

Life

'The day after this, I discovered my cancer'

Jennifer Wrynnne on finding a lump ten weeks after the birth of her fourth child, and what happened next


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ADVERTISING: Aiden Hanley, tel 087 8599577, email aiden.hanley@mediahuis.ie
Cover: Jennifer Wryne with her husband Colm and daughter Amelia Rose



Was St Patrick a Pisces?

The saint's life aligns with some of the qualities of the sign

St Patrick's Day often feels to me like the official end of winter in Ireland. While we might still get hit with a few cold spells, the long nights and frigid chills are finally behind us. It's also the time of year when tourism goes from about zero to a hundred.

Astrologically, March 17 coincides with the last handful of days in the zodiac calendar: The Spring Equinox, which usually happens between March 19 and 21, depending on the year, is considered the true beginning of the astrological calendar. This year, it occurs on March 20, just three days after St Patrick's Day. Pisces is the final

sign of the zodiac, and it's during this mystical window that we celebrate St Patrick. There are some interesting connections to consider here. Pisces is the sign of liminal spaces and other worlds, and its energy is all about being of service or sacrificing personal desires for the collective. We can see some of St Patrick's qualities mirrored in this.

As a missionary, he was known for the hardships he faced that ultimately led him to teach peace and spirituality – often taking action based on divine guidance and messages from the spirit world. Now, we have to remember that the St Patrick we celebrate is a mixture of a real historical man and mythic folklore. For example, the famous story of him banishing snakes from Ireland is definitely a metaphor. Wild snakes have likely never been

native to Ireland; if they were, it was millions of years ago.

The 'banishing' is actually a metaphor for him clearing out pagan practices in the name of Christianity. When we think about those practices, we're talking about the druids, the healers, and the medicine people who worked with herbs and recognised the Celtic festivals of Imbolc, Bealtaine, Lughnasa and Samhain.

Come to think of it, St Patrick was probably not a huge fan of astrology. It would definitely have fallen under the 'naïve' umbrella he was trying to fold up and he's likely rolling in his grave with me analysing his holiday through an astrological lens. rachellehicks.com

Words by **Rachelle Hicks**

Illustration by **Clare Meredith**

Editor's letter



I can't remember how long ago it was that I had cancer. I mean, I know roughly – I'm going to say seven years, but it could easily be eight. Even nine. The joy of not knowing with any accuracy is considerable. The thing that was once huge in my life, is now small. More importantly, I feel that it is also small in the lives of my children. Jennifer Wryne's beautifully expressed cover story by Liadán Hynes this week reminded me of those very hard times – and in particular the awful dilemma of what, if anything, to tell the children. Jennifer chose not to tell hers anything because they were too little to make any real sense of the words. Instead, she said she was going on holidays during the times when she had to

be away from them. She chose to protect them from something terrifying that they were far too young to understand.

Not everyone can do that, obviously, but I think her reflection that 'my kids were my one and only motivation' will resonate for many. She also writes about the vital help given by her own mother, mother-in-law and aunt, during this time – a reminder that cancer rarely affects only the person diagnosed. It is a centrifugal force into which families and loved ones are inevitably pulled.

It affects so many lives – so let's never get complacent about it. This Daffodil Day, give what you can. rachellehicks.com

Emily Hourican, Editor

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GILLIAN ANDERSON IS WEARING SHADE 8.13

Vibe check

Chin up, Timothée, if you lose at the Oscars tonight, you can do what I did after failing my Taekwondo exam, or try putting on these brave faces...

By Saoirse Hanley

It might surprise you to know that I have, in fact, lost at something before. I know, you're thinking "What? How? Surely nothing could have bested this beautiful and intelligent and perfect woman" but I'm only human after all. We'll get to more about that in a moment. It's a big week for the losers – and winners – among us, as the pinnacle of the Hollywood awards season finally rolls around. It's Oscars time, and while some awards feel like they're already engraved with the name of the winner (Jessie Buckley for Best Actress), others look to have changed expected owner entirely over the past few weeks (Timothée Chalamet for Best Actor).

Despite huge momentum at the beginning of the season, with *Murder Supreme* tipped to be the project that sees Chalamet take the going home at only 30 years of age, the campaign has fallen flat. Though he won a Golden Globe for the role, he lost out on both a Bafta in February and the Actor Awards last week. Ouch.

Now, all hope may not be lost, he could be on stage accepting the Best Actor award to end all Best Actor awards, and for a man in pursuit of greatness and with a stellar performance under his belt, it would be well deserved.

But should he lose, well, Chalamet if you are reading this I have some advice for you. My own loss is surely just as defining and seismic as an Oscar. From the age of eight, I was in pursuit of athletic success much like Chalamet's Marty. Him in ping pong, me in martial arts.



My own loss is surely as defining and seismic as an Oscar. From the age of eight, I was in pursuit of athletic success much like Chalamet's Marty. Him in ping pong, me in martial arts

in ping pong, me in martial arts. I did Taekwondo for a large part of my adolescence, keeping it up until I went to college. I have not one, but two black belts in the sport, which I'm going to start telling the X bots who are mean to me.

Any martial artist knows the transition from bright-coloured belts to the exclusive black ones is major. It involves a grading – an exam of sorts – that you spend months training for, and which tests your skills in sparring, self-defence, kicking, and breaking planks of wood with your hands and feet. All that is to say, it takes a lot of hard work. My best friend and I trained together, with a wider group, and all passed – except me.

It would take another trip around the sun for me to get my first black belt, and it was humbling because I had expected to breeze through the year and get my belt embroidered with my friends. When I did finally pass, the master (he's the big cheese) told me I had balls for coming back and trying again, which was strangely heartening to hear at 17.

But before I could have that redemption arc – my Rocky montage of nimbly bouncing on my bare feet and punching the air – I had to lose, gracefully. The equivalent of all those polite smiles the actors do when the camera is on them and someone else has just been announced as the winner.

That tight smile is all you can do at first. I couldn't exactly steal the limelight from my friends who had passed with flying colours, now could I? They had worked hard, clearly harder than me, and they had earned it. They had every right to hoist their metaphorical Oscar into the air.

To add insult to injury, they then spent the rest of the weekend training with all of the other black belt winners, and I had to watch from afar... which resulted in the next step. You can cry, either really or performatively. My tears? The real deal, baby. I'm blubbing at the unfairness of it all, at how there must be some mistake, at how I really did train hard.

There's art in fake crying too: gem of the Irish music scene, CMAT, turned on the lake waterworks when she lost a Brit award to Rosalia and she played it off well. This works a treat if you're all out

of the organic kind. Importantly, CMAT had told reporters on the red carpet that she was not going to win, getting ahead of the narrative, as it were.

You know in *The Devil Wears Prada*, when Meryl Streep's Miranda Priestly says that when they get back to New York, they'll have to do some PR damage control? This is your next port of call when you lose – you have to make the headlines yourself. Maybe you lead with your plans to come back stronger, maybe you say it was all rigged (though this won't make you any friends). Either way, you send the text before it comes out in the town newsletter.

In Timmy's case, he's going to have to do some more method Marty-ing. Puff up your chest, Chalamet, and say it's all part of the plan: Before Marty could succeed, he had to lose, which is its own kind of winning actually. ●



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Notions & Necessities



NECESSITY

Solo run

The Temple Bar Gallery + Studios has just launched its new exhibition *Lunula*, by Lucy Stein. The show, which will run until May 3, features the work of the London-based niece of celebrity chef Rick Stein, which draws on feminine iconography, using ancient reference points but also her own experiences as a mother and caregiver. **LH** See templebargallery.com



NOTION

Mid-century moments

Bookings are open now for The Little Island boutique pet-friendly hotel in west Cork, an adult-only retreat near Clonakilty. Sisters Aislinn and Nicole O'Shea did a lot of work on this cute spot themselves, creating a 1960s California vibe that opens for business next month with an onsite deli and all-day pizza, as well as sea-swim and cocktails. **SC** *Rooms from €190, thelittleisland.ie*



NOTION

Put the bonny into bride

Carton House is hosting a beautiful bridal event on March 28. By Invitation, with Chupí, Studio Grace, Folkster Bridal and Flowerpop. A wedding showcase created to celebrate the modern bride, guests can attend the morning session, 11am-1pm, and enjoy a panel discussion covering all aspects of the big day. **LH** Tickets, €19.50 for bride and four guests, see byinvitation.ie

NOTION

Diffuse the situation

For a last-minute Mother's Day token of appreciation, you could do worse than the Neom Wellbeing Pod Mini+ diffuser in a limited-edition pink. It's perfect for small spaces, including the bathroom, as it's USB rechargeable. It's also a waterless machine: you simply screw in a bottle of essential oil, possibly the brand's gorgeous It's All Rosy blend of rose, geranium and orange. **SC** €79, [Brown Thomas, Arnotts](http://BrownThomas.com)



NOTION

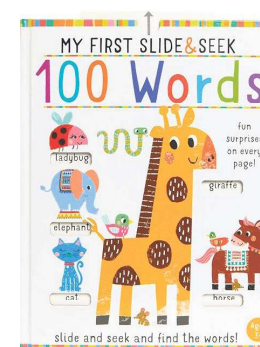
Super salsa

Salsa Jeans has just launched its new style, the Super Wide Leg, perfect for the spring-summer season. The high-waisted, relaxed fit silhouette comes in both a light and a darker medium wash. **LH** *Super Wide Leg, €99.95, available in Salsa Jeans stores at Liffey Valley and Blanchardstown Centre, Brown Thomas, Arnotts, Avoca, McElhinneys, Anthony Ryans and others, as well as salsajeans.com*

NECESSITY

Froth and foam

Many of us are at full capacity for countertop appliances, which makes the small but mighty new Nespresso Nanofoamer a welcome arrival. Unlike the foamer on a coffee machine, this device creates cold foam suitable for hot or cold drinks, with two density settings. It's also USB chargeable and ideal for travelling. **SC** €45, nespresso.com



NECESSITY

A cúpla focal for kids

Start them early 'as Gaeilge' with this picture book of first words, each of which is illustrated and has a slide-and-seek panel, behind which are the words in both Irish and English. The adults might well learn a cúpla focal too. **SC** *My First Slide & Seek 100 Words in English and Irish, €9.99, published by Gill Books*

NECESSITY

We'll meet again

Singalong Songbook is bringing their popular show, *We'll Meet Again, The Story of Vera Lynn*, to the National Concert Hall on March 26. Starring Linda Kenny and Damian Smith, with musical director Alan Carney seen here, the audience will have the chance to sing along, with lyrics projected on the night. **LH** For information and tickets, see nch.ie



Compiled by **Sarah Cadan** and **Liadán Hynes**. hjemagazine@independent.ie

Dear Mary: I've fallen for my fiancée's sister and think I should get out of both their lives

Mary O'Connor



Q I am wracked with guilt after developing feelings for my fiancée's sister. She returned from Australia last year when I met her for the first time, and at first I fought a physical attraction to her, and now I have gone on to develop feelings for her.

She is very like my fiancée to look at, and my type, but she is a much happier and more confident version of my fiancée. I thought it would be OK when her boyfriend returned from Australia, and that my desire to be near her would die away.

How wrong I was. I feel intensely jealous of her boyfriend. I feel the only way to resolve the situation is to break up with my fiancée and to get out of both sisters' lives.

I don't think my fiancée suspects and I would be very keen to spare her any hurt whatsoever. What do you think?

A You find yourself in a very difficult situation, and I am struck by the fact that you want to do the honourable thing and cause as little hurt as possible to your fiancée. It is going to be very difficult for her when you tell her that you are having second thoughts about getting married.

You obviously will have to give her a reason as to why you have changed your mind about marrying her. She is going to have a lot of questions, including possibly asking if there is

someone else. So be prepared for that. She is indeed going to be very hurt because you will be completely changing how she thought her life was going to be. It is now going to be a life without you in it. You don't say if you are living together. In my experience, it is much more difficult to break up when a couple share a home. One girl told me that it was like a death, only without the funeral, and I understood what she was trying to say. So commiserations if you find yourself in that position. It takes a lot of work, and a lot of sadness, to break up when there is also a home involved. Joint purchases that have been made, trying to agree who gets what and in some cases who gets to keep the dog or the cat. All of this against a backdrop of hurt and blame.

