

The Year Ahead: 1989 Horoscope by Patric Walker

EUROPEAN TRAVEL & LIFE

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FEMME FATALE

She's back.
And this time she's in Paris

Glenn Close begins
another "Dangerous Affair"

Positively Positano

St. Moritz vs. Gstaad

Magical Scottish Castles

Irish Country Cooking

Life on the River Thames

Real French Blue Bloods

Cool, Confident Munich

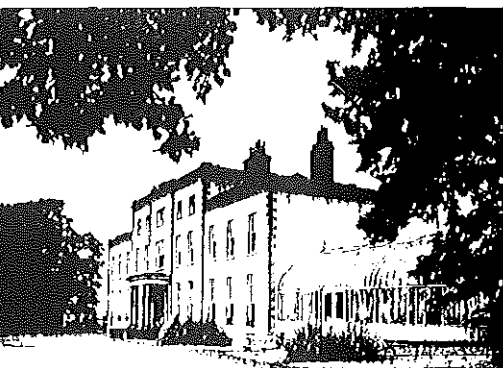




At the top restaurants in County Cork, vegetables are fresh and truly local—they're grown in the garden out back. At Mill House, in Skibbereen, co-owners David Good (left) and Sean Crowley gather runner beans. "We have fun," says Sean. "It's wonderful opening the door and meeting people."

THE BEST OF IRISH COOKING

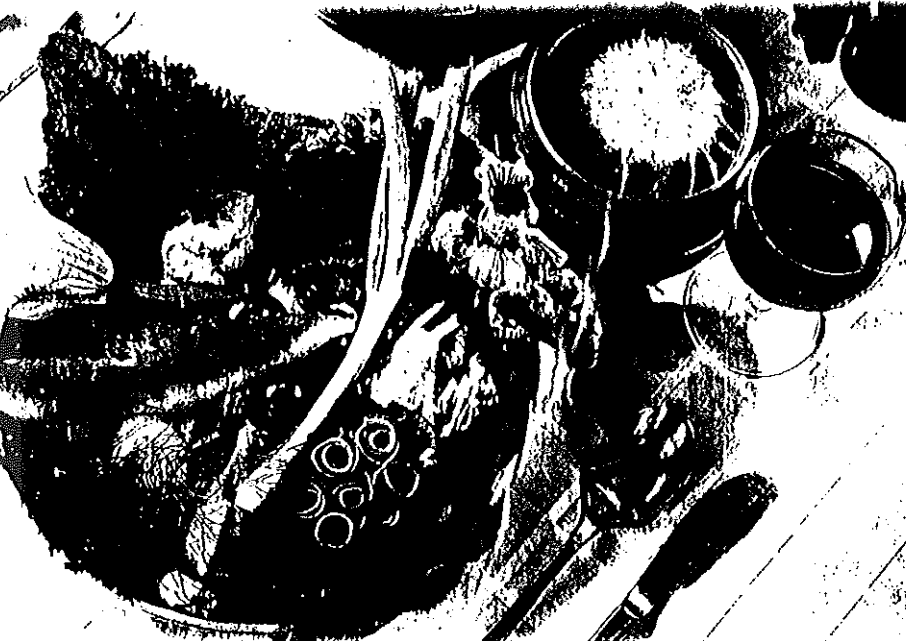
Thought Irish cooking was just meat and potatoes? Try drisheen, quark, and Tipperary duck



Local fish is delivered daily to the pier near Mill House. Opposite: Chef David Good's scallops cooked in a brandy and cream sauce. Above: Longueville House, an inn-restaurant in Mallow.

"Oh, yes, life in Ireland has considerable advantages! It has humanity, and poetry, and a sense of the past which is stronger than in any other part of the world I know." So claimed the great short-story writer Frank O'Connor in an essay he wrote for *Holiday* magazine forty years ago. He knew his native land well. But he left one thing out: great food, as fresh and flavorful as anywhere in the world. You need go no farther than the restaurants of County Cork to sample some extraordinary cuisine as well as to see the veracity of O'Connor's entire evaluation. High and low, you'll find the humanity, poetry, and history, along with rich, earthy flavors.

