

TASTE!

Your essential guide to food & beverage

SECTION D



Irish soda bread is a customer favorite at St. Stephen's Green Publick House in Spring Lake Heights.

STAFF PHOTOS: KEITH J. WOODS

ERIN GO BREAD

Bake Irish soda bread for St. Patrick's Day

By **SUSAN BLOOM**
CORRESPONDENT

Moist and cake-like, hearty yet delicate and slightly sweet — nothing suggests St. Patrick's Day quite like Irish soda bread.

The "experts" agree that the consistency of real Irish soda bread should be somewhere between bread and cake.

"It should be dense, but not too dry or heavy," said Dave Guerin, chef at St. Stephen's Green Publick House in Spring Lake Heights.

Chef John LaBarbera at Hailey's Harp & Pub in Metuchen agrees.

"Irish soda bread should be smooth and well-balanced with fruit, a little dry with a crumbly texture, but moist," he said. "You shouldn't need something to drink to help it go down."

Baking soda is a critical means to that end, giving Irish soda bread its signature name and just the right amount of rise, because the recipe for this quick bread doesn't contain any yeast.

"It shouldn't rise too high," Guerin said, "otherwise it gets too light and fluffy."

Another key ingredient when making Irish soda bread?

"Buttermilk gives it a unique flavor as opposed to just using regular milk or water," LaBarbera said.

Guerin said that while cream is too heavy and milk too light, "buttermilk gives it just the right amount of body and creaminess."

WHERE TO GO

ST. STEPHEN'S GREEN PUBLIC HOUSE: 2031 Route 71, Spring Lake Heights; 732-449-2626; www.ststephensgreenpub.com

HAILEY'S HARP & PUB: 400 Main St., Metuchen; 732-321-0777; www.haileyssharppub.com

MARA'S BAKERY & CAFE: 25 E. Main St., Denville; 973-625-0901; www.marascakeandbakery.com

SWISS CHALET BAKERY: 176 South St., Morristown; 973-267-0092; www.swisschaletbakery.com

Finally, a signature "X" or cross carved into the top of the bread during the baking process helps it rise to the appropriate height and, according to some Irish lore, wards off evil spirits.

Irish soda bread has been enjoyed for centuries and was the foundation of a traditional ploughman's lunch, which Irish farmers would take with them into the fields, along with ham, cheese, olives and other easily-portable items.

"The bread was tasty, economical, easy to make, didn't require refrigeration and stayed well, so it was a staple at every meal," Guerin said.

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Executive chef Dave Guerin cuts an Irish soda bread at St. Stephen's Green Publick House.

WINE



AP PHOTO

Vinegar made from leftover wine is used to make a vinaigrette dressing at the Camino restaurant in Oakland, Calif.

Chefs have grape ideas for old wine

By **MICHELLE LOCKE**
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

You've heard of turning water into wine. But what can you turn wine into once the bottle is past its prime?

Plenty, say a trio of thrifty chefs who have been turning dregs into delicious vinegars, marinades, even sorbets.

"Any good kitchen — waste not, want not," points out Clark Frasier, co-founder of Arrows Restaurant in Ogunquit, Maine.

Restaurants end up with wine leftovers for a number of reasons, particularly if they sell a lot of it by the glass, something that's become more popular as consumers have become more cautious about spending. But that trend can leave restaurants with plenty of wine at the bottom of the bottle.

At the Camino restaurant in Oakland, chef/owner Russell Moore uses leftover wine to make his own red wine vinegar and recently started making a white wine vinegar, as well. He hasn't bought a bottle of vinegar since Camino opened three years ago, though demand has become so high he's planning to start up a third barrel so he can age the vinegar longer.

Moore, who worked for 20 years for Alice Water's famous Chez Panisse restaurant in Berkeley, Calif., has been making his own vinegar for years. The process is fairly simple, he says, though it does require some supervision.

To start, you need "live" vinegar, the clear, plastic-looking stuff that can form at the bottom of a bottle that actually is the "good" bacteria that turn alcohol into vinegar and is known as a "mother." This can be purchased; Moore got his when he looked at a bottle of vinegar on his counter one day and realized it had produced a mother.

He makes his vinegar in small oak barrels stashed on a shelf in the Camino kitchen. Holes bored in the barrels allow air to pass over the vinegar's surface. He feeds it the leftover wine and a little water if necessary. And that's it.

The result is better than most of the commercially available vinegars out there, he says — and way less expensive, something that fits well into the aesthetics of Camino's no-waste policy.

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Green sips for St. Pat's Day that aren't beer

By **MICHELLE LOCKE**
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Are green suds a dud? Ted Breaux, master distiller for Lucid absinthe, thinks so. And so, it seems, do plenty of other people.

Absinthe is French, of course, but "we get quite a bit of interest around St. Patrick's Day," Breaux says of the green fairy, the nickname given to absinthe for its color and legendary qualities of intoxication. He also notes that National Absinthe Day, March 5, falls quite close to March 17, the day to celebrate all things Irish.

March 5 was the day four years ago that Lucid's campaign to lift a U.S. ban on absinthe was successful, making the drink legal

for the first time in nearly 100 years. Interesting fact: Lucid is produced in France using 130-year-old distillery equipment designed by Gustave Eiffel. Yes, the tower guy.

Lucid absinthe is 124 proof (or 62 percent alcohol by volume), so drink it with caution. A simple presentation for St. Patrick's Day is an absinthe frappe, which is absinthe and a dash of simple syrup, shaken over ice and poured into a glass that has mint in it.

Green supernatural beings are one way to celebrate. For a more down-to-earth approach, the Les Deux gastropub in Hollywood has Dealer's Choice cocktail in which guests describe what they're in the mood for and bar-

tenders tailor a drink to match.

And if the mood is shamrock? "I'm thinking some Jameson (Irish whiskey) and some basil, some lemon juice — that sounds like a good little combo right there," said Giovanni Martinez, bartender at Les Deux. "Do a little sour with that, maybe honey, lime juice, Jameson and basil. Make sure the basil gets in there really great so it's flecked with green."

Maybe you want to take the green theme in a completely different direction.

At Bar 888 at the InterContinental San Francisco, mixologists created the LEED'er cocktail to mark the hotel's recent



AP PHOTO

There are many ways to drink green this St. Patrick's Day, such as this Green Fuzz cocktail.

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