You will have to be prepared to be the bad guy as you are the one doing the breaking up. But it is far better to

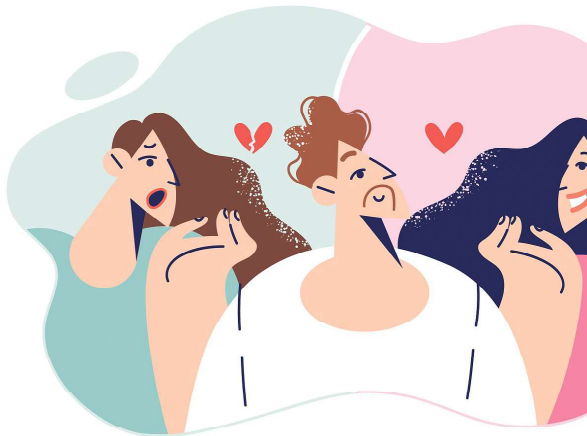
“Even if you do still love her, the trouble is you don't love her enough to commit to spending your life together”

do it now rather than if you were to get married knowing that someone else had stolen your heart.

You seem to have fallen for your fiancée's sister even though you don't know her all that well. But you see her as a better version of your fiancée and perhaps you have idealised her without knowing her 'warts and all'. But the fact is that you no longer feel that your fiancée is the one for you, and that is what must govern how you act from now on.

Don't be surprised if you find that you still love your fiancée - that is to be expected. As a result, you are going to feel very lonely because she is no longer in your life, so ensure that you have the support and companionship of a close friend during this transition.

But even if you do still love her, the trouble is that you don't love her enough to commit to spending your life together. ●



You can contact Mary O'Connor anonymously by visiting dearmary.ie or email her at dearmary@independent.ie or write c/o 27-32 Talbot St, Dublin 1. All correspondence will be treated in confidence. Mary O'Connor regrets that she is unable to answer any questions privately.



Feel on top of the world on a giant adventure

Indulge in the best things in life this spring on a short break in Northern Ireland. Discover everything you need to make the most of every moment. Mouth-watering locally-sourced food and drink. Jaw-dropping natural landscapes. Eye-opening heritage and culture at every turn. A superb range of accommodation to suit your every mood, from luxury city centre hotels to boutique countryside hideaways, and the most glamorous glamping opportunities.

The Merchant Hotel

The Merchant Hotel in Belfast's trendy Cathedral Quarter is a five star delight on the city's doorstep. Its unique blend of Art Deco swish and Victorian grandeur is the ideal setting for that city break you've always dreamed of. Luxury and style go hand-in-hand with live jazz, a roof-top hot tub, world-class cocktails and dining options to die for.

Killyhevlin Lakeside Hotel & Lodges

Located on the shores of Lough Erne, here you'll find spacious rooms, luxury suites and amazing food. Prefer the freedom of a self-catering break? Then opt for one of the hotel's luxury lodges. Fancy a little pampering? It's waiting for you at the hotel's Kalm Elemis Spa, a sanctuary of peace and tranquility. The spa-therapy menu offers everything from power-boosting anti-ageing facials to hands-on body therapies.

Mussenden Temple, Castlerock

In the beautiful surroundings of Downhill Demesne near Castlerock you'll find one of the most photographed scenes in Ireland. The Mussenden Temple is perched on a cliff-top, 120 feet above the waves. Built by an eccentric bishop for his niece, the building is the focus of a dramatic walk which is guaranteed to blow away the cobwebs. Enjoy the adventure trail before picking up a treat from Al's Coffee Hut.

Victoria Square Shopping Centre, Belfast

Welcome to a piece of retail heaven. Victoria Square Shopping Centre is famous for the panoramic views from its rooftop glass dome, and over 50 famous high street names, including Ireland's first Sephora, and countless food and drink options.

Browns in Town

In Derry, you'll be in foodie heaven at Browns in Town. Chef Patron Ian Orr's restaurant serves up a modern menu of perfectly plated starters, mouth-watering mains and delicately prepared desserts. Michelin-recommended, it's proved a hit with one and all. The very best in local produce is on offer and great food is complemented by an inspired selection of drinks.

Wild Atlantic Distillery, Co. Tyrone

A tour of the Wild Atlantic Distillery is a must for gin enthusiasts. Go behind the scenes to see how its spirits are crafted. You'll enjoy a neat tasting of the full range and a Wild Atlantic Distillery cocktail. Perhaps you'd like to enrol at the gin school for the afternoon? Distil your very own spirit, then fill your bottle, name your gin - and apply your own personalised label!

Slieve Donard

This magical place has a fairy-tale setting between a beautiful beach and the magnificent Royal County Down golf course. Every detail of your stay here - from the springs in your bed to your ESPA spa treatments - has been taken care of with consummate skill. There are fabulous views of the majestic Mourne mountains throughout the resort, even from the spa! You'll find a host of local attractions on your doorstep, too.

Killeavy Castle Estate

Nestled among the woodlands on the Ring of Gullion, Killeavy Castle Estate offers the ideal accommodation to take a step back from our fast-paced lives. Stroll through the stunning hotel grounds and admire the secluded walled garden, where fruit, vegetables and herbs are grown to create Killeavy's fresh and seasonal tasting menu.

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‘My kids were my one and only motivation – they’re my only reason to get up’

*Ahead of Daffodil Day this Friday, award-winning milliner and influencer Jennifer Wrynn tells **Liadán Hynes** about her journey with breast cancer. Less than a year on from her diagnosis, she recalls her first reaction and dealing with treatment, all the while trying to keep a sense of calm for her four kids*

Coping with cancer

» Jennifer Wrynn was 10 weeks postpartum from the birth of her fourth child when she found a lump in her breast. It was the day after Amelia-Rose's christening in June 2025, and the new mum was in the shower, preparing for a trip to the hospital later that day for her baby's two-month injections. "I wasn't particularly looking, it was just rubbing the shower gel on my breast and I could feel it. But because I was so early postpartum, I didn't in any way get alarmed."

In hospital with her daughter, she mentioned the lump she had discovered, just in case. "And it was actually the nurse who was immediately, like, 'Oh, let me have a look at this.'"

Jennifer was due back in the following week for a smear test. The nurse told her to leave the lump alone until that appointment, they would check it again the following week. She left unconcerned. "I honestly never thought about it. The following week I went in, and sure enough it was still there. She did an investigation, in the sense that she measured it, and checked both my breasts, under my arms, all that kind of stuff."

Jennifer, who is now 36, is an award-winning milliner and influencer from Leitrim. In 2015, she won Best Dressed at Cheltenham, wearing a green dress from Covet, a boutique in the Powerscourt Townhouse at the time, and a hat that was her own creation.

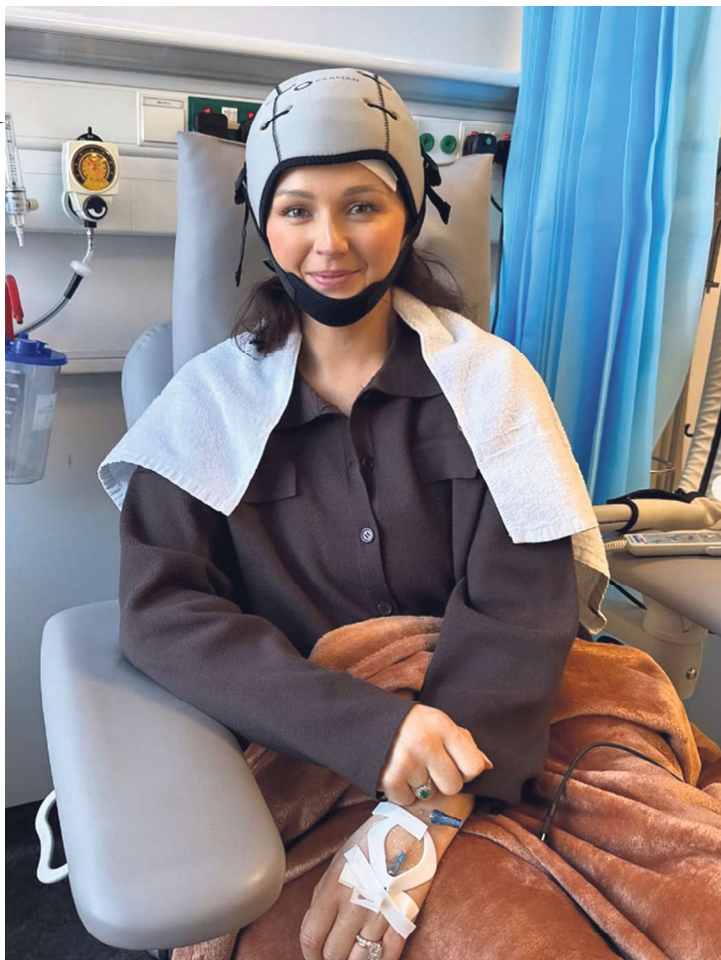
Having originally studied at The Grafton Academy, she worked as a visual merchandiser for Louis Vuitton, Dublin, before later opening her own millinery boutique in the Powerscourt Townhouse. Today, she is an in-demand milliner as well as a regular at ladies' days on the race circuit. After her appointment with the nurse last summer, Jennifer was referred on to the breast clinic in Galway. "It was maybe two or three weeks later, I very casually went, thinking I was out in the city for the day. I brought the baby with me, because again I was kind of like, 'Oh, this is one of these things... I'm going to run in for two seconds and walk straight back out again, basically.'"

During the ultrasound, the doctor announced that they would in fact do a triple assessment (mammogram and biopsy as well as ultrasound) that day.

"I got a bit of an eerie feeling off him, just because he was so quiet when he was doing the ultrasound," Jennifer recalls. "He wasn't really talking to me. He was dead, dead silent. I was kind of holding my breath that the baby wouldn't wake up. I was a bit preoccupied with that. And then he said to me, 'We'll do the triple assessment mammograms, the biopsy as well.' And then 'I'm going to bring you back in Thursday week and we're going to discuss the treatment plan.'"

This was the first sign that things might be more serious than she had thought. "Cancer came to my head straight away when I heard the word treatment. I just knew it wasn't as simple as I had thought."

A mammogram then biopsy followed,



at which stage she spoke to the radiologist. Upset and overwhelmed, Jennifer still managed to gather herself enough to speak up. "I just thought, 'You know what, I'm only going to get one chance at this. I'm going to ask him.' And I said 'Do you think by any chance I might have cancer?' His exact words to me were we have to wait for the biopsy results to come back, but your lump has every single characteristic of cancer."

"By the time I left the hospital, I was about to explode. I was like, 'Get me the baby, and let me get out to the car quickly.'"

Once in the car, Jennifer called her mother Mary to whom she is extremely close, the two work together in Mary's curtain business, live near each other in Mohill, Leitrim, and Mary regularly

Clockwise from above: Jennifer Wrynn wearing a cold cap to lessen hair loss as she underwent chemotherapy; on her wedding day with husband Colm; winning best dressed lady at the Cheltenham Races in 2015 with one of her own hat creations. Photo: Steve Humphreys at the Galway Races in 2018. Photo: Gerry Mooney

Previous page: Jennifer with her husband and kids at her daughter Amelia Rose's christening in June last year in Leitrim

provides childcare for Jennifer and her husband Colm. Jennifer grew up in nearby Gortagh, alongside her sister and brother. She and Colm have known each other all their lives. "We actually only lived maybe two miles up the road from each other," Jennifer explains of their childhood.

"And our parents are really good friends, so we've kind of known each other all our lives. There used to be a little bit of a slagging match when we were kids. Like, 'Oh, you know, will you marry my daughter?' And we'd be like, 'No way.' And then we were first together when we were 14 or 15, very, very young, and then obviously went our separate ways. And we got back together then in our 20s."

"My mum is a very reasonable person," Jennifer continues of the day of her tests. "When it comes to medical stuff, she'd



never really panic unnecessarily, and I think I was looking for her to be like, 'Don't worry.' But she just knew from the way I had carried the story to her, she knew things weren't good. She felt that the radiology team might have been trying to basically break my fall, so that when I went back for the results, I wasn't under any kind of false illusion that it wasn't as serious as it was."

