

## Spring Reverie Moves the Year toward Midsummer

*We shall not cease  
from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place  
for the first time.  
Through the unknown,  
unremembered gate  
When the last of earth  
left to discover  
Is that which was the beginning  
— T.S. Eliot*

By CYNTHIA WALLENTINE  
May morning, sun up, clean air, distant sounds, almost too perfect. Too likely taken for granted.

Favoured plants and frustrating weeds vie for the same soil, sun, and nutrients. Fair enough.

Both humble and exalted, Beltaine, May Eve, swept through once again, bringing a green mist of unmistakable magic to even the oldest eyes.

Imbolg, in February, was the outset of the growing year, and Beltaine marks wild maturity where seeds of ideas dismissed in youth, may yet find fertile ground.

In the space in which I sit, dandelions compete with lawn. Smaller flowers, and bigger bushes, bloom.

In the distance, tall, tall ash trees layer new neon-green leaves against a blue, blue sky. In one glance, the moon, a jet contrail, and a hawk ply guessed-at trajectories.



While it marks the advent of Celtic summer, this time of year remains spring to me. To the Celts, the year begins with winter.

Our modern association of spring with beauty and youth, and winter with old age and bittered brow, perhaps bears some rethinking.

Though beautiful, this season was typically one of immense hunger for Irish forebears. Imbolg broke the fast of the cold season with first-born lambs.

By Beltaine, crops planted had not yet produced. While youth is a sight to behold, it needs care, and can neither thrive, nor yield, without guidance.

From Beltaine into June's midsummer, comes the flourish of the growing year.

Stored energy impatiently pushes forth. With luck, ideas drive further than before, in the mind and hand of young, old, and in-between.

Spring into summer, its industry relies not on youth but on the perception of those who gaze upon its riches, feel its energy, and are moved by its emergence.

On any day, great and small changes in perception alter our course in unpredictable ways.

Nearby, memories of decades passed flow to me from a great pussy willow, just now leafing-out.

To my children, the mature bush solidly marks ground, almost as a statue. To spring pollinators, it is the only game in town for much-needed food.

Fluid, solid, transitory — our lives are built utterly on the moments we occupy, and the meaning we confer upon them.

Youth, aged, or middle-ground — each exists in every season, and every day, a literal matter of our point of view.

From blazing bonfire at Beltaine, to the almost imperceptible flip of summer into autumn at summer solstice — places we have been, but never been — and will be one day again...depending on how you look at it.

In the distance, a high chime, perhaps the Silver Bough, calls to away. The wind speaks, the very air glitters, from green into the gold of midsummer.

## Scottish creations fill this cookbook

OUTLANDER KITCHEN  
By Theresa Carle-Sanders  
Delacorte Press  
ISBN 978-1-101-96758-4

*Reviewed by Catholine Butler*  
*Outlander Kitchen: The Official Outlander Companion Cookbook* features recipes inspired by Diana Gabaldon's bestselling series, *Outlander*, now also a critically acclaimed television series.

Claire Beauchamp Randall's incredible journey from postwar Britain to Eighteenth Century Scotland is a feast for all five senses and taste is no exception.

From Claire's first lonely bowl of porridge at Castle Leoch to the decadent roast beef served after her hasty wedding to Highland warrior Jamie Fraser, to fried chicken to buttermilk drop biscuits on Fraser's Ridge in Colonial America over 25 years and several trips through the stones later, *Outlander Kitchen* contains over 100 creative, doable recipes to tempt every fan's palate.

What is really interesting about this cookbook is that each recipe is accompanied by an excerpt from the book in which it appeared, as well as mouth-watering colour photography.

The recipes range from hot broth at Castle Leoch, a meal in itself with some hearty bread. Crowdie cheese, Scotland's most ancient cheese. At one time every crofter in the Highlands made it.

Cock-a-leekie soup, quintessentially Scottish, is a popular soup served throughout the winter in Scotland, and a common addition on the table on St. Andrew's Day (November 30), Hogmanay (December 31), and Burns Night (January 25).

One of my favourite recipes is the bangers and mash with slow-cooked onion

gravy. British sausages — particularly those made during rationing in World War II — were made with an excess of water and would sometimes burst when cooked over high heat, leading to their nickname bangers.

The onions for the gravy cook low and slow all day to make an unbelievably flavourful gravy and the rest comes together for an easy end-of-the-day meal.

Mash the potatoes, stir in butter, add the cream and the onion gravy, mound in the middle of the plate and top with one or two sausages and serve with green peas. To die for.

Some of the other delicious recipes are: Mrs. Graham's oatmeal scones with clotted cream; honey-buttermilk oat bread; and Mrs. Bug's buttermilk drop biscuits.

And some before and after dinner such as Frank's sherry tippie, recommended before meals and after a delicious, satisfying meal.

Atholl Brose for the Bonnie Prince, made with rolled oats, honey, cream and blended Scotch whisky.

A batch can be made up ahead and will keep for a month in the refrigerator...pity it's only billed as an after-dinner digestive!

There are a few other recipes included in the cookbook but Scottish recipes predominate and reading their ingredients was making me very hungry for some real pure hearty Celtic food.