BY NICHOLAS FOX WEBER PHOTOGRAPHS BY GEORGE WRIGHT



Olto Kunze (above right), a native of West Germany, settled in Cork, where he is chef-owner of Dunworley Cottage. His distinctive cooking style is a mix of Irish and German traditions. Above left: His vegetarian salad platter served with nettle soup and pumpnickel, sourdough, and Irish breads.

On a drizzly August day, a friend and I arrived a bit after one o'clock at the elegant Lovetts on the outskirts of Cork City. We were both looking fairly seedy, dressed more for hiking than fine dining, and accompanied by our hungry and equally disheveled 3-year-old daughters, who were charged up as only small children can be after a long car trip. The place looked closed; no one else was there, but we were assured we were more than welcome. Perhaps we'd like to order off the menu for the girls. "A little poached fish might suit the pretty maidens. We'll put the sauce on the side." No problem when, as we washed down succulent local oysters with pints of Smithwicks, the girls crawled out of sight under a banquet table draped in well starched linen. We began to chase them in the fear that one good tug would send masses of heavy silver and cut crystal cascading to the floor. "They're only children," insisted our private butler, or perhaps the owner. At any rate, he was our maître d', our waiter, and, for all we knew, our cook that day. As if in a spell from his gentle lifting voice, the girls played the calmest hide-and-seek we'd ever seen. When they emerged for their tender sea bass and then again for homemade red currant and blackberry ice creams, they disarrayed nothing. And when the four of us lingered over homemade cookies and candies, our resident angel simply said, "I must leave to do a few errands before the markets in Cork close, so please just shut the door firmly to lock the place when you leave. Stay as long as you like. I've just brewed you some fresh coffee; take your time over it as long as the kids are happy." Total strangers a couple of hours earlier, we were left alone with the great nineteenth-century portraits all around us and the laudable stock of fine Bordeaux and Burgundies clearly in sight.

Lovetts prides itself, above all, on its seafood. While sipping single malt Irish whiskey and Ballygowan (the national Perrier) and studying the large leather-bound menus in the bar (called a "lounge" in these parts), you are likely to be given canapés made with smoked sea trout and fresh chives and with slivers of smoked eel and capers. The chef, Manuel Las Heras, bases his menu on what he can buy at market each day. You might start dinner with baby scallops, cooked with their coral attached, served piping hot in the shells under a parsleyed garlic butter. Las Heras, who started cooking under his father in Madrid and

then trained in the French Basque region, invents most of his own dishes: small individual sea bass slowly roasted in clarified butter, then flamed with Pernod, shallots, white wine, fish stock, and "a coffee spoon" (which is to say less than a teaspoon) of cream; braised sea trout wrapped in very slightly cooked lettuce; rounds of monkfish, which look like pieces of baguette, in a delicate orange-colored prawn sauce. The local vegetables are properly *al dente*. The cheese assortment, including smoked Gubbeen and Camembert-style St. Killian, comes with homemade crackers. Ice creams, served in a large tulip-shaped biscuit shell, might include a caramelly, crunchy brown-bread flavor and a deep magenta loganberry.

Proprietor Dermot Lovett does something ingenious with the wine list. He marks all his wines—of which there is a splendid selection—from one to ten, one being the most bone-dry, ten the sweetest. It helps enormously; one wonders why it isn't done everywhere.