Jennifer and her family had to wait a week between that assessment, and receiving her diagnosis. "That week was hell," she says now. "It was the worst week, and I've been through chemo, and radio, and everything since, but that was the worst week by a million miles. That unknown. You're googling things, and you're trying to remember everything that every doctor had said. It was horrific,

nothing has compared to that since, in terms of the mental toll."

Upon returning to hospital, Jennifer was told she had HER2-positive breast cancer. Her treatment plan would involve a lumpectomy, chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

"I didn't yet know what stage it was, so I didn't know if it was early or late, how bad it was, for me, and I know every mother would say the same, all you have is your children, and everything else is kind of, you know, your house, your car, your holidays, it doesn't really matter, only your children. And you do have this wave of absolute panic, of like, 'Oh my god, what if I'm not here for my children?' That definitely crossed my mind those first few days. Your immediate thing is



“My kids were so young that I didn't need to explain anything to them. That was why I really clung on to the cold cap, to try and save my hair”

just absolute panic for your children," Jennifer's eldest, Alex, was five, her twins, Amber and Isabella, three, and her baby nearly three months old, when she received the diagnosis of breast cancer. She was able to shield them from knowledge of her disease.

"I was in a very fortunate situation in that my kids were so young that I didn't need to explain anything to them. That was why I really clung on to the cold cap, which was the treatment I used to try and save my hair. Because if I had to lose my hair, that would have been something very different for my children."

Given their ages, the children did not need to be told what their mother was experiencing. "I wanted to save them from basically everything as much as I possibly could. The motherhood side of things is just panic stations when things set in at the start, for sure."

Having been diagnosed on June 24 last year, Jennifer underwent lumpectomy surgery in early July. "That went really well. My surgeon, his words were, 'No surprises, good or bad, so that's what they want.' She started chemotherapy in September, finishing in late December, then started radiotherapy - 20 sessions Monday to Friday for four weeks - a few weeks later.

"The chemo was rough enough, good days and bad days, and then the radiotherapy I found very, very doable."

When she went for surgery and then chemotherapy, she would tell the children she was going on holidays. "It was just easier to say it that way, rather than bother to explain it. And I was lucky that I had my mum basically on hand all of the time, throughout my treatment, to mind the kids when I was away. Every time we (apparently) went away they were looking for a treat or present back from the holidays, that was kind of the vibe for them. Thank god they were saved from that."

She was able to keep up this level of protection around her children for the entirety of her treatment, supported by her mother, mother-in-law, and aunt. "Their support was phenomenal. Say in the evening times, I was so tired. You've four children running around the place, and life is going on for them. But you're so fatigued by the whole thing."

"There were a lot of mornings I just felt like I did not have the energy to get up out of the bed. I mean, you look around, and the baby was in the room beside me throughout all of this as well. So it's kind of like, eight little eyes peering in on you

Coping with cancer



“When I first found the lump, I totally assumed it was a postpartum lump

► in the bed every morning, kind of jumping on you, waiting for you to get up. And, you know, they know no different. In one way it was challenging, of course, having young kids and going through all of this. And then in another way, they were my one and only motivation, they're my only reason to get up.”

The routine children require provided “great discipline”. They needed to be up, dressed, fed and out to school every morning. “So it kind of created, I suppose, a routine and a rhythm for me. And I found that kept me going, because I could get them dropped off, and go for a walk. I always fought the whole time for life to be as normal as possible, both for me and for them. It's great to have them looking at me, not giving me any excuse but to get up.”

With the chemo, there would be one “rough week” where Jennifer would feel “groggy and rotten”, followed by “two very, very good weeks”. She has also experienced hot flushes from the medical menopause instigated by the targeted

Milliner and breast cancer patient, Jennifer Wrynn, who launched the Irish Cancer Society's Daffodil Day fundraiser, which takes place on Friday.
Photo: Andres Poveda

hormone therapy and brain fog as a result of chemo. “The hot flushes, oh my god, they literally sweep you.”

Jennifer had her last chemotherapy session on December 29 last year. “It was so good to finish, I could start the new year fresh as well. Radiotherapy was brilliant. I had 20 sessions of it for four weeks. I think in my head I was like, ‘I got through chemo, I can get through anything.’ And thank god, I didn't have the side effects like fatigue, burn sensation, things like that.”

As a milliner who has always sorted flowing locks, the hair loss was one of the challenging aspects of her treatment. “The cold cap, while it was amazing, I still lost about 60pc of my hair. I've had long hair all my life, I had to cut it short, which I kind of did mind. The hair loss was massive, I had a large bald patch on the top back of my head. By the end, I had had a lot of bald patches throughout. It sounds a bit vain but the hair loss was difficult. With my eyelashes, I knew there was no chance of holding onto them, that didn't

bother me. And they grew back a week after. I wore a hair piece and I still do. Day to day I just wear my hair as it is, but if I've an occasion, I wear a hair topper, for length and fullness.”

She will remain on targeted therapy, Herceptin and Zoladex until mid-August. “So the bad weeks, I just needed every inch of support that I could possibly get from my mum, from my husband, my auntie, they were just all-hands-on-deck. I needed all sorts of help because I suppose with four kids, and they're so lively and they obviously knew nothing.

“My priority was always the kids. And I never really settle well unless the kids are with my mum, do you know that kind of way?” She laughs somewhat bashfully. “Every Friday that I went into chemotherapy, she would be there with the kids from literally morning to night. And then, because the baby was so, so young, she actually took her for me the weekend after chemotherapy, just to allow me that guaranteed two or three full nights sleep. I found when I got that, I'd be able to manage the rest of it in other ways. Without her, oh my god I don't know where I'd be.”

Jennifer's youngest daughter turned one on March 6. It has been quite a year, and it's far too early for Jennifer to have begun to get to grips with it. “I take stock. I haven't done (therapy). I probably will down the line. I actually think I'm a delayed reactor and part of my brain doesn't actually register that this has all happened.”

She describes an interaction with a pharmacist, post diagnosis, when they referred to her as a cancer patient.

“And I was like, it just stomached me, because I was like, ‘Oh my god, I'm a cancer patient.’ I actually think it will be about another 12 months before it's fully registered in my brain what has happened. It's been a mad year.

“This cancer and treatment and all of that, it just took over the postpartum side of things, and I almost forgot about it. I had eight or 10 very blissful weeks of postpartum, before being immersed in something completely different.

“When I first found the lump, I totally assumed it was a postpartum lump. I had had a C-section with Amelia Rose as well. So it wasn't even at that ‘You're safe to exercise’ stage of post-baby as such. Say for my gym class, you're really told not to go back to them until they're about 12 weeks. I was in the theatre again 12 week later getting a breast cancer lump removed.”

Jennifer pauses then continues, displaying remarkable fortitude.

“With my other kids, I was always back to work quite early, because obviously I worked for myself and for my mum. So there was no 26-week maternity leave. With Amelia Rose, I've just been so lucky to have so much time at home with her, one-to-one. So there are a few benefits there as well.”

The Irish Cancer Society will hold its annual Daffodil Day fundraiser on Friday, March 20, see cancer.ie

CREATED FOR THE RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES BOARD



Are you a landlord or tenant? Here's what the Irish rental law changes could mean for you

Jessica Gardiner

For any landlord or tenant, knowing your rights and protections in the rental relationship brings a sense of reassurance. In Ireland, the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) plays a central role in creating a rental sector that is fair, regulated and easier to navigate. From providing guidance on rights and responsibilities to helping resolve disputes, the RTB supports both sides of the rental relationship.

From 1st March 2026, a new set of rental laws come into effect across Ireland, introducing stronger tenant protections, changes to how landlords can end tenancies, and a national system of rent control.

Whether you are renting a home or providing one, these changes are designed to bring greater clarity and security to the rental sector. As a landlord or tenant, here's what the new rules could mean for you.

Why rental laws are changing

Last year, the government announced proposed changes to rental laws. These changes are based on recommendations from the Housing Agency's Review of Rent Pressure Zones (RPFs). The approved policies introduce a national system of rent control, enhanced security of tenure (a tenant's right to stay in rented

accommodation for a certain period), and change the circumstances under which a landlord can end a tenancy.

Under the changes, tenancies already in place before 1st March 2026 will not be affected by the new rules.

Impact of changes for landlords

For landlords, a tenancy can be ended within the first six months for any reason, as was the case under previous rental rules, too. After that, termination will only be allowed for specific legal reasons.

For individual landlords with four or more tenancies (or all company landlords), the grounds for ending a tenancy created from 1st March will be limited to two situations:

- where the tenant breaches their obligations, or
- where the property is no longer suitable for the tenant's needs.

Landlords with one to three tenancies can also end a tenancy for these reasons but they will also have some additional grounds. During a six-year cycle, they may be able to end a tenancy if they

need to sell to avoid serious financial hardship, or if they or a close family member needs to live in the property. At the end of the six-year cycle, further reasons apply, including selling the property, substantially refurbishing or renovating it, or changing its use.

For tenancies created before 1st March 2026, landlords will continue to be able to end a tenancy for the six reasons allowed before the new rules took effect. These include sale, refurbishment or family use, regardless of how many properties the landlord owns.

Rent increases will change from 1st March 2026. Rent will be capped at 2% per year or inflation, whichever is lower, for most tenancies. Re-setting rent to market levels is limited and only allowed for new tenancies after the last tenant leaves voluntarily or at the end of a six-year cycle in ongoing tenancies. Tenancies before 1st March 2026 cannot have their rent reset to market level while they continue.

What the changes could mean for tenants
For tenants, the biggest benefit is stronger protections around how long they

can stay in their home. Once a tenant has lived in a property for six months without receiving a valid notice of termination, they gain security of tenure.

For new tenancies created after 1st March 2026, tenants will have a minimum six-year tenancy cycle. During that six-year period, a landlord can only end the tenancy for defined legal reasons, and those reasons will depend on whether the landlord owns four or more tenancies, or less than four.

Tenants in older tenancies will continue under the current rules, which already limit when a landlord can end a tenancy to just six reasons. Whether you're a landlord or tenant, understanding the rental law – including your rights and responsibilities – can make all the difference to your experience, leading to a more successful professional relationship and peace of mind.

Rental laws are changing.
Learn more at [rtb.ie](https://www.rtb.ie)

RTB Bord um Thionóntachtal Cónaithe
Residential Tenancies Board

MEET THE DOWN SYNDROME CHANGEMAKERS

From acting on a hit TV series to graduating from third level education and government campaigning, **Patrice Harrington** talks to six trailblazers advocating for the rights of their peers and building a better future

What do you imagine the life of a person with Down syndrome looks like in 2026? Ahead of World Down Syndrome Day on March 21, we spoke to six members of Down Syndrome Ireland (DSI) National and Regional Advisory Councils (NAC and RAC), who steer the organisation and advocate for the rights of people with Down syndrome across Ireland.

Meeting monthly, they advise on key issues like employment, housing, education, cost of living and transport. But they do much more besides.

Whether it's having a day job as part of DSI's National Employment Programme, starring in a hit TV show, pursuing political ambitions or studying in third-level institutes, these six changemakers are pushing boundaries, achieving success on their own terms and redefining the parameters of living with an intellectual disability.



It's important that people with Down syndrome and their disabilities are represented on screen and on all platforms. It supports inclusion and encourages people with disabilities to achieve anything if you believe in yourself



Driving ambition



It's important to be independent and speak up for yourself. Communication skills are also important

» **Eileen Dunne (45) from Virginia, Co Cavan, works two jobs and is training for the Special Olympics Ireland Summer Games in June**

Working behind the bar of the Cavan Crystal Hotel every Tuesday, Eileen takes great pride in her job. "I serve tea, coffee and scones. The customers are very nice; they sometimes give you tips. It's important for people with Down syndrome to work because we are happy to work. It's a nice job and I work hard."

Eileen has also had a job in Tesco, Navan, for 24 years.