If you aren't planning a trip to Scotland right away, get the ingredients for the recipes in *Outlander Kitchen* and try your hand at making some of the traditional Scottish creations.

You can also read the background of the recipe, while the tantalizing aroma fills your kitchen as you anxiously wait for it to cook.

## National protocol urged to detect cases of the 'Celtic Curse'

ROB Ross of Port Albert, Saskatchewan could not understand why he was suddenly experiencing seizures, joint pain, significant weight gain and memory loss.

Two years later — after many visits to various doctors, and after he had developed diabetes, arthritis and heart and kidney problems — he finally learned that he was suffering from Canada's most common genetic disorder: hereditary hemochromatosis (HHC).

It's a condition that is easily treated and Rob could have avoided his long list of health problems if it had been detected sooner.

A group of 10 prominent Canadian physicians are now recommending a national protocol to promote more timely diagnosis of this common genetic disorder which is estimated to affect approximately 80,000 Canadians.

Because it primarily affects people of Northern European heritage — particularly those of Celtic descent — it is often referred to as the "Celtic Curse."

"The problem is that thousands of Canadians with the disorder — as well as their doctors — don't know they have it," says Dr. Sam Krikler, a hematopathologist at Surrey Memorial Hospital and Associate Clinical Professor in the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at the University of British Columbia.

Dr. Krikler also chairs the Canadian Hemochromatosis Society's Medical Advisory Board.

Dr. Krikler says HHC can impair the body's ability to shed excess iron, which is then stored in the organs or joints.

If the iron continues to accumulate, it can cause a host of serious and sometimes fatal conditions — including liver and heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, mental illness, and cancer.

"The good news is, hemochromatosis can be treated very easily, without drugs," he says.

"The treatment — phlebotomy, or blood-letting — is usually effective in reducing iron levels back to normal.

"The bad news is that the HHC diagnosis is too often missed, or only comes after irreversible damage has already occurred."

A recent analysis by the Society has pointed out that the cost of treating cases of liver disease, diabetes, and arthritis resulting from undiagnosed HHC in Canada runs into many millions of dollars each year.

"There is a strong business case to allocate resources for the early diagnosis and treatment of HHC in addition to the ethical imperative to prevent and minimize suffering," Dr. Krikler says.

May has been declared national Hemochromatosis Awareness Month in Canada.

The Canadian Hemochromatosis Society is a registered charitable organization dedicated to raising awareness of HHC among the medical community and providing support for those with the disorder.

For more information about the disorder visit the society's website [www.toomuchiron.ca](http://www.toomuchiron.ca).

## Travel and high seas adventures make for a captivating read

AN IRISHMAN IN CHINA  
By William P. Sexton  
O'Seasain Publishing Co  
ISBN: 978-0-9701310-4-1

*Reviewed by Catholine Butler*  
*An Irishman in China* is the fifth Irish historical novel by author William (Bill) Sexton.

The main character in the novel is Connor Murray who spends all his waking days as a young man dreaming of travelling to exotic places.

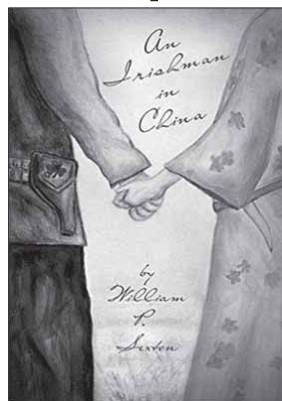
Any free time away from chores on the family farm is spent down on the docks at Cobh in County Cork watching the ships come and go in the harbour.

Connor is always hoping a ship will arrive from some foreign port and he can get an opportunity to speak to some of the seamen onboard.

His parents know nothing of Connor's dreams and Father McKenna, the local parish priest, tells him he feels that Connor has the makings of a priest in him.

Connor is incredulous and tells Father McKenna he isn't holy enough and he has other plans to travel the world.

The priest replies he could also do that as a missionary.....not what Connor



wants to hear.

Then, Connor's daydreams finally become reality when a cargo ship having engine trouble pulls into Cobh harbour for repairs.

After meeting captain Tom Snyder and some convincing and begging, Connor's wish is fulfilled and he is spirited aboard the ship as a stowaway

That night the ship sets sail with Connor heading off into his adventure.

Unbeknownst to Connor, Captain

Snyder isn't completely above board in his helpfulness and Connor could never have imagined what lay ahead on his journey.

This captivating tale spreads out over three countries with shifts in the plot that make the story completely unpredictable.

Connor's Irish temper gets him in and out of fights and some near death situations...but always with the luck of the Irish on his side.

As with all of Sexton's novels, there are twists and turns. It's an exciting read.

William P. Sexton was born in New York City to Irish-born parents and he lived in Ireland during the Seventies.

He is now married with two sons and two grandchildren and living in New Jersey.

The author's four previous Irish historical novels are: *Liam O'Connor I Have Not Forgotten Thee*, *When Irish Eyes Are Spying*, and *Escape From Barbados*.

There is no doubt that William P. Sexton is Irish to the core and he has dedicated this novel *An Irishman In China* to his mother and father who came from Ireland — Mary O'Connor (Cork) and Leo Sexton (Limerick).