | Janine Kennedy
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Janine helps photographer Philip Doyle during the cover shoot for this edition at her farm in Co Tipperary. \ Philip Doyle



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The perfect EASTER DESSERT

This tart combines two of our very favourite desserts – a Banoffee tart, and a baked custard tart – and the result is sweet, creamy and downright delicious

Words & recipe **Janine Kennedy** | Photography **Philip Doyle**

If you're looking for a showstopper dessert this Easter, look no further than this baked custard Banoffee tart. The toasted pecans here are optional, but the *Irish Country Living* test kitchen all agree it brings a nice bit of earthiness which helps cut through the sweet banana and caramel flavours. To pull off the ultimate showstopper, buy a culinary torch from a kitchen shop and toast the meringue right at the table.

Banoffee Custard Tart

Serves 6-8

INGREDIENTS

For the shortcrust:

- 250g plain flour
- Pinch of salt
- 3 tbsp caster sugar
- 125g cold, cubed butter
- 1 large egg
- 1-2 tbsp ice cold water, if needed

For the custard filling:

- 4 large eggs, room temperature
- 150g caster sugar
- 300ml cream
- 250ml milk
- 1 tsp vanilla essence
- Pinch of cinnamon (optional)

For the meringue:

- 3 egg whites, room temperature
- ¼ tsp cream of tartar
- 150g caster sugar

For the tart:

- 2-3 ripe bananas
- 200g good quality, shop-bought caramel sauce (we use Follain salted caramel sauce)
- Toasted pecans (optional)

METHOD

1 Make the shortcrust pastry: in a large mixing bowl, combine the flour, salt and caster sugar. Add the



cold, cubed butter and, using your hands, rub the butter into the flour mixture until it resembles coarse crumbs.

2 Make a well in the centre of the flour/butter mixture and add the egg. Using your hands, mix the egg into the dough until it starts to come together. If it feels too crumbly at this stage, add 1-2 Tbsp ice cold water. You want the dough to come together into a ball.

3 Knead the dough just a few times on a lightly floured surface and divide into two equal portions. Shape each half into a disc and wrap in cling film. Chill for at least 30 minutes, or for 1-2 hours (for this recipe, you are only using one half of the dough – the other half can be frozen and used for another recipe).

4 Preheat the oven to 200°C. Take one of the shortcrust discs and roll it

on a floured surface to approximately 2cm thickness. Place the rolled pastry into a 24cm tart tin with a removable bottom; gently pressing the pastry into the sides and trimming any excess.

5 Place a sheet of parchment directly over the top of the pastry and fill with pastry weights or baking beans. Bake the pastry base for 15-20 minutes, then remove from the oven and immediately lower the heat to 150°C. Take the baking weights/beans out of the pastry case and remove the parchment. Leave to cool.

6 While the base is baking, make the custard filling: add the milk, cream, vanilla and optional cinnamon to a saucepan and heat over medium. Slowly bring to a boil. While the milk and cream are heating, whisk the eggs and sugar together in a mixing bowl.

7 When the milk mixture comes to a boil, immediately remove from the heat. Add a tiny amount of hot milk to the egg and sugar mixture and immediately whisk. Do this 2-3 more times to temper the eggs and ensure they do not scramble.

8 Slowly add the remaining hot milk in batches, whisking after each addition, until all of the milk has been added. Give the mixture one last good whisk, then strain the mixture through a fine mesh sieve to catch any bits of cooked egg.

9 Pour as much of the custard mixture to the par-baked pastry as you can, leaving approximately 5cm between the custard and the top of the tart (if you have leftover, you can bake it separately as a flan or thicken to make a pouring custard).

10 Bake the tart for around 1 hour in the preheated oven. You want the middle of the tart to still jiggle a bit when it is ready. Let the tart cool at room temperature for 1.5 hours, then chill until ready to serve.

11 When the tart is chilled, slice the bananas and arrange over the top of the custard. Pour or drizzle the caramel sauce over the bananas, then, if using, scatter the toasted pecans. Place back into the fridge while you're making the meringue.

12 In a stand mixer with the whisk attachment, add the egg whites and cream of tartar. Whisk on high until soft peaks start to form, then add the caster sugar 1 Tbsp at a time until all of the caster sugar is used. You should have stiff, glossy meringue peaks which can be piped.

13 Place the meringue into a piping bag and pipe 'kisses' all over the top of the chilled banoffee custard tart. Use a torch to toast the top of the meringue, or place in the oven and grill until the tops are nicely toasted. Serve immediately.



Banoffee custard tart makes a sensational centrepiece; below, use the piping bag to pipe 'kisses' all over the top; use a torch to toast the top of the meringue; the inside.



Brighten up springtime meals with these great Irish products, writes **Rosalind Skillen**

When we think about spring, we picture vibrant daffodils, fields dotted with playful lambs and prickly yellow gorse smelling of coconut. Spring is a season of renewal. It's about freshness and vitality, and our dinner plates should reflect this. From mushrooms grown in Dublin to seafood harvested off the coast of Kerry, here are some Irish producers of choice for this Easter season.

1. Katie's Kombucha
katieskombucha.ie

Katie McCann was introduced to kombucha when she was training as a chef at Ballymaloe Cookery School and fell in love with fermentation. She started to brew kombucha at home and launched her business during the pandemic because she wanted everyone to experience a store-bought kombucha which has the essence of a home-brew.

Katie brews her 100% raw, live kombucha in small batches from her purpose-built kitchen in Dalkey, Co Dublin, making three flavours infused with real ingredients: Wicklow raspberries, organic apples and organic ginger. It's available in stores nationwide or for online delivery in Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow. A box of 10 is €35.



2. Hickey's farm
hickeyfarm.ie

Hickey's Farm is a family farm and farm shop in Ardee, Co Louth. Brothers Martin and Patrick took over from their parents in 1993, and Martin's son, Gerard, is now also involved in the growing operation. Everything here is done in-house, and the family specialise in growing a wide variety of potatoes.

At this time of year, Hickey's Golden Wonders and Maris Piper are in season and ideal for your Easter dinner as both varieties have a floury texture.

A 5kg bag of potatoes is around €4.50.

Irish treats... to your table



Katie brews her 100% raw, live kombucha in small batches from her purpose-built kitchen in Dalkey.



3. Bumble and Goose
bumbleandgoose.co.uk

What started in 2018 as a hobby for Lynsey Blakley, founder of Bumble and Goose, has grown into an award-winning business.

Bumble and Goose deliver cakes, biscuits and brownies across Ireland, the UK and Europe, and have baked biscuits for companies like Chanel and Aston Martin, and even Taylor Swift during her recent Eras tour.

Lynsey's team of eight make everything by hand in small batches in their bakehouse in Co Down before packaging them in air-tight shipment boxes for delivery.

Try their Easter Mini Egg Brownies (6), €24.10.



4. Say cheese
killeenfarmhousecheese.wordpress.com/

After a shaky start to the newly-named British & Irish Cheese Awards, Killeen Goat Mature has been crowned "Best Irish Cheese" for 2025. Last week, it was reported that, due to being held up in customs, none of the Irish cheeses had made it to judging. The judges were, it appears, able to judge the Irish cheeses once they arrived and announced

the winners on 26 March. Killeen is a five-month aged gouda-style cheese and is produced by Marion Roeleveld in Portumna, Co Galway from her family's 200-strong goat herd. Other notable 2025 wins include St Tola goat's cheese, who won gold for their St Tola Karst, and Toonsbridge Dairy, which won gold for their feta-style cheese. Pictured is Killeen Goats Cheese producer, Marion Roeleveld from Loughanroe East, Ballyshrule, Portumna, Co Galway.

5. Mushroom Butcher
[@mushroombutcher](https://www.instagram.com/mushroombutcher)

You might have seen portobello and button mushrooms on supermarket shelves, but what about varieties like lion's mane, phoenix or pearl oysters? These mushrooms, non-existent in a commercial variety, are exactly what Mark Senn and his partner, Ingrid Baceviciute, are growing in Portobello, Dublin.

A chef for almost 30 years, Mark started experimenting growing mushrooms in his home kitchen and

now harvests them in his carefully controlled retail unit.

He sells them from his bright green food truck, talking customers through the different chemistry profiles and textures.

Mark recommends shaggy chestnut mushrooms in ramens and hotpots, and says pink oyster mushrooms go well with prawns and lobster because of their natural seafood notes.

Available at the Mushroom Butcher. Price varies by weight.





The Artisan Pizza Company

Sweet Easter fun with Pizza da Piero

A fun way to use up leftover Easter eggs. Get the whole family involved in making this delicious Easter Dessert Pizza using Pizza da Piero's authentic Italian sourdough bases - handcrafted fresh daily in Rathcoole, Co Dublin with just five simple ingredients.

Perfect for both savoury and sweet toppings, Pizza da Piero bases are made using a traditional Italian sourdough process, ensuring a light, crispy texture every time. Whether making a classic Margherita, a gourmet prosciutto and rocket, or this chocolatey Easter treat, the possibilities are endless.

Easter Dessert Pizza

1 large Pizza da Piero pizza base

160g spiced biscuit spread or chocolate spread

150g pink and white marshmallows

100g leftover Easter egg chocolate, broken into pieces

100g mini eggs or leftover cream eggs

METHOD

1 Preheat the oven to 180°C. Line a large baking tray with parchment paper and place the pizza base on the lined tray.

2 Evenly spread the spiced biscuit spread around the pizza base, the same as you would a pizza sauce.

3 Top the pizza with the broken pieces of chocolate egg, followed by the marshmallows and mini eggs.

4 Bake in the preheated oven for 15-20 minutes.

5 Remove from the oven and let cool for 5-10 minutes, as the sweets and chocolate will be molten hot.

6 Cut into slices and enjoy



Why Choose Pizza da Piero?

- ➔ Multi-award-winning sourdough pizza bases.
- ➔ Just five simple ingredients – no artificial preservatives, colours, or flavourings.
- ➔ Vegan-friendly AND dairy-free – a light, delicious base for all toppings, sweet or savoury.
- ➔ Available in Dunnes Stores, SuperValu, Tesco, and independent retailers nationwide.

Special Easter Offer!

Get €1 off Pizza da Piero mini bases in Dunnes Stores until April 21st.

➔ FOLLOW US FOR MORE DELICIOUS RECIPES: @PIZZA_DA_PIERO | PIZZADAPIERO.IE

‘Where are the Pouldoody oysters?’

Award-winning food journalist, Robb Walsh, left Texas for Co Clare and discovered a vibrant food community, writes **Janine Kennedy**

Photography Claire Nash

If you’ve ever lived in a foreign country, you’ll know that sometimes you need to put the work in to build a community around you. Other times, if you’re lucky, the community will come to you naturally. For American-born food writer and journalist Robb Walsh, his wife, artist Kelly Klaasmeyer and their two children, it was the latter: their coastal Co Clare community found them.

Coming from Galveston, Texas in 2018, the family make the decision to up-sticks and move to the Wild Atlantic Way, where Kelly planned to pursue (and has now completed) a graduate degree in studio art.

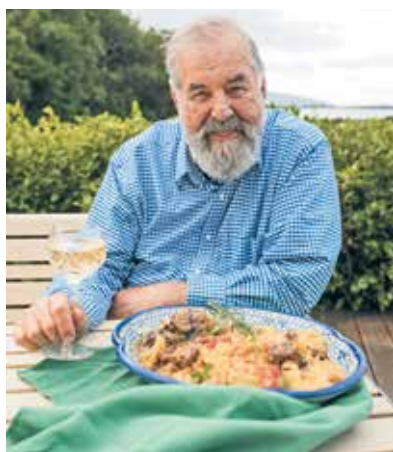
Robb was no stranger to this region, having written a revered piece of seafood-focused literature in 2008 entitled *Sex, Death & Oysters*. This book explores the lore of the iconic mollusc through a global lens; taking a cultural journey to discover the many approaches to oyster cultivation and gastronomy worldwide.