"I work in the clothing department, F&H. I tidy the clothes, get the clothes, get the right sizes, put out the returns, clean the floors."

Eileen is former chair of NAC and recently stepped down from her role as ambassador for DSI, which saw her travel to Taiwan last year.

"I did a video for World Down Syndrome Day 2025 that was shown on billboards in Taiwan. This year the theme for World Down Syndrome Day is 'Together Against Loneliness' and we have meetings about that. It's important to have someone to talk to. I go out with friends sometimes. We go bowling or to the cinema in Navan," she says, adding that her favourite films are *The Usual Suspects*, *Scream* and *Die Hard*.

Eileen does synchronised swimming, loves to dance the cha-cha-cha and is training for the Special Olympics Ireland Summer Games in June. "I'm one of the representatives for kayaking. We train once a week on Sundays on a lake in Cavan. It's really fun."

Her advocacy has centred around challenging stereotypes about people with Down syndrome, improving access to work and more autonomous living.

"It's important to be independent and to speak up for yourself. Communication skills are also important."



Eric Nolan (26) from Walkinstown in Dublin works in Diageo and plays basketball with Southside Shooters
Last year, Eric worked with Transport for Ireland and the National Transport Authority to develop easy-read guides that help people with intellectual disabilities travel more confidently by bus throughout Ireland.

"I've been taking the bus for seven years myself," he says. "I work Tuesdays and Thursdays in Diageo. I work in the canteen, wiping down tables and putting the chairs away. I do stocktaking at the shop in the canteen."

His working life is just one part of a very busy schedule. "I go swimming every Tuesday. I go to the gym every Wednesday and I go to my bowling club every Friday. I do my basketball as well and my athletics. My other hobbies are singing, dancing, walking and spending time outdoors."

Eric also attends the Ash Tree Hub, part of St John of God Lifey Services, which supports men and women with intellectual disabilities. "It's my day centre up in Tallaght. You get your own key worker and we go on outings. I've made lots of friends there."

Eric was encouraged by his sister to join the NAC after finishing his studies at Finglas FET College.

"I did my interview in the college in 2023 and then I did computers and reading. Now I'm a voice for people with Down syndrome. My advice is don't let people change who you are and be whatever you want to be in life."



“ Living independently is great. You can go wherever you like, more or less

Una Coates (43) is public relations officer for NAC and lives independently in Dublin

When she got the keys to her apartment almost two years ago, Una felt "relieved, like, 'I can't believe it'. Living independently is great. You can go wherever you like, more or less."

Prior to moving out of her family home, Una completed the Supported Independent Living Programme with Stewarts Care, a voluntary organisation providing community-based services for people with intellectual disabilities.

"You learn about community, inclusion and safety, general education, e-learning, household management, food and cooking," she says. "I cook for myself. I put stuff in the air fryer. If not, I'll buy something in the shop and use the microwave or the oven."

Una goes out to work three days a week. "It might sound ridiculous, but I have two jobs. In Campton Insurance I'm the admin so I look after people's post, the documents they give me, or laminating, or if something needs to be filed. In

Musgrave's cash and carry I can work out on the floor if I want to or in the canteen."

"What does she like about working?" "The good money, the good wage. I might spend it on clothes or to put food on the table."

Una is a trained health messenger for Special Olympics Ireland, and collaborates with Mental Health Ireland and Inclusion Ireland. She delivered an opening statement to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on disability matters in 2023, calling for the application of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities across all aspects of life, including education, health, support services and access to justice.

"I did a course in Trinity College on contemporary living and they taught us self-advocacy," she says, of the two-year programme for students with intellectual disabilities, focusing on independent living, personal growth and career development. "I still go into Trinity and give talks about mental health. If you're stressed, you should go for a walk or a swim or a sleep."



Left: Advisory Council advocates
Conor O'Donnell, top, Eileen
Dunne, middle right, Fintan Bray
and Una Coates, bottom right, Yann
O'Carroll and Eric Nolan. Photos:
Steve Humphreys

Actor Conor O'Donnell (22) from Newbridge, Co Kildare, played Michael in TV show *Bad Sisters*. A student in Trinity College, he is Ireland Reads ambassador 2026

From the day he joined Stage Academy Newbridge aged six, Conor blazed a trail.

After performing in all-Ireland winning variety shows there, he moved on to the Leinster School of Music & Drama in Griffith College, where he earned first class honours across all of his exams and was awarded the President's Medal for Outstanding Performance.

Little wonder his TV debut was another hit.

"My first acting role was Michael in *Bad Sisters*," he says, of the Sharon Horgan series also starring Eve Hewson, Anne-Marie Duff, Eva Birthistle and Sarah Greene.

"It was a great experience. I learned so much from the other actors and really developed as a person. It really was a life-changing experience and something I'm very proud to be part of. I loved being with all the actors and getting to know them. I loved being on set, seeing all the cameras and equipment for each scene."

Conor also liked the process of getting into character.

"I prepare for a role by reading the script and learning my lines. I also must take note of the lines before and after me so I know when to come in. It takes a lot of time, but I enjoyed the challenge."

He points out that we live in "a very diverse world" which should be reflected on film and TV.

"Roles may be limited for actors with disabilities and also factors such as learning lines and following instructions may be a little more challenging for actors with disabilities," he says. "It's important that people with Down syndrome and their disabilities are represented on screen and on all platforms. It supports inclusion and encourages people with disabilities to achieve anything if you believe in yourself."

Conor is in second year in Trinity College studying Arts, Science and Inclusive Applied Practice, a two-year programme for students with intellectual disabilities. Last year he was an official Down Syndrome Ireland advocate for people to vote in the general election. Now he is Ireland Reads ambassador 2026. This is a government initiative to encourage people to enjoy a book.

"I would love to play a character in *Fair City* or *Emmerdale*," he says, of his future acting ambitions. "I would also love to do *Dancing with the Stars*."

Driving ambition

» **Fintan Bray (32) from Delvin, Co Westmeath is chairman of the NAC. He is the first person with Down syndrome to have a senior position in Fianna Fáil as a recruitment officer with their disability network**

Campaigning for accessible transport, employment and higher education are top priorities on the agenda for NAC's chairperson.

"I'm living in rural Ireland, so the transport issue is personal for me. Everyone has a right to transport. Everyone has a right to be on a bus. People with disabilities – people in wheelchairs – need more support," he says.

"We're not just NAC members, we're a family full of friends. I want people from different branches to tell us about their issues and we will support them. Even if it takes a long time just to get it across the line, we will stick to it. People with Down syndrome want to have our own jobs, we want to have our own education. I've contacted ministers, TDs and senators across Ireland to make it so the people with Down syndrome will have a stable life in future. Maybe I will become a TD or senator myself. But I'm glad where I am now."

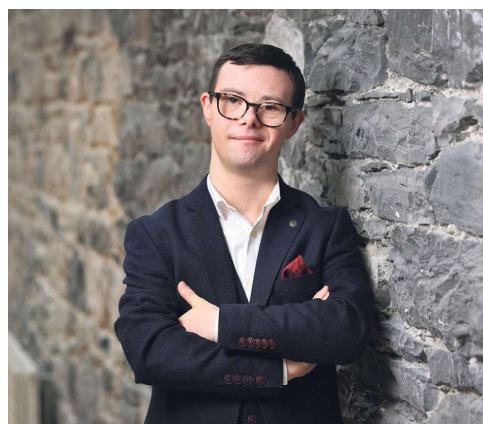
Fintan wants to inspire other people with Down syndrome to similarly have big ambitions.

"Don't think that you can't do things. You can. If you believe you can do it, go out there and do it. Represent yourself."

When he is not lobbying on behalf of NAC members, Fintan's favourite hobby is dancing. "I'm a ballroom and Latin dancer in Barn Door Creative Studios in Westmeath. Nessa O'Reilly created a company of dancers with Down syndrome which really inspires me. I'm a big fan of Taylor Swift, and I'm a big rugby man. Conor Murray is an ambassador for Down Syndrome Ireland, and it was great to meet him in person."



World Down Syndrome Day takes place on March 21. Down Syndrome Ireland is asking members of the public to celebrate by hosting a Lots Of Socks party (lotsosocks.ie), or picking up a pair of its limited-edition socks at downsyndrome.ie



Yann O'Carroll (25) is from Tralee, Co Kerry, studies in Munster Technological University (MTU) and works in two hotels

Every Wednesday, Yann goes to work in Ballygarry Estate Hotel in Tralee. "I get the lobby ready for lunch. I do cleaning there, I fill up the jugs with water and ice. I fold the napkins and I take orders for lunch."

Seasonally from April to October, Yann devotes his Mondays to a second job in Muckross Park Hotel in Killarney.

"I'm a day porter concierge. I wear a white shirt, black pants, socks, black shoes, a tie and a waistcoat. I do bags and luggage, cleaning and room service; sometimes people want a bottle of wine. Some guests are from Dublin and some are from America."

Three days a week Yann walks to MTU where he is a student on the Path 4 programme aimed at increasing access to higher education for people with intellectual disabilities.

"Last year I studied food and beverage management in MTU and I passed. Actually, I got 58pc. You have to learn how to carry things carefully. Now I'm learning to cook every Monday. Last week we made French toast and eggs. We've done soup, chicken, fish, stew and spaghetti Bolognese, but my favourite is curry."

Every Saturday morning, Yann participates in the local 5km park run. "My best time this year is 30 minutes 58 seconds. I will get my 250 park runs hopefully when I come back from holidays in Corsica in August."

He goes to the gym twice a week, plays basketball and swims. "I also do singing and dancing on the Wii. I love *Abba Forever*, Nathan Carter's song *Wagon Wheel* and *Grease*."

Yann travels by train to Dublin with his father for NAC meetings.

"We have discussions about transport and the cost of living. I went to Simon Harris's office on World Down Syndrome Day last year. I talked to him about justice and transport." 🟡



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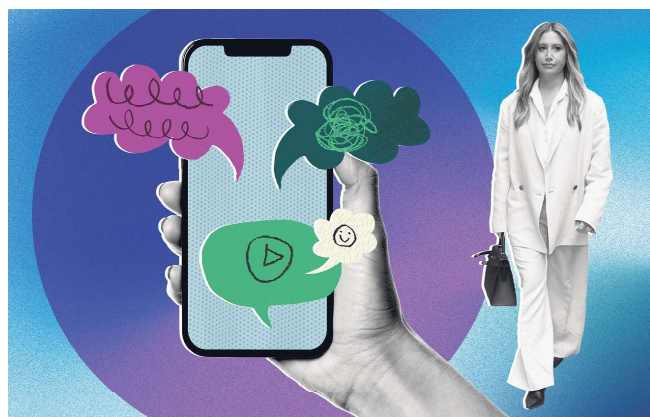
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Explore living

Contrary to the actress's feelings of being excluded, **Leslie Ann Horgan** shares how her weekly waffles have helped her stay in contact with friends and navigate motherhood



Sorry, Ashley Tisdale, mum groups are not toxic, they're a lifeline

It's Wednesday morning and I'm halfway along the walk to my daughter's creche when the first video lands in the WhatsApp group. At lunchtime, another couple appear. Before I leave the office at 5pm, I find a quiet spot to record and send my own. I'll watch all of the videos later on when the final member of the group – the one with the oldest kids and therefore latest bedtime to shepherd – sends hers. The 'Wednesday Waffles' were first suggested by one of my friends over a year ago. She'd stumbled across a guy on Instagram talking about how he'd started sending video updates about his life to his friends once a week and how it had brought them closer. She suggested that it might be a fit for our group of five friends, who many years ago backpacked around Australia and New Zealand together. These days we're all working mums with demanding jobs and busy lives, and we don't get to meet up as much as we'd like to – especially as one of our crew lives in the UK. In recent years, we'd all fallen into the black hole of saying "We must arrange a coffee" or "I must give so-and-so a call", but rarely following through. By comparison, a short update filmed

Actress Ashley Tisdale who left a celebrity mom WhatsApp group in January. Graphic: Clare Meredith

I've had a place to discuss the enormity of the mental load, the complexities of trying to give my everything to both child and career

on your phone on a given day seemed very easy – and so it's proved to be. The Wednesday Waffles quickly became a high point in my week. While, as an older millennial, I was self-conscious about making the videos at first, I soon got used to recording to the point that I'll now do it walking along the street. What do we talk about? Everything and nothing, plans for the upcoming weekend, problems at work, the books we're reading, the onset of perimenopause. Most frequently, though, we talk about motherhood. With eight children between us, ranging in age from two to 10, the joys and stresses of being mums are central to all of our lives. Whether I need advice or support, cheering on or space to vent – or even just a place to send cute photos of my daughter without feeling I am being a boring burden – the Wednesday Waffles are there for it all. In fact, so successful have the Wednesday Waffles been that I now have a second video group in my life. On Fridays, I share updates with my two best friends from college, who each have two children. I didn't know that WhatsApp cuts videos off at seven minutes until the Friday recordings (we're still working on

the name) were born! In January, singer and actor Ashley Tisdale made global headlines when she encouraged women to leave toxic mum groups. In a blog post that went viral after being shared by *The Cut*, Tisdale described "mean-girl behaviour" and finding herself left out of activities from one of her groups. "If a mom group consistently leaves you feeling hurt, drained, or left out, it's not the mom group for you," she wrote. I couldn't agree more, but I fear that her bad experience could tarnish the value of these groups for other women, or make them wary of joining one. For me, mum groups have been anything but toxic – they've been a lifeline. When I'm hurt, drained or feeling left out of any area in my life, these are the exact people that I turn to.

