

QUICK GUIDE

Ingredients to a Successful Burns Supper

BURNS SUPPERS have been in existence now for over some 200 years. The first Burns Supper occurred just 5 years after his death, on the 21st of July 1801. Nine men held the first Burns Supper in the Burns Cottage itself and they agreed to meet each year. The Reverend Hamilton Paul organized the celebration and is attributed to establishing the key elements that make up the supper to this day:

- Address to the Haggis
- The Toast to the Immortal Memory
- Good friends, food and drink
- Recitation and celebration of the work of Robert Burns

Burns Suppers are celebrated all over the world, on every continent and just about every country. Since the first Burns Supper was held, the number of people celebrating Scotland's National Poet has continued to grow and grow. Celebrated on, or about, the Bard's birthday. Burns Suppers range from formal gatherings to uproariously informal dinners. Most Burns Suppers fall in the middle of this range, and adhere, more or less, to the time honoured form established by Reverend Hamilton Paul.

Burns' recognition increased after his death, and Burns Suppers became popular tradition spreading quickly across Scotland. A group of Ayrshire merchants in Greenock held the first Burns Club Supper on 29th of January 1802. Later his birth date was discovered to be the 25th January and thereafter this date was used. And the Burns clubs grew.

This growth wasn't constrained to only Scotland. The Scottish diaspora who ventured off to foreign countries took their heritage and traditions with them, including Burns Suppers. This tradition to annually celebrate the bonds of friendship and poetry caught imaginations globally, expanding to areas as far and diverse as Australia, Russia, and China.

The Calgary Burns Club will be hosting a Burns Supper on the evening of Friday January 26 at the "Hotel Arts" in Calgary. This is a member and invited guest only event. Check our Club website www.calgaryburnsclub.com for further details.

There are numerous publications on hosting a Burns Supper and we encourage you to refer to those for insightful detail. Here is a Burns Supper high level guide for your consideration.

BURNS SUPPER ELEMENTS

- National Anthem(s) [Formal Supper]
- Grace [often the Selkirk Grace]
- Soup and Starters
- Haggis Parade [Formal Supper]
- Address to the Haggis
- Main Course
- Dessert
- Speeches are usually interspersed with recitations and songs
- Loyal Toast
- The Immortal Memory
- Toast to the Lassies
- Reply to the Toast to the Lassies
- Other Toast(s) [Optional]
- Auld Lang Syne

ADDRESS TO THE HAGGIS

After the "Soup and Starters", the Haggis is set at the table. At a formal Burns Supper the Haggis is carried into the room, usually preceded by a piper. Whether piped in or placed at the table, the address 'To a Haggis' is recited often by a special guest. This is one of Burns's best known poems and can be found on social media channels such as YouTube.

Following the meal there are commonly three speeches being:

- The Immortal Memory : discussing an aspect of Robert's life.
- Toast to the Lasses : usually with humour and wit.
- If the Supper is attended by ladies, then a response is given by a lady.

The speeches are usually interspersed with recitations and songs.

THE IMMORTAL MEMORY

The Immortal Memory is a speech and is the most important part of the supper. A special guest must address the assembly speaking about an aspect concerning Robert Burns. This can involve a resume of his life, or a chosen theme, revolving around the man Robert Burns, his work, loves, interests and life. The speech should give a reason why Robert Burns should remain immortal.

At the end of the Immortal Memory, everyone stands to toast 'the Immortal Memory of Robert Burns' and this is where the title of the speech comes from.

THE TOAST TO LASSIES

The Toast to the Lassies is nearly always delivered by a male. The Toast is usually humorous and can include non-complimentary ideas regarding the fairer sex. However, it is essential that it must conclude by praising the lassies, speaking of love and perhaps remembrances.

REPLY TO THE TOAST TO THE LASSIES

The reply is normally given by a female. Again, humour is expected, giving a chance to respond to the initial Toast to the Lassies, without fear of response. In this respect, the lady has the last word.

The evening should conclude with everyone joining in singing 'Auld Lang Syne'

--- INGREDIENTS ---

BILL O'FARE

- Soup and Starters [Cock-a-Leekie Soup | Smoked Salmon]
- Haggis wi' a' the Honours [mashed tatties – potatoes, and neeps - turnips] often served with Whisky
- The Main Course [Fish, Lamb or Beef]
- Sweets and Puddings [Scotch Trifle, red fruits with Drambuie, Atholl Brose]
- Cheese [with oatcakes]

DRINKS

- Aperitifs
- Wines
- Whisky

SPEECHES

- Loyal Toast
- The Immortal Memory [celebration of the genius, life and works of Robert Burns]
- Toast to the Lassies [nearly always delivered by a male]
- Reply to the Toast to the Lassies
- Others [Toast to Absent Friends]

POSSIBLE BURNS RECITATION

- A Man's a Man for A' That
- To a Mouse
- Holy Willie's Prayer
- Tam o' Shanter

POPULAR SONGS

- My Love is Like a Red, Red Rose
- Ae Fond Kiss
- Flow Gently Sweet Afton
- O, Were I on Parnassus Hill