

Clarke family gearing up for St. Patrick's festivities

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"May your blessings outnumber the shamrocks that grow
And may trouble avoid you
wherever you go."

- Irish blessing

Shamrocks are the national emblem of Ireland, and coveted as the symbol of spring's rebirth. The three-leaf clover also represents the arrival of St. Patrick's Day's festivities.

St. Patrick's Day has been celebrated in Ireland for hundreds of years, and has become well-rooted in America. In fact, the first St. Patrick's Day parade is said to have marched across U.S. soil. Another American angle is corned beef, which was introduced to the traditional meal by Irish immigrants in New York in the early 1900s, replacing Irish bacon.

The Clarke family of Barrington has been cooking up traditional Irish fare all week. After being deluged with requests, Matthew and Leone Clarke have expanded their annual St. Patrick's menu at Clarke's Irish Bakery and Deli, 455 W. Northwest Highway, to a full week. Through Saturday, they are offering favorites such as corned beef and cabbage, Irish stew, pasties, Irish cottage soup, brown bread, Irish soda bread, and many delightful desserts. Call (847) 381-5113 for details.

The Clarkes are also preparing the St. Patrick's Day dinners for a St. Anne's fund-raiser. Despite the long cooking hours, they enjoy celebrating the holiday spirit with customers from near and far. Once the hectic holiday is over, the Clarkes will be planning their new weekend Irish breakfast menu. They have noticed an increase in Irish immigrants in the area, many of whom have requested breakfast favorites from their homeland. Amid the March madness, the Clarkes keep their daughters, Kathrine and Stacey, priority one. They are looking forward to Kathrine's speech tournament later this month.

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