My Wednesday and Friday groups, alongside a couple of other WhatsApp chat groups with close friends, have always been important to me – but never more so than when, at age 40, I was the last in each of the circles to become a mother. Since then, mum groups – including one with lovely women I met at a baby sensory class – have guided me through the first three years of my daughter's life. From their shared wisdom, I've learned how to manage a soaring temperature (always have Paracetamol in the house), that Center Parc is worth the money (and what to pack if you're going), what level of Christmas gifts are appropriate for the staff at creche, and countless other practical parenting tips. More importantly, I've also had a place to discuss the enormity of the mental load, the complexities of trying to give my everything to both a child and a career. The toll that having kids takes on your body and your relationship, and just how endlessly exhausting it all is. Knowing that other mums have had the same experiences, thoughts and frustrations, is sometimes all that keeps me sane.

I'd be lying if I said that what's discussed in the groups doesn't spark the occasional flicker of panic or guilt in me. We're the only ones who haven't started swimming lessons. Did we underplay Christmas too much? I'm way behind the curve on researching schools. There are times when I am judgmental about people's parenting choices or overly defensive about my own. And, yes – as Tisdale detailed in her blog – on rare occasions I've messaged someone privately to snark about what another has said in the group. Mostly, though, I know that when something strikes a nerve, that's about myself and not others, and highlighting my sensitivities is just another benefit of being in a mum group.

So, on Mother's Day I'd like to say thank you to the Wednesday Wafflers, my Friday friends and the other women in my life who have helped me with every imaginable aspect of motherhood. I know that I could not do it without you. And given I'm seven months pregnant and about to head back into the coalface, please keep your phones charged and nearby. ●

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Ease in

Peek inside artist and sculptor Margaret Fagan's garden apartment that showcases her works. **Kevin Dundon** dishes up pork ribs for St Patrick's Day and cake for Mother's Day and **Geraldine Herbert** takes on the role of 'a mam with a van'

Life stories

Each week, photographer Ruth Medjber asks one person to share a tale from their own life...



'You can't control pregnancy'

Life can be hard and heavy sometimes. This series of daily portraits and stories has taught me that people really need to share their difficult times, as a way to process, but also as a way to help others.

The story I want to share today is a lot lighter. It's one of pure excitement, mixed with a standard amount of nerves. Musician (and friend) Sinéad White is about to have her first baby. By the time this article comes out, all going well, there'll be a new baby boy or girl in the world. Her partner knows the gender she doesn't, so that's also adding to the suspense in the room.

All around her home there's signs of something happening. In her bathroom, there's a tiny baby bath placed in the shower. In the hallway, there's a second-hand freezer with a list attached of all the premade meals inside that her and her partner Kieran prepared. The energy and excitement in the house are palpable, and it's truly heartwarming to see. Sinéad was once hilariously grossed out by the idea of pregnancy, describing it as 'something

Words and
photograph by
Ruth Medjber

out of a science fiction movie", but has thankfully got used to the little internal high-fives and kicks.

"You eventually come to get to know the baby. What's really nice is you're awake in the night with insomnia, but you're mainly awake because the baby is just doing their own little thing, bopping around. It's so quiet at that time of night, so it's just me and them. You're never alone any more. It's always me and them, my own little Tamagotchi."

When I ask about her pregnancy and if it has gone well, she's almost embarrassed to tell me that it was really easy. "The experience has really made me a lot more sensitive to how much other people might be going through, even in terms of, say, fertility or babies. Everything behind the scenes that you've no clue about."

She almost feels a tad guilty for having such a lovely time while pregnant, but as her friend, it's joyous to see. Sinéad has wanted a family for so long. She has not gone without her own struggles, ideally she would have loved to have started earlier (she's

36), but life got a bit bumpy, as it does. It's so very on brand for her that even now, at a time that should be all about her, she's still considering the feelings of others. She admits that feeling a bit powerless about the unknown is the most daunting element of pregnancy. "It's been tough mentally because so much of it is just out of your control, and you're kind of like, 'I hope the baby's OK.'"

"I've been very, very fortunate because, naturally enough, when you become pregnant, all of the women in my life came out of the woodwork, and they're telling me all these secrets and stories. They're telling me things that might happen or things that happened to them. It's a lot to take in at times. But it's also been nice in a way, because I feel like there's a tenderness to that, that I wasn't expecting. But for me, the most challenging part of it is just thinking, 'I hope everything is OK, and if it's not, I hope we'll cope.'"

Ruth's Sin Seúl Éile - That's Another Story conversations are available as a podcast and at sinseulelle.ie

For a combination of St Patrick's Day and Mother's Day treats, start with these tasty, sticky ribs for mains and finish with a sweet and simple sponge

Pork ribs for Paddy and cake for the mammy

Kevin Dundon



This weekend is one of those where the kitchen might not be the main priority. With the St Patrick's Day bank holiday bringing gatherings, parades and long walks, and Mother's Day falling at the same time, the focus is often on spending time together rather than spending hours cooking. So this week, I am sharing two recipes that deliver big flavour without too much last-minute stress – one for sharing around the table, and one as a sweet way to say thank you.

The first recipe is sticky glazed porter pork ribs – rich, slow-cooked and full of depth. The ribs are rubbed with a warming blend of smoked paprika, mustard powder, coriander, cumin, cinnamon and a touch of chilli, and then

gently roasted with stock until they are tender enough to fall from the bone. The real character comes from the glaze, made with honey, dark soy sauce, ketchup, balsamic vinegar and Irish porter, simmered until glossy and thick enough to coat the back of a spoon.

The porter adds a deep malty note that works beautifully with the sweetness and spice. Once brushed and returned briefly to the oven, the ribs become shiny, sticky and irresistible. Served with a simple salad of grated carrot, shallots, baby spinach and fresh herbs tossed lightly in the glaze, it is a relaxed, crowd-pleasing dish that can be prepared ahead and finished just before serving.

For Mother's Day, a flavoursome cake is always one of the simplest and most heartfelt gestures. This lemon curd and raspberry sponge is light, fresh and perfect for the season. A classic whisked sponge is layered with raspberry jam, softly whipped cream, mini meringues and generous dots of lemon curd, then finished with fresh raspberries and a dusting of icing sugar. The combination of sharp lemon, sweet berries and crisp meringue makes every slice feel celebratory. It looks impressive yet is straightforward to prepare, and sharing it over a cup of tea is often all that is needed to make the day feel special.

Photography by **Tony Gavin**



Sticky glazed porter pork ribs

Serves 4

You will need:

- 6 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp smoked paprika
- 1 tsp mustard powder
- 1 tsp ground coriander
- ¼ tsp ground cumin
- ¼ tsp ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp chilli powder
- 2 baby back pork racks
- 3 tbsp honey
- 3 tsp dark soy sauce
- 4 tbsp ketchup
- 3 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 500ml porter
- 500ml chicken stock
- 2 carrots, grated
- 2 shallots, sliced
- 80g baby spinach leaves
- 20g parsley, chopped
- 20g coriander, chopped
- 2 tsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper

1 Preheat the oven to 140C. In a bowl, combine the chopped garlic, smoked paprika, mustard



powder, ground coriander, ground cumin, ground cinnamon and chilli powder. Divide into 2 containers, one for the marinade and one for the glaze.

2 In the bowl with the first half of the spice mixture, add the pork ribs. Toss and rub well to coat the ribs throughout and set aside to marinate for 30 minutes.

3 Place the second half of the spices in a saucepan for the glaze. Pour in the honey, soy sauce, ketchup, balsamic vinegar and porter.

4 Bring the mixture to the boil and reduce the heat to low. Simmer until reduced by half or until lightly coating the back of a spoon. Remove the glaze from the heat and keep warm.

5 Place and arrange the pork ribs onto the roasting tray.

Pour the chicken stock into the roasting tray and tightly cover with tin foil. Place in the oven for about 2.5 to 3 hours, until the pork ribs are falling off the bones when pulled.

6 Once the ribs are nearly ready, prepare the salad. In a bowl, combine the grated carrots, shallots, spinach, fresh parsley and fresh coriander. Season with a tablespoon of the porter glaze and add extra olive oil if desired.

7 Once cooked, brush the ribs with the glaze and roast for a further 5-8 minutes in the oven to help stick and give a shine to the ribs.

8 Remove the ribs from the oven and brush again with the glaze. Serve while warm with the salad. ●

Raspberry and lemon curd Mother's Day sponge cake

Serves 4-6

You will need:

- 120g plain flour
- ¼ tsp baking powder
- 4 eggs
- 120g caster sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ½ lemon zest
- 150ml lemon curd
- 3 tbsp raspberry jam
- 200ml cream, whipped
- 100g mini meringues
- 1 tbsp icing sugar
- 200g raspberries

1 Grease 2 x 20 cm / 8-inch sandwich tins and line the bottom of the tins with a round of baking paper. In a small bowl, sieve the flour and baking powder.

2 In a large mixing bowl, using an electric beater for ease, beat the eggs with the sugar, vanilla extract, and lemon zest for 5 minutes until creamy and fluffy.

3 Carefully, fold in the sieved flour and baking powder, then transfer evenly into the two prepared sandwich tins.

4 Bake for 25-30 minutes or until a skewer inserted in the centre comes out clean. Remove from the oven and transfer to a wire rack. Allow to cool.

5 Spoon the lemon curd into a piping bag if possible. Spread some of the jam on one sponge. Spoon on the whipped cream. Scatter half of the mini meringues and dot half of the lemon curd. Top with the second sponge.

6 Decorate with icing sugar. Then, on the top of the sponge, create raindrop-style dots with the rest of the lemon curd and the mini meringues. Lastly, add the fresh raspberries to decorate. Enjoy the cake within a day. ●



KEVIN'S IRISH BUY



Let's celebrate something Ireland makes to a gold standard: butter! There are many ways to get the best of butter and adding flavours is a brilliant idea. Do Me a Flavour, based in Monksland, Co Roscommon, is a family-run business, created in 2013, which specialises in creating bespoke flavoured butters, seasonings and food solutions. The flavoured butters – from garlic and rosemary to chilli and lime – are perfect for finishing meats (like my pork ribs), fish or vegetables, or melting over hot potatoes. They bring instant depth and balance without extra prep. Pricing averages €3.50-€5 per pack, see domeaflavour.ie



Beet this!

**Susan
Jane
White**



The Wholefoodie

Move over Novak Djokovic, nitric oxide is fast becoming the 2026 darling of sports science. Nitrate-containing foods such as beetroot hold the magical ability to alchemise into something completely magnificent by way of our oral microbiome. Yep, our mouth's beneficial bacteria act like a key

to a nitric oxide lock. How awesome is that? Research shows that our oral bacteria convert nitrate to nitrite, which becomes nitric oxide by the time it finds our blood stream.