As is right and proper, the book devotes an entire chapter to Irish oysters; taking readers on a Guinness-soaked adventure around Galway Bay during the Galway Oyster Festival.

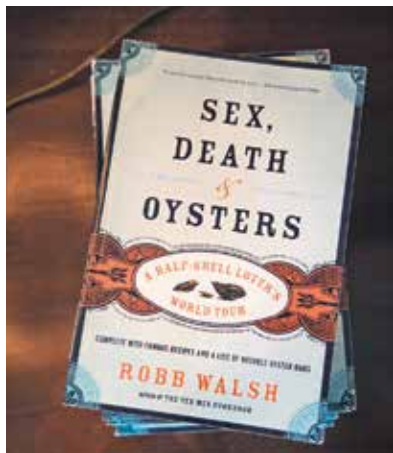
Robb’s journalistic reputation preceded his move to Co Clare. One of his first encounters with a local included a slight critique of the book.

“My friend, David Donoghue, is a forager,” Robb says. “When I first arrived, David knew I had written [*Sex, Death & Oysters*]. He read the Irish chapter and he said, ‘where are the Pouldoody oysters?’

“I had never heard of them,” he continues, chuckling. “And David thought that was ridiculous, so he took me down to visit a local oyster



Alsatian Baeckeoffe is a popular braised meat dish made with Riesling – Robb’s version is made in the slow-cooker and uses Irish lamb; below, one of Robb’s 14 books, *Sex, Death & Oysters* takes readers on a global journey.



farmer – Feargal Langley – and we got some oysters. I tasted them; they were lovely.

“After that, I felt the need to redeem myself and did some research on the oysters. They have a storied history; [for example] I found that James Joyce had mentioned them in *Finnegan’s Wake*. Then, when my wife and I were looking for a house,

we looked for over a year and finally came to this one. Someone had told us about it and it wasn’t even for sale yet.

“We walked in the front door and saw these picture windows looking out over the water, and I said to the auctioneer, ‘is that Pouldoody Bay?’ He said yes, and I immediately replied, ‘we’ll take this one.’”

Community of food

Off-setting the wind-ravaged Burren coastline outside their door, Robb and Kelly have created a welcoming haven in their Pouldoody home. The house is full of colour and art, floor-to-ceiling bookshelves, comfy furniture and an expansive dining room table facing those picture windows overlooking the bay – a table which is seldom empty.

This was the whole idea. Their home is a welcome space for fellow bon vivants and food lovers, and specifically those interested in great Irish ingredients. Robb and Kelly regularly host friends and visitors to celebrate the bounty of the locality.

“There’s a community of food lovers here in Clare which is unique,” Robb says. “It includes quite a few foragers and people who are really focused on the inter-tidal ingredients available to us – the pepper dulse, the carrageen – people don’t just talk about seaweed here, they talk about specific kinds of seaweed!”

Anyone familiar with Robb’s work (which includes 14 cookbooks and books about food) might feel intimidated prior to meeting him. After all, he is a three-time James Beard award-winner; the food writing equivalent to the Man Booker Prize for literature.

Aside from oysters, he was among the first to focus on the cultural sig-

nificance of Tex-Mex cuisine and has delved into the origins of southern American foodways, including the art of American-style barbecue.

His work has helped pave the way for others to proudly lay claim to their food heritage, including Indigenous Tehano Americans and African Americans, whose roles in the cuisines of the American south have been marginalised and downplayed for much of history. So yes, meeting Robb for the first time can be intimidating.

But in his cozy home by the sea, there is no hint of snobbery. Instead, a lazy basset hound takes a nap under your feet. Friends make themselves at home in the kitchen, which features a massive island and serves as an open invitation to gather, have a glass of wine or pick up a mixing

bowl and start cooking. He and Kelly have found their community – or rather, the community has found them.

“One of our favourite things to do is import our crazy American holidays, like Mardi Gras, to our home here in Ireland,” Robb says. “I buy local crab meat and oysters and make a huge pot of gumbo. We invite everyone from far and wide to come – mainly so I can tease them about Pancake Tuesday. Imagine, the rest of the world has these insanely wild parties to bring in Lent – Carnival in Rio de Janeiro; Mardi Gras in New Orleans – and you eat pancakes?”

Sex, Death & Oysters

Robb is currently working on his 15th book, *Braised, Simmered and Stewed: Heritage Dishes for the Slow*

Cooker, which is due to be published in 2026. As with *Sex, Death & Oysters*, Robb is on a global journey with this book; enabling home cooks to try anything from Chinese-style savoury rice porridge (known as congee) to a succulent French braised meat dish called baeckeoffe.

“Baeckeoff means ‘bakery oven’ in Alsatian,” he comments. “It’s also the name of a Sabbath supper prepared by devout Protestants who didn’t cook on Sundays. Each family’s distinctive clay pot was filled with stew and slow-cooked in the village’s bakery oven.

“Classically, baeckeoffe includes lamb, beef and pork marinated overnight in Riesling and seasoned with juniper berries. This is Alsatian super-chef Jean Georges

Vongerichten’s streamlined lamb-only version, which I have adapted for the slow cooker. The flavour reminds me of Irish stew – but made with white wine.”



Alsatian baeckeoffe

Serves 6-8

INGREDIENTS

1kg white potatoes
(Records or Roosters)
1 onion, finely diced
1 carrot, finely diced
1 leek, thinly sliced
2 tbsp chopped parsley,
plus more for garnish
Sea salt and freshly grated
black pepper
10 juniper berries (optional)
1 bay leaf
2 sprigs rosemary, divided
375ml Riesling wine
(preferably Alsatian)
1 lamb shank (around 600g)
500g lamb shoulder meat,
cut into bite-size pieces
1 tomato, sliced

METHOD

1 Peel and slice the potatoes. Place the slices in a bowl of cold water and set aside until ready to use.
2 Chop the carrot, onion and leek finely, or alternately, pulse them in a food processor. Add the chopped parsley to the vegetables.
3 Drain the potatoes and place half on the bottom of a 3.7L slow cooker. Next, add half of the vegetable mix followed by the stew meat. Season with salt and pepper and a few juniper berries, if using.
4 Place the lamb shank and remaining potatoes and vegetables on the next layer, followed by another round of seasoning. Bury one rosemary sprig and the bay leaf in the middle of the mixture.
5 Pour the wine over to cover and top with tomato slices.
6 Cover and cook on the lowest setting for 6-8 hours, or until the lamb is fork tender and the meat is falling off the shank bone.
7 Remove the bay leaf and rosemary and carefully transfer the stew to a serving dish, being careful to keep the shank meat intact. Garnish with the remaining rosemary sprig and sprinkle over some additional chopped parsley.
5 Serve with a chilled glass of Riesling, a fresh green salad, and English or Dijon mustard, so each diner can add a dollop to their bowl.

Robb and Kelly have created a warm and welcoming home overlooking Pouldoody Bay in Co Clare; below, Alsatian baeckeoffe. \ Claire Nash

Kish Fish brothers Tadgh and Damien O'Meara followed in their father's footsteps, creating a thriving family business. \ Kirsty Lyons



Meet the Kish MONGER

Ireland is surrounded by some of the best quality seafood in the world, so this Good Friday, try something a little bit different, writes **Janine Kennedy**

In Ireland, it sometimes seems like there is a perceived aversion to seafood and it is difficult to pinpoint the exact cause. Let's face it: we are an island nation (surrounded by some of the healthiest fishing

grounds in Europe) with a population who, more often than not, will always choose the beef over the hake at a wedding reception.

As Good Friday approaches – the one day of the year where the majority of Catholic households will be

eating fish – *Irish Country Living Food* wants to celebrate the very best of our bountiful waters with a seafood-focused recipe collection to please everyone (even the most seafood-averse in your household).

To help us on our mission, we

sourced our seafood from Kish Fish in Howth, Co Dublin. Here, brothers Tadgh and Damien O'Meara are keeping the family fishmonging tradition alive and well; selling fresh and prepared fish products in several locations around Co Dublin.

This has been the way since 1966, when Tadgh and Damien's father, Tadgh Sr, started Kish Fish from a humble stall in the old Dublin Fish Market. Damien, Tadgh and their brother Bill (who sadly passed away in 2022), took over the business in the 1990s and have brought it from that small market stall to the major food service operation we see today.

Mission

Employing a team of over 100 people, Kish Fish's wholesale business supplies a wide variety of Leinster-based restaurants and the brothers operate four retail locations in Howth, Coolock, Bow Street and in Avoca Dunboyne.

The company also creates a range of ready-to-cook meals and sauces in their Howth production kitchen, which is located in the same area as their smokehouse, their Howth shop and their café, Baily Bites.

"Working in this industry allows

TOP TIPS FOR BUYING FRESH FISH

1. Plenty of fish

Try different types of fish

If you are looking for a specific type of fish to cook at home – like haddock or John Dory – and they aren't available, don't despair. Most fish recipes, including the ones we are sharing in this edition of *Irish Country Living Food*, can be made with other types of fish or seafood. Substitute salmon for Irish trout, or halibut for hake. Scallops are sweet and succulent, like crab and lobster, so any of those could be used in most scallop-focused recipes.

2. Sustainability

If you're serious about sustainable seafood, trust an Irish fishmonger

Some types of seafood are only available seasonally, while other types of fish are not coming from Irish waters. If you get to know your local fishmonger, they can help steer you in the right direction when it comes to sustainably-sourced seafood. If you are buying fish from an Irish supermarket, you can look for the Marine Stewardship Council logo (MSC) for sustainably-sourced seafood, though local and Irish is always your best bet.

3. Glow for it

Look for fish with a healthy glow

Skin that has a bit of a sheen, fins that aren't droopy and clear, bright eyes are all indications of freshness when purchasing whole fish.

Fresh fish shouldn't really smell "fishy" – that is an indication of the fish not being at its freshest. Ideally, you want a fish with firm flesh, as well.



Your fishmonger can help you with filleting your fish. \kishfish.ie

4. Ask for help

Your fishmonger won't bite

Purchasing an entire salmon but want it filleted and portioned according to a specific recipe? Looking for sushi-grade quality or some fatty tuna or salmon for a poke bowl? Your fishmonger can help you with all of that, and more.



It is worth experimenting and trying new types of fish. \kishfish.ie

us to uphold family traditions that were passed down through generations since we began trading in the Old Dublin fish Market, and to provide high-quality seafood to the larger community," Tadgh tells *Irish Country Living Food*.

Kish Fish's work serves multiple purposes in the wider community, from providing consumer education around seafood to supplying local businesses with freshly-made chowder. They also have Bord Bia Origin Green gold membership, which a business can only get through demonstrating exceptional performance in sustainability measures.

"We are constantly looking to push the boundaries of innovation within our industry whilst still respecting tradition," Tadgh says.

Through their prepared foods, smoked products (like their new Guinness Smoked Salmon) and extensive range of fresh seafood, encouraging consumers to try new types of fish is a particular area of interest for Tadgh and Damien. Experimenting with new flavours and techniques helps them on their quest.

"We often have tastings in our stores; showcasing ideas for consumers to prepare new dishes," he says.

Favourite fish

Variety is key when it comes to supporting a sustainable seafood industry. A good way to support sustainable seafood is by eating more bycatch (fish caught by accident while trying to catch another type of fish), like pollock.

Tadgh says his favourite fish is probably haddock – "a beautiful white Irish fish that's mild, flaky and versatile" – but as a fishmonger, he admits he is always a bit spoiled for choice.

"There are so many options [for

great seafood dinners at home]," he says. "I suppose it depends on the occasion. A simple starter could be a few slices of smoked organic Irish salmon on homemade soda bread with a layer of cream cheese, which is absolutely delicious."

"Another option would be some John Dory fillets. John Dory is a delicious, firm-textured Irish fish. I really enjoy it pan-fried in a garlic and white wine sauce with some Dublin Bay Prawns on the side."

