

Celebrate Saint Patrick's Day

To most of us, Saint Patrick's Day is a time of revelry which we celebrate with friends by immersing ourselves in Irish culture and customs. Local pubs are usually filled with people wearing green hats, green clothes, sporting shamrocks and enjoying some Irish drinks and food.

Saint Patrick's Day was a traditional Catholic holiday but over time has evolved into a feast and eventually became what it is today. It's still a public holiday in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Montserrat and Newfoundland.

Saint Patrick (the man) was born in the 4th century in Roman Britain, kidnapped at sixteen by Irish raiders and taken to Ireland as a slave. He later escaped, returning to Britain where he studied to be a priest. In 432, he returned to Ireland on a mission to convert the Irish from Polytheism to Christianity. One of Saint Patrick's teaching tools was the shamrock; he used the three-leaved plant to illustrate the Holy Trinity. The shamrock is now, of course, widely recognized as a symbol of Saint Patrick's Day and is also responsible for the colour green's association with the holiday where blue had the original connection.

Did you know that Montreal has bragging rights in North America for the longest running Saint Patrick's Day parade which has been held every year since 1824? Almost anywhere you go in the world, they'll be celebrating Saint Patrick's Day in one form or another and New Brunswick is certainly no exception. If you're looking for Irish suds or spirits to enjoy this March 17th there are several choices at your NB Liquor store so please allow me to suggest a few of my favourites.

Tyrconnell Single Malt Irish Whiskey has a full, fruity nose with a touch of citrus. You'll taste honey, oranges, lemon, a little caramel and lots of malt. Tyrconnell finishes long and strong with lingering fruit. This whiskey is best served neat or with a little touch of water to open it up.

Bushmills Black Bush Irish Whiskey is aged in casks that once held oloroso sherry. The sherry cask aging gives the whiskey a tarnished-copper colour and intensifies the fruit on the pallet. Black Bush is a complex whiskey that remains quite smooth as the sherry influence provides a little sweetness for balance. Take a little sniff of it and you may recognize notes of molasses, yeast, currant and allspice. This whiskey serves best neat or on the rocks.

My favourite Irish export is their beer! O'hara's Irish stout is pitch black, full bodied, bold and not for the faint of heart. O'hara's has a rich espresso head and a nose like strong, cold coffee. I find flavours of dark chocolate, bitter coffee bean, hops and dense bread. This stout has a long and dry finish that is endlessly enjoyable. A bottle of O'hara's is a delicious way to celebrate St. Paddy's Day.

Smithwicks (pronounced Smiddicks) Irish Ale is an easier drinking beer for this occasion. The colour is amber with a fairly dense, creamy head. You'll taste burnt honey, caramel, toast and mild hops. The nose is citrusy green tea with a little banana. Smithwick's has lots of character but doesn't go overboard so it's good for repeat performances, if you know what I mean.

If you don't normally celebrate Saint Patrick's Day think about giving it a try this year. Take in some Irish culture; the music, the food, the drinks, get out there and what there is to see. Remember: on March 17th, everyone is Irish and if someone offers you a green beer, find out *why* it's green before you drink it. May you live as long as you want, and never want as long as you live.

Tyrconnell Single Malt Irish Whiskey, 750 ml \$39.99

Bushmills Black Bush Irish Whiskey, 750 ml \$28.99

O'hara's Irish Stout, 500 ml \$4.43

Smithwicks Irish Ale, 440 ml \$2.99

Written by Aaron Greenman, Product Advisor, Prospect Street Liquor Store,
Fredericton NB