

# Burns Night (January 25)



## The Noble Haggis

Regard his soulful mien  
his air of rugged  
fortitude, of unflinching  
stoicism. This...  
the embodiment  
of the true  
Highland  
spirit

For serious info about  
Burns Night see  
[scotland.org/celebrate-scotland/burns-night](http://scotland.org/celebrate-scotland/burns-night)

The Haggis  
hunting season  
runs from Nov  
30 to Jan 25

Selkirk Grace  
"Some hae meat and canna eat  
And some wad eat that want it  
But we hae meat and we can eat  
And sae the lord be thankit"

All food fans will enjoy having a crack at hosting a proper Burns Night and, more particularly, the Haggis. Culinary legend, symbol, and delicacy, its earthy flavours reflect the sere, austere, and untamed landscape of its origin; of reflected worlds in mountain lakes, grouse-haunted moors, and quite possibly Jurassic waterlife.

The Taster salutes the Haggis, compliments him on his Tartan, and suggests the following for a Traditional Burns Night Supper

**Preparations.** You need not be Scots to host a Burns Night. All you need do is use the term 'Scots' (as opposed to 'Scottish', the mark of an irredeemable Sassenach) and never spell Whisky with an E (that would be Oirish Whiskey, an it please yer honour). Just ask a Scots chum or two to Address the Haggis. The Taster is pleased to report that, the one time it did this, it transpired that none of the Glaswegian and Edinburgh personalities so invited had ever Addressed The Haggis in

their lives; and they were very pleased to be asked to do so.

**Piping in the Guests**  
A piper welcomes the guests. If you can't source a traditionally-clad piper, a CD of Scottish Airs will do

**Selkirk Grace (see box, right)**  
A short but important prayer, to be read by the Host (or designated speaker). Also known as Burns's Grace at Kirkcudbright (pronounced "kurk-uh-bruh").

**Piping in The Haggis**  
Guests stand to welcome the star attraction, ideally delivered on a silver platter by a procession of: Chef, Piper (or Bearer of the Ceremonial iPod), Those Who Will Address the Haggis, and Whisky-Bearers. Guests clap in time to the music until the Haggis reaches the table.

**Addressing The Haggis**  
The Haggis-Carver/Addresser now seizes his, or her, moment of glory. They may ad-lib, if they wish, or

(given the pressure of expectation) read from a script. They cut the haggis along its length ("trenching its gushing entrails") at the appropriate point. (It may be advisable to make a small cut in the haggis beforehand in the privacy of the kitchen, to allow the escape of steam and prevent any superheated explosions of gore all over the honoured guests.) During the final, triumphant line — 'Gie her a haggis!' — the Addresser should raise the Haggis to at least shoulder-height, which the audience should receive with rapturous applause.

**Toast to The Haggis**  
The Speaker requests the audience to join in the toast: typically, "The Haggis!" The Haggis may be baptised

afresh with a splash of neat whisky before serving. If the procession withdraws for its noble cause (to be cut up in the kitchen), guests should clap during the withdrawal.

**Menu**  
The traditional starter would be cock-a-leekie soup. This may be prepared according to tradition, requiring anything up to 24 hours' hard labour beforehand; alternatively, we understand, a tinned version is available. For the main course, the Haggis is accompanied by neeps and tatties (mashed turnips and potatoes — as nice as you choose to make them, with cream, butter, nutmeg etc); followed by sherry trifle or 'cloodie dumpling' (search online); cheese and oatcakes or bannocks (flatbread — lots of recipes online); and malt whisky. Scots salmon and/or vegetarian haggis are also acceptable.

**Entertainment**  
Burns songs and readings. Or perhaps not. It depends how many literature graduates you know/

are able to inveigle into the evening, However proceedings go, though, it is only polite to conclude with a Toast to the Memory of Robert Burns.

**Auld Lang Syne**  
The Host requests guests to stand and belt out a rousing rendition of the famous tune (see right). Carriages home will then, if the Host has any sense, be ordered. For Auld Lang Syne, my dears — for Auld Lang Syne!

**Address to a Haggis**  
Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face,  
Great chieftain of the puddin' race!  
Aboon them a' ye tak your place,  
Painch, tripe, or thairm:  
Weel are ye worthy o' a grace,  
As lang's my arm.  
The groaning trencher there ye fill,  
Your hurdies like a distant hill,  
Your pin wad help to mend a mill  
In time o' need,  
While thro' your pores the dews distil  
Like amber bead.  
His knife see rustic Labour dight,  
An cut you up wi ready slight,  
Trenching your gushing entrails bright,  
Like onle ditch:  
And then, O what a glorious sight,  
Warm reekin, rich!  
(it continues in this vein for four more verses)

**Auld Lang Syne**  
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
And never brought to mind?  
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
And auld lang syne!  
For auld lang syne, my dear,  
For auld lang syne,  
We'll take a cup o' kindness yet,  
For auld lang syne.



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