

A Taste of West Cork





Welcome

to a Taste of West Cork



West Cork as a region has become synonymous with a lifestyle that embraces the pleasures of life, whilst at the same time pursuing an ethic of excellence, integrity and innovation. This guide is very much a product of the region, presenting recipes that will both delight the senses and guide the user to the natural qualities and flavours integral to our local produce. Modern Irish cuisine has blossomed in recent years and embraced culinary trends from around the globe with remarkable self-belief and flair. However, one of its principal features is the confidence and respect it has developed for its local taste treasures.

This guide has been developed by West Cork LEADER Co-operative Society Ltd. in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland as part of our comprehensive training programme for local tourism establishments. The recipes were created by Chef Rory Morahan, who has brought a modern twist and style to some of our most traditional dishes. The principal ingredients are from producers participating in the West Cork Regional Brand. This is an initiative to build on the achievements of local food producers and tourism providers in establishing the region's reputation. It is designed to emphasise excellence and environmental quality, and to reflect positive local characteristics such as the richness of the area's heritage, culture and landscape.

We have also endeavoured to give you a flavour for West Cork itself by highlighting a number of the producers and setting them in the context of the area's history, culture, resources and current food trends. In doing this we are delighted to have the input of Regina Sexton, Ireland's leading food historian. Regina's contributions are researched with care and convey her enthusiasm for her subject.

The recipes are primarily intended for use in restaurants, hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs and pubs, and are mostly based on single portions. If you are cooking at home remember to adjust to suit your requirements. You will find that a number of the recipes use ingredients that will have to be prepared in advance, the recipes for these you will find in the supplementary recipes section.

We have dedicated a considerable proportion of the guide to pub grub. There is a core group of West Cork pubs that have long been held in renown for distinctive casual dining. Happily this group is rapidly growing in number. Our guide seeks to add further momentum to this welcome shift. At the heart of good pub grub are simple wholesome foods like homemade soups, chowders and stews. You will find these and more in the pub grub section.

For the people of West Cork this is our food and we are immensely proud of it. It is the ambition of West Cork LEADER Co-operative that in presenting this culinary guide an even greater number of local chefs will be inspired and encouraged to develop their own menus and signature dishes based on authentic local ingredients, flavours and traditions.

Enjoy!

Ivan McCutcheon, Editor
West Cork LEADER Co-Operative

West Cork

a Place Apart

A Foreword by Regina Sexton
Food Historian



West Cork is a place apart: come in late Spring, Summer and Autumn and you are struck by the colour and natural vitality of the landscape, with hedgerows overcrowded with wild flowers, each as if competing with the other for attention to their beauty. Come back in Winter when the colour has faded somewhat and you'll notice the extraordinary and dramatic diversity of the land and seascapes. River valleys run to the sea between mountainous peninsulas. Fertile fields lie dotted and separated with a string of fish-rich lakes. But even in Winter you'll feel that there's a warmth here quite unlike anything you'll find elsewhere due to the mild southwesterly winds and the warming effects of the Gulf Stream. West Cork's microclimate encourages almost year round agricultural activity. This is an environment untainted by industrial development or the swamping effects of rapid urbanisation. Climate, an unspoilt environment, diverse habitats and an extensive coastline combine to make West Cork one of the country's best producers of quality regional foods and ingredients. The proximity to the sea gives supremely fresh fish and shellfish and in summertime the sea gives back migratory fish, like salmon and eels, to the inland waterways. Sheep and lambs scatter in carefree fashion on the pure, heathery mountains. Cows graze fields with a complex mix of grasses and diverse flora. And the bees, well, the bees have more than they can handle in courting the endless blooms. Fish, shellfish, beef, lamb and honey together with potatoes and kitchen garden vegetables are the traditional staples and are so excellent as a product of their pure environment that the simpler the cooking, the better you can appreciate and enjoy their merits. This simple and respectful treatment of the raw ingredient is possibly best applied to the cooking of West Cork fish and shellfish, where the freshness and flavour of the product, minutes from the sea, needs little in the way of introduction, outside perhaps the complimentary benefits of a bit of creamy butter and well-chosen herbs.

However, added to the region's natural environmental ability in producing superlative raw ingredients is a concentrated community of food producers whose conscientious philosophy and dedicated approach to careful production of food is unrivalled, and is indeed, the envy of the outsider. As a result, West Cork was to the forefront in directing a number of revolutionary food

movements. Since the 1970s, the region has been the epicentre of farmhouse cheese production and has led the way with its award-winning cheeses. More importantly, West Cork is also home to some of the country's finest raw milk cheese producers. In tandem with these developments, a number of innovative West Cork butchers felt proud and confident enough to rescue a number of traditional products that had over time been de-based somewhat by large-scale industrial production. In line with the cheese revolution, West Cork reinstated the quality and reputation of black and white puddings and flavoursome sausages. Inspired by the success of these pioneers, a second generation of small food producers are striving to promote new dairy products, small scale pork, ham and bacon production with positive and much appreciated results. But here the traditional also sits well with the emergence of non-traditional contemporary products, like chocolates, relishes and cured meats, and while these are not indigenous to the region they are produced using the area's best raw ingredients giving them a hybrid sense of identity with strong local character.

