

PRESS CUTTING

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FOOD



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LET IT FLOW  
MARTIN MORAN  
PICKS HIS SEASONAL  
FAVOURITES



# Check out a hotel chef's festive cheats

Dromoland Castle's kitchen supremo is not keeping his Christmas menu secrets under a hat – he's sharing his stress-free recipes for a gourmet spread, writes *Katy McGuinness*



**M**ost of us stress about the logistics of Christmas dinner, fretting that everything won't be ready at the same time or that we'll poison guests with undercooked turkey. Spare a thought then for Dave McCann, the executive head chef of Dromoland Castle hotel in Co Clare, who's in charge of delivering a luxury festive meal to 130 guests with high expectations.

"We serve lunch between 1pm and 4.30pm – the older guests tend to eat earlier," he says. "We have a number of guests who spend Christmas with us every year, and around 40% of people opt for traditional turkey and ham, while others choose goose or pheasant. Beef wellington is another popular choice."

First, however, McCann will be getting his own family's turkey ready before heading into work to feed the masses.

After supervising a full table d'hôte menu for Christmas lunch, with a "grazing buffet" for the evening, McCann will hope to make it home by 6pm to enjoy Christmas dinner with his wife Ann and their children William, 23, Laura,

**McCann dishes out Christmas dinner**

22, and Isabel, 12. "I direct the cooking of the bird from a distance, but Ann does the actual work. There'll be a few phone calls and photographs WhatsApped over the course of the day, then I'll glaze the ham when I get home," McCann says.

"We start with a platter of terrine and some seafood – nibbles more than an actual starter. The turkey comes from our local butcher, Newmarket Family Butchers, and I always go for