

Burns Night 2022

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Burns Night

Burns Night is celebrated in Scotland on or around 25 January. It is a yearly commemoration of the life of the bard (poet) Robert Burns, who was born on 25 January 1759. The day also celebrates Burns's contribution to Scottish culture.

People celebrate Burns Night by hosting dinners where traditional Scottish food is shared and a selection of Burns's poems are read aloud.

Scotland facts



Population (estimation 2021):

5.4 million people

Capital: Edinburgh

Official languages:

English, Scottish Gaelic

National animal: Unicorn

National bird: Golden eagle

Islands: over 790

Land area: 77,910 km²

Robert Burns

Robert Burns was born on 25 January 1759, on a dark and windy night in the village of Alloway in Ayrshire, Scotland. Colloquially known as Rabbie, he died just 37 years later, at his home in Dumfries, likely from rheumatism, that, sadly, would have been treatable today.



Portrait by Alexander Nasmyth, 1787

Despite his short life, Burns left a huge catalog of poetry and songs that have been pored over, enjoyed, and spoken aloud for over 200 years. His timeless words have echoed throughout the generations, inspiring people from every walk of life.

Burns wrote over 700 songs and poems, mostly in the Scots dialect. His best-known works are the songs “Auld Lang Syne” and “Like a Red, Red Rose”, and the mock-heroic poem “Tam O’Shanter.”

Try some of these traditional Scottish recipes!

(v = vegetarian)

Cock-a-leekie soup recipe

Time: 1 hour and 30 minutes

Serving: 4–6 people

Ingredients

- Small whole chicken
- 4 large leeks
- 4 large carrots
- 2 sticks of celery
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 medium onion
- 120g long grain rice
- Salt and white pepper
- 2.5 liters of cold water (approximately)
- A handful of dried prunes (optional)

Equipment needed

- Large pot
- Chopping Board and knife
- Measures/Scales
- Mixing spoon

1. Wash the leeks and then chop the green parts off and put the green parts in the bottom of a pot, place the chicken on top.
2. Then arrange the celery sticks, 2 carrots, onion, and bay leaves around the chicken. Cut them down to fit if necessary. Add salt and pepper.
3. Pour cold water over the top. (It should cover the chicken so you use a little more or less if you need to.)
4. Cover and bring to the boil, then turn down to simmer for about one hour, until juices run clear when you push a knife into the chicken, or the chicken is falling off the bone.
5. Meanwhile, chop the whites of two leeks into rounds. (The other two leek whites are not necessary for the rest of the recipe so you can set aside to use for something else.) Chop the 2 remaining carrots into small pieces.
6. If needed, use a spoon to remove some of the fat that floats to the top.
7. Remove the chicken (it maybe helpful to put in a colander over a bowl to collect any extra liquid, then tip the liquid back in the pot) and set aside to cool a little.
8. Take out the green part of the leeks, the onion, celery, and carrots, and discard.
9. Add the chopped whites of the leeks and the uncooked carrots and simmer for 10 minutes.
10. Add the rice and simmer for a further 15 minutes.
11. Remove the chicken from the bone and shred, and discard the bones.
12. Taste the stock, and add more salt and pepper if necessary, or simmer for longer and allow it to reduce to strengthen the flavor.
13. Add the shredded chicken back in and allow to heat through for a few minutes.
14. Dish into a bowl and sprinkle with a few chopped, dried, prunes, (optional), then serve.

Lentil Soup (v)

Time: 50 minutes

Serving: 4 people

Ingredients

- 1 medium onion
- 300g red lentils
- 1 small leek (well washed)
- 1 small turnip/neepe or rutabaga/swede
- 2 carrots
- 1 medium potato
- 30g butter
- 1.5 liters of vegetable stock

Equipment needed

- Pot
- Chopping board and knife
- Blender (optional)
- Measures/Scales
- Mixing spoon

Instructions

1. Rinse the lentils in cold water and set aside. There is no need to soak them.
2. Finely chop the onion and leek. Heat the pot, on a medium heat, and add butter to melt. Add the onion and leek and cook for 5 minutes, stirring constantly, don't let the onion brown.
3. Chop the carrot, potato, and neepe into small cubes.
4. Add the carrot, potato, and neepe to the pot and cook for a couple of minutes, then add the stock and lentils.
5. Bring to a boil then turn down to simmer for 40 minutes. You may need to top up with a little extra water if the soup gets too thick.
6. Soup can be eaten chunky or can be blended smooth.