"We often have tastings in our stores; showcasing and creating new ideas for consumers to prepare and present new and unique dishes"

For occasions like Easter, Tadgh and the rest of the O'Meara clan keep things traditional with a fish supper like the aforementioned haddock or John Dory, but he also feels that Irish home cooks shouldn't be afraid to experiment and try something a little bit different.

"Ireland is uniquely located on the North East Atlantic and there is such a vast range of fresh seafood [available to us]," he says.

"Fish can often be caught and served on the same day for a unique sea-to-plate experience."

"Don't be afraid," he adds. "Often, I find people are quite reluctant to try a different type of fish for fear that they won't know how to cook it and might get it wrong. Fish is very easy to cook and with some advice from your fishmonger, any home cook can create a great fish dish this Good Friday."

kishfish.ie

We Irish are not the best when it comes to eating and enjoying fish, but we are getting better – especially as we learn more about the great seafood found just off our pristine coast. Eating more wild fish isn't just good for our health – it also helps support Irish dayboat fishers, who often work under difficult conditions to get seafood from the ocean to your plate. It's always best to source seafood from a trusted local fishmonger, but if you don't have access to one, you can order sustainable Irish seafood online and have it delivered, fresh, right to your door. It has never been easier to enjoy the bounty of the sea.

Crêpes with smoked trout, lemon, chive crème fraîche and spring herbs

- Serves 4**
INGREDIENTS
For the crêpe batter:
140g plain flour
200ml whole milk
2 eggs
25g butter, melted
For the lemon and chive crème fraîche:
200g crème fraîche
Zest and juice of ½ lemon
30g finely chopped chives
Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
To assemble:
200g smoked Irish trout
4 eggs, fried sunny-side up
100g fresh, in-season herbs (tarragon, fennel fronds, chive flowers, woodruff, wild garlic or sorrel)
Mixed green salad, to serve

METHOD
1 Make the crêpe batter: in a large blender, place all of the crêpe ingredients and blend on high until the mixture is completely combined, with no lumps. You can leave the batter in the blender, or place it in a pourable container with a lid. Let the batter chill in the fridge overnight (which is best), or for a minimum of 30 minutes.
2 Make the lemon and chive crème fraîche: place the crème fraîche, lemon rind, lemon juice and chives in a mixing bowl and whisk to combine. Season with salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste. Chill until ready to serve.
3 When the crêpe batter has rested, heat a medium-sized, non-stick pan over medium heat. Add a bit of oil or butter to the pan and wipe it with some kitchen towel (you don't want too much grease in the pan).
4 Pour approximately 100g of batter into the preheated pan and immediately swirl it around to ensure



Forget the fish dinners of yesteryear - let's celebrate the wealth seafood found in Irish waters with these upscale creations

Recipes Janine Kennedy | Photography Philip Doyle

the batter coats the bottom. Let the bottom set for approximately 1 minute, then, using a rubber spatula, gently lift the sides of the crêpe – if it doesn't lift easily, it needs more time to cook. When it lifts, flip the crêpe and cook for an additional 40 seconds on the other side.
5 Place the cooked crêpe on a parchment-lined tray and keep warm in

the oven while repeating the process with the remaining batter. This should make four to six medium-sized crêpes.
6 When the crêpes are cooked, use the same pan to fry the eggs. Place 1 tbsp of butter in the pan and add the four eggs. Lower the heat to medium low and cover. The eggs will cook on the bottom and steam on the top.

7 Time to assemble: place a crêpe on a dinner plate and smear approximately 50g of crème fraîche on one side, followed by 50g of smoked trout. Scatter the fresh herbs over the top and then fold the crêpe in half, then in half again so it looks like a triangle. Top with a fried egg and serve warm with a side salad.

Maryland-style crab cakes with poached asparagus and sauce gribiche

- Serves 4-6**
INGREDIENTS
For the sauce gribiche:
3 large eggs, hard boiled, yolks removed from whites
6 cornichon pickles
2 tbsp capers
1 small shallot, minced
½ bunch each tarragon, dill and parsley
2 tbsp red wine vinegar
2 tsp Dijon mustard
250ml mild Irish rapeseed oil
Salt and pepper, to taste
For the crab cakes:
125g mayonnaise
1 large egg
2 tsp Dijon mustard
3 dashes of Worcestershire Sauce
2 dashes of hot sauce
500g Irish crab meat
150g bread crumbs
1 tsp each: paprika, garlic powder, onion powder
1 tsp salt
Freshly ground black pepper
200ml sunflower oil, for frying
To serve:
One bunch of asparagus

METHOD
1 Make the sauce gribiche: boil the eggs for 9-11 minutes (you want a hard yolk for this sauce). Place the cooked eggs in an ice bath to shock before peeling and separating the yolks from the whites.
2 Place the egg yolks in a food processor and finely dice the egg whites. Set the egg whites aside for later.
3 Add the vinegar, mustard and some salt and pepper to the egg yolks. Turn on the food processor (you can also use a blender here) and, while processing, carefully add the oil in a thin stream. This will make a dressing which is slightly thinner than a mayonnaise.
4 Finely chop the capers, cornichons, shallots and fresh herbs. Add to the finely diced egg whites. Add the egg yolk mixture to this and fold everything together. Taste and adjust seasoning with more salt and freshly ground pepper, if needed. Place in an airtight container and chill until ready to use (you can make this up to two days in advance but it is best eaten within 24 hours).
5 Make the crab cakes: preheat the oven to 150°C and line a baking tray with parchment. In a large bowl, combine the mayonnaise, mustard, egg, Worcestershire sauce, hot sauce, crab, spices and bread crumbs. Mix well to combine and season with salt and pepper.
6 Using a heavy-bottomed frying pan, heat the sunflower oil on medium until hot. Add large spoonfuls of the crab cake mixture and cook

for 2-3 minutes on each side, until golden brown and cooked through. Lower the heat slightly if the crab cakes are browning too quickly.
7 When cooked on both sides, place the crab cakes on the lined baking tray and keep warm in the oven until ready to serve.
8 In the meantime, bring a pot of salted water to a rapid boil. Fill a

large mixing bowl with cold water and ice and set aside. Trim the ends off the asparagus and place in the boiling water. Cook for 1 minute to 90 seconds, until bright green but not completely cooked.
9 Place the asparagus in the ice bath to ensure they cool immediately. Place the cooled

asparagus on some kitchen towel to drain.
10 To serve, place the asparagus on a plate and add one to two warm crab cakes. Top with a generous dollop of the sauce gribiche and serve immediately (this recipe is also great topped with a poached egg for breakfast for brunch).

TOP TIP
"Shocking" your boiled eggs and asparagus in ice water immediately stops the cooking process.





Seared scallops with maple gastrique, bacon crumble and pea purée

- Serves 4
- INGREDIENTS
- For the maple gastrique:
- 125ml maple syrup
- 125ml Irish apple cider vinegar
- Pinch of flaky sea salt
- For the pea purée:
- 1 shallot, finely sliced
- 10g butter
- 250ml hot vegetable stock
- 300g frozen peas
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- To assemble:
- 12 large, fresh Irish scallops, coral removed
- 2 tbsp butter
- Salt and pepper, for seasoning
- 200g thin, streaky bacon
- Pea shoots, fennel fronds or spring cress, for garnish

METHOD
1 Make the maple gastrique: in a medium-sized saucepan, bring the maple syrup and apple cider vinegar to a rapid boil. Keep it at the temperature and cook for 5-10 minutes, until a syrup consistency is achieved – the mixture should coat the back of a spoon. Add the sea salt, cool completely and store in the fridge until ready to use (this will keep in an airtight container for up to two weeks and goes equally well with fish or pork).
2 Next, make the pea purée: in a saucepan, melt the butter over a medium heat and cook the shallot until it is translucent but not browned. This should take about 2-3 minutes. Add the vegetable stock and bring to a simmer.
3 Add the frozen peas and cook until the peas turn bright green and are cooked through, about 2-3 minutes. Strain the peas using a fine mesh strainer but keep all of that cooking liquid.

4 Add the peas and shallot to a blender and add ¼ of the cooking liquid. Blend, adding cooking liquid a bit at a time, until your desired thickness is achieved. We used approximately 150ml of liquid to make a thick, spreadable purée.
5 Season to taste with salt and pepper, add the purée to a container and cool to room temperature. You can chill the purée in a tightly sealed container overnight in the fridge, but it is best used within 24 hours.
6 Make the bacon crumb: preheat the oven to 200°C and line a baking tray with parchment. Place the streaky bacon on the baking tray and bake for approximately 15 minutes, or until crisp – you want to make sure the bacon is really well cooked or it won't crumble.
7 Let the bacon cool to room temperature and then, using a sharp knife, chop until a fine crumb is achieved. Place in a dish and keep in the fridge overnight or at room temperature until ready to use.

8 Prepare the scallops: place the scallops on a plate lined with a kitchen towel. Pat dry with more kitchen towel and season both sides of the scallops with salt and freshly ground black pepper.
9 Heat a non-stick pan on medium-high. Once it's nice and hot, add the butter to the pan to sizzle and melt. Place the scallops in the pan and sear for 45-60 seconds on each side, adding a bit more butter if you wish, until they are a nice, golden-brown colour but not overcooked.
10 Time to assemble: if chilled, gently reheat the pea purée, maple gastrique and bacon crumb. Place a generous dollop of pea purée on the base of each plate and gently swoosh it around with the back of a spoon.
11 Place three scallops on each plate and sprinkle some bacon crumbs over the top of each. Drizzle with the warm maple gastrique, then garnish with pea shoots, spring cress or fennel fronds. Serve immediately to the table.

Tandoori monkfish tail with coconut rice and mango chutney slaw

- Serves 4
- INGREDIENTS
- For the tandoori monkfish:
- 4 monkfish tail fillets
- (if you can't get the tail meat, just use regular monkfish fillets)
- 4 tbsp Tandoori spice blend
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp finely grated ginger
- 1 red chilli, finely chopped (optional)
- 200g natural yogurt
- 2 tsp salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Juice of one lemon
- For the coconut rice:
- 500g basmati rice, soaked in cold water for 30 minutes and then well-rinsed
- 400g tin full fat coconut milk
- 600ml cold water
- 2-3 kaffir lime leaves (optional)
- 1 tsp salt
- For the mango chutney slaw:
- One head of savoy or napa cabbage, finely sliced
- 2 large carrots, peeled and grated
- 2 red bell peppers, finely sliced
- ½ bunch coriander, finely chopped
- 4 tbsp mango chutney
- Juice of one lime
- 60ml Irish rapeseed oil
- Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

METHOD
1 Marinate the monkfish: place the monkfish in a non-reactive dish, like a casserole dish. Top with the yogurt, tandoori spice blend, garlic, ginger, chilli (if using), salt, pepper and lemon juice. Using your hands, mix the marinade into the fish thoroughly. Wrap with cling film and chill for 1-2 hours.
2 Preheat the oven to its hottest setting (we set our oven to 230°C). Line a deep baking tray with parchment and set aside.
3 Start the coconut rice: place the soaked and rinsed basmati rice into a large pot with a tight-fitting lid. Add the coconut milk, cold water, lime leaves (if using) and salt. Stir to combine the coconut milk and water.
4 Place the pot of rice on a high heat on the hob and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally so the coconut milk doesn't scald. Once the rice comes to a boil, reduce the heat to low, cover and let the rice cook for about 25 minutes, until all of the liquid has been absorbed.
5 While the rice is cooking, make the slaw: in a large bowl, combine the cabbage, grated carrot, red pepper and coriander. In a separate bowl, mix the chutney, lime juice and rapeseed oil. Pour the dressing over the vegetables and mix well to coat. Season with salt and freshly ground pepper to taste and leave to marinate until ready to serve.
6 When the oven is really hot, place the monkfish on the lined baking tray. Pour any remaining marinade



over the fish. Place in the oven and depending on the fish, roast on high for 15-20 minutes (a full monkfish tail will take approximately 20 minutes, but smaller pieces could cook very quickly). The marinade will brown and the monkfish will be slightly firm to

the touch, but still very tender once cooked.
7 To serve, add a generous spoonful of rice to a warmed serving plate. Add a big piece of the monkfish and top with a large serving of the slaw. Garnish with coriander and more chutney, if desired.



