



St. Patrick's Day: Not My Sort of Thing

This year, as in most years of my more recent past, I will not go out for St. Patrick's Day. In fact, not only will I not go out, I will actively stay in. I will stock my fridge with food things, restock my liqueur cabinet with booze things, shut off my phone, close the curtains, and bolt the door. I will even remove all traces of green just in case someone happens to see it and thinks I'm one of them.

Now please, don't get the wrong idea about what I am and am not. I am not anti-Irish whatsoever. In fact, I love the Irish! I love U2 and Guinness and Jamison whisky and long, entertaining stories and potatoes and boiled things and dark pubs and cable-knit wool sweaters and James Joyce and the movie *My Left Foot*. In fact, many of my ancestors hailed from that Emerald Isle. My last name is McGarvey for blarney sake! No, I am not anti-Irish, I've just come to realize that St. Patrick's Day is simply not my sort of thing.

I realize that St. Patrick's Day is celebrated in many different countries — not least of them Ireland. It is, in fact, the most widely celebrated saint's day in the world. Alas, I have never been to St. Patrick's Day in Australia or Switzerland or Japan (though I did pay \$25 for a pint of Guinness in Tokyo once) or England (that's got to be awkward) so I can not speak to

their interpretations. I am, however, very familiar with what the good people of the United States have done with it. It goes something like this:

Wear something with green in it to the office. Maybe even add some extra pizzazz to your look with a "Kiss me, I'm Irish" pin or a brooch that looks like a leprechaun or a tie covered with shamrocks. Pinch people who you encounter that have failed to incorporate green into their outfit. Leave work with less friends than when you arrived because pinching people is obnoxious. Go straight from work to the nearest happy hour and begin your mission by ordering something strong and a shot. Meet up with friends, some of whom have no doubt come laden with St. Patty's Day paraphernalia (think: plastic green bowling hats, light up flashing shamrock necklaces, light up flashing shamrock antenna headgear, more things that say "Kiss me, I'm Irish" or some lude variation there of, oversized plush leprechaun hats, and, of course, a large assortment of things that make noise). Order a round or two of shots. Notice a small verbal argument taking place between two gentlemen standing nearby. Decide to leave the bar you're

at because it has gotten too crowded and it isn't "Irish" enough. Head to your next drinking establishment making sure to use those noisemakers during your transit. Arrive at next drinking establishment to discover that it is even more crowded than the place where you started. Immediately order a round of shots and more strong drinks. Claim at some point to be at least one eighteenth Irish (this will endear you to your fellow celebrants as each of them will most likely also claim some percentage of Irish heritage before the end of the night). Order another round of shots. Also, while you're at the bar, go ahead and get two strong drinks instead of just the one because it's getting more crowded and who knows how long it'll be before you can get back to the bar. Begin a short conversation about how many cops you've seen out tonight. Start to sing *Danny Boy* in your lowest octave but then realize by the second or third line that you don't know the words. Yell to your friend who's going back up to the bar to not forget the shots. Witness a heated altercation between several people on your way to the bathroom. Try to use the bathroom as quickly as possible so as to escape the pungent



odor of vomit. Decide to again move locations. This time while in transit, strive to be the loudest band of revelers on the sidewalk. Pass an escalating screaming match between two groups of obviously inebriated merrymakers. Arrive at next party place to discover that it is the most crowded yet and that there is a cover charge. Once inside, order shots and more strong drinks. Realize that it's St. Patrick's Day and you haven't had a Guinness yet, so order one of those as well. Complain about how much money you've spent. ***SCENE MISSING*** Decide that this is the most opportune moment to bring up that thing that your friend did a while back that's been bothering you, speaking loudly enough so that the whole table can hear you. ***SCENE MISSING*** Pick up your drinks and your belongings from your table before they are knocked over by the handful of burly men embrangled in fisticuffs that is heading in your direction. See a middle-aged woman fall off her chair. ***SCENE MISSING*** Offer to buy one of your friends their next drink and another round of shots if they go to the bar for you to get yours. Immediately forget this and make your way back to the bar yourself. While waiting for

the bartender to notice you, you find yourself in a back and forth of name calling with a large breasted woman wearing a low-cut, tight fitting Celtics shirt and plush leprechaun hat. ***SCENE MISSING*** You make your way out to the sidewalk to find that it is a sea of snarling, stumbling, wobbling people all wearing uncannily similar outfits. You correctly recognize that this crowd is not friendly, but volatile. You go to a street corner where you are one of a dozen people trying to hail a cab or call and Uber. All around you are flashing blue lights, car horns, and screaming. You observe a man throwing up a few feet away. The luck of the Irish is conspicuously missing as you wait for what seems like an hour to catch a ride home. ***FADE TO BLACK***

The Irish have had more than their fair share of misery to deal with throughout their history: English invasion, the great potato famine, the IRA, Sinead O'Conner going coocoo. They are proud, strong willed survivors and they bloody well deserve to have their very own day of international recognition. But St. Patrick's Day (The American Version) really has little to do with Ireland at all and everything to do with getting snookered. And

listen, before you jump to any assumptions about my own personal habits based on that last statement, let me assure you that I love to imbibe. One might even classify me as a professional. St. Patrick's Day, on the other hand, is for amateurs. People who are looking for an excuse to go out in public and tear it up. If Thanksgiving is for family and Christmas is for presents and the Fourth of July is for barbecuing and Valentine's Day is for lovers and President's Day is for sleeping in, St. Patrick's Day is for blacking out.

And the Irish must certainly be given props for being so wise as to put their day of celebration in the middle of the most boring time of year for Catholics – Lent (the Catholic Church lifts Lenten restrictions such as drinking alcohol on St. Patrick's Day).

I'm sure I could dig up a "Kiss me, I'm Irish" pin somewhere (or at least a "Kiss me, I'm something-or-another"). And I actually own a fantastic green velvet shirt that's been pulled from the back of the closet on many a March 17th. But I was younger then and my patience, as well as my liver, had yet to be tried. Now that I'm older and wiser, I'll watch the fights from my window. However, if anybody is interested in singing *Danny Boy*, give me a shout. I know all the words now... ●