

A Traveler's Library

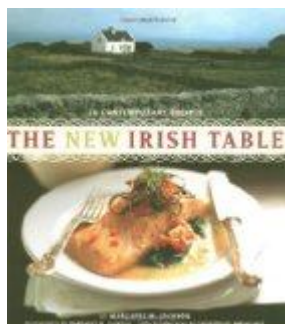
Books, Movies, and other Travel Inspirations

The New Irish Table

🕒 March 8, 2012 📁 Books, Cookbook, Destinations, Food, Ireland, Travel ✍ BlogSherpa, Brette Sember, cookbook, food travel, guest blog, Ireland, Irish cooking, Kinsale, recipe 👤 Brette Sember

Tasty Travels

Destination: Ireland



Book: *The New Irish Table* by Margaret Johnson

Review By Brette Sember



Creagh Gardens, near Skibbereen, County Cork

St. Patrick's Day makes me long for the rolling green hills of Ireland. The castles, blarney, wool, lace, sheep, and the ever-present ocean are the things that come to my mind when I think of Ireland. I don't think about the food. Those who imbibe might think of pints of ale and stout and the rousing Irish songs shared in pubs.. Or you can check out the recommendations for Celtic music from **Music Road's** Kerry Dexter who wrote here about **Music for St. Patrick's Day**. And if you love dance, you might wax poetic about **Riverdance**. But you're probably not going to have much to say about the food from Ireland. Margaret Johnson wants to change all that. Her book, **The New Irish Table: 70 Contemporary Recipes**, wants to take us all by the hand and show us the culinary delights waiting in Ireland today.

Page through this title before you delve into the recipes and you'll already be hungry. The pages are filled not only with Johnson's beautifully prepared dishes, but salmon smoking, shop windows filled with sausages, breads, and cheeses, and other vivid food invitations to open your heart (and your mouth to Ireland). The book is also a mini-journey through the geography and heart of Ireland in photos. Castles, thatched roofs, gravel roadways, misty hills, Irish people, and rustic home, street, and ocean scenes fill the pages. It's all there – the Ireland you've been longing for. What you didn't know you were longing for is Irish cooking.

Johnson cooks the food of today's Ireland (redolent with seafood, elegant appetizers, warm soups, delicious local produce, and artisan crafted specialties) but she does much more than that. She leads us around the country, telling us where her ingredients are made and what makes them special (such as Irish creams and Irish honey). There's talk about the history of food in Ireland (the potato is associated with Ireland, but Johnson tells us the story of how it got there). She shows us where to shop (the Kinsale International Gourmet Festival and The English Market are on my list now) and encourages us to reach out and experience Ireland even if we can't travel there (the list of excellent resources at the end make it possible to cook Irish in America).

The recipes are moored with a sense of place and atmosphere as many of them originated in a specific restaurant that Johnson has visited. For example, a recipe for Cornish Hens with Apricot, Port, and Balsamic Sauce is prefaced by a description of the Lettercollum House in Timoleague, County Cork, a former convent turned restaurant, where the dish is cooked by the owners using produce from their walled convent garden. Yes, you'll find some things you've heard of before (like colcannon, black pudding, champ, and sticky toffee pudding), but your taste buds will explore the new Ireland when they try Loin of Bacon with Cranberry-Cider Jus, Cashel Blue Cheesecake with Pickled Pears, and Rathcoursey Emerald Soup.

I thought I wanted to go to Ireland before I sat down with this cookbook. Now I know that I MUST go.



Marmalade Pudding

Marmalade Puddings with Bushmills Custard Sauce

Marmalade Puddings:

- ¾ cup plus 1 tablespoon thick cut orange marmalade
- 1 ½ cups unsalted butter at room temperature
- 1 ½ cups superfine sugar
- 6 eggs, beaten
- Grated zest of 2 oranges
- 3 cups self-rising flour
- 1 tablespoon ground allspice

Custard Sauce:

- ½ cup heavy cream
- 1 cup whole milk
- 5 egg yolks
- ½ cup superfine sugar

3 tablespoons Bushmills or other Irish whiskey

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Orange segments and mint sprigs for garnish

Pudding:

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Generously grease six 4-ounce ramekins. Put 2 tablespoons of marmalade in the bottom of each.

In an electric mixer, combine the butter and sugar. Beat for 3-4 minutes or until light and fluffy. Add the eggs, orange zest, and the remaining 1 tablespoon marmalade, then gradually beat in the flour and allspice. Spoon into prepared ramekins.