Pan-roasted halibut with miso brown butter udon, garlic mushrooms and spinach

- Serves 4
- INGREDIENTS
- For the miso brown butter:
- 125g butter
- 65g light miso paste

To assemble:
4 fillets Irish halibut, skin removed and boned (your fishmonger can do this)
1L good quality chicken stock
2 tsp light soy sauce
1 tsp sesame oil
1 tsp rapeseed oil
500g mixed mushrooms (shitake, chestnut, or shimeji)
200g baby spinach

- 500g cooked udon noodles
- 100g finely sliced spring onion
- 50g thinly sliced red chilli (optional)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Crispy garlic, crispy shallots or crispy onions (shop bought), to garnish

METHOD
1 Make the miso brown butter: in a saucepan, bring the butter to a light simmer. It will start to bubble. Let the butter cook for approximately 5 minutes, until the milk solids turn brown and the butter has a nutty smell. Keep at a consistently high heat but do not let it burn. Remove the butter from the heat and let cool to room temperature.
2 Add the miso paste to the butter. Chill until ready to use (you can make this up to three days ahead).
3 Next, prepare the mushrooms: thickly slice the mushrooms (if using Asian style mushrooms like enoki or shimeji, leave them whole and just trim the ends). Heat a large non-stick pan on high heat and sear the mushrooms in batches until they are nicely seared – if you crowd the pan, they will get soggy, so make sure you do this in batches. Set aside until ready to use.
4 Place a heavy-bottomed pot or

Dutch oven over a medium heat. Add the chicken stock, soy sauce and sesame oil and bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to a light simmer. Add the mushrooms, udon and spinach and gently cook until the noodles are cooked through. Add 1 tbsp of the miso brown butter and stir through.
5 Preheat the oven to 200°C. In an oven-safe pan, heat the rapeseed oil on medium high. Season the halibut fillets with salt and pepper and place in the hot pan to sear.
6 Cook the halibut for 1-2 minutes, until golden brown on one side. Then, flip and immediately place the pan in the preheated oven to finish cooking. Roast the halibut for approximately 10 minutes – the fish should be flaky and tender when finished. Brush a small amount of the miso butter on the hot cooked halibut.
7 To serve, divide the noodles between four large pasta bowls. Add plenty of mushrooms and spinach to each and evenly divide the broth between the bowls. Add a fillet of halibut to the top of the noodles, then top with spring onions, crispy garlic and chillis, if using. Serve piping hot.

Love. Make. Eat. CHOCOLATE DREAMS

Norma Kelly of Mitchelstown's Praline Pastry & Chocolate teaches us how to temper chocolate for Easter, writes **Caroline Hennessy**

Photography Donal O'Leary

I always wanted my own chocolate shop." Norma Kelly of Praline Pastry & Chocolate came home to achieve her long-term ambition, and the people of Mitchelstown and beyond have been reaping the delicious benefits ever since.

Norma, from nearby Ballylanders, attended secondary school in the north Cork market town before heading to the capital in 2006 to study for her BA in Culinary Arts at Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin – then DIT).

"I went to Dublin with every intention of coming home, but it took 14 years," she says, "I loved living there at that time in my life." Continuing her education with an MSc in Culinary Innovation, she worked as a pastry chef in Dublin restaurants Fallon & Byrne and Gary Rhodes' Rhodes D7 while also lecturing in pastry at TU Dublin.

While making the most of all opportunities in the city, Norma's heart was still in the countryside. After marrying Patrick Cleary in 2016 and moving closer to home, she decided it was the ideal time to open her own establishment. Tucked into a unit behind the main street, Praline opened its doors in Mitchelstown in 2017 with an offering that included coffee, beautifully composed cakes and delicate French patisserie.

"People thought we were mad at the start," Norma remembers. "Especially because of the location." Although the first iteration of Praline wasn't easily visible, or in a spot that traditionally had a food offering, it quickly made its mark with people calling in to check out what was on offer and coming back to buy special occasion treats. Norma initially of-

TOP TIP
Untempered chocolate, while perfectly edible, won't be as shiny and may have streaks.



Caroline Hennessy enjoys the sweet task of learning about tempering chocolate with Norma Kelly at Praline.

fered savoury breakfasts and lunches, but soon realised that she needed to focus on her strongest offerings.

"I knew I could bake, and bake well, but I didn't have the space. When I moved away from breakfast and salads and stripped it back, I was able to build it up and add more things that I wanted to make."

Change of mindset

The year 2020 was a transformative one for many in the food industry. For Norma, it was when she was able to properly realise her own vision for the business. The COVID-19 pandemic gave her the opportunity to focus on what she really wanted to do – and that was to work more with chocolate.

"We worked away with a skeleton staff, but most of the time I was on my own – which gave me time to think. COVID definitely accelerated the introduction of chocolate." Expanding her production kitchen into the area that had previously been a sit-down café gave her more space and opportunities.

"I think people's mindset about food changed during the pandemic. People treated themselves, they started to look local and value local, and realise what was on their own doorstep."

Right from the start, there was a welcoming market for Norma's handmade chocolate truffles and bars, and that has increased in the years since.

Chocolate has always been one of Norma's passions – she was the winner of the best moulded chocolate award at the Cacao Barry World Chocolate Masters UK & Ireland in 2015 – and chatting with her in the production kitchen, surrounded by chocolate in many forms, it's easy to see why.

"We're very lucky in Mitchelstown. We have great support, regular customers and there's a good business community"

Starting with sustainably sourced Cacao Barry professional chefs' chocolate, Norma has used local and Irish ingredients from producers like Tipperary's Galtee Honey Farm and The Apple Farm, O'Neill's Irish Atlantic Sea Salt in west Cork, Mean Bean Coffee in Waterford and Co Limerick's Ballyhoura Mountain Mushrooms for innovative and different flavour combinations. Her beautifully decorated handmade Easter eggs, filled with an assortment of truffles, are always popular.

While Norma's original space is currently the production kitchen for the business, she went on to open a second outlet – Praline Pastry & Chocolate Café – on the main street in Mitchelstown in December 2023.



Caroline Hennessy learning to temper chocolate with Norma Kelly.

At the moment, she's also busy working on plans to move her production unit to a bigger space just outside the town. This will incorporate a coffee bar – planned for later this month – followed in autumn by an on-site training school, offering classes in tasting chocolate, making bars, truffles, Christmas cakes and seasonal pastries.

Previous classes that Norma offered in Mitchelstown were sell out successes and, from my experience in her kitchen, she's a patient and thorough teacher.

Family bonds

While building up the business, re-imagining and expanding it, Norma also added three children into the mix: Vivienne (7), Marianne (4) and two-year-old Louis. "It's chaos at times with young kids but they've grown up with it," she notes. "My parents [who live nearby] are fantastic and we have great childminders."

With 14 people now working between the production kitchen and café, Norma is quick to emphasise the importance of her staff. "We have a great team, they're like my family."

She acknowledges that, while coming home was a great business move, it was lonely at the beginning because she didn't know other business people, particularly in her age group.

"Then Mikey [Shinnick] opened The Town Coffee Company in 2020 and Kate [O'Callaghan of O'Callaghan's Café and Delicatessen] came home from London during COVID," smiles Norma.

"We're very lucky in Mitchelstown. We have great support, regular customers and there's a good business community," says Norma.

It works both ways, and Mitchelstown is very appreciative of its locally produced chocolate and chocolatier.

See praline.ie

Tempering chocolate for Easter eggs

WHAT YOU NEED

An accurate thermometer
Bowl
Spatula
Palette knife
Stainless steel scraper (or you can buy paint scrapers from hardware stores)
Polycarbonate egg mould (for shaping the chocolate – available online)
300g dark or milk chocolate

Norma uses Cacao Barry chocolate in Praline but, for the home cook, she says that there's no need to be too worried about brands.

"Use good quality chocolate and make sure that it has minimal ingredients – cocoa mass, cocoa butter, sugar, natural vanilla flavour, soy or sunflower lectin, milk powder for milk chocolate – nothing else. No vegetable oil, no palm oil, no other sugars, like xylitol.

"People get hung up on cocoa content," says Norma, "but you can't define chocolate by its cocoa percentage. Something like a 70% can be very bitter, or it could be really nice as well. It's about your own preference."

No matter which chocolate you choose, she says, it's important to "get to know your chocolate, get comfortable with the chocolate and get to know how it feels as the temperature cools."

MELTING THE CHOCOLATE

When it comes to melting, Norma is an advocate of the microwave. "There's no water, no moisture," she says. "No matter how hard you try [with a bain marie set up], the glass bowl gets too hot and you're almost guaranteed to get moisture

into the chocolate with steam from the pot.

"In the microwave, it's important to go slowly and in increments," she adds. "For instance, with 1kg of chocolate, heat it for one minute, then go up in bursts of 10-20 seconds, stirring every time and finishing when there are still a few lumps in the chocolate. Stirring is very important. Don't go away and leave it."

THE SEEDING METHOD

- 1 Chop the chocolate – it melts more evenly – and set one-third (100g) aside.
- 2 Place the remaining 200g into a bowl and melt until it reaches between 45-50°C.
- 3 Add the remaining 100g of chopped chocolate to the bowl of melted chocolate and stir, keeping an eye on the temperature.
- 4 When the chocolate is at 28°C, heat it up again to 30°C. When this temperature is reached, pour the chocolate into your mould.

THE TABLE (TABLIER) METHOD

- 1 Chop all 300g chocolate, place it in a bowl and melt until it reaches 45-50°C.
- 2 Pour the melted chocolate on to a clean, cool worktop (marble is best, although stainless steel also works).

3 Using a palette knife and stainless steel scraper, keep the chocolate moving by folding it back into itself until the temperature has lowered to 28°C.

4 Scrape it into the bowl and heat until it reaches 30°C. Pour the chocolate into your mould.

Don't forget: chocolate can be mood-dependent. "If we're in a bad mood or in a hurry, it's guaranteed to go wrong," laughs Norma, "but we can always re-temper it. There's no waste in chocolate."

TOP TIP
No matter which tempering method you choose, it's all about concentration on the temperature.



Well-tempered chocolate is shiny, has a distinct snap and no streaks.

Happy Easter!

Easter is a time for family and friends and this year we can enjoy celebrating together and look forward to the warmer weather and brighter evenings that are ahead.

I have created some delicious recipes using some of my favourite products from the Simply Better Collection along with my cookware range which is available in Dunnes Stores and online at www.dunnesstores.com so I hope you get to try it and cook along with me this Easter.

From my family and my colleagues on the Simply Better team, may I wish you and all your family a very Happy Easter.

From Neven Maguire & The Simply Better team.

Find all of Neven's recipe videos on our Simply Better Social Accounts:

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RECIPE

Salmon En Croûte with Citrus Butter

Ingredients (Serves 2)

- 2 Simply Better Organic Irish Salmon Darnes, skin removed
- 1 Simply Better Corn Fed Large Egg
- 1 Tbsp Simply Better Organic Irish Jersey Milk
- 1 Pack Simply Better Ready To Roll All Butter Puff Pastry, thawed
- 50g Unsalted Butter, softened
- 50g Baby Spinach Leaves, washed
- Finely Grated Rind of 1 Lemon
- Finely Grated Rind of 1 Orange
- 1 Tbsp Fresh Flat Leaf Parsley, chopped
- 1 Tbsp Sesame Seeds
- Sea Salt & Freshly Ground Black Pepper
- Mixed Green Salad, to serve

Method

1. Place the butter in a small bowl and beat in the parsley, lemon and orange rind and season generously.
2. Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F/Gas Mark 6). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
3. Roll out the pastry and cut into 4 even sized sections and roll each one out on a lightly floured surface into a 12cm x 18cm rectangle, trimming down the edges if necessary. Arrange two of the pieces of pastry on the baking tray lined with parchment paper. Place a salmon fillet in the centre of each one and smear over some of the citrus butter and cover with the spinach leaves.
4. Mix the egg and milk together to create an egg wash and use this to brush the edges of the pastry, then lay a second sheet of pastry on top, pressing down to seal. Crimp the edges by gently pressing the edge of the pastry with a fork or top of a tablespoon. Continue all the way around the edge of the parcel. Repeat this for the second parcel.
5. Brush the pastry parcels with the remaining egg wash and sprinkle over the sesame seeds.
6. Bake for 25-30 minutes, until the pastry is cooked through and golden brown.
7. To serve, arrange the salmon parcels on warmed serving plates with some of the mixed green salad.



