

Irish Soda Bread a perfect staple for St. Patrick's Day



Sora's Irish Soda Bread

Photo Susie Iventosch

By Susie Iventosch

It's just so much fun working with fellow Lamorinda Weekly writers who love to cook and discover new recipes as much as I do. Sora O'Doherty is just one of those, and she is always sending me fun recipe ideas for dishes that have caught her attention. This latest recipe she shared for Irish Soda Bread arrived just in time for St. Patrick's Day. It's really easy and so delicious and I hope you all give this bread a try!

Sora lived in Ireland for 14 years and has also visited the country many times before and after living there, so she's sampled her fair share of soda bread recipes.

"Every St. Patrick's Day I see a ton of recipes for white soda bread with raisins, which I never saw eaten in Ireland," Sora remarked. "But Brown Soda Bread is eaten daily. It's very healthy — high in fiber and protein, I think."

She fussed around with her recipe from Ireland to adapt it to American ingredients, and now thinks she's got just the right formula. The main problem with using the Irish recipe is that we have very different flour here in the States, so she had to find the right combination of available flours. For extra texture, she also adds bran, wheat germ, and old-fashioned rolled oats. This makes the bread really hearty with a wonderful crunchy crust.

Sora says this bread is delicious with Irish butter, but smoked salmon, and even peanut butter are great on it. Her favorite butter for this bread is Kerry Gold. "I recommend Kerry Gold Butter for spreading on your bread. In the old times in Ireland, you could judge a family's wealth by how thick the butter was spread on the bread for guests," she added.

She also noted that in Ireland you'd eat it for breakfast

with eggs, sausages, bacon, black and white puddings, mushrooms and grilled tomatoes. I think you can use this hearty bread in so many ways.

But, for St. Patrick's Day, Sora says that Irish folks favor dishes that have the colors of the Irish flag, green white and orange. So, upon her suggestion, I served my Irish Soda bread with smoked salmon, Boursin cheese, capers and fresh dill for appetizers recently. It was such a big hit and everyone loved it. This recipe will become a regular in our kitchen!

Happy St. Paddy's Day!



Recipe Notes

- The first time I made the bread, my dough didn't seem like it could handle more than two cups of buttermilk. But, the second time I used a more hearty whole wheat flour and was able to use 2 3/4 cups of the buttermilk, although my dough appeared to be much softer than Sora's, which made it difficult to cut the X into the dough. So, I'd recommend adding just enough of the buttermilk to get all of the dries incorporated and so you can roll into a ball and make a deep cross using a wet sharp knife.
- Sora uses Bob's Red Mill Whole Wheat Flour and I used King Arthur 100% Whole Grain whole wheat flour. If you want to use Irish flour, you'd want to look for Odlums coarse whole meal flour which you can get from Amazon.
- I reduced the amount of baking soda on my second batch to two teaspoons instead of three and my family and I really loved the flavor much more with a little less baking soda.

Sora's Irish Soda Bread

(Makes one large round loaf)

INGREDIENTS

- 3/4 lb. Bob's Red Mill Graham Flour (12 oz.)
- 1/4 lb. all purpose flour (4 oz.)
- 1/2 cup rolled oats
- 1/2 cup bran
- 1/4 cup wheat germ
- 3 tsp. baking soda (I use only 2 tsp.)
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 1/4 to 2 3/4 cups buttermilk

DIRECTIONS

Butter very well a deep, 8-inch pan. Preheat oven to 400 F.

Mix all dry ingredients thoroughly. Make a well in the center and add buttermilk; mix well to make a soft dough. Spoon the dough into the center of the pan, shaping it into a ball with the spoon. Use a sharp knife dampened with water to cut a deep cross in the top of the bread. This allows the bread to rise properly and bake evenly, ensuring that the center is baked through. (Such a great idea ... maybe we should try this with that darn banana bread that never bakes all the way through!)

Bake 40 to 45 minutes. Remove bread from pan and cool completely on wire rack, then wrap in a tea towel or store in an airtight container. Slice thin or thick, and serve with butter or peanut butter, smoked salmon and dill, or with eggs and bacon!



Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977. Or visit <https://treksandbites.com>



Looking Good in Lamorinda Spring into color



Photo Moya Stone

Dresses in shades of Magenta available at Divine Consign.

By Moya Stone

Viva Magenta is the color of the year, says Pantone Color Institute, the company behind the standardized color matching system. Magenta comes from the red family and it is described by Pantone as a shade with "vim and vigor" and is "expressive of a new signal of strength." Inspired by nature, more specifically the cochineal beetle, Viva Magenta is meant to reflect strength, power, and compassion in our ever more stressful and challenging world.

Magenta is a vivid color that pops any outfit. I see it as

an interesting accent in patterns for dresses, shirts, and accessory pieces such as scarves, gloves, and even socks.

For those sartorial adventurers who want the full color experience, I spotted the perfect Magenta dress at Divine Consign in Lafayette. Made of lace, the dress has a fitted bodice and full skirt and would be a lovely and unique choice for the prom, a wedding, or an elegant dinner party. If you have a taste for vintage, currently Divine Consign has a wide variety of vintage clothing and jewelry as well as decorative items from mid-



Photo provided

From left: Rosylyn and Tom Stenzel from Venture Quality Goods, Joseph Ward from Joseph Ward General Contractors.

century to the 1980s. Open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., 1014 Oak Hill Road.

It feels like we're rocking the '90s again with this season's Elevated Basics look: trousers paired with a tank top or a classic white shirt topped with a blazer; relaxed fit denim; cargo pants in all fabrics from silk to leather; the classic pencil skirt with an Oxford shirt or cropped sweater; ballet flats and long drop earrings. Understated (meaning simple structures with no bells and whistles) totes are in, and the bigger the better!

In local fashion news – Venture Quality Goods boutique in Lafayette is moving just one block west of their current location on Mt. Diablo. Co-owner Rosylyn Stenzel tells me that the new space has much to offer. "At the new location," she explains, "we'll be more visible, have more room to show product, as well as a more comfortable experience with the bigger, open space."

And there's better parking, too. Established in 2012, Venture is our local go-to for casual clothing for both men and women. The shop offers California brands including Patagonia, Faherty, and Johnnie-O. A recent addition to the store is the popular line Cotopaxi, which repurposes scraps from other companies to make colorful outerwear and bags. Stenzel says that she's grateful to the people of Lamorinda and the Bay Area. "We started from nothing and now we have a great community that has been really supportive." Venture is still open at their current location, but look for them sometime around late March in their new home at 3599 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Also check out their website: www.venturegoods.com.

Recently, with the rise in the maker's movement, the craft of making Friendship Bracelets has become a focus and London-based crafter Maria Makarova (AKA Masha Knots) is on it! After more than

10 years of making the colorful bracelets herself and offering YouTube tutorials, she has written a book – "The Beginner's Guide to Friendship Bracelets: Essential Lessons for Creating Designs to Wear and Give" (Rocky Nook). The popularity of Friendship Bracelets has ebbed and flowed over the years, but as an endearing sign of friendship they never really go away. New generations of teenagers, young adults, and now even older folks can't resist the charm of a handmade symbol of connection.

In her book, Makarova explains in detail how to make simple and more complex bracelet designs. She covers tools of the trade, basic loops, embellishments, fixing common mistakes, and she even offers "tricks and tips." The instructions are user friendly with lots of diagrams and step-

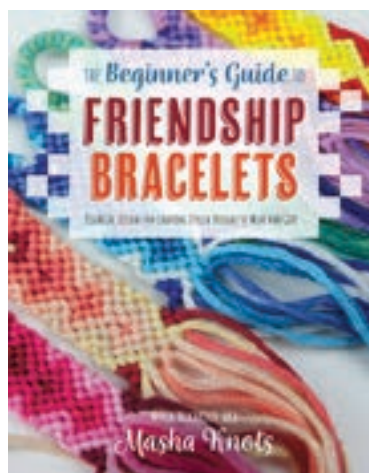


Photo courtesy Rocky Nook, Inc.

by-step photos. Friendship bracelets are a great accessory to play with color. Viva Magenta anyone?

Add some color to your wardrobe and go forth in style. Moya Stone is a fashion writer and blogger at www.overdressedforlife.com.