Put the ramekins in a large baking pan and add hot water to the pan to come halfway up the side of the dishes. Cover the pan with waxed paper, then with foil, and prick the foil in 6-8 places. Bake for 25 minutes, until the puddings are set and lightly browned.

Custard Sauce:

In a heavy saucepan, combine the cream and milk and bring to a simmer over medium heat. In a large bowl, whisk the egg yolks and sugar together. Gradually whisk the hot milk into the yolks. Return to the pan and stir constantly over medium heat for 6-8 minutes, or until the custard thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon. Transfer to a bowl and whisk in the whiskey and vanilla. Set aside.

To serve, run a knife around the side of the ramekins and turn the puddings out onto serving plates. Spoon custard around the puddings and garnish with orange segments and a spring of mint. Serves 6.

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Were you surprised to hear food as a reason to travel to Ireland? If you've been to Ireland, where did you find good food?



Brette writes often about travel, food, and home arts and is the author of more than 40 books about food, law, health, family issues, business, finance and textbooks. She blogs at [Putting It All on the Table](#) and her personal web site is [Brette Sember](#).

[Brette Sember](#) – who has written 27 posts on [A Traveler's Library](#).



Like It? Share!*About Brette Sember*

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14 thoughts on “The New Irish Table”



March 23, 2012 at 12:13 pm

**Brian
O'Shea**

Irish food has gotten downright gourmet these days, Kinsale is a lovely seaside town as well as a culinary destination. The west of Ireland is one of the most picturesque spots in the world. Just remember to use proper etiquette especially in the pub.
Cheers



March 12, 2012 at 10:33 pm

Kris

I'm dying to get to Ireland, but a pudding that includes Bushmill's? That might tide me over!



March 10, 2012 at 2:46 pm

**Jane
Boursaw**

That Marmalade Pudding looks lovely. I don't have a lot of experience with Irish food and clearly, I've been missing out.



March 10, 2012 at 7:00 am

Like Connie, I have Irish roots too, but I haven't tried cooking any authentic Irish fare, I'll have to check out this cookbook.

MyKidsEatSquid



March 9, 2012 at 1:48 pm

Okay I've been finding out I have ALOT of Irish in my roots- and then of course we found out my husband's grandfather is Irish- so I think this is a MUST have book. I want to cook some of these Irish dishes and learn more about Ireland.

Connie



March 8, 2012 at 6:52 pm

I love the idea of this book! There are so many talented Irish (and British) cooks, and the food of the British Isles can be excellent, not just pub grub. I hope the cookbook opens many eyes.

Casey



March 8, 2012 at 5:59 pm

What a fantastic review. I never would have considered *wanting* to learn how to cook Irish, but you might have just changed my mind.

Alisa
Bowman



March 8, 2012 at 6:48 pm

Anyone who wants to learn to cook Irish IN Ireland, should consider a visit to Berry Lodge in County Clare. Here's my [Girl's Getaway article](#) about the charming Rita who teaches cooking classes. And just down the road we found real gourmet eating at a family restaurant. The southwest corner of Ireland seems to be the best for food. We visited a fantastic farmer's market too-I'll have to post pictures of that one of these Thursdays.

Sounds like a terrific cookbook, Brette. Thanks so much for bringing it to us.



March 8, 2012 at 5:12 pm

Ireland is one of those countries on my “must do” list. I might have to get this book for my Godbrother, he loves everything Irish!

Living Large



March 8, 2012 at 1:17 pm

this sounds like a fine book — I like books which tell stories along with the recipes.

Kerry Dexter

I enjoy preparing my own food when I'm in Ireland, in part because I like going to the grocers there. restaurants are great to explore as well, but if you are coming from the US and Canada, especially if you live outside the big cities in those countries, be prepared for eating out to take a bigger chunk of your budget than you might expect.



March 9, 2012 at 6:01 am

I definitely found this to be true when we were in the UK. We stayed in apartments which allowed us to do some cooking ourselves which helped.

Brette
Sember



March 8, 2012 at 10:02 am

I'm going to pass this on to my Irish-food-loving friends. And I'm determined to visit Ireland one day soon – I hear it's a wonderful place.

Sheryl



March 8, 2012 at 8:52 am

I love Irish food – but this book makes me want to travel back to Ireland! Can't wait to get it – thank you!

wandering
educators



March 8, 2012 at 8:14 am



merr

I already sent this post to family members! I would love to travel to Ireland.

Comments are closed.