RECIPE

Crispy Potato, Salmon & Baby Leek Bake

Ingredients (Serves 4-6)

- 1 Bag Simply Better Irish Charlotte Baby Potatoes
- 2 Tbsp. Simply Better Italian Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 1 Bunch Spring Onions, trimmed & finely chopped
- 100g Simply Better Oakwood Smoked Drinagh Cheddar, grated
- 30g Butter, diced
- 2 Packs Simply Better Organic Lightly Smoked Irish Salmon Darnes, skinned & cut into chunks
- 1 pack Simply Better Irish Baby Leeks (or 1 Leek), sliced
- 2 Tbsp. Plain Flour
- 300ml Simply Better Organic Irish Jersey Whole Milk
- 1 Tbsp. Simply Better Irish Made Wholegrain Mustard
- 200g Baby Spinach
- Simply Better Oriel Sea Salt & Freshly Ground Black Pepper

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F/Gas Mark 6). Heat a skillet pan over a medium heat and then melt the butter. Sauté the leek for a few minutes to soften. Season generously and then sprinkle over the flour. Cook for another minute, stirring. Gradually add the milk until you have a smooth sauce and then simmer for a few minutes to reduce a little.
2. Stir the mustard into the pan, season and fold in the spinach until wilted. Fold in the salmon and allow to simmer.
3. Roughly chop the potatoes and cook in a pan of boiling salted water for about 15 minutes until tender. Drain and return to the pan, shaking for a minute or two to dry out.
4. Transfer the potatoes to a baking tray and crush with a large spoon or masher. Pile the crushed potatoes on top of the salmon filling. Drizzle over the oil, then season and sprinkle over the spring onions and cheddar.
5. Bake for 30 minutes until bubbling and golden. Serve straight to the table.



RECIPE

Steakhouse Rib Roast with Red Wine Gravy

Ingredients (Serves 4-6)

- 1.5kg Simply Better Irish Angus Rib Roast on the Bone
- 2 Tbsp. Simply Better Steakhouse Seasoning, plus a little extra
- 2 Tbsp. Simply Better PDO Terra Di Barra Bitonto Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 2 Large Onions, thickly sliced
- 250ml Simply Better Deriva Organic Malbec
- 3-4 Sprigs of Fresh Thyme
- 1 Carton Simply Better Irish Angus Beef Stock
- 30g Butter, cubed
- Simply Better Harissa & Honey Roasting Carrot & Parsnip and Simply Better Irish Garlic Potato Gratin, to serve

Method

1. Remove the beef from its packaging and dry with kitchen paper. Leave at room temperature for 1 hour.
2. Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas Mark 4). Mix the steakhouse seasoning with the olive oil. Rub this mixture all over the beef rib. Pile the onions into the centre of a roasting tin and season with a little of the steakhouse seasoning, then put the beef rib on top and add some water to the tray. Roast for 1 hour 35 minutes for medium or 15 minutes less for rare and 15 minutes more for well done. Remove from the oven, then transfer the beef to a board and cover loosely with tin foil to rest for 30 minutes.
3. While the beef rests, make the gravy. Transfer the roasted onions and any juices from the tray into a frying pan over a medium heat. Pour in the wine and thyme leaves and allow to bubble down, then stir the stock. Continue to simmer until reduced by half, stirring occasionally. Strain through a sieve into a pan and whisk in half of the butter and pour into a gravy boat. Toss the roasted onions with the rest of the butter and put into a small dish.
4. Carve the rested beef into thin slices and serve on plates with some of the vegetables and gratin. Hand the red wine gravy around the table to serve.



RECIPE

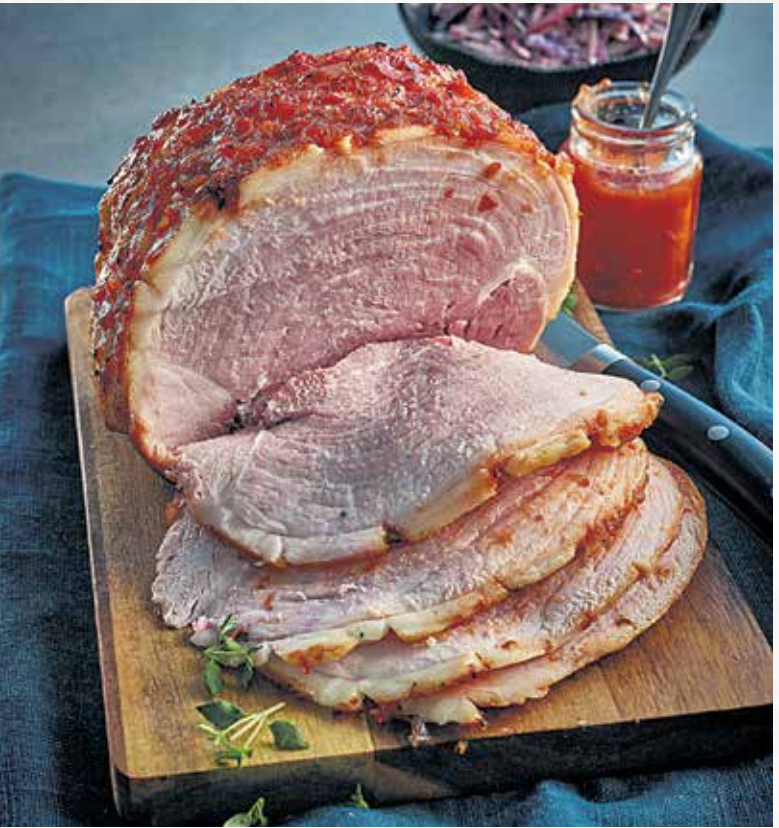
Bacon Lattice Roast Chicken with
Boulangère Potatoes

Ingredients (Serves 4-6)

- 4 Tbsp. Simply Better Italian Extra Virgin Olive Oil, plus extra for greasing
- 1 Tbsp. Simply Better Poultry Seasoning
- 1 packet Simply Better Thin Cut Unsmoked Dry Cured Irish Streaky Bacon Rashers
- 1 Simply Better Irish Corn Fed Chicken (1.5kg)
- 4 Onions, thinly sliced
- 2.5kg Simply Better Challenger Potatoes, thinly sliced
- 1 Pouch Simply Better Irish Made Free Range Chicken Stock
- 250ml Simply Better Irish Jersey Cream

Method

1. Mix half of the oil in a small bowl with two teaspoons of the poultry seasoning and rub all over the chicken, inside and out. Take the bacon and use three rashers to cover each leg completely. Lay out five of the remaining rashers on a piece of parchment paper and weave the rest of the rashers to create a tight lattice. Use to cover the chicken, tucking the wings underneath.
2. Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F/Gas Mark 6). Fry the onion over a medium to high heat in the rest of the oil for 20-25 minutes until softened and golden brown. Season with a little of the poultry seasoning.
3. Spread a third of the potatoes in a roasting tin and season lightly with the remaining poultry seasoning. Sprinkle over half of the onions and continue layering, finishing with a layer of potatoes.
4. Mix the stock and cream in a jug and pour over the potatoes. Put the lattice covered chicken on top, then roast for 1 hour and 30 minutes until the chicken is cooked through and tender.
5. Carefully transfer the chicken to a warm plate and leave to rest for 20 minutes. Increase the oven heat to as high as it will go and return the potatoes to the oven for that time to crisp up. Remove the lattice, then carve the chicken into slices and arrange on plates with the potatoes and some of the lattice, adding some vegetables, if liked to serve.



RECIPE

Sticky Chilli Ham with Apple Slaw

Ingredients (Serves 6-8)

- 1.5kg Simply Better Hand Cut Unsmoked Irish Ham
- 1 Bottle Irish Pale Ale (such as Galway Hooker)
- 1 Carton Simply Better Irish Made Free Range Chicken Stock
- 2 Tsp. Mixed Peppercorns
- 1 Carton Simply Better Handmade Chilli Jam
- 1 Simply Better French Honey Crisp Apple
- ½ Lemon, pips removed
- ½ Red or White Cabbage, core removed & thinly sliced (or half & half is ideal)
- 1 Tbsp. Simply Better Irish Made Wholegrain Mustard
- 2 Tbsp Simply Better Single Source Irish Jersey Cream
- 100g Simply Better Authentic Greek Yoghurt (10% Fat)
- 1 Pack Fresh Flat-Leaf Parsley
- Simply Better Oriel Sea Salt and Freshly Ground Black Pepper
- Roasted Simply Better Irish Charlotte Baby Potatoes, to serve

Method

1. Place the ham in a deep pan that fits it snugly. Pour in the ale and stock, then add the peppercorns. Bring to a gentle simmer and cook for 1 hour.
2. Preheat the oven to 220°C (450°F/Gas Mark 7). Drain the cooked ham, reserving the liquid and leave to cool to room temperature. Using a sharp knife remove the string and skin, leaving a layer of fat behind. Place in a small roasting tin and smear with all but 1 Tbsp of the chilli jam, then add some of the reserved liquid to prevent the glaze from burning into the tin. Roast for 30-40 minutes until the ham is cooked through and the glaze is crisped up and caramelised, topping up with a little more liquid as necessary.
3. Meanwhile, prepare the apple slaw. Cut the apple into quarters, then remove the core and thinly slice. Put in a bowl, then squeeze over the lemon juice, tossing to coat. In a separate bowl, combine the yogurt, cream, mustard and remaining Tbsp. of chilli jam. Season generously and pick the leaves off the parsley and fold those in as well. Fold in the cabbage and apples and toss well to combine.
4. Leave the ham to rest for at least 20 minutes and serve warm or cold, carved into slices with the apple slaw and roasted Charlotte baby potatoes to serve.



RECIPE

Roast Lamb with Hasselback Potatoes

Ingredients (Serves 4-6)

- 2kg Simply Better Connemara Hill Frozen Irish Leg of Lamb, thawed
- 1 Tub Simply Better Bulb Fermented Garlic
- 2 Tbsp. Simply Better Italian 'Nduja
- 2-3 Fresh Rosemary Sprigs
- 1.5kg Simply Better Irish Challenger Potatoes (even-sized and not peeled)
- 2 Tbsp. Simply Better Cold Pressed Irish Rapeseed Oil
- 1 Carton Simply Better Handmade Red Chimichurri Sauce
- Simply Better Oriel Sea Salt and Freshly Ground Black Pepper
- Simply Better Sicilian Lemon Steamed Greens, to serve

Method

1. Remove the lamb from its packaging and dry with kitchen paper. Use a small, sharp knife to make about 30 small, deep incisions all over the top and sides of the leg. Peel the garlic cloves and trim them down, then cut into even-sized pieces. Push a piece of garlic and a tiny sprig of rosemary right into each incision then smear over the 'nduja. This can be done a day in advance, then cover and chill. Remove from the fridge 1 hour before roasting.
2. Preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/Gas Mark 5). Sit each potato between the handles of two wooden spoons and cut widthways at 3mm intervals (the spoon handles will stop you slicing all the way through). Put them into a large roasting tin and drizzle with the oil, then toss to coat. Turn the potatoes so they are cut-side up and season with salt. Nestle the lamb in the middle and season generously.
3. Roast for 1 hour 40 minutes for medium, basting the potatoes every 30 minutes until the lamb is golden brown and the potatoes are crisp and golden. The lamb will be slightly pink in the middle but cooked. For rare, cook for 10 minutes less, and for well-done cook for another 20 minutes. Transfer the lamb to a warm platter and cover loosely with tin foil for 20 minutes. Give the potatoes a final good shake and put back in the oven until needed.
4. Carve the lamb into slices and arrange on plates with the Hasselback potatoes and some red chimichurri sauce. Add a bowl of the steamed green vegetables to serve.