Nitric oxide is mostly celebrated for its ability to relax blood vessels, seduce high blood pressure, and service erectile dysfunction. But athletes are finding it useful for speeding up recovery. This may be because nitric oxide helps to promote blood flow, oxygen delivery, circulation and nutrient transport to muscles.

Woolhoof! Then there's the stellar fibre load inside each bouncy beetroot. Fibre is one of the most underrated health tools. It slows digestion, blunts blood sugar spikes, and literally feeds the microbes that help regulate our metabolism. If there was a pill that did all that, you'd take it! Better still, there's a tasty salad that promises the same.

Shall we give it a go?

Simple beetroot salad

Serves 2-3

You will need:

- 250-300g cooked beetroot
- Juice and zest of 1 small lemon
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- Flaky sea salt, a generous pinch
- A few sprigs of fresh dill
- 4 eggs, room temperature

1 Using a very sharp knife, thinly slice your cooked beetroot into gorgeous purple sheets of beet. The thinner, the better.

2 Gently tumble through your lemon zest and juice, and the olive oil and some flaky salt. Scatter over a plate, and toss the fresh dill across the top. Set aside.

3 To boil the eggs, bring a small pan of water to a popping boil. Gently drop in the eggs. Return the water to a rolling boil and cook for 6 minutes 30 seconds for a jammy soft-boiled egg. Plunge the eggs into iced water to cool them down and cease the cooking process. Tap the egg shells on the kitchen counter, to smash gently and peel.

4 To serve, slice each boiled egg in half and top the beetroot salad. A side of goat's cheese on toasted sourdough would be lovely, but not essential. ●

My favourite room

» scribbling. I loved drawing and writing poetry. I remember writing some stuff at school and the teacher saying 'Where did you copy this from?' But I didn't copy it, it was just me." For secondary education, she attended school with the Sisters of Mercy nuns – "Merciless, we called them," she notes with a laugh.

One of four children, Margaret says her parents – traditional Catholics, typical of their generation – were supportive and she got opportunities to do a lot of things, including horse riding. "I love horses, they're very bright and intelligent, they can pick up feelings."

She also enjoyed sports, but the competitive element didn't appeal to her. "I was a very good runner. I remember I'd be winning and people would shout 'Come on, Margaret, you're winning,' and I'd slow down. I don't see the point in winning when someone just wants to beat you the next time," she laughs.

The horse riding and sports were casual but the art wasn't. She says her family tried to nudge her in more conventional directions, but she always knew she was going to be an artist, even though she had to get 'a proper job' after school. "Art in those days was not considered a career, you couldn't make a living from it."

For a proper job, she actually trained as a draughtsperson, but she says she recoiled at a job in the field. "It wasn't creative," and she claims it didn't help her in her art in any way.

Fortunately for her, she met Yann Renard Goulet, a French sculptor, renowned here back in the 1970s, and later a member of Aosdána, the Irish association of artists. Goulet had an art school in Bray and she studied with him for four years. "He was a great teacher, we had a classical training. I even something like drawing an apple, you'd think, 'This is stupid,' but he taught us how different it could look, depending on the light, or on the shadows, or the colours you use to paint it. When you're young, all that is wonderful."

The Goulet training enabled her to do exams at The National College of Art and Design and she qualified as a teacher and became Goulet's assistant. "When I qualified, I was pretty good at teaching."

Margaret married young and she continued for a while as Goulet's assistant. She also did art classes in her home. The kids were paramount, but she didn't give up her own painting, which she really did for herself in those days. "The dining room was my studio, there would have been an easel up there all the time. I'd be hanging clothes out in the garden and when I'd come back in, the kids would have gotten at the brushes and there would be brushstrokes everywhere," she smiles at the memory. Her early work was all figurative, but then she let her imagination 'go with the flow' and some of her works are more abstract. As the children got older, she started to exhibit in the annual RHA show and she was spotted by different gallery owners, including the Ashford Gallery where she had her first show. Then Suzanne Macdougald of Solomon Fine Art offered



Above: Margaret in her living room. She trained under renowned sculptor Yann Renard Goulet and many of her sculptures are scattered around the apartment. She adores horses and even rode herself as a child, so horses were a favourite subject in her sculpting days. She did this bronze piece called *Striving* in 2005. The sculpture in the window is by Margaret's friend Bob Quinn

Left: The works of artist friends also hang in the apartment

her a show and the relationship with the gallery, now in Balf Street, continues to this day with the current director Tara Murphy. "When you have a gallery, you don't have to think about doing anything except the work," Margaret notes. British gallerist Barbara Stanley also exhibited her work regularly. "Barbara saw my work in the Irish embassy in London and contacted me. I'm very lucky in the people that I've met."

She was also commissioned to do several portraits, including that of renowned director Garry Hynes, founder of the Druid Theatre Company. It's a fantastic likeness, one created after spending a lot of time with her subject. "I sat in on rehearsals to get to know her, you need to be around a person when you're

going to paint them, and I put her sitting on a chair she always used. She very often had an apple in her hand and I used that."

Like her mentor Goulet, Margaret is also a sculptor and has many of her own pieces in her home, but these days prefers to concentrate on painting. Over the years, she has developed a particular way of working – for example she spent a week in Inis Meán, just absorbing the landscape, no paints, no sketches. "I love Irish landscape, there's history in every bit of it." It was only when she got home that she started sketching and then painting. Unlike a lot of artists, she doesn't find it useful to take photos.

"I find they close you in, I like to have my head free with the feelings I have about the places. The landscape in Inis

"I was a good runner. I'd be winning and people would shout 'Come on, Margaret,' and I'd slow down. I don't see the point in winning"



Ageing like 64 fine wines

Lucinda O'Sullivan



Celebrating 20 years in SoCoDu's coastal village of Glashule, Gerard Maguire's fabulous 64 Wine only gets better with age, writes our critic

When it comes to a foodie atmosphere, it doesn't get much better than being surrounded by 1,700 bottles of wine ranging from classic and fine, to organic, natural and biodynamic.

No, you don't have to go to a châteaux in Burgundy or a castillo in Cadiz. I'm talking about Gerard Maguire's 64 Wine in the coastal village of Glashule, between Dun Laoghaire and Dalkey. With many interesting wines too from small artisan producers, it's an absolute heaven for the oenophile, with prices to suit all pockets. It's in no way intimidating or pretentious and will satisfy even the most sniffy of wine critics!

Having had a business in Glashule, I've known it and neighbouring Sandycove for many years. With an attractive cosmopolitan bohemian village vibe, and the romantic Joycean tower at Sandycove, it's always been a shopping and leisure destination for the wealthy denizens of Dalkey and Killiney. On the worst of winter days, you'll still find people,

wrapped up in their woolies, shooting the breeze over a glass of wine outdoors or taking the plunge down at the Forty Foot bathing point. Cavistons Food Emporium has been at Glashule's heart for many years now, while the late Dick Free's former Londis, where 64 is now located, seemed to have everything you could ever possibly want. There are numerous boutiques, plus Nuala Woulfe's Beauty salon, Rasam Indian restaurant, Mitchell and Son wine shop, and of course The Eagle pub dominating the crossroads, not to mention the annual Bloomsday celebrations.

But back to 64 Wine, which is celebrating 20 years in Glashule and has been the ultimate addition to the village. It's not just a wine shop but a cafe, deli and wine bar – a meeting place. The idea came about when Gerard Maguire and his wife began holidaying in the Basque region of France and fell in love with the notion of really good artisan produce and wines served in simple surroundings.

The dream and team has expanded since then with perfectionist Maguire, who is also a co-owner of Les Deux Cols vineyard in the Rhone Valley, bringing Anthony Robineau on as a partner in 64, and Jonut (Johnny) Apostol from Bucharest as chef.

The tables are cleverly laid out, discreetly placed amidst a maze of curving walls of wine, yet visible enough for 'Do you see who's over there?' as you quaff and nibble on their divine small plates. A cafe from 9am–4pm on weekdays, kicking off with coffee and pastries before swinging into lunch from 11am–2.30pm. On Friday and Saturday evenings it enters full wine bar mode with a menu of snacks small plates (€5–€19) plus charcuterie and premium cheese boards at €19/€26/€50.

Eschewing olives, smoked almonds and padron peppers, the focaccia with a deep rich crispy chicken skin butter (€7.50) was simply irresistible. We basically wanted everything on the menu, from chicken liver pate with onion marmalade, crispy chicken skin, crostini, to Atlantic prawns pil pil with tartine sourdough to pulled pork cheek sliders with coleslaw.

However, we followed our focaccia with a stunning presentation of dressed Lambay crab meat, topped with a crab claw, all resting on wafers of kohlrabi and toast (€18).

Equally impressive was a delicious military precision line-up of Cantabrian anchovies, interspersed with piped mayo, scattered with chives on butter brìoché toast (€10). Chunky rondelles of Iberico baked chorizo (€13), paired with butterbean puree and burnt onion was hearty, followed by an evening special of poached cod (€19) with new potatoes and broccoli.

We finished with two cubes of panettone chocolate ganache (€6) and, with a glass of Maria Casanovas Cava (€12), Tenuta delle Terre Nere Etna Rosso 2023 (€14.50), non-alcoholic Kolome Nuli Riesling (€6.50), water (€5.50), plus excellent service from Denis, also from Romania, our bill came to €125. ●

64 Wine,
64 Glashule Road,
Glashule,
Co Dublin.
Tel: (01) 280 5664
64wine.ie
lucindaosullivan.com





Margaret's grand garden apartment

Margaret Egan didn't become a full-time artist until her four children had grown up, but since then she has earned a reputation for work which is both mystical and magnetic, all created in a tiny studio next to her period apartment home in south county Dublin

Awork of art which isn't based on feeling isn't art at all," said Paul Cézanne, while Vincent van Gogh said: "I want to touch people with my art. I want them to say 'He feels deeply, he feels tenderly.'" Both men have been dead over 100 years and their works are very different to those of artist Margaret Egan, yet she would heartily agree with those sentiments. Margaret also describes her paintings – which cover a multitude of subjects, including horses, people, music, landscapes, and more recently current events like the conflict in Gaza – as all about the feelings. In Margaret's case, she talks about the feelings she has when doing the work and the feelings she wants to evoke in people looking at the finished result. "When you feel something about a painting, then it's speaking to you, even if it's really horrific."

Interestingly, she herself admires the work of such diverse artists as landscape painter JMW Turner "my favourite – there's a lot of emotion in his work" –

Words by
Mary O'Sullivan

Photography by
Tony Gavin

Artist Margaret Egan in the hall area of her garden apartment in south county Dublin. She says the apartment was "a kip" when she bought it, but she was lucky enough to get a family friend, architect Desmond Barry, on board to help her renovate the space and she made it cosy yet elegant with the addition of period furniture from auctions. The large colourful painting over the round table is one Margaret painted many years ago

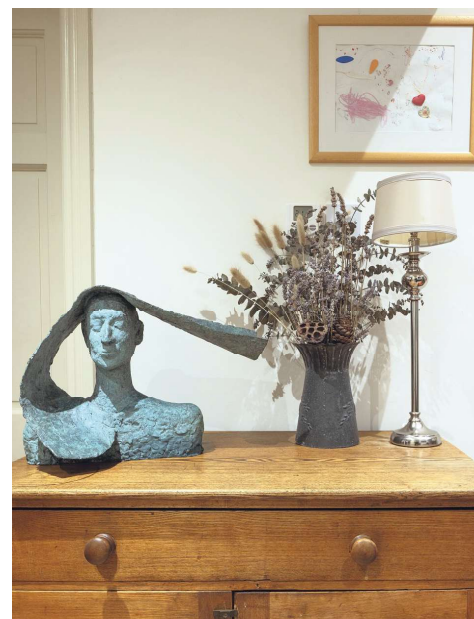
and surprisingly Francis Bacon with his distorted, disturbing explorations of the human condition. "I used to think some of his pieces were really cruel and didn't like them. In a gallery in Australia, I saw a piece of his that I hadn't seen before and I could not pass it by, it was speaking to me."

