



From the poetry

of Robert Burns to a celebration of Scottish food, here is a guide to what the occasion involves. There's a general coziness that drifts through the months of October, November and December, one that's also mixed with partying and optimism. It is instigated by the embracing of a change in season and the arrival of Christmas with its copious plates of food, social gatherings and clichés of snow and fireplaces. Then there's the New Year, which rapidly becomes a thing of the past and suddenly the coziness and celebratory aspects can be lost, monotonies kick in and a craving for warmer weather intensifies. But January 25th brings us Burns Night, the annual occasion embracing the Scottish bard Robert Burns.



Burns, 1759-1796, is generally regarded as Scotland's most celebrated poet, writing about working life, regional experiences and personal observations. Considered as a forerunner to the Romantics literary movement, his work includes *To A Mouse*, *A Red, Red Rose*, *Halloween* and *Auld Lang Syne*. The first Burns Supper took place in 1802 by some of his closest friends and continued thereafter on the date of his birth.

A central focus of the night has consequently become the food and drink, platefuls of traditional Scottish flavours and glasses continuously topped up with

warming whisky. There's the haggis and side helping of mashed parsnips and potatoes (also known as neeps and tatties), a starter likely consisting of cock-a-leekie (leek and chicken) soup, and a dessert of cranachan – a pudding rich with cream, raspberries and whisky. Addresses can be made: *The Immortal Memory* (a personal speech remembering Robert Burns) and

“A central focus of the night is the food and drink, platefuls of traditional Scottish flavours and glasses continuously topped up with warming whisky.”



Toast to the Lassies (often involving a lighthearted response by a female present), and poetry is recited. Although Scottish in principle, celebrations take place all over the UK and anybody is welcome to join in.

Mac & Wild is a Scottish restaurant bringing seasonal produce from the Highlands to people in the heart of London. "Burns Night is a bit like Christmas in that everyone has their own traditions," says co-founder Andy Waugh. "Being in the dark depths of winter it's usually quite boozy. It's a party, it's a gathering." Their menu includes different haggis products such as haggis pate and haggis burgers. "I was messing around with drying out or dehydrating haggis. I use it quite often," Waugh explains in regards to additional variations of the dish. Last year included a week of Burns Night celebrations, with people grabbing a microphone and singing Scottish songs,

while this year sees the addition of live poets.

Although a conventionally meaty affair, there are alternatives for non-meat eaters. Emi Leese, (of Emi's Good Eating blog), for example, is a London-based vegan cook who holds an annual vegan supper. "I made the event as much an experience as possible because that is what a Burns Night is all about," she says. Thus, alongside listening to the *Selkirk Grace*, *Address to the Haggis* and closing the night with *Auld Lang Syne*, food is in keeping with the Scottish flavours and textures. "The vegan version has the same mix of spices and aromas as the non-vegan version and the body – the dense and crumbly part – comes from the lentils, beans, carrots and oatmeal," explains Leese.

Overall, Burns Night has become an occasion of pride, literary appreciation and an excuse to party for all, which, in the gloominess of late January, is just what's needed to lift the spirits.



Francesca Rose is a freelance writer whose musings and research on fashion can be read at www.knotjournal.com

international women in London
kcwc



Welcome to kcwc!

We are London's largest international women's club providing over 35 activities including:

- Top-level lectures
- Courses
- Tours
- Social, cultural and special events
- Art
- British history
- Travel
- Foreign languages
- Food
- Fitness and wellbeing
- Classical music and opera
- Fashion
- Theatre
- Wine appreciation

And much more...

Join us and enjoy access to exclusive London venues and attractions, and attend our General Meetings to meet like-minded women and hear high-profile speakers.



For more information contact membership@kcwc.org.uk or visit www.kcwc.org.uk



Join the French speaking community in London !

Meet our 950 members
Participate in 70 cultural events
Socialize in one of our local area groups
Join our Mums & Kids activities, Clubs, Sports courses...
and much more !

Visit and join online on www.londresaccueil.org.uk

 find us on Facebook