RECIPE

Dauphinoise Potatoes

Ingredients (Serves 4-6)

- 1 Carton Simply Better Single Source Irish Jersey Cream
- 300ml Simply Better Organic Irish Jersey Whole Milk
- 2 Garlic Cloves, halved
- 2 Fresh Thyme Sprigs
- 1 Shallot, roughly chopped
- Good Pinch of Grated Nutmeg
- 1kg Simply Better Irish Challenger Potatoes
- 40g Simply Better Freshly Grated Parmigiano Reggiano PDO
- Butter, for greasing
- Simply Better Oriel Sea Salt and Freshly Ground White Pepper

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 160°C (325°F/Gas Mark 3). Put the cream and milk in a pan with the garlic, thyme and shallot. Slowly heat and just as it reaches boiling point, and you can see bubbles appearing around the edges remove from the heat. Set aside for 10 minutes to infuse, then strain the liquid into a large jug and add the nutmeg.
2. Meanwhile, peel the potatoes and cut into 3mm slices using a mandolin if you have one. Spread them on a clean tea towel and pat dry. Keep them covered with a tea towel to prevent them from colouring.
3. Generously butter an ovenproof dish and add a layer of the potato slices, slightly overlapping the slices and pour over some of the cream mixture. You don't have to be too neat with the lower layers but keep some of the best slices for later so the top looks good. Season with salt and pepper and then add some of the parmesan.
4. Continue layering in this way, finishing with a final layer of the potatoes. Pour over the rest of the cream mixture and scatter the remaining parmesan on top, then cover with tin foil, place on a baking tray and bake for 1 ½ hours. Take out of the oven, then remove the tin foil and press the potatoes down firmly with a palette knife. Return to the oven to bake for another 30 minutes until completely tender and golden brown. Leave to stand for about 10 minutes before cutting into slices to serve.



RECIPE

Roasted Baby Carrot Tarte Tatin

Ingredients (Serves 4-6)

- Plain Flour, for dusting
- 1 packet Simply Better Frozen All Butter Puff Pastry, thawed and fridge cold
- 2 packets Simply Better Baby Carrots
- 5 Banana Shallots, halved and peeled
- 50g Butter
- 2 Tbsp Simply Better Organic Grade A Canadian Maple Syrup
- 1 Tbsp Simply Better Mediterranean Seasoning

Method

1. Place a large piece of parchment paper on the work surface and lightly dust with flour. Using a rolling pin, roll out the pastry to a 26cm circle, using a 24cm frying pan tin as a guide and allowing an extra 2cm border. Trim off any excess and place on a baking tray in the fridge for 30 minutes to rest.
2. Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F/Gas Mark 6). Trim the carrots and place in a saucepan of boiling water. Simmer for 5 minutes, then drain.
3. Melt the butter in the frying pan over a medium heat with the maple syrup. Add the shallots and parboiled baby carrots. Allow to colour for a minute or two, then remove from the heat. Sprinkle in the seasoning and toss until evenly coated, then arrange the vegetables, with the cut sides of the shallots facing down.
4. Lay the rested pastry on top of the vegetables and tuck in the edges like a blanket. Put in the middle of the oven and bake for 30 minutes until puffed up and golden. Rest for 5 minutes, then flip on to a plate. Cut into slices and serve hot or warm.

DUNNES STORES

Simply Better



RECIPE

Pear & Frangipane Chocolate Tart

Ingredients (Serves 6-8)

- 1 Pack Simply Better All Butter Shortcrust Pastry, thawed
- 50g Self-Raising Flour, plus extra for dusting
- 250g Caster Sugar
- 2 Simply Better Dutch Xenia Pears
- 1 bar Simply Better Single Origin Madagascan Dark Chocolate, broken into pieces (100g)
- 150g Butter, at room temperature
- 150g Ground Almonds
- 3 Simply Better Corn Fed Free Range Eggs
- 2 Tbsp. Flaked Almonds
- Icing Sugar, to dust
- 1 Carton Simply Better Irish Made Vanilla Bean Fresh Custard

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 160°C (320°F/Gas Mark 3) and place a baking sheet on the middle shelf. Roll out the pastry on a lightly floured work surface and use to line a 10" loose bottom tart tin. Place in the freezer for 30 minutes to firm up.
2. Put 100g of the sugar in a pan with 200ml of water and simmer until the sugar has dissolved. Peel the pears and cut into quarters, then remove the cores and discard. Put the pears into the pan and cover with a lid then simmer for 20 minutes until tender. Remove from the heat and allow to cool.
3. Put the chocolate in a heatproof bowl set over a pan of simmering water. Leave until the chocolate is almost melted. Carefully remove from the pan and leave to finish melting, then stir until smooth.
4. Put the remaining 150g of sugar in a large bowl with the butter, ground almonds, flour and eggs in a large bowl and beat with an electric whisk until smooth and fluffy. Spoon into the lined tart tin, working it around from the outside before working towards the middle of the pastry case. Drop spoonfuls of the melted chocolate on top and draw the tip of a knife through the mixture to nicely marble.
5. Drain the cooled poached pears well and then arrange in the tart, cut-side down, with the pointy end towards the middle, pressing gently into the frangipane mixture. Carefully scatter over the flaked almonds and bake for 1 hour until nicely risen and the pastry rim is lightly golden.
6. Leave the tart to cool in the tin for at least 10 minutes then transfer to a board and dust with icing sugar. Serve warm or cold cut into slices with some custard.



RECIPE

Hot Cross Apple Crumble Pudding

Ingredients (Serves 6-8)

- 1 Pack Simply Better French Honey Crisp Apples
- 1 Tbsp. Ground Cinnamon
- 2 Tsp. Vanilla Extract
- 150g Light Muscovado Sugar
- 75g Butter, plus extra for greasing
- 125g Plain Flour
- 30g Ground Almonds
- 3 Simply Better Irish Corn Fed Free Range Eggs
- 1 Carton Simply Better Single Source Irish Jersey Cream
- 200ml Simply Better Organic Irish Jersey Whole Milk
- 1 Pack Simply Better Irish Made Bramley Apple & Sultana Hot Cross Buns
- 1 Carton Simply Better Caramelised Hazelnut Ice Cream

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas Mark 4). Peel and core the apples and cut each quarter into 4 again, Heat a skillet or frying pan over a medium heat and add the apples, 1 Tsp. of the cinnamon and vanilla and 50g of the muscovado sugar. Add 2 Tbsp. of water and saute the apples for about 5 minutes until the apples have softened and caramelised but are still holding their shape.
2. Butter a 25cm square ovenproof dish. Melt the butter in a small pan. Meanwhile, stir the flour, ground almonds with another 50g of the muscovado sugar in a bowl and then using a fork gently mix in the melted butter to make the crumble topping.
3. Break the eggs into a bowl and whisk in the cream and milk with the rest of the cinnamon, vanilla and sugar. Cut the hot cross buns into slices (8-9 each) and arrange half in the bottom of the dish to create a base. Scatter over half of the apples and pour over half of the egg mixture. Repeat these layers and press down gently to ensure everything is well soaked. Leave to sit for 5 minutes, then sprinkle over the crumble topping and bake for 40 minutes or until the custard is set and the crumble is golden brown.
4. Serve the pudding straight to the table and add scoop of the ice cream to serve.



RECIPE

Flourless Fudgy Chocolate Cake

Ingredients (Serves 8-10)

- 225g Butter, cubed plus extra for greasing
- 3 Bars Simply Better Single Origin Colombian Dark Chocolate, roughly chopped
- 1 Shot Simply Better Intense Espresso (approx. 40ml)
- 6 Simply Better Irish Corn Fed Free Range Eggs, at room temperature
- 100g Light Muscovado Sugar
- 200g Caster Sugar
- 2 Tsp. Vanilla Extract
- 30g Cocoa Powder
- Whipped Simply Better Single Source Irish Jersey Cream & Simply Better Handpicked King Cherries, to serve

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 160°C (325°F/Gas Mark 3). Butter a 23cm springform cake tin and line with parchment paper. Melt the butter and chocolate in a heatproof bowl over a pan of gently simmering water. Remove from the heat and stir in the espresso, then set aside to cool slightly.
2. Separate the eggs and whisk the whites with an electric mixer in a large bowl with 50g of caster sugar for about 1 minute until soft peaks form. In another bowl, whisk both the brown sugar and remaining caster sugar, vanilla and egg yolks for 6-8 minutes until pale and fluffy. Then sift in the cocoa powder and mix gently to combine. Fold the cooled chocolate mixture into the egg yolk mixture, then gently fold in the egg whites until just combined. Transfer to the prepared tin and bake for 40 minutes until the top is slightly cracked and the middle still has a slight wobble. Transfer to a cooling rack and leave to cool completely.
3. To serve, dust the cake with cocoa powder and cut into slices and arrange on plates with the cream and cherries.

You, me and THE SEA

The Sea Hare
co-founders Sinead
Foyle and Philippa Duff
offer a unique style of
hospitality within their
Connemara locality,
writes **Janine Kennedy**

Photography Emilija Jefremova

Philippa Duff and Sinead
Foyle own and operate
The Sea Hare in
Connemara, Co Galway.

I am bred and buttered in Connemara.” If there was ever a poster child for this coastal Co Galway region, it should be Sinead Foyle. The love she has for her home can be heard in her voice, but it is also exemplified through her work in local food and hospitality.

Hospitality isn't just a career option – for many like Sinead, it is a calling. And for Sinead, in particular, it is in her blood.

“My grandmother was driven by hospitality,” she tells *Irish Country Living Food*. “She was quite formidable; a powerhouse for her time.”

In the early 20th century, Sinead's grandparents settled in the village of Clifden and developed a strong hospitality presence there. All of their seven children, except one, also ended up working in the industry – and now their grandchildren are following suit.

“There is an entire group of us who are all working locally in hospitality,” Sinead says with a laugh. “From motels and hostelries right to Blue Book estates and private country houses – all are family-run, all individually-run. We support each other, but we are independent of each other.”

Having studied travel and tourism

before attending Ballymaloe Cookery School in the mid-90s, Sinead had the itch to travel. And travel she did; working different jobs in tourism all over the world for well over a decade, while experiencing new foods and cultures.

Homecoming

When she decided to return and settle in her beloved Connemara, she brought all of this experience home with her. When she was introduced to local chef Philippa Duff, the pair realised that by working together, they could do something extraordinary – soon enough, they developed The Sea Hare.

“Philippa is an exceptional cook – she is just phenomenal,” Sinead says. “I was looking to start a local food business and people told me to talk to her. Where I am a busy bee; she is calm and collected. It makes for a phenomenal partnership.”

“Pre-pandemic, in 2019, I could see local pubs were closing down or limiting service. I thought – there's empty premises here; let's talk to the publicans and see if we might be able to rent space or use it until they open in the evening – so we started out in a place called Joyces in Cleggan.”

While she isn't a vegetarian, Philippa has always loved working with local vegetables. For her menu

items, Sinead wanted to incorporate local seafood into their offering, as well. Both women are heavily influenced by their love of travel and global flavour, so The Sea Hare quickly became a haven for comforting, vegetable-focused meals packed with exotic flavour.

New sauce

Once they opened, they also started producing their Sea Hare Tamarind Sauce, which proved so popular with diners they ended up bottling and selling the condiment for retail. On Thursdays, they would offer a weekly fish dinner, and quickly their popularity grew among visitors and locals alike.

“The whole thing just grew legs; it got big so quickly,” Sinead recalls. “I love the craic, I love having a laugh, I love live music, and you never knew what might be on offer. It grew very organically for us.”