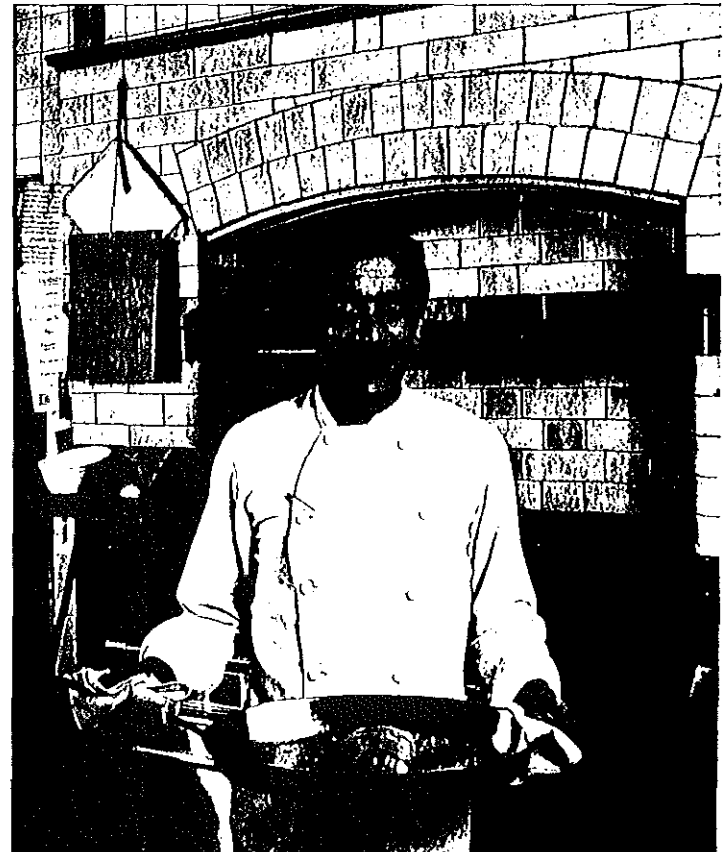
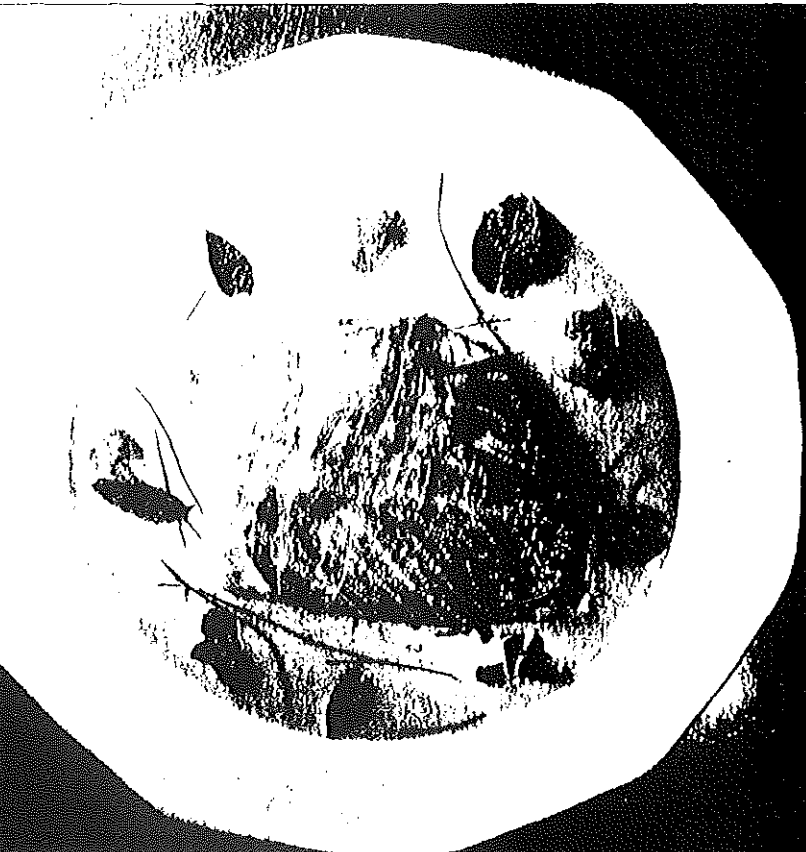
Abbot's Lodge is a luxury hotel with a Michelin star-winning restaurant in a grand late-Georgian mansion that overlooks Cork and a patchwork of distant farmland. I had a long discussion with Declan Ryan, one of the owners, about drisheen. As Ryan said, "Drisheen means a blood sausage—in Cork, one made only from sheep's blood, no fat, gristle, or breadcrumb. Cork has always been a provision center. In 1800 it was the largest butter market in the world and, along with Bristol, the major food center for the British Isles. Cork exported salt pork and salt beef packed in casks of brine. But you can't pickle the offal: the liver, the kidneys, the blood. So very often that's what the people in Cork ended up eating, to the point that today we eat four times the national average of liver, kidneys, and so on. Two centuries ago, a man might have had a wage of five shillings plus ten pounds of offal.

