

President's Pint of View



ANOTHER DAY IN PARADISE, I thought to myself as I awoke this morning in Key West and wandered to the balcony for my morning eye-opener. So much to do and so little time; I guess that's what Paradise is all about.

That statement is also true about the Friendly Sons. I know we are at the end of our year and we are all in a bit of a relaxed mode, especially if you're in the Conch Republic like me (by the way I think I need another rum drink, the sun is warm and I wouldn't want to overheat. Please do the same if you're in the same predicament.)

But seriously, our 2017 events are about to begin and there is much to do. Get on an event committee and help out.

Speaking of events, our last blowout is our Christmas party at the Downtown Holiday Inn "Top of the Tower" on Dec. 12. If you haven't already signed and paid for your dinner, the last day we can receive your mailed-in reservation is December 7. Make sure you include your entree choices (steak, chicken or salmon) with your \$25 per person check.

Well, time to get back to relaxing. Like I said, so little time... maybe another drink? From me, the cat and the iguana, see you at the next meeting.

President Mike O'Connell

Wearin' of the Grin

A Russian couple were walking down the street in Moscow one night when the man felt a drop hit his nose.

"I think it's raining," he said to his wife.

"No, that felt more like snow to me," she replied.

"No, I'm sure it was just rain," he said.

Well, as these things go, they were about to have a major argument about whether it was raining or snowing. Just then they saw a Communist Party official walking toward them.

"Let's not fight about it," the man said. "Let's ask Comrade Rudolph whether it's officially raining or snowing."

As the official approached, the man said, "Tell us, Comrade Rudolph, is it officially raining or snowing?"

"It's raining, of course," he replied and walked on.

But the woman insisted: "I know that felt like snow," to which the man quietly replied, "Rudolph the Red knows rain, dear."



I was in a Starbucks recently when my stomach started rumbling and I realized that I desperately needed to fart. The place was packed but the music was really loud.

So to get some relief, I timed my farts to the beat of the music. After a couple of songs I started to feel much better.

After I finished my coffee I noticed everyone staring at me.

I suddenly remembered that I was listening to my iPod.

This is what happens when old people start using new technology.



Upcoming:

CHRISTMAS DINNER

Dec. 12

"Top of the Tower"
Holiday Inn Downtown
1050 Sixth Ave.

[NEXT MEETING]

Jan. 9



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The Blarney

DECEMBER [NOLLAIG] 2016

Festive FSOSP feast featured in a fortnight

We'll all gather soon to put our raucous, convivial seal of approval on another year's activities. The **Annual Christmas Dinner in the "Top of the Tower" at the Holiday Inn Downtown this coming Dec. 12** is sure to offer a pleasant respite from your hectic seasonal activities. If you haven't reserved your spot at the table, contact Treasurer Mike Murphy and do it right away. **Deadline for food orders is Thurs., Dec. 8.**

Our sophisticated gathering and tasty, basic menu options of chicken, fish and steak are a far cry from the winter festival celebrations of our Irish ancestors.

Geese, ducks, great sides of beef, sheep and pork were turned on the roasting spit in the halls of chieftains in early Christian and medieval times. In later centuries, the spit had become the kitchen oven and, by the late 18th century, vegetables and fruits began to feature more heavily on the table during the Irish Christmas.

Recipes using beef suet, mixed dried fruit and whiskey in cakes and puddings, not terribly dissimilar to those that make an appearance on our modern festive tables every year, started to acquire a seasonal status.

Cattle and pigs were slaughtered and shared out with others. The poor simply shared with their immediate family and neighbours, but note the traditional division among the gentry in the early 19th century:

The head, tongue and feet: to the blacksmith

The small ribs attached to the hindquarters: to the tailor

The kidneys: to the doctor

The udder: to the harper

The liver: to the carpenter


The marrowbone: to the odd-job man

The heart: to the cowherd

A choice piece each: to the midwife & the stableman

Black puddings and sausages: to the ploughman

To the gentry of Ireland, Christmas food meant enormous feasts of meats, fishes, vegetables, rich creamy sauces and all manner of sweet delicacies washed down with copious quantities of alcoholic refreshments.

The majority poor enjoyed more hearty fare. It was not as rich as the foods enjoyed by those further up the social ladder, but nonetheless exceptionally luxurious to the palate of a population that lived at subsistence level (or worse) for much of the year. 

**FSOSP
Holiday Dinner**
6 p.m. Cocktails
6:45 Foy Dancers
7 p.m. Dinner
8 p.m. Program
& Slide Show



Traditional Irish Christmas recipes live on in Eire

The following are brief descriptions of typical Irish Christmas recipes still enjoyed today.

Roast Goose (25th December)

Goose was always the number one festive food for celebrations such as weddings and Michaelmas which were held between September and Christmas. Stuffed with herbs and fruit, it used to be boiled but by the 19th century it was roasted, stuffed with onions, bacons and potatoes, or with apples and potatoes. Roast turkey didn't become the first choice of Irish Christmas recipes until the 20th century.

At least 1 lb. of uncooked weight was allotted per diner. Stuffing was usually potatoes, apples and onions with spices and excess fat had to be poored off 3-4 times while roasting to make it less greasy.