“From motels and hostelries right to Blue Book estates and private country houses – all are family-run, all individually-run”

“More importantly, though, we were bringing a year-round offering to our local community,” she adds. “Too many businesses [on the Wild Atlantic Way] are only open seasonally, which I understand, it costs to stay open. But the locals need access to good food, and we want to be able to serve them as much as the visitors. Open three days a week if you're worried. If you build it, they will come.”

The pair did exceedingly well their first year in business, and even during the ups and downs of the COVID-19 lockdowns, Sinead was pleasantly surprised to see how they were able to come out of it. However, in 2023, their lease agreement was broken; suddenly leaving the beloved eatery without a home.

Sinead and Philippa announced that they would have to put their business on hiatus. While the pair took some healing time afterwards, they were soon eager to get back into the saddle.

Today, while still in the process of finding a permanent location, The Sea Hare refers to itself as “a nomadic café” specialising in pop-ups and special events throughout the region.

“People have been very kind in supporting anything we do,” she says. “What I have found is, when something wrong happens to you, the amount of people who come behind you is astonishing – I was blown away by that support.”

Today, the duo are working closely with Irish food icons Jeni Glasgow and Reuven Diaz, formerly

Falafel

Serves 6

INGREDIENTS

300g dried chickpeas
100g dried yellow split peas
1 tsp baking soda
2 cloves garlic
1 onion, roughly chopped
50g fresh parsley, chopped
50g fresh coriander, chopped
1 tsp Lebanese seven spice (a mixture of ground cloves, cinnamon, cumin, coriander, black pepper and nutmeg)
½ tsp chilli powder
1 tsp sea salt
2 tsp baking soda
1.5L vegetable oil, for frying

METHOD

1 Soak the dried chickpeas and split peas in cold water mixed with 1 tsp baking soda overnight.

2 The next day, drain the water from the soaked legumes and place the chickpeas and split peas into a food processor.

3 Add the garlic, onion, chopped parsley and coriander, all of the spices, the salt and the remaining 2 tsp baking soda to the food processor.

4 Blitz until all of the ingredients are well-chopped and combined. The mixture should form into a consistent, but coarse, texture which can be shaped into balls that don't fall apart.

5 Scoop the mixture up in heaping tablespoonfuls and form into balls. Place each falafel on a baking tray lined with parchment paper.

6 Using a deep, heavy-bottomed pot or deep fat fryer, heat the vegetable oil to a temperature of 170°C. Being careful not to crowd the pot, gently place 3-4 falafel into the oil at a time.

7 Fry the falafel for approximately 5 minutes each, turning them half-way through cooking. They should be golden brown on the outside, with a slight crunch, and mealy on the inside.

8 Place the cooked falafel on a tray lined with kitchen towel to drain any excess oil. Let them cool slightly, then serve with our shatta, quick pickles, flat breads and salad.

TOP TIP:
Falafels can be eaten hot, cold or room temperature making them ideal for a picnic lunch.



Flatbread is easy to make; below, falafel is a great option, hot or cold.

Flatbread

Makes 4-6

INGREDIENTS

200g plain or wholemeal flour
¼ tsp salt
100ml warm water
2 tbsp olive oil

METHOD

1 Mix 75ml of the water in with the flour and salt until you have a shaggy dough which just comes together.

2 Add the rest of the water, bit by bit, until you have a dough which is soft, but not sticky.

3 Add the olive oil and knead for about 5 minutes until the dough is smooth and elastic. Cover the dough with a clean, slightly damp cloth and let it rest for 30 minutes.

4 Divide dough into four to six pieces and roll into balls.

5 Sprinkle a small bit of flour on your work surface and roll out each ball into a circle 8-10cm wide. Cover the rolled out dough pieces with the damp cloth to keep them from drying out.



6 Heat a frying pan on medium high (no oil needed). Pop a flat bread onto the pan and cook on one side for 2 minutes, then flip and cook on the other side for 1-2 minutes.

7 Wrap in a clean tea towel to keep warm and all the breads are done.

Shatta

Serves 6

INGREDIENTS

300g red chilli peppers
15g sea salt
Juice of ½ lemon
Olive oil, to cover

METHOD

1 Stem and roughly chop the chillies (remove the seeds if you don't like too much heat).

2 Combine the chillies with the sea salt in a large mixing bowl.

3 Mix thoroughly and add the mixture into a clean, sterilised jar. Leave in a cool, dark spot for three to five days, opening and re-closing the lid once a day to release any pressure.

4 Once there are some bubbles forming in the mixture, add the lemon juice and stir. At this stage, cover the top of the shatta with a layer of olive oil and store in the fridge.

5 Once chilled, the fermentation of the chillies will slow and the oil will keep them from oxidizing. You can store the shatta in the fridge for up to two weeks.

6 Use a dollop on poached eggs, a smear on a ham sandwich or drizzle over falafels.

Quick Pickles

Serves 6

INGREDIENTS

1 large red onion
1 tsp sea salt
1 tsp sugar
1 tbsp vinegar

METHOD

1 Peel and cut the onion into thin half-moon slices. Pop into a glass or ceramic bowl and add the salt, sugar and vinegar (you can use cider, white wine, rice vinegars – each will give you a different flavour in the pickle).

2 Mix together and gently massage the onions until they start to release their juices (they'll feel slippery). Marinate for an hour.

3 Store in the fridge for up to three days.

of Eastern Seaboard, who also sadly had to close their Drogheda, Co Louth restaurant several years ago.

“Reuven has been our head chef for two years and I adore him,” Sinead says. “I have a team around me, ready to go and we're very hopeful we will have a permanent new

home soon. Reuven is very much on board with me and he's just wonderful, and Jeni as well.

“I tend to watch the trends of what's going on in food and hospitality in North America and Australia – I know we have something very magic here in Connemara,” she

continues. “I just feel so privileged having all of this on my doorstep.”

If you are lucky enough to find yourself in Sinead and Philippa's part of the world this spring, why not try some of their favourite recipes to pack up for a seaside picnic?

Wonderful wines for Easter

With Easter falling late in spring, we're celebrating the best of both words. Fresh, vibrant whites to enjoy in the good weather, and beautiful bold reds, perfect for lamb, writes **Ciara Leahy**

Baron Amarillo Rueda Verdejo

€8.99, Aldi

It's not that my love affair with sauvignon blanc is over, it's just that we're taking a break for a bit. And I'm cheating on it with Verdejo. This vibrant wine from the Rueda region of Spain has all the citrus flavours that we love in a sauvignon with pops of grapefruit and lime with fresh acidity. But it has a bit more oomph with a well-rounded and persistent palate with notes of almonds and fennel. This Baron Amarillo Verdejo from Aldi is great value, allowing you to explore the variety without breaking the bank. Try it with the pan roasted halibut on page 6 and thank us later.



Deluxe Australian Chardonnay Limestone Coast

€8.99, Lidl

They say don't judge a book by its cover or a wine by its label. But, in this case, I couldn't help it. The blue ocean on this label reminds me of Oz adventures. One sip and I was right back there. This wine is very typical of Australian chardonnay – lots of tropical notes of melon, peach and mango nuanced by a hint of nuts, some minerality and even a bit of butter. It's got good body and perfect to pour with roast chicken. But I'm giving the Maryland crab cakes on page 4 a go, and this chardonnay will be chilling as soon as I put on my apron.



Chablis Famille Brocard

€24.99, on special at €19.99 until 29 April, Simply Better at Dunnes Stores

If scallops are on the menu, nine times out of ten my husband will order them. So he has put in a request for the seared scallops with maple gastrique (Janine's fancy word for syrup) with bacon crumble on page 5, and I'll be serving it with this Chablis. The organic grapes are grown in the Kimmeridgian soil of France and in the Burgundy sun, they develop and contribute to a crisp wine with citrus, fresh peach and pear shining through. You'll also get floral notes and a hint of minerality, which will pair beautifully with the sweet, briny flavour of the scallops and the salty bacon.



Cara Organic Rosé

€20.95, on special at €15.71 from 22 April, O'Briens Wine

Unless you live by the sea, oysters are mostly enjoyed in restaurants. But in the last few years, I'm seeing a lot more at fish counters and in supermarkets. So I've been practicing my shucking skills, and this Cara Organic Rosé from Château De Caraguilhes in the Languedoc region is a great pairing. A blend of grenache blanc, noir and gris grapes, it is quite a delicate wine, and very fresh. Floral notes lead the nose followed by a pop of citrus grapefruit, a little peach and those characteristic strawberry and tangy redcurrant flavours. A gush of minerality will work well with Irish oysters, or let the flavours shine on their own and serve as an apéritif.



Moët & Chandon Brut Impérial NV

€69, O'Briens Wine, Molloy's and Brown Thomas

One of things I enjoy about Easter is that it's a family celebration but with a more relaxed feel than Christmas. Once we hear the word celebration, we think of Champagne. And we're opting for a classic, the Moët & Chandon Brut Impérial NV which is a blend of that iconic trio of grapes – pinot noir, pinot meunier and chardonnay. Up front, white fruit flavours of pear, peach and apple have a vibrant intensity. And then those toasty brioche notes are expressed beautifully within a steady bead of bubbles. Enjoy as an apéritif or pair with a selection of canapés to start your Easter feast.

M&S Classics Malbec

€10, M&S

The Classics wine range in M&S is pocket friendly and reliable, which is important if you're having a party. So whether it's a family gathering around the Easter table or you're looking forward to barbecues in the sun, this Malbec will hit the spot. It has all those classic Malbec flavours, juicy and smooth with jammy fruit like blackberry, blueberry and plum with a hint of mint and good spice on the finish. It isn't overly complex but it is certainly a crowd pleaser and will work great with burgers, steak and lamb. On a lazy Friday evening, crack it open and enjoy with a crispy pepperoni pizza.



Appassimento St Giorgio

€13.99, on special at €11 until 29 April, Simply Better at Dunnes Stores

When it comes to the iconic lamb at Easter Sunday dinner, most people will serve it with a beautiful, bold red. Let's head to Italy and the Puglia region, known for its deep, rich, velvety wines. This Appassimento St Giorgio is well balanced with fruity flavours of red berry, plums and cherry coming out to play, complemented by delicate, herbaceous notes and a teasing taste of chocolate. Luscious and incredibly smooth, it has soft tannins and a gentle finish. If you're planning on serving a cheese board later in the day, this wine will carry you through and will work especially well with a slice of Cashed Blue.



El Holgazán Ribera del Duero

€22.95, O'Briens Wine

If you're upping the budget for Easter Sunday, here is a wine worth the extra few euros. El Holgazán is from the Ribera del Duero region in Spain. This Tempranillo takes the lead with plenty of fruit flavours such as strawberries, redcurrants, blackberries and figs, elevated by a touch of chocolate and liquorice. Medium bodied, the tannins are soft, contributing to a silky-smooth finish. As well as lamb, this wine would be ideal with a rib eye steak or some venison. Interestingly, El Holgazán means 'the slacker' in Spanish and the winemakers hail it as the perfect wine for lazy moments. Sounds ideal for a relaxed Easter weekend.



Tesco Finest Provence Rosé

€12, Tesco

The sun is out, and rosé season is here...not that we needed an excuse. So we're heading to Provence in France, the region that has really put rosé on the map in recent years. Grapes spend the year basking in the Mediterranean sun and this rosé from Tesco ticks all the boxes. The pale pink hue draws you in and its fruity notes of redcurrant, strawberry and stone fruit are very easy (too easy!) to enjoy. While this is a wine to sip on its own with friends, it has a nice spicy, tangy finish making it food friendly and ideal with a charcuterie board or some goat's cheese smeared on crackers.





Canoe features the best views of the city from the 44th floor of the TD Bank Tower.

Toronto has something to offer any visitor – including some great gastronomic experiences, writes **Janine Kennedy**

If New York City is a melting pot of food culture, Toronto – the largest city in Canada – could be considered a cultural mosaic. Indeed, Toronto is one of the most multicultural cities in the world, with every city block featuring a different culinary offering.

