



The **Omaha Pipes and Drums**
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 a Celtic tradition since 1970



**Haggis: "Great chieftain
 o' the puddin' race"**

Ingredients:

Set of sheep's heart, lungs
 and liver (cleaned by a
 butcher)

One beef bung

3 cups finely chopped suet

One cup medium ground
 oatmeal

Two medium onions, finely
 chopped

One cup beef stock

One teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon pepper

One teaspoon nutmeg

½ teaspoon mace

Method:

Trim off any excess fat and
 sinew from the sheep's
 intestine and, if present,
 discard the windpipe. Place
 in a large pan, cover with
 water and bring to the boil.
 Reduce the heat and
 simmer for an hour or
 possibly longer to ensure
 that they are all tender.
 Drain and cool.

Finely chop the meat and
 combine in a large bowl
 with the suet, oatmeal,
 finely chopped onions, beef
 stock, salt, pepper, nutmeg
 and mace. Make sure the



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Haggis

The haggis is widely believed to be a
 Scottish delicacy (and I use the term
 loosely) made from a sheep's stomach
 stuffed with wheat and barley, among
 other things. However, rumors persist of
 the haggis in fact being a small furry
 animal native to Scotland.

Haggis Hunting

A strange and eerie sound drifts slowly
 down the glen, *uisge beatha! uisge
 beatha!* The sun is peeping over the
 horizon but none can feel the warm rays
 through the swirling mist. The men are
 huddled by the traditional "siggah" rock,
 chanting and taking turns at the cask with
 the warm golden water of life.

Suddenly, a tracker appears on the
 heathery slope and calls "*haggi!aggi!*" In
 a flash, the men are up and running,
 spreading out in the ancient hunting
 pattern which each had learned as a boy.
 Catching a wild haggis, in these days of
 scarcity, would make a living legend of the
 team involved.

A haggis whistle is used to attract the
 animals.



The most difficult part of the ancient art of
 haggis hunting is actually locating the
 beast and then chasing it in the right
 direction. The haggis has evolved to be
 just a bit faster than the fittest man and
 more sure footed than a mountain goat. It
 runs along the hillside using its two long
 legs and the one short leg to maximum
 advantage.

Once it slips through the hunting line it can be
 gone into the gorse in a flash. The hunters
 must keep behind and on the uphill side so
 that the haggis is gradually driven down to
 lower ground. This can take over three hours,
 but once the critter is down on the glen floor
 the advantage swings quickly in favor of the
 hunters – because of its uneven legs the
 haggis can only run in circles when on flat
 ground.



As soon as the hunters see a haggis circling in
 this fashion they surround it, and bring up the
 cask for celebratory refreshment. Within about
 twenty minutes the haggis can be found lying
 flat out through dizziness and exhaustion.
 Soon after that the men are usually found
 lying flat out around the haggis, with an empty
 cask rolling amongst them!



ingredients are mixed well. Stuff the meat and spices mixture into the beef bung which should be over half full. Then press out the air and tie the open ends tightly with string. Make sure that you leave room for the mixture to expand or else it may burst while cooking. If it looks as though it may do that, prick with a sharp needle to reduce the pressure.

Place in a pot and cover with water. Bring to the boil and immediately reduce the heat and simmer, covered, for three hours. Avoid boiling vigorously to avoid bursting the skin.

Serve hot with "champit tatties and bashit neeps" (mashed/creamed potato and turnip/swede). For added flavor, you can add some nutmeg to the potatoes and allspice to the turnip/swede. Some people like to pour a little whisky over their haggis - Drambuie is even better! Don't go overboard on this or you'll make the haggis cold.

Since 1971 it has been illegal to import haggis into the US from the UK due to a ban on food containing sheep lung. The situation was further complicated in 1989 when all UK beef and lamb was banned from importation to the US due to the crisis. In 2010 a spokeswoman for the US Department of Agriculture stated that they were reviewing the ban on beef and lamb products, but the ban on food containing sheep lung will remain in force.

Haggis Hurling

Haggis hurling is claimed to be a traditional Scottish sport. It is said that the haggis would be prepared for lunch for the man of the family who was out working the croft or cutting peat, by his wife. Scotland is known as a land of rivers and bogs, so walking from the croft house to the place of work could often entail a long way round to cross a river or low lying ground.

In these cases the wife would throw the cooked haggis to the husband, who would catch it using the front apron of his kilt. If he dropped it, he either went hungry; or spent the afternoon scraping his lunch off a rock; or spent the afternoon scraping bits of peat off his lunch.

According to the Guinness Book Of Records, the present World Record for Haggis Hurling is held by Alan Pettigrew of Saltcoats. He threw 1lb 8 oz. Haggis 180 feet 10 inches on the island of Inchmurrin on Loch Lomond in August 1984.

There are a number of rules associated with modern haggis hurling:

- The purpose is to compete for both distance and accuracy from on top of a platform, usually a half a whisky barrel.
- The haggis must be of traditional construction and recipe. Tender boiled sheep's heart, lung and liver with spices, onions, suet and oatmeal and stock stuffed in a sheep's paunch which has then been boiled for three hours. The haggis must land intact: a broken or split haggis results in disqualification.
- At the time of hurling the haggis should be cooled and inspected to ensure no firming agents have been applied. Rules dictate that the haggis must be packed tight and secure, with no extra skin or flab.

- The sporting haggis weighs 500 grams, with a maximum diameter of 18 cm and length of 22 cm. An allowance of ± 30 grams is given and this weight is used in both junior and middle weight events. The heavyweight event allows haggis up to 1 kg in weight, but the standard weight of 850 grams is more common, with an allowance of ± 50 grams.
- Judging is undertaken by the Hagrarian, with the assistance of the Clerk of the Heather and the Steward of the Heather. The Hagrarian checks that each haggis is in order, the Clerk of the Heather blows the hooter to begin the hurl, and the Steward of the Heather measures the hurl (always in feet and inches) and confirms the haggis remains unburst.

But.... is haggis hurling a joke or is it real? It turns out that the answer is both. In 1977, one Robin Dunseath placed an advert in a Scottish national newspaper announcing that at the Gathering of the Clans that year in Edinburgh there would be a revival of the ancient Scottish sport of haggis hurling. The response was unexpected: large numbers of people wanted to take part, and many who did take part then took the sport back to the United States, Canada and Australia, where competitions were established by people who believed they were reviving a traditional Scottish sport extinct since the early 1800s.

The funds raised by the hoax, and from the book that followed about the sport and its supposed history, *The Complete Haggis Hurler* went to charity.

The results since have been amazing. Scottish haggis hurling societies have developed wherever Scots have traditionally settled. And having let the Genie out of the bottle, Robin Dunseath found he couldn't persuade it to go back in. He eventually owned up to the hoax that lay behind the sport, only to find his creature had developed a life of its own, and that while haggis hurling may not actually be a traditional Scottish sport, it soon will be.

Until next month...

Sláinte