Margaret has made a name for herself and her work over the past 30 years and her exhibitions are eagerly awaited by art aficionados, including her current exhibition *The Wonder of the Present, the Possibilities of the Future*, at The Solomon Gallery which runs until March 28. It's a credit to her talent and persistence that while she came relatively late to public attention, after seeing her four children off on their own independent lives, she has built a solid reputation for her work with people variously describing it as mysterious, magnetic and mystical.

However, even while she was rearing her family, painting was a big part of her life and has been since she was a child growing up in Wexford. One gets the feeling that she always stood out, was always her own person. "I've been painting my whole life. I was always



Above: Margaret loves to cook for friends and she got this antique dining table at auction. The painting over it is inspired by glimpses of people she observed in their apartments from outside – a snippet of life going on inside



Left: Margaret is a fond grandmother and the sketch over the unit is by her granddaughter when she was five. The sculpture is called *Sheltered Serenity*

Meain is rough and rocky and has huge blowholes. I came away feeling I was in another century, way before civilisation began," she says. "You feel the history. I have a romantic notion that the land holds energy." Some of her paintings are figurative like her Gaza works, but many are impressionistic and even semi-abstract.

She does dozens of sketches for each painting, then starts on the canvas. "I love big paintings. I've done mainly big for a while. I was one of the first artists in Ireland to use big canvases." She paints in her studio next to the kitchen every day, doing longer days in the spring and summer when she can work by natural light. She used to work in oils, but they can be a health hazard and now uses mainly acrylics. "I enjoy acrylics as much as I did oils. I've learned to make them as rich as oils," she notes.

Colour is very important to her work and she uses it to evoke feelings, to create moods and atmosphere, all very subtly done. Mossy greens, burgundies, blues and browns abound and interestingly these are the colours she uses in the decor of her apartment in south county Dublin, which has been Margaret's home for the last 25 years – it's the garden apartment of a large period house. "It was a friend of mine who found it. It was a kip of a place when I bought it." However, she knew that the son of one of her art adult students was an architect – Desmond Barry – and she approached him to help her renovate, which he readily agreed to do. "He worked the whole thing out. It was only when I told a friend he was doing that for me, her reaction made me realise how important he was – he was highly respected in his field for old housing – and how kind he was to restore it with me."

He suggested taking down the wall between the two reception rooms, which means she has a large welcoming living space. He changed the entrance to the apartment, giving her more space and the original entrance is now a guest bedroom. The original bathroom was very long and Margaret herself came up with the idea of turning it into two bathrooms, one of which is an en-suite for the guest bedroom.

She has a compact kitchen but it's structured in such a way that suits Margaret, who loves to cook. The recipes of Yotam Assaf Ottolenghi are among her favourites. She loves to have friends around for meals and has a fine-dining mahogany table which she got at auction. Practically all the pieces in the house were bought at auction and they go well with her paintings, the two creating a rich and atmospheric setting. Some of the paintings on the walls are now in the current exhibition. They will probably be snapped up – fortunately, Margaret will be able to create more.

"I want to keep painting til I drop dead," she says, cheerily. ●

The Wonder of the Present, the Possibilities of the Future exhibition continues at Solomon Fine Art in Dublin until March 28, see solomonlineart.ie



A mam with a van?

It might not be quick, but the Kia PV5 van is more comfortable and refined than you might expect and might even become a treasured favourite



Geraldine Herbert

When I was 15, my most prized possession was a pair of cherry red Doc Martens. The kind that suggested I might at any moment either join a band or stage a sit-in protest. At school, we had to remove our shoes when entering the gym. One nun spotted them and, lifting them up, she declared, "We would have cried if we were sent to school in these". It seems one person's most treasured possession is someone else's worst nightmare.

All of this brings me to my test car this week, a Kia PV5, a van converted into a family car. For some, the idea alone will induce mm-level despair. A van? For people? What next? But for others, it will

The 416km range is not bad for something with the aerodynamic properties of a garden shed

be the answer to a question they didn't even know they had asked.

The PV5 is tall, squared-off and makes no attempt to hide its credentials as a van. Up front there's Kia's "Tiger Face", while black cladding gives it a faintly outdoorsy look. Twin sliding doors (a big hit with the teenagers) open wide and low, making it simple to get in and out of, regardless of where it's parked.

The choice of colours runs from sensible blacks and greys to a surprisingly perky Frost Blue, but this is never going to be an aspirational object; it looks more akin to a household appliance.

Inside, there are just five seats (a seven-seat version is coming in July), a cavernous cabin, acres of functional wipe-clean surfaces and an abundance of smart storage. There's artificial leather, heated

Beauty Triona McCarthy

Inspired by new bride Roz Purcell's nails and since refreshing her own, our guru shares her tips

Can we take a moment, please, for how flipping fantastic Roz Purcell looked on her wedding day? I love how she did her own make-up, ditched the tan, AND used a white pencil under her nails! So this week, let's take a lil inspo from the new Mrs Desmond and discuss healthy nails.

I've been barred from my local nail bar Hillary in Ranelagh for constantly pulling my gel nails off!! I know, I know. I took a break over Christmas and didn't put anything on my nails, and it was all going great until I had to do TV and decided to get BIAB gel. NEVER pull BIAB off your nails! I was left with toilet-paper nails, hence the barring. So, I've suddenly developed an obsession with everything good for my nails to bring them back to life.

Great Tips
Purcell did this tip trick for her wedding and it looked so lovely in the pics I saw on Instagram. If you want to copy her look, take a **Kiko French Manicure White Pencil** (€4.99, [kikocosmetics.com](#)) to accentuate the natural white rim of the nail. The special titanium dioxide, talcum and kaolin formula gives you an immediate white, lightly iridescent effect, so you can look polished without having to go to the nail salon.

Nailed It
Now, let me introduce you to Manucurist, the French nailcare brand changing the manicure game! Manucurist is revolutionising healthy nail routines with plant-based, non-toxic formulas like Green Oil and strengthening serums that promote growth and repair without harsh chemicals.

I discovered it on Dr Laura Lenihan's Instagram and instantly ordered. If you want to nourish and strengthen your nails, **Manucurist Nourishing Nail Pen** (€16, [manucurist.com](#)) is a care pen designed for nails and cuticles. It contains castor oil, vitamin E and pistachio extract to rehydrate and revitalise your nails, while nourishing and softening cuticles. I love



that it comes in a pen format with a brush tip to make it easy and precise to apply.

Reset Yourself
This lil bottle has been the best thing I've discovered on my nail care reset AND it's an Irish brand! If you want to give your nails a little break between gel manicures, **14 Day Manicure Gel Break** (€17, [14daymanicure.com](#)) is a nail treatment that gives you stronger, healthier nails. Gel Break helps to repair, strengthen and nourish your nails while maintaining a naturally radiant shine.

I met with 14 Day Mani founder, the fabulous Suzanne Cummins, to celebrate the launch of **Nonicure The Nail Reset System** (€49,

Get your nails in shipshape with top products, including 14 Day Manicure Gel Break, below

[14daymanicure.com](#)). It's a nail care ritual designed to protect before problems appear, formulated with strengthening bamboo extract, antioxidant-rich cranberry and apple extracts and vitamin E. Such a great name, Nonicure!

Electric Blue
If you have lovely strong nails, you can dip your digits in this delightful designer colour. The nail varnish **Chanel Le Vernis L'eglise** (€33, [brownthomas.com](#)) is a deep and metallic blue with an ultra-shiny, lacquered finish and a high concentration of pigment designed to make vibrant colours dazzle. ●

Trick

Homemade shimmer
Mini my 11-year-old has a side hustle in painting nails, making bracelets, AND repurposing products like this DIY bronzing stick she made for a body shimmer. Simply pop a stick moisturiser out of its case, cut it into pieces and melt it to liquid in the microwave. Break up a bronze-coloured shimmer highlighter, stir it into the liquid, and pour the mixture back into the stick container. Pop it into the fridge until it hardens and voila.

Treat

Gut work
I swear to Gucci, if I'm not talking about the f*cking menopause, I'm talking about my second brain, aka my gut. So, I feel the new **ProVen Biotics For Peri/Menopause** (€42.95, [provenbiotics.ie](#)), with a whopping 50 billion clinically studied Lab4P-friendly bacteria, were made for me.



Treatment

Face forward
I know exactly where I'll be next weekend – finding out all about the Kris Jenner facelift I keep telling everyone I'm gonna get! Future Beauty & Health Show takes place next weekend, March 21-22, at the RDS Dublin, and it gives you the opportunity to meet the best clinics, top doctors and leading specialists to get honest advice about your skin, hair and health concerns. For more information and tickets, see [futurebeautyshow.com](#)

Home help Darren Kennedy

How do we design our first child's nursery to be a practical space as they grow?



To begin with, huge congratulations. Planning your first nursery is one of those quietly thrilling milestones. It is where practicality and emotion meet, and where design suddenly has a very real job to do.

"The biggest shift I encourage new parents to make is to think beyond the newborn bubble," says Gavan Costello, sales director at Baby Elegance. "Those first few months are fleeting. If you choose pieces that only work for a tiny baby, you will find yourself replacing them just as you find your rhythm."

Instead, he advises looking for furniture designed to evolve. "A well-made cot that converts into a toddler bed will see you through several key stages. Adjustable mattress heights are not just convenient, they are essential for safety, allowing you to lower the base as your baby becomes more mobile. "Sleep is another area where long-term

Above: Haddington chest and wardrobe from Baby Elegance, babyelegance.com

Below: Gavan Costello, sales director at Baby Elegance



thinking pays off. "A breathable, supportive mattress with a snug fit and a washable, hypoallergenic cover is worth investing in," says Costello. "It is something you will interact with every single day, so durability and hygienic matter just as much as comfort. Look for materials that promote airflow and meet recognised safety standards. Peace of mind at 2am is priceless."

Storage, he adds, is often underestimated. "A chest of drawers with an integrated changing surface is a smart choice, particularly in smaller rooms. In those early months, having nappies, wipes and spare sleepsuits within arm's reach makes changing safer and less stressful. Later, when the changing stage is over, that same piece should function simply as a beautiful chest of drawers that earns its place for years."

The same principle applies to wardrobes. "Adjustable hanging rails and flexible shelving allow you to move seamlessly

from tiny babygrows to school uniforms without needing to overhaul the entire space," he says. When it comes to style, Gavan recommends restraint. "Aim for calm and timeless rather than overly themed. Soft, layered neutrals with texture will age far better than novelty motifs. You can always bring personality in through art, textiles and accessories that are easy to update as your child grows."

Above all, he returns to the fundamentals. "Prioritise solid construction and safety certifications. Check for sturdy fixings, smooth drawer runners, non-toxic finishes and furniture that can be anchored securely to the wall. Children grow quickly, but so does their curiosity."

If your nursery feels serene, works hard for you every day and adapts as your child changes, then you have made smart choices.

As Gavan says, "Good design in a family home is not about perfection. It is about creating a space that supports real life, from the first night home to the years that follow." ●

My Life in Matches

Jamie Osborne



The Leinster and Ireland rugby player reveals his standout games, from a visit to Croke Park as a child, to playing for Naas during a storm and beating South Africa

I Myself and Andrew, my brother, went along to the Heineken Cup semi-final game at Croke Park in May 2009 with our dad and uncle. I was seven and Andrew was five. I remember it being this big deal, and it was – the first club rugby game to be held at Croke Park after the GAA had opened up the stadium to other sports. Leinster were definitely the underdogs for the game and Munster, the defending champions, were very strong around that time. They had already beaten Leinster a couple of



times that season. Not many people were giving Leinster a chance.

One of the early, standout memories from that game was going into our seats and seeing these massive patches of blue and red all over the stadium, and the sheer amount of people in the place – more than 82,000. Then, Leinster really blew Munster out of it. The clincher was Brian O'Driscoll intercepting a Roman O'Gara pass and sprinting away 80 metres to score a great try.

That game was such a special memory. Myself and Andrew were so young at that time, but our dad, Joe, loved going to Leinster games. He instilled that love of rugby in us, and it grew from there. Andrew made his senior Leinster debut in March 2024, scoring against Zebre. He was playing on the left wing, and I was inside centre. To be lining up for Leinster together almost 15 years after that Heineken Cup game was beyond anything we could have dreamed growing up.