Located on the shores of Lake Ontario, Toronto has a population of over two million, while the Greater Toronto Area has a population of over six million. Around half of this population is estimated to have been born outside of Canada. Along with English, there are an additional 160 languages spoken in the city.

Among the many cultures represented in Toronto, it shouldn't come as a surprise that there's a vibrant Irish community and some great Irish pubs (Dora Keoghs, McVeighs and PJ O'Brien's, to name just a few).

Historically, the neighbourhoods of Corktown and Cabbagetown were the homes of Irish emigrants. Though their roots are poor, today, both neighbourhoods are well-to-do with beautiful, historic homes; ideal for springtime strolls.

Practical information

Aer Lingus flies direct from Dublin to Toronto year-round (with fares starting at around €250 one way) while Canadian airline Westjet flies direct seasonally, from April to October (with similar rates). Both airlines fly into Toronto Pearson International airport, which is located approximately 40 minutes from the city centre.

In times past it was a hassle to reach downtown Toronto from the airport, but a new express train system between Toronto's Union Station and Pearson has made this journey quick, inexpensive (€8 one way) and pain-free.

The ease of getting to the city centre combined with a flight time of just over six hours makes a long weekend trip to Toronto completely doable. You don't need more than a few days to get a taste of the city.

Toronto is easy to navigate with its subway and streetcar system (known as the TTC) found along every main avenue and street. Like most North American cities, Toronto



Union Station (left) is found just before getting to the Roger's Centre and the CN Tower. \ Janine Kennedy



The historic City Hall and Nathan Phillips Square in Toronto. \ Janine Kennedy

is based on a grid system. With a little help from Google maps, you'll easily find your way around.

When to go

Spring is a wonderful time of year to visit Toronto. When the days get warmer in April and May, patio season begins and there is nothing better than sitting outside and soaking up the sunshine with a cold pint and some tasty food.

Summer becomes unbearably hot, with temperatures up to 40°C and while winter visits can be nice, after Christmas the weather becomes increasingly cold and can easily go down to -40°C. Winter visits are also prone to travel delays, so spring is really the best time of year to visit.

Where to stay

marriott.com; filmores.com; thedrake.ca

Toronto can be pricey, but as the euro has a higher value than the Canadian dollar, you can probably stay more affordably than the average Canadian visitor.

The Sheraton Centre Toronto is located in the heart of the city, on Queen Street West, just opposite the historic Nathan Phillips Square. It features luxuriously comfortable rooms, an indoor/outdoor pool and a great location, but it comes at a price: expect to pay between €200

and €300 per night, depending on the room. If you need something more budget-friendly, The Filmores Hotel is definitely not luxurious, but more cost-effective with rooms coming in at just over €100 per night. If budget travel is your thing, try an Airbnb in the downtown core, which would be comparable in price.

If you're into arts and culture, consider staying at The Drake Hotel on Queen Street West. This area borders several trendy neighbourhoods and is within walking distance to some great bars and restaurants.

It is a 10–15-minute streetcar ride from the commercial shopping areas and has a quieter, cooler neighbourhood vibe.

Where to eat

evergreen.ca

More like, "where not to eat?" Toronto is home to so many vibrant communities: Chinatown along Spadina Avenue, Greek Town on the Danforth Road, Koreatown along Bloor Street and Little India along Gerrard Street East.

Toronto is also home to a thriving Caribbean community and features some of the best Jamaican food... well, outside of Jamaica. Not to mention Ethiopian, Moroccan, Latin American and Southeast Asian offerings.

If you're looking for more of a community-food vibe, head to Kensington Market where you'll find great café and brunch options during the day and hipster bars at night. The iconic St Lawrence Market is full of vendors and food options every day of the week, and on Saturdays you'll find a farmers' market in nearly every neighbourhood (the Evergreen Brick Works market is our favourite).

Dinner

alorestaurant.com; biffsbistro.com; antlerkitchenbar.com; canoerestaurant.com

Feeling fancy? Try Alo Restaurant, which has a Michelin Star and is headed by the incredibly skilful chef Patrick Kriss. If you can score a reservation (and afford the price tag), you will be blown away by what is on offer in this French contemporary restaurant. Biff's Bistro is a bit more affordable, an easier spot to snag a table and always delicious. Expect comforting vibes, Parisian bistro menu items and wines to match.

If you're looking for a true taste of Canadiana, try Canoe in the city centre – which features the best views of the city from the 44th floor of the TD Bank Tower – or Antler Kitchen Bar in the Little Portugal neighbourhood on Dundas West. Both offer high-end experiences and great Canadian ingredients.

Global flavour

chubbysjamaican.com; mahasbrunch.com

For a taste of the Caribbean, try Chubby's Jamaican Kitchen for



Biff's Bistro offers a wonderful French-style dining experience.



Maha's Egyptian Brunch is family-owned; right, their cheese and date toasties with home fried and Egyptian spiced potatoes are a delight. \ Janine Kennedy



tropical cocktails and a killer jerk chicken. Maha's Egyptian Brunch is absolutely delicious (their mint tea and date grilled cheese sandwiches are divine) and for the best dim sum, try Rol San restaurant in the heart of Chinatown. Although they don't have a website to peruse the menu beforehand, the surprise is worth it.

Poutine

nomnomnom.ca; smokespoutinerie.com

Canada's unofficial national dish is poutine: a glorious combination of crispy French fries, squeaky cheese curds and a rich, dark gravy.

Try Nom Nom Nom Poutine and – if you can handle the heat – get it topped with a generous portion of jerk chicken. You will also find Smoke's Poutinerie in multiple locations, including at the airport.

This is a chain, but the poutine comes in a number of different combinations (though the classic is always the best option).

Become a Blue Jays fan

ticketmaster.ca

Walking the streets of Toronto, you will likely see a lot of Blue Jays paraphernalia – this is because the "Jays" are the home baseball team and they reside at the iconic Rogers Centre (formerly known as the Sky Dome).

The baseball season starts in spring and you can get fairly inexpensive tickets, if you don't mind where you sit.

Even if you're not a sports fan, this is a fun way to spend an evening with good ball park food on offer and bits of entertainment throughout. Tickets start at around €10.

Do the Edge Walk

tickets.cntower.ca

If you've ever done the Croke Park Skyline tour, think of the Toronto

Edge Walk as a bit of an upgrade. This is not recommended if you are afraid of heights, but if you are a thrill-seeker visiting Toronto's historic CN Tower (and it is highly recommended you do for the views alone), you might be interested in walking around its outer edge.

At 116 stories high, the Edge Walk is the world's highest hands-free walk where you are secured to the building by a harness. What better way to get that 360° view of the city? The whole thing takes about 90 minutes in total, with the walk taking 30 minutes. Tickets cost €135.

Shop till you drop

thebay.com

If you enjoy shopping, you might want to bring a spare suitcase. Canada's oldest department store, The Hudson Bay Company, has its flagship location at the corner of Queen and Yonge streets and features multiple levels of clothes, cosmetics, homewares and more. Just across the street, you'll find the Eaton Centre shopping mall, which will lead you out onto Dundas Square (home to even more shops and restaurants).

On either end of Queen Street (east and west) you'll find independent shops specialising in vintage clothes, designer furniture, cute stationary and more. On Bloor Street, you'll find more high-end shopping in Bloor-Yorkville.

Take in some culture

theoperahouse.toronto.com; ago.ca; rom.on.ca; yukyuks.com

Interested in a ballet or a night out at the opera? Check out The Opera House Toronto for show schedules and tickets. If musical theatre is more your thing, King Street west is where you'll find the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) headquarters and the Royal Alexandra Theatre.

Visit the Art Gallery of Toronto on McCaul Street, where tickets are €20 or head up to Bloor Street and visit the Royal Ontario Museum for exhibitions on nature, culture and science, tickets cost €20.

One thing Canadians and the Irish have in common is a love of stand-up comedy.

In Toronto, the most iconic comedy club is called YukYuks. You will find some form of stand up or improv happening

each night and there is a full schedule of events on their website which you can check out for specific events or stand-up comedians. Ticket prices from €2.

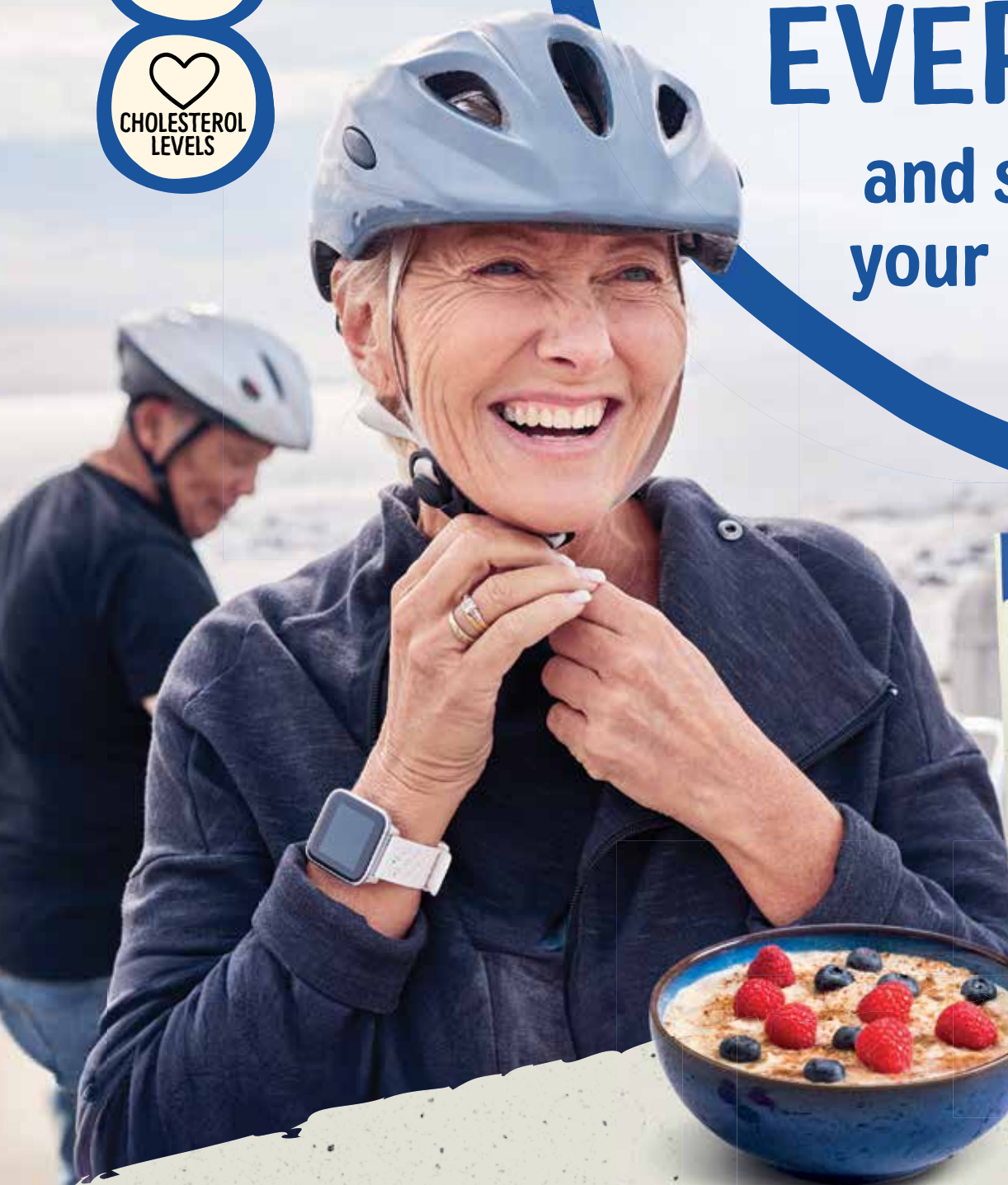
With so much to do, see, buy and eat, Toronto should absolutely be on your must-visit list for 2025.

TOP TIP:
Kensington Market has great café and brunch options by day and hipster bars by night.



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