

Just the answer when Irish tummies are growling

BY DAVID JOHNSTON, THE GAZETTE SEPTEMBER 16, 2009 COMMENTS (1)

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Chef Stéphane Urier added Guinness beer, peas, carrots and shallots to create an Irish poutine that even has the colours of the Irish flag.

Photograph by: Dave Sidaway, The Gazette

Ever since Joe Ryan from Philadelphia created the first ski centre on Mount Tremblant in 1939, the area has been attracting new people and new ideas.

The 1991 purchase of Mont Tremblant Resort Inc. by Vancouver-based Intrawest resulted in massive investments that turned Tremblant into a tourist destination with intercontinental appeal.

This cultural and culinary fusion has produced a new addition to the slow but sure internationalization of poutine, Quebec's gift to global fast food.

Irish poutine.

This Celtic riff on the holy trinity of french fries, cheese curds and barbeque gravy is an irresistible curiosity on the menu at Nelly O'Connors Irish Pub, in the Hotel Mont Tremblant. The hotel sits in the centre of the town of Mont Tremblant, four kilometres from the colourful village at the base of the Tremblant ski hill. The 107-year-old hotel was purchased in May 2008 by Irish immigrants and a Montrealer born and raised in Toronto. These new owners installed the pub.

Malachai and Louise

O'Connor already were well-acquainted with Tremblant, having visited as tourists before immigrating. And Toronto native David Innis's relationship with Tremblant dates to his university days a generation ago, when he was attracted by the skiing.

Irish poutine was created by the hotel's executive chef, Stéphane Urier. He comes from Normandy, the region of France that was the major source of immigration to Quebec in the 17th and early 18th centuries.

For his Irish poutine, Urier took classic poutine and:

Created a new gravy, a blend of classic gravy, veal stock and Guinness beer

Added peas and diced carrots. Why? "Because peas and carrots are fixtures" on the Irish dinner plate, Urier said, and because green and orange, as in peas and carrots, are also colours in the Irish flag.

Added chopped shallots. Why? "To remind people of champs," Urier said. Champs is a dish of baked mashed-potatoes and shallots that is popular in Ireland.

Let me just say I would have no hesitation recommending Irish poutine to anyone with an enterprising palate.

Do like I did: put one hand over your heart before you eat it, and two hands over your belly when you finish it.

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