The stoic, if not conversionary, zeal of the small producer has also encouraged a strong growth in organic farming - in fact a growth that is greater here than in any other part of the country. The vibrant food culture of West Cork gives the region a distinctive and attractive identity. This is manifest in the recognition by many local food retailers of the appeal that the range and quality of our foods has for visitors and locals alike. Add to this the fact that West Cork hosts the greatest number of farmers' markets in the county. Choose your market day, go along to Clonakilty, Bantry, Dunmanway, Inchigeelagh, Macroom, Schull, Skibbereen or Castletownbere and here you'll find the tastes that define the region and the infectious energy of the producers in providing carefully and slowly crafted foods that set West Cork apart.

West Cork Country Salad

Starter

1 portion

- 1 Smoked chicken breast
 - 1 Potato
 - 1 Tomato
 - 30g French beans
 - 1 Egg
 - Selection of seasonal mixed leaves
 - To taste Salt & pepper
 - 25g Fresh herbs
 - 20ml West Cork dressing
- see page 37*

Method

Cut smoked chicken breast into slices.
 Boil egg for 8 minutes until hard-boiled.
 Wash and drain salad leaves.
 Wash, peel and cook potato.
 Cut tomato into wedges.
 Prepare and blanch French beans.
 Shape mixed leaves into a floret in centre of plate, add potatoes, tomatoes, French beans, egg and sliced smoked chicken.
 Dress with West Cork dressing and finish with fresh herbs, season to taste.



West Cork Country Salad

By 1765 and indeed earlier Cork was importing quantities of 'sallet oyle' (salad oil) by the hogshead (around 54 gallons) making the salad a dish that has a long and evolving tradition in this area. Vinegar, the other partner for dressing salad was also imported or homemade on country estates. Such large country homes supported extensive kitchen gardens that supplied the affluent with a wide range of summer and winter salad greens. For the more modest landowner salad became a feature of the diet from the early 19th century onwards, when agricultural improvers encouraged the small farmer to diversify into growing a broader range of vegetables, including salad leaves and herbs. For years the 'salad tea' remained a feature of many West Cork rural homes. Often the cold remains from the hot chicken dinner were served with home-grown lettuce, cucumber, celery, spring onion and tomato and served with a country dressing of sour cream mixed with a little vinegar and sometimes thickened with egg yolk. Simple though delicious in terms of the quality of its home-produced ingredients. RS

Stuffed Pig's Trotters

Main

1 portion

- 1 Whole pig's trotter
- 25g Black pudding
- 25g White pudding
- 25g Sausage meat
- 50g Sliced bacon
- 80g Chicken mousse *see page 37*
- 200ml Brown stock *see page 36*
- 60g Aromatic vegetables
- 6 New potatoes
- 1 Apple
- 25g Honey
- Herbs
- 100ml Cider
- 10g Tomato puree
- To taste Salt & Pepper

Method

Prepare pig's trotter by boning out whole trotter and trimming off all hairs.
 Prepare a bed of aromatic vegetables (e.g. carrot, celery, onion and leeks) and set pig's trotter on top. Cover with stock, add herbs and braise for 2-2½ hours at 170°C.
 Remove from braising pan and cool.
 Dice bacon, black pudding, white pudding and mix with sausage meat and chicken mousse. Season with salt and pepper and add in freshly chopped herbs.
 Fill trotter with stuffing, shape into a cylinder, wrap in buttered foil and braise for 40 minutes
 Remove from pan and rest for 10 minutes
 Make sauce from remaining meat juices by adding honey and cider, reduce and thicken, finish with diced apple.
 Serve on bed of cooked sliced potatoes, mount pigs trotter on top and dress with apple honey sauce and top with fresh herbs.



Stuffed Pig's Trotter

Better known to us all as crubeens (meaning pig's feet) these were always a favourite treat served with brown bread and stout in the pubs around West Cork, especially on Saturday nights. They were served either hot or cold, but the hot ones commanded greater respect being more juicy and responsive to chewing. The feet were always cured or brined, which meant of course that their saltiness encouraged the drinking of more pints! As a snack food they served the same function at fair days and race days when they were abundantly available and in high demand. Opinions are divided as to which make the best crubeens for eating, those from the hind or fore quarter. Some believe the hind feet are best because they have more meat on them, others prefer the more delicate fore trotters. Crubeens, like many of Ireland's humbler meat cuts are going through somewhat of a resurgence as this recipe indicates. RS

Strawberry Gateaux

Dessert

1 portion

- 100g Strawberries
- 25g Pastry cream
see page 39
- 50g Puff pastry
- 25g Vanilla sponge
see page 39
- 25ml Strawberry coulis
see page 39
- 25g Crème fraîche
- Sprig of mint
- 10g Icing sugar
- 10ml Syrup
- Poker

Method

Wash and cut strawberries into slices. Cut out a sponge disc.

Roll out puff pastry top and bake at 200°C for 10 minutes.

Mix pastry cream with crème fraîche, lay sponge disc in a circle mould and wet with syrup.

Layer strawberries on bottom and sides, add in crème fraîche pastry cream mix, cover with puff pastry lid.

Sprinkle icing sugar on pastry lid and mark with hot poker. Serve with coulis and a sprig of mint.



	Starter	Main	Dessert
Food cost	2.34	2.63	1.01
Cost price	6.69	7.51	2.89
Vat 13.5%	0.84	0.94	0.36
Net price selling	7.52	8.45	3.25
GP 65%	4.35	4.88	1.88
Recommended Selling Price	€8	€10	€3.50

Fuchsia Producers

- Ummera Smoked Products
- Valley View Free Range Eggs
- Waterfall Farms Ltd
- Staunton's
- Martin Carey
- Bandon Co-op
- Heron Foods
- Molaga Honey
- Irish Yogurts