2 A game that still means a lot to me was lining out for Naas at Under-18s level in a final played in tough conditions. We won the D'Arcy Cup in April 2019. Storm Hannah had threatened to postpone the game, but the rains held off. The winds were still wild, though. What made that match so special was it would be the last year that a lot of us would have been playing together. After that step up, some people quit, some move on to the age grades, or move away. We had not won anything significant in a few years.

I just remember it as a really tough game – taking on Navan down in Carlow. We ended up putting together one of the best performances we ever had as a group. We won 42-10 and scored some great tries. That is something I look back on fondly. I still have a lot of friends over there and would speak with a lot of them about that game and how good it was.

3 I've had a lot of firsts and memorable occasions with Leinster, Ireland and the British & Irish Lions in recent years, but the game that really stands out is Ireland's second test against South Africa in July 2024.

What made the game even more special was what had happened the week before (losing 27-20) and the way we had played. That was my Ireland debut, playing at fullback. I was pleased with the try I scored



Top left: Ireland rugby star Jamie Osborne

Top right: Osborne is tackled by Jesse Kriel during the second test between South Africa and Ireland at Kings Park in Durban in 2024

Above: Jamie, left, pictured with brother Andrew – both future Leinster players – in 2013

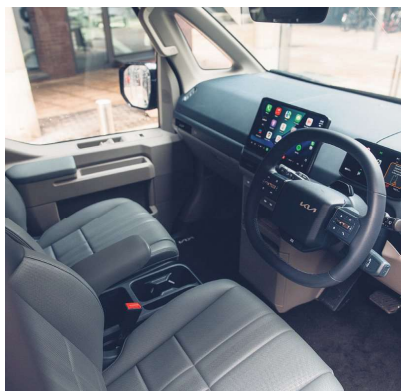
Left: Osborne, second from right, at Canterbury and Interport Uweys launch of the 2026 Irish Rugby collection, along with fellow internationals Sam Prendergast, Erin King and Vicky Elmes Kinlan. Photos: Ramsey Carby & Brendan Moran/Sportfile; James Crombie/INPHO

but was not the only one that left the game knowing they could do more. Playing away in South Africa against the world champions, it probably doesn't get much bigger than that. Then to win in the manner we did is what will always stay with me. We played great in the first half, Conor Murray scored a great try and we led 13-6 at the break. We didn't play at all well in the second half but stuck in the fight. We were able to finish on a high and work our way back into scoring position.

Clarán Fawley kicked an incredible drop goal from near 45 metres out. That made for a really tight, tense final 10 minutes. The lads did brilliant to force South Africa back in those closing stages, and Clarán went back for another drop at goal. That was it, the clock was hitting 80 minutes so it was all or nothing. He caught it well and it sailed through the posts. Unbelievable.

I was standing right in front of the posts when Clarán kicked it. Best view in the house. I think me and Peter O'Mahony were the first to realise we had won it. I say that, but Clarán was already wheeling away and running back to our bench to celebrate!

To go from there to a Lions' debut a year later, just shows you how quickly these huge events can come at you in rugby. Going to Australia last summer gave me a little taste of what it is like to be at the very top level. I'm hungry to not just stay at that level, but push myself on and make sure I am involved in those big games. ● As told to Pat McCurry



Left: Geraldine Herbert test drives the Kia PV5. Photo: Paul Herbert-Kane

Above: The 12.9-inch infotainment screen with wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto

and ventilated front seats and enough lumbar adjustment to appease just about any size of driver. A 7.5-inch driver display pairs with a 12.9-inch infotainment screen with wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, plus USB-C ports everywhere.

It's not particularly plush or premium inside but it does what it says on the tin and the boot swallows a whopping 1,300 litres and swells to over 3,000 with seats folded. Three adults fit comfortably across the back thanks to the wide cabin and flat floor. It offers more usable space than many electric MPVs.

There is just one battery option – a 71.2kWh battery with a combined 416km WLTP range, which is not bad for something with the aerodynamic properties of a garden shed. DC charging from 10–80pc takes about 30 minutes on a 150kW charger. The charging port is to the front – a rear one would make it easier and safer to get it in and out of a public charging point, particularly given its size.

It will go from 0–100km/h in a very leisurely 12.4 seconds with a 135km/h top speed. It's not quick, but it is comfortable and more refined than you might expect. The steering is light and there is a good turning circle, but it still feels big on the road.

The PV5 achieved a four-star rating when tested by Euro NCAP and is well equipped with passive and active safety systems. Prices start from €42,550, and rivals include the Citroën e-SpaceTourer (€55,200) and Volkswagen ID. Buzz (€67,785).

The PV5 is a very clever family car that's not without its flaws. Inside, it could use a splash of joie de vivre and there's no ultra-long-range version. But when you consider the space, equipment, warranty and price, it is more than the sum of its parts.

It is the Doc Martens of family transport. Not to everyone's taste, but for the right owner, it will feel like the cleverest, most precious thing in the world, even if somewhere, a nun is quietly weeping. ●

UNDER THE BONNET

Kia PV5

Starting price: €42,550
Engine: 71.2 kWh battery, 120kW (163 PS) permanent magnet synchronous electric motor
Transmission: Single-speed automatic transmission
Range WLTP: 416km combined
CO2 emissions/motor tax: 0 g/km; annual motor tax €120

Speedy verdict

Not everyone's dream car, but for those who value space and sense, the Kia PV5 is a revelation

Star rating

★★★★★

Auto advice

How to get rid of car odours

If there are lingering smells from cigarettes, pets or damp, these tips will help you eliminate them

Q How do I get rid of the smell of cigarettes from a used car?

A The first thing to do is thoroughly clean the car and remove mats and any seat covers. Vacuum front and back and don't forget to also include the area under the seats. Empty all storage areas or anywhere ash could be lurking. Wipe hard surfaces with an all-purpose cleaner, then clean fabrics with an upholstery shampoo or a car interior cleaner, paying particular attention to headlining, which traps smoke. You should also replace the pollen filter, as this can trap odours and keep recirculating them.

Q What can I do if the car smells musty and damp?

A Where there is a persistent damp or mouldy smell, often there is, or has been, moisture trapped somewhere, so you need to find the source before trying to remove the smell. Check for wet carpets, especially in the front footwells and boot, lift any removable trim and look for blocked drains around the windscreen, sunroof and scuttle panel. In stubborn cases, you may need to lift the carpets and underlay and treat any visible mould. You should then dry the interior thoroughly and leave a dehumidifier or moisture-absorbing packs in the car for several days. Once that is done,

deep-clean the carpets and upholstery with a suitable cleaner, otherwise the smell is likely to return.

Q What can I do about a "wet dog" or pet smell?

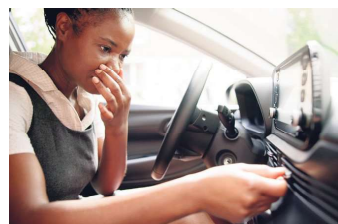
A Remove and wash any removable covers, then vacuum seats and carpets, ideally with a pet-hair attachment as this is what you need to remove embedded fur. Use an enzyme-based cleaner or odour-neutralising upholstery shampoo.

Q When is it worth paying for professional odour removal?

A If you've already done a thorough DIY clean and the smell is still obvious, then a professional service is usually the only option for fully removing the odour. However, before you commit, ask for a clear description of the process, how long it will take and whether they offer any form of guarantee. ●

TOP TIP

While air fresheners can help reduce light odours, they won't fix the underlying issue. They are best used as a finishing touch after a proper clean. But if the smell returns within a few days, you need to go back to basics.



Where there is a persistent damp or mouldy smell, often there is, or has been, moisture trapped somewhere

Contact Geraldine: email sundaymotors@independent.ie

Nobody tells you...

...how we are supposed to maintain baseline health, a vaguely clean home, vaguely clean kids and a decent skincare routine in the current hellscape that is life. All I know is 'maxxing' is not the answer. By Sophie White



So, if you, like me, dwell on the internet for far too much of your time, you may have come by the term 'maxxing' sweeping the webosphere. Maxxing is basically a term to describe getting the most out of whatever practice or habit you might be referencing. Think sleepmaxxing for presumably getting the best bang for your buck out of your night's sleep, or proteinmaxxing for, you've guessed it, hitting your protein goals as quickly and efficiently as possible. Sound vaguely makey-uppy and stupid? That's because it is.

The term originated on the part of the internet affectionately called the manosphere and started with the concept of looksmaxxing. Looksmaxxing is the practice of being an idiot! OK, OK, I joke. It is the practice of getting the absolute most out of your appearance. This seems, on the face of it, innocuous enough, right? Putting your best foot forward and all that.

Unfortunately, the biggest proponent of the looksmaxxing movement is a controversial US influencer called Braden Peters, who goes by the name Clavicular on socials. Clavicular's rise is due to some pretty reprehensible behaviour, including but not limited to singing along to Kanye West's song 'Hell Inter' with his pals Andrew Tate and Nick Fuentes and livestreaming himself apparently running someone over with his Tesla Cybertruck (I mean the fact that he even owns a Tesla Cybertruck speaks volumes).

Clavicular has directly inspired some of people's extreme looksmaxxing efforts, including smashing bones with a hammer for a strong jawline or cheekbone. Clavicular has indeed wielded a hammer to max his face, as well as used steroids and surgery. Oi,vey.

Somebody, please switch the internet off once and for all. The maxxing idiom has moved well beyond the fringes in the last few weeks and, ironically, I've seen it coupled with such pleasant words as joymaxxing, whimsymaxxing and hobbymaxxing. It was when I saw the phrase "mummymaxxing" being bandied about, my scrolling screeched to a halt. "Do not come for us," I hissed at the phone. No one and I mean NO ONE needs the idea of maxxing less than mothers. Our baseline setting is "maxxing" for god's sake.

If you are in charge of small children, your whole life is spent full throttle maxxing. I brush my teeth in the shower. I clean the house while taking work calls on my headphones. I answer emails while getting smear tests. We are the last people who need telling about maxxing.

The thing is mummymaxxing, like a lot of maxxing, feels pretty damn toxic, especially when it's shared on social media. We've long bemoaned the lies peddled on platforms like Instagram. It's the highly curated highlights reel of people's lives. We know this. Even when people are purporting to be showing the real,



If you're in charge of children, your whole life is spent maxxing. I brush my teeth in the shower. I clean while taking work calls. I answer emails while getting smear tests

messy side of life, there is something suspiciously performative and aesthetically pleasing about it all. Especially when it comes to the corner of the internet I am affectionately dubbing the 'manosphere'. Though not quite as toxic as the manosphere, the mamosphere is still rife with women peddling a narrative of motherhood that I find unrecognisable. Exquisitely dressed children in recycled burp sack pinafores, wooden toys that my children would use to beat each other about the head and not a babybel or other ultra-processed food in sight. Unless someone is posting a flat lay of their tube of Anusol and frozen beige foods their children will only eat, I cannot believe their nonsense take on motherhood.

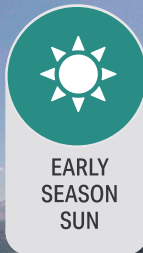
The thing I find hard about the mummymaxxing is the accompanying air of smug that comes with it. But the thing is, I know that the constant posting of perfection is driven by something much darker than a desire to make other women feel bad. The very last thing I want to do is be down on the women with the nice Instagrams documenting their perfectly maxxed lives of suspiciously clean children, healthy marriages and optimised self-care routines because I know that behind all that maxxing is a woman who is probably mortally afraid that she is 'getting it all wrong'.

The snuggles is actually desperation to present a life of order that is probably far from her actual reality. This is definitely related to the fact that women have been forcibly socialised to feel we must perform ourselves for wider consumption in order to receive the kind of validation that men seem to get just for existing. I also feel there has to be something in the fact that motherhood as a vital (and very difficult) role is not valued by society at large so the urge to prove that we are doing it well – doing it to the maxx – is sorely tempting. ●

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Marie, August '25



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