"My father grew up with a real Cork childhood, which meant either tripe or drisheen on Sunday morning. And we did too: tripe and onion, or drisheen," Ryan continued. "My mother, who wasn't weaned on it, said she couldn't abide it, so my father would prepare it. We have it available for those Cork men whose wives wouldn't dream of eating it."

It's no surprise that the entrance hall is lined with awards and certificates signed by the likes of Paul Bocuse and the Grand Maître



Lovett's restaurant in Cork City prides itself on its seafood. Dermod Lovett (above, in the bar) is the urbane proprietor.
Below: Madrid-born chef Manuel Las Heras braises sea trout and wraps it in cooked lettuce.



de l'Ordre du Bontemps de Médoc et des Graves. Ryan, his wife, Patricia, and his brother, Michael, go to France frequently to buy wines and sample the latest dishes at three-star restaurants. They send their promising young chefs to train with Troisgros and other prominent chefs. And some of their staff are French. The wine list at Arbutus is strong in German and Italian as well as French vintages. The menu is a blend of French and Irish cooking, with native products.

You'll start dinner, after a glass of extraordinarily good champagne—always available here by the glass—with anything from traditional Cork crubeens (pigs' feet) to an exquisite blend of quail eggs and sea urchins. (The method of lightly poaching the eggs in the sea urchin shell is a French-inspired bit of brilliance that renders the flavors incredibly mild and sweet.) The pigs' feet are an earthy dish customarily eaten by heavy-drinking students while they down pints of beer; here it has been cooked as a delicacy—the smallest forefeet slowly simmered for a good eight hours, then grilled with bread crumbs spiced with fresh herbs, and served with a finger bowl. Next might come a cassiolette of shellfish or a fillet of sole or turbot with caviar sauce, and then, as a palate cleanser, a sorbet made from an infusion of the blossoms of the weeping silver lime tree at Arbutus's entrance. There's lamb from Tipperary ("because we think it's sweeter"), and it is prepared in a variety of ways (although with the generous attitude that is typical of these places, Declan Ryan might tell you that Longueville House has even better lamb because they kill it themselves and don't need to refrigerate it, which he says toughens it). The ducks are free-range, and, in season, the venison and other game are the real thing, not farm-bred specimens.

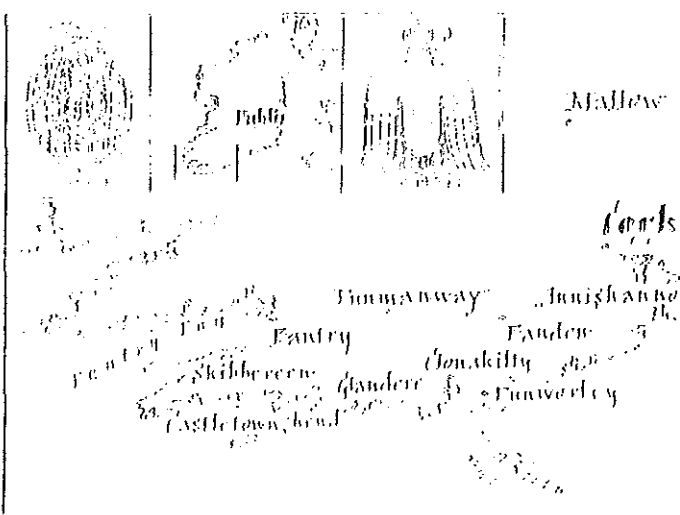
I know of no other restaurant where I might eat a dish called "Irish bacon and cabbage" while drinking a fine Nuits-Saint-Georges, but at Arbutus Lodge it is an experience without equal. The bacon is of a type Michael Ryan saw being produced in Dublin, cut from a loin of pork. He has trained his Cork butcher to put it in a subtle brine and smoke it very lightly, after which the chef at Arbutus sautés it (instead of boiling it, as is the usual practice) before serving it with fresh young cabbage. Most of the vegetables are from Arbutus's own garden, but there are also rarities like chanterelles from Kenmare. All are given the impeccably simple preparations they deserve. As for Irish farmhouse cheeses, Arbutus has the best of them: firm and sweet Ring from the Irish-speaking Waterford district of the same name, richly creamy Cooleney, semisoft Gubbeen, Cashel Blue, and splendid cheddars. The ice creams are not only made but also pasteurized right on the spot. As for the other desserts, they are all wonderfully not-too-sweet: poached pears and peaches, a tart gooseberry pie, fine confections of chocolate and meringue. Arbutus offers excellent breakfasts, too. This means not only the good eggs and rashers, sausage, drisheen, mushrooms, and grilled tomatoes that you would expect of a hotel restaurant, but also a fine fruit compote with homemade yogurt, and, unique in these parts, homemade croissants.

