
Scots wha hae

Celebrating Robbie Burns Day

DON TSE

Robert Burns (1759-1796) is Scotland's most famous poet. You may have sung one of his most well-known works just a few weeks ago — "Auld Lang Syne." So loved is the Bard of Ayrshire that Robbie Burns Day is celebrated around the world each January 25, the anniversary of his birth.

The most common way to celebrate

Robbie Burns Day is to attend a Burns Supper, where attendees don kilts and celebrate all things Scottish. Such dinners typically start with the "Selkirk Grace," after which the haggis is piped in (a bagpiper plays and leads the way as the cook carries the haggis to the host's table). The haggis itself is then formally addressed. You can read the address, which was written by Burns, here: robertburns.org/works/147.shtml. Scotch is then used to toast the haggis before everyone eats.

The haggis is traditionally served with "tatties and neeps" (potatoes and

BOOZE

turnips), with other courses of Scottish fare. Theses might include oatcakes and cranachan (a trifle dessert made with whipped cream, raspberries, honey, oatmeal and Scotch).

And of course, much more Scotch is consumed throughout the dinner.

There may be readings of some of Burns's works and the evening ends with a singing of "Auld Lang Syne."

In Calgary, the Calgary Burns Club hosts an annual dinner at the Telus Convention Centre. Formal attire is required. Tickets are \$175 and are available through their website at calgaryburnsclub.com.

Kensington Wine Market also hosts a dinner each year. This year's event is being held at Fort Calgary and will feature whiskies from Benromach Distillery and Gordon & MacPhail independent bottlers. The cost is \$99 and tickets are available by calling the store at 403-283-8000.

Willow Park Wines & Spirits does not have a dinner, but for a mere \$25, you can attend a tasting at their store featuring six expressions of Bruichladdich. Haggis will also be served. Contact them at 403-296-1640.

If Scotch isn't your thing, you can still celebrate Robbie Burns Day by enjoying a Scottish-style beer. Alley Kat recently released its latest seasonal offering, Darn Tartan Scotch Ale. This dark brown beer is appropriately malty but not overly sweet. There are flavours of peanut shells and, long after the beer is swallowed, the flavour of peat emerges. (People often equate peat with smoke, but they are different.)

And remember, as Scotland's favourite son said, "...if ye wish her gratef' preyer, gie her a haggis!"