

The Farmette Cookbook: Recipes and Adventures from My Life on an Irish Farm

Imen McDonnell

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Omnivores are not left out of the new crop of cookbooks, and the focus in *Farmette* is on growing or buying the best quality ingredients from local sources. Author Imen McDonnell was a confirmed American urbanite before meeting her future husband, scion of a family dairy farm in County Limerick, Ireland. The engaging chronicle of her transformation into the Farmette is strewn like dried fruit in a Halloween Barmbrack among the recipes and the creamy photographs of food and farm. She's a great storyteller and infuses this memoir-laden cookbook with tales of how she fell headlong in love with a man, a family, a farm, and a country.

McDonnell was guided into Irish country cooking by her late mother-in-law, Peggy, and there are generous helpings of her slightly tweaked, traditional recipes for holiday favorites, comforting meals for drizzly days, and baked goods. The author champions the splendid local fish, potato varieties, meats, and berries, but leads off with a rich introduction to fresh dairy products, including directions for making butter, a number of cheeses, Milk Jam, and even homemade Irish Cream.

The author developed her own niche on the family farm by cultivating a large kitchen garden and scouring the farm and countryside for wild edibles. Foraging treks with her young son and her flair for incorporating American and other ethnic influences are clearly evident in such innovative recipes for Lavender Sloe Gin Jellies and Wild Garlic and Soft Irish Cheese Tamales. Through it all, she interprets Irish farmhouse cooking for others, from a tour of the Irish pantry, to revelations about how the Irish really celebrate St. Patrick's Day (hint: it's not with corned beef), to her helpful scullery notes at the end of each recipe.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (Summer 2016)

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