At Mill House Restaurant in Skibbereen, you dine in a lovely old mill house down a driveway off a back road near the resort town of Castletownshend, on the coast, a bit over an hour south of Cork City. You can walk from the restaurant to the pier at Union Hall, which is where local fishing boats come in every evening to unload heaps of local prawns, crab, brill, monkfish, skate, mackerel, and various types of sole. This is the very fish that will be on the dinner menu at Mill House the next night, and that is likely to turn up in the finest restaurants in Paris five days later. My wife and I dined at Mill House with a local fisherman and his wife. The sweet local Dungeness crab was fresh and richly flavored. Large scallops with their roe were cooked in a light sauce of

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At Arbutus Lodge, a Michelin-starred hotel restaurant, a chef interleaves tomatoes and courgettes (above) as garnish for a lamb dish. Left: Michael Ryan, co-owner, travels frequently to France with brother Declan to purchase wine and try new restaurants. Opposite: Fresh sea urchins and quail eggs on a bed of spinach.



AL



IRISH COOKING

Continued from page 80

cream and brandy; and sweet and tender skate was prepared in a simple lemon, butter, and caper sauce. A warm salad of sautéed chicken livers sat on a bed of oak leaf lettuce. (This and the other vegetables, like new potatoes, carrots, and courgettes, are grown in Mill House's garden.)

This restaurant can be elaborate and do very well at it. Smoked mackerel crepes give panache to that great local fish. Seafood Provençale in a puff pastry is loaded with salmon, brill, hake, and monkfish in a light sauce. These dishes are accompanied by the warm and earthy brown buttermilk scones that one finds all around this region but that here are unsurpassed. The desserts: a tart cold citrus soufflé, boozy profiteroles, light crepes filled with whipped cream flavored by Tia Maria, homemade ice cream made with tart green apples or with Bailey's Irish Cream and burnt almonds.

Mill House is a professional and spiffy place, and, at the same time, as congenial as a dinner party given by close friends. "We have fun," says co-owner Sean Crowley. "It's wonderful opening the door and meeting people. It's a great pleasure if our guests enjoy themselves, a crime if they arrive at eight and leave at nine." If Crowley doesn't already know you when you enter, he will soon enough, and you'll feel a level of comfort rare in a great restaurant—but typical of those of County Cork.

Dunworley Cottage is in an exotic setting in the middle of nowhere—actually near the so-called village of Dunworley. Approaching it (owner Otto Kunze will give you good directions over the phone), you pass incredible sweeps of Dunworley Bay and hear the surf splashing against the rough coast. The restaurant itself is in a 200-year-old cottage made of natural stones with clay grout. It is surrounded by ruins of stone walls, and inside has a distinct country farmhouse look: unmatched country chairs painted red, special local pottery, stainless steel flatware rather than silver plate. Sitting under leafy branches in "the observatory" or walking around the stone outbuildings, you may well feel as if you are in Provence. But once you have eaten here, you know just where you are.

Of all the great chefs of Cork, no one is as geared toward the unusual possibilities of local ingredients as Otto Kunze. The restaurant offers a unique cuisine: Irish-German, mostly organic, and, if you like, vegetarian. The mix is apparent in his extraordinary breads, all made with organic flour. They include a

splendid dense and crusty white bread, similar to everyday French but made with unbleached "strong" white flour; a half-white, half-rye sourdough loaf subtly flavored with anise and caraway (and tasting ever so slightly of molasses and orange); and a classic Westphalian pumpernickel of which ninety percent of the flour is local rye.