Although not confined to Ireland's Christmas dinner table, baked ham is another dish often served with the goose.

Three types of potatoes are quite likely to appear with Christmas dinner: roast, boiled and mashed, plus roasted parsnips, boiled or mashed swede, brussels sprouts and cabbage.

Plum Pudding (25th December)

Plum or Christmas pudding, half drowned in whiskey, is, of course, an essential part of the main family dinner on Christmas Day itself but may make a limited appearance on other days as well.

Spiced beef for St. Stephen's Day

Irish Spiced Beef is traditionally served on St Stephen's Day (26th December). This is the case in most of Ireland but in Co. Cork, it is not just one of the most popular Irish Christmas recipes, but also a dish served the year round. Although our ancestors would have prepared their own dish, and many families still do, you can find well-prepared beef joints, liberally covered in spices, in butchers throughout Ireland in the two weeks before Christmas.

Preparing it was a long process. A middle rib of beef was boiled and then pressed between two heavy plates for 12-15 hours. The meat was then covered in a mixture of spices with salt, sugar and minced onion, and placed in an earthenware crock.

Once a day, every day for a fortnight, the meat was turned and each time re-rubbed with the spice mixture.

Scones for Little Christmas (6th January)

On Little Christmas (6th January), the last official day of the season in Ireland, the feast consists mainly of baked goodies such as scones, cream, jams, gingerbread, iced sponge cakes and pots of tea.

This tradition arose from the belief that women deserved a special day of their own after providing for their families throughout the festive period. The chosen foods were considered "dainties" but Spiced Beef still often makes an appearance, too.

These baked goodies are enjoyed throughout the year, not just as part of an old-fashioned homely Irish Christmas. 🍀

From Claire Santry, Irish-Genealogy-Toolkit.com.



The Irish Christmas Markets

In the 18th and 19th centuries, The Margadh Mor ["the Big Market"]kickstarted the count-down to Christmas in Ireland.

Its alternative name ["the Live market"]was perhaps a better description because this is where the fowl (turkeys, goose, hens) were sold alive.

In the third week, the Dead Market took place. At this market, too, were bought new clothes, whiskey, sweets, tobacco and all the ingredients for a Christmas pudding.

The latter, which bears little resemblance to the modern Irish plum pudding, was boiled on Christmas Eve after the home had been decorated with laurel, holly and ivy. 🍀

Board News

In mid-November **Jim O'Donnell and his lovely wife Terrie** were again playing "Santa," buying Christmas gifts for three lucky kids in our assigned family in **Mentor Iowa's** holiday program.

This non-profit, volunteer organization was started in 1974 by citizens and juvenile court professionals who were concerned about the growing number of children being served. MI provides trained volunteer mentors to abused, neglected and delinquent children who are under the jurisdiction of the court.

"This was difficult (this year). Two of the three were very specific about what they wanted (in their wish list)," said Jim.

Using Terrie's alchemic shopping powers, they parlayed \$312 cash, our club donation, into about \$575 in gift value (*see pic at right*). Our club's efforts will make the season special for those kids at a holiday party this month. Thanks, Mr. & Mrs. Santa!

Mentor Iowa's creed is "Every Child Deserves a Future." Learn more about this great organization at: mentoriowa.org.



All Dec. 12 Christmas dinner reservations must be made in advance. The cut-off is Thurs., Dec. 8. Payment is \$25 per person and entree choices are steak, chicken or salmon. Other options available include gluten-free and vegetarian. **Contact Mike Dennis at mdennis1958@gmail.com or 779-7026.**



A memo from the support-your-club department:

All **dues are expected in January**, NOT March. Bring your 2017 fee (still just \$40!) to the Dec. 12 dinner, if you like. Be nice and not naughty and get it taken care of soon. Santa is watching!



Our charity donations for the year reached the \$12,000 level. To hit that mark, end-of-the-year donations were approved for: **House of Mercy, Best Buddies, and Holy Family School** (\$1000 each).

Requiescat in pace

Long-time FSOSP member **Charles (Tim) Duffy** passed away on Nov. 8 at age 86.

He grew up in Bussey, Iowa and his career years were spent at John Deere in Ankeny.

We send our condolences to his family.

BLARNEYBITS



Just part of the Christmas gift offerings for Mentor Iowa from the FSOSP.

Sully's December events

7TH

TRIVIA NIGHT

10TH

100 DAYS TO ST. PAT'S PARTY

Beer specials & first 100 people receive custom St. Pat's tallboy koozies. Giveaways all night and fab prizes...including a trip to Mexico (!)

21ST

STU RYAN O'BRIEN IRISH SING-ALONG, 7 P.M.

24TH

CUSTOMER APPRECIATION PARTY
Free food & live music

Also in December...

6TH

STU RYAN O'BRIEN @ MICKEY'S IN CLIVE

CMA Concert - Jan. 14

25th annual concert season for the Celtic Music Association continues with an appearance by **Runa at Holy Trinity Hall @ 8 p.m.**

"Interweaving the haunting melodies and exuberant tunes of Ireland and Scotland with the lush harmonies and intoxicating rhythms of bluegrass, flamenco, blues, jazz, they offer a thrilling and redefining take on traditional music," says their website.

Learn more about them at runamusic.com. 🍀