Mince and Tatties

(Minced/ground beef and mashed potatoes)

Time: 1 hour and 15 minutes

Serving: 4 people

Ingredients

- 500g minced beef
- 1 large onion
- 2 carrots
- 2 tbsp butter
- 5 tbsp flour
- 350–450ml beef stock/gravy

Equipment needed

- Chopping board and knife
- Saucepan
- Mixing spoon
- Measures/Scales

Instructions

1. Dice the onion, and peel and chop the carrots into circles.
2. Heat a saucepan or pot to a medium heat, melt the butter, and add the onions, cooking them until they are soft.
3. Add the mince, using a wooden spoon to break it up so there are no big lumps.
4. Add the flour and stir thoroughly.
5. Add the carrots and stock/gravy. You should have enough to cover the meat. It will reduce through the cooking process, but if it does so too quickly, you can add a bit more.
6. Turn to a low heat and simmer until the meat and carrots are tender and the sauce has thickened up. This will take approximately an hour. You can also cover with a lid if the stock is reducing too quickly.
7. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
8. Mashed Potatoes: Peel and boil potatoes until tender, (test with a fork). Drain, add in butter and mash!
9. Serve mince and tatties with any other sides you want.

Veggie Shepherd's Pie (v)

Time: 1 hour

Serving: 6 people

Ingredients

- 6 large potatoes
- 60g of butter
- 2 tablespoons olive oil or butter for sautéing
- 3 shallots, chopped (or some onions and garlic)
- 400g fresh mushrooms, sliced
- 6 carrots, peeled and chopped
- 200g green lentils
- 2 cups veggie broth (vegetable stock cube and water)
- fresh herbs to taste (rosemary, thyme, and a bay leaf)
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 teaspoon salt (more or less to taste)
- Optional: Grated cheddar or parmesan

Equipment needed

- Pot(s)
- Measures/Scales
- Oven and oven proof dish

Instructions

1. Mashed Potatoes: Peel and boil potatoes until tender, (test with a fork). Drain, add in butter and mash! Set aside.
2. Veggies: In the pot, sauté the shallots (or the onions and garlic) with some oil or a little butter. Add in the lentils, mushrooms, and carrots with the veggie broth and cook for 15 mins.
3. Add in herbs, tomato paste, salt, and flour and stir well. Simmer for another 10 mins, until sauce is thickened.
4. Transfer veggie sauce to oven proof dish and cover with mash potatoes. (Optional: Sprinkle top with cheddar or parmesan)
5. Bake in oven for 15 mins at 180 degrees. Top should turn golden but not burn! (If needed, either cover with foil or turn down temperature and cook longer).

Cranachan (v)

Time: 20 minutes

Serving: 4 people

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp medium oatmeal
- 300g fresh raspberries
- a little caster sugar
- 350ml double cream
- 2 tbsp honey
- 2-3 tbsp whisky, to taste (optional)

Equipment needed

- Oven or frying pan
- Baking tray and parchment paper
- Sieve
- Whisk
- Bowl and spoon

Instructions

1. To toast the oatmeal, spread it out on a baking sheet and bake until it smells rich and nutty, about 5 minutes at 160 degrees. Oats can also be toasted in a frying pan if needed. Then let the oatmeal cool.
2. Make a raspberry purée by crushing half the raspberries and pass them through a sieve. Sweeten this to taste with a little caster sugar.
3. Whisk the cream until just set, and stir in the honey (and whisky), trying not to over-whip the cream. Taste the mix and add more (of either) if you feel the need.
4. Stir in the oatmeal and whisk lightly until the mixture is just firm.
5. Alternate layers of the cream with the remaining whole raspberries and purée in serving dishes. Allow to chill slightly before eating.

Scottish Tablet (v)

Time: 30 mins prep. plus 30 to cool

Serving: 6–8 people

Ingredients

- 175g unsalted butter
- 450g caster sugar
- 75g sweetened condensed milk
- 150ml water

Equipment needed

- Baking tray/tin and parchment paper
- Saucepan
- Wooden spoon or plastic spatula

Instructions

1. Line a tray with baking parchment.
2. Put the butter and 150ml water in a pan over a low heat, and melt the butter (don't let the water boil). Tip in the sugar and dissolve, stirring often.
3. Bring the water to the boil, turn down to a simmer, then add the condensed milk. The mixture will be a light creamy color.
4. Cook for 20-30 mins, stirring often, until the mixture is thick and a deep caramel color.
5. To test, drop a little mixture onto a cold side plate, it should not run and should be thick and sticky after 30 seconds. Remove from the heat and beat for 10-15 mins until it has slightly thickened.
6. Pour into a prepared tray/tin and leave to cool for 30 mins before cutting into squares.

Shortbread recipe (v)

Time: 40 minutes plus time to cool

Serving: 6–8 people

Ingredients

- 200g unsalted butter, softened
- 100g caster sugar, plus extra to finish
- 300g plain flour
- 100g chocolate chips (optional)

Equipment needed

- Mixing bowl and spoon
- Baking tray and baking paper
- Rolling pin and flat surface/tray/board
- Oven
- Wire rack/cooling tray

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 190C/170C Fan/Gas 5.
2. Beat the butter and the sugar together until smooth.
3. Stir in the flour to get a smooth paste. Add in chocolate chips.
4. Prepare a flat surface with a little flour and gently roll out until the paste is 1cm thick.
5. Cut into desired shapes either by hand or with a cutter, and place onto a baking tray, lined with baking paper.
6. Sprinkle with caster sugar and chill in the fridge for at least 20 minutes. (Dough can be left longer or overnight in the fridge. Use refrigerated dough within 24hrs. Dough can also be frozen for use at a later date. Freeze for a maximum of 3 months, wrapped in cling film/plastic wrap, then let thaw naturally in the fridge before starting at step 4.)
7. Bake in the oven for 15–20 minutes, or until pale golden-brown. Set aside to cool on a wire rack.

Kirsty's favorite Burns' poems

To a Mouse

Wee, sleekit, cow'rin, tim'rous beastie,
O, what a panic's in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,
Wi' bickering brattle!
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,
Wi' murd'ring pattle!

I'm truly sorry man's dominion,
Has broken nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion,
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor, earth-born companion,
An' fellow-mortal!

I doubt na, whiles, but thou mayst thieve;
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!
A daimen icker in a thrave
'S a sma' request;
I'll get a blessin wi' the lave,
An' never miss't!

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!
It's silly wa's the win's are strewin!
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,
O' foggage green!
An' bleak December's winds ensuin,
Baith snell an' keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,
An' weary winter comin fast,
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,
Thou thought to dwell-
Till crash! the cruel coulter past
Out thro' thy cell.

That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble,
Has cost thee mony a weary nibble!
Now thou's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble,
But house or hald,
To thole the winter's sleety dribble,
An' cranreuch cauld!

But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In proving foresight may be vain;
The best-laid schemes o' mice an 'men
Gang aft agley,
An'lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,
For promis'd joy!

Still thou art blest, compar'd wi' me
The present only toucheth thee:
But, Och! I backward cast my e'e.
On prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I canna see,
I guess an' fear!

Address to a Haggis

(This is traditionally recited at a Burns Supper.)

Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face,
Great chieftain o the puddin'-race!
Aboon them a' ye tak your place,
Painch, tripe, or thairm:
Weel are ye wordy o' a grace
As lang's my arm.

The groaning trencher there ye fill,
Your hurdies like a distant hill,
Your pin wad help to mend a mill
In time o need,
While thro your pores the dews distil
Like amber bead.

His knife see rustic Labour dight,
An cut you up wi ready slight,
Trenching your gushing entrails bright,
Like onie ditch;
And then, O what a glorious sight,
Warm-reekin, rich!

Then, horn for horn, they stretch an strive:
Deil tak the hindmost, on they drive,
Till a' their weel-swallow'd kytes belyve
Are bent like drums;
The auld Guidman, maist like to rive,
'Bethankit' hums.

Is there that owre his French ragout,
Or olio that wad staw a sow,
Or fricassee wad mak her spew
Wi perfect scunner,
Looks down wi sneering, scornfu view
On sic a dinner?

Poor devil! see him owre his trash,
As feckless as a wither'd rash,
His spindle shank a guid whip-lash,
His nieve a nit;
Thro bloody flood or field to dash,
O how unfit!

But mark the Rustic, haggis-fed,
The trembling earth resounds his tread,
Clap in his walie nieve a blade,
He'll make it whistle;
An legs an arms, an heads will sned,
Like taps o thrissle.

Ye Pow'rs, wha mak mankind your care,
And dish them out their bill o fare,
Auld Scotland wants nae skinking ware
That jaups in luggies:
But, if ye wish her gratefu prayer,
Gie her a Haggis.

Ae Fond Kiss and then we sever

Ae fond kiss, and then we sever;
Ae fareweel, alas, for ever!
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee.
Who shall say that Fortune grieves him,
While the star of hope she leaves him?
Me, nae cheerful twinkle lights me;
Dark despair around benights me.

I'll ne'er blame my partial fancy,
Naething could resist my Nancy:
But to see her was to love her;
Love but her, and love for ever.
Had we never lov'd sae kindly,
Had we never lov'd sae blindly,
Never met-or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

Fare-thee-weel, thou first and fairest!
Fare-thee-weel, thou best and dearest!
Thine be ilka joy and treasure,
Peace, Enjoyment, Love and Pleasure!
Ae fond kiss, and then we sever!
Ae fareweeli alas, for ever!
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee.

My Love is Like a Red, Red Rose

O my Luve's like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June;
O my Luve's like the melodie
That's sweetly play'd in tune.

As fair are thou, my bonie lass,
So deep in luve am I;
And I will luve thee still, my Dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my Dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun:
I will luve thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only Luve!
And fare thee weel, a while!
And I will come again, my Luve,
Tho' it were ten thousand mile!

Find more Burn's poems at the Library or online. Keep reading this booklet for recommendations.

Further information

At the Library

Books on Robert Burns:

Auld Lang Syne by Joanna Findon

Robert Burns and All That by Allan Burnett

The Bard: Robert Burns, a Biography by Robert Crawford

A Night Out with Robert Burns: The Greatest Poems by Robert Burns,
arranged by Andrew Hagan

Poems and Songs of Robert Burns by Robert Burns, edited by James Barke

Books about or featuring Scotland:

Children

Scotland: Horrible Histories by Terry Deary

Always Room For One More by Sorche NicLeodhas

Scottish Folk Tales for Children by Judy Paterson

City of Ghosts by Victoria Schwab

Teens

The Thirty-nine Steps by John Buchan

Kidnapped by Robert Louis Stevenson

Adults

Jack Parablane mystery series by Christopher Brookmyre

Shetland Island mystery series by Ann Cleeves

Outlander series by Diana Gabaldon

Lanark series by Alasdair Gray

Inspector Rebus series by Iain Rankin

Scottish authors and poets

J.M. Barrie

Arthur Conan Doyle

Carol Ann Duffy

Edwin Morgan

Walter Scott

Alexander McCall Smith

Muriel Spark

Robert Louis Stevenson

Irvine Welsh



Explore Robert Burns and Scotland on [WORLDBOOK](#), through the [Library's e-sources](#)

Online resources

[Robert Burns Country](#)

[Robert Burns - Scotland's National Bard | VisitScotland](#)

[How to hold your own Burns Supper | Scotland.org](#)

[National Trust for Scotland](#)

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