For his nettle soup, Kunze cultivates his own field so that he can be certain to obtain the crowns of young nettles, which he picks himself before cooking them down with spring onions and garlic butter. When you eat the velvety result, a deep mossy-green color, you would never believe that the essential ingredient at one point could only be handled with rubber gloves.

Kunze bakes lamb sweetbreads with lightly garlicked cream and chopped mushrooms. He pan-fries salmon with a gooseberry and elderflower sauce made from homemade preserves. For his pan-fried duck in a brandy, honey, lemon, and raisin sauce, he creates an especially rich demiglaze, using twenty

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Tipperary ducks to end up with three pints. For dessert, try homemade quark (a refined product made from sour milk, which he also uses in various recipes and salad dips) with fresh fruit, and an extraordinarily dry chocolate almond cake made with homemade lemon juice-flavored marzipan and Belgian chocolate.

In the early seventeenth century, the magnificent lands in Mallow, on which Longueville House is situated, belonged to the O'Callaghan family. In 1650 they forfeited the property to Cromwell, but fortunately they regained possession in the early 1930s and now operate a small hotel in the grand eighteenth-century house there. Jane O'Callaghan recently turned over her toque to her son, William, who trained at the Ferme Saint-Siméon in Honfleur and with Raymond Blanc at Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons near Oxford.

To start, William might offer a warm salad of wood pigeon served with roasted pine kernels and oyster mushrooms. He briefly pan-fries the pigeon breast and serves it with the

mushrooms, herbs, and chopped shallots. He makes a *nage* of fresh fish with salmon, monkfish, brill, and prawns, and accents it with coriander seed. As Declan Ryan pointed out, Longueville is known for its lamb, raised under the O'Callaghans' supervision. William roasts it stuffed with thyme and serves it with juice made from the bones. This dish is exquisite, but the veal medallion in Madeira sauce and breast of farmyard duck with cèpe sauce are also first-rate.

Breakfast at Longueville is a must. Softly colored Stephen Pearce pottery bowls are filled with poached gooseberries, plums, spiced apples, perfect with homemade yogurt. The brown bread and jams are fresh from the kitchen. French toast is served with Longueville's own honey. The pink trout comes from the Blackwater River, which you can see out the window. The pork and veal sausages are homemade. And with your eggs you can have bacon, grilled tomato, mushrooms, black-and-white pudding, and lamb's liver.

So-called ordinary cooking can be marvelous in County Cork. But beware the excessive mayonnaises, the ubiquitous prawn sauces. Little is more disappointing than to find your superb fresh Dungeness crabmeat disguised by a bottled dressing. You can, however, find some real treats. At Windmill Tavern in Skibbereen, for example, I had an excellent plate of prawns. At O'Connor's Seafood Restaurant and Bar in Bantry, there is a seafood platter of poached salmon, flavorful rollmops, smoked mackerel, and a rice and mussel salad made with sweet, firm rice and the farmed mussels that are a specialty here—they are grown on ropes that are suspended from sea rafts or long lines, so they are free of sand and grit.

I've enjoyed a similar platter at the Marine Hotel in Glandore, where one can dine while looking out the window at dinghies from great yachts tying up at the pier. At the nearby Glandore Inn you will eat poached salmon wedged into a simple toasted sandwich. Then there are in-town local hubs like the West Cork Hotel in Skibbereen and An Súgán in Clonakilty. Sunday dinners may feel a bit like children's birthday parties, but if you don't mind a bit of crowding and the occasional sound of a baby crying, you can sample a wonderful side of Irish life in these places. Your plate will be heaped with rib-sticking food like roast pork in gravy or fried plaice along with mounds of boiled local potatoes and chips, as well as cauliflower, parsnips, and pureed turnip.

And if you are looking for the best French fries in the world, be sure to stop at the chips van alongside the road between Bandon and Imishannon. 