

ORGANIC FOODS AND WILD FOODS AT MACREDDIN VILLAGE

A SHORT CHRISTMAS STORY

CONCERNING

'THE PLUM PUDDING, THE SPICE TRAIL AND THE INVITABLE IRISH TWIST'

Long, long time ago, every year, well before we even yielded our harvest here on this island... exotic foods like ginger, nutmeg, cinnamon and cumin had already set off to Ireland from India and slow-travelled, swapped and traded through The Ottoman region picking up sultanas, raisins, coriander, cloves and more. This perfect way of preserving foods then slowed boated its way through Iberia and France swapping, trading and picking up port, oranges, claret wines and Normandy cider, before arriving here in time to trade these exotic goods at our autumn harvest markets.



It wasn't by coincidence that these foods arrived here during the major autumn markets that once took place all around Ireland at harvest time. Harvest provided a bounty to us and gave us the means to trade for these treasures. These provided much-needed winter foods during those dark months and indeed luxuries for the wealthier homesteads...spices and exotics like Seville oranges and maybe claret. In return, we traded dried beef, Limerick hams, salted fish, crop harvest and livestock. This trade then moved on down through Europe back to Turkey to start the annual food circle once more... this was the way we traded in the world as we knew it, remaining this way for so many generations that it become tradition.

And tradition is what it has become; we've put our own twist on ginger, in our cakes and our famous ginger biscuits. We've put our own uses to these dried grapes in our Barm Brack, Plum Pudding and Christmas Cake. All these we think as being typically Irish and of course time has made them this.

But now think about cloves in our hot whiskey, think about nutmeg on our late-night warm milk, we took Seville oranges and now it's 'our traditional Irish marmalade', we brought in Port and served it hot with sugar. We mulled our Bordeaux red wine with cinnamon and other spices.



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We've given these once exotic foods an Irish twist... show me an Indian that would understand ground nutmeg on warm milk, or an Iberian that would tolerate their port being heated, or indeed a Turk that could comprehend that we boil their dried fruits into what we call Plum Pudding. Nonetheless, that's what we did, we applied our take and our cooking methods and now we have integrated these foods into our traditional cooking. These perfectly preserved foods arrived to us in Ireland for hundreds of years, every year by slow-road and slow-boat... this undoubtedly was the original SlowFood, as we know it today.



And today we all carry on this tradition and import these now, quintessentially 'Irish' Spices for our kitchens. We do so also for all our Kitchens here in Macreddin!

And when you were recovering from the Festivities last January, our Pastry Kitchen was busy making this Plum Pudding, just for this Christmas.

Of course, Anna follows 'the hand-me-down' traditional recipes just like her mum did, and all our mums and grandmothers did... and of course, it's still Organic (like it always was) and yes, it's on The Strawberry Tree menu every December since we opened in 1998.

And every January for thirty years now, the requests come in from our Strawberry Tree Friends to us to make our traditional and organic, year-aged Christmas Pudding, to be put aside just for them to enjoy or to give Family and Friends for the following December.. it's now become a part of a very precious Irish Food Story here in Macreddin .

It's easy for all of us to forget about the Pudding and then we find ourselves buying some pudding in some shop, somewhere? But our Grand Mums always made our Christmas Puddings well in advance... just as we do here.

It's simple to order your Traditional and Organic, year-aged Christmas Plum Puddings from Macreddin, just let us know and then Anna, Jeff and our Chefs will start making your Puddings in January 2025... just for you and yours next December 2025.

Happy Christmas from all the Crew & Management at Macreddin Village.