

## **ST. PATRICK'S DAY TRADITIONS**

St. Patrick's Day is a celebration of Irish culture as much as it is about the saint. While many of the symbols associated with March 17th are directly related to St. Patrick, some have absolutely nothing to do with him. The most well-known tradition on St. Patrick's Day is probably the practice of wearing green. Some Irish traditions receive an extra shot in the arm on St. Patrick's Day. It is always lucky to find a four-leafed clover, but it is even luckier to find one on March 17th. Choosing St. Patrick's Day to kiss the famous Blarney Stone is also considered extra lucky.

### **Snakes**

Although there is no historical evidence for the event, St. Patrick is credited in popular legend with driving all of the snakes out of Ireland. Depending on which version of the legend you hear, he either drove them into the sea after giving a sermon on a hilltop, or he fasted and meditated for forty days on a mountain, which drove the snakes away. Either way, the snakes fled into the sea and drowned. In actual fact, the Ice Age took care of any snakes that might have been in Ireland. What the legend truly represents is the driving out of paganism from Ireland.

### **Shamrocks**

There is no historical evidence for this legend. When Patrick struggled with the task of explaining the Trinity to the Irish, he used the shamrock as an analogy. Each leaf on the plant is of equal size and importance, as it is with the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The legend had enough influence that the shamrock became the national symbol of Ireland.

### **Leprechauns**

Okay, the little guys have nothing to do with St. Patrick. Zip. Nada. In Irish legend, leprechauns are a far cry from their happy-go-lucky modern counterparts. They were generally seen as bad-tempered spirits, capable of great mischief. They did have pots of gold and catching a leprechaun forced it to reveal the gold's location, although the leprechaun was likely to come back at you later. They probably became associated with St. Patrick's Day because a) they were Irish, and b) they looked cute on greeting cards. I doubt the original leprechauns would be too pleased with this.

### **Food**

Traditional Irish food is an essential part of any St. Patrick's Day feast. Corned beef and cabbage is popular fare, as is Irish soda bread and potato pancakes. Many people enjoy the opportunity to go wild with the green food coloring, which can be mixed into cakes, pancakes, yogurt, and the most popular – beer.

One or two traditions have very little to do with St. Patrick. Leprechauns have become one of the symbols of St. Patrick's Day, but their inclusion has more to do with greeting card designers than any involvement with Ireland's patron saint. As for green beer, well, do we really need an excuse to drink beer? Sláinte!



**HAPPY SAINT PATRICK'S DAY!**

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See: [http://www.saint-patricks-day-traditions.com/html/cultural\\_icons.html](http://www.saint-patricks-day-traditions.com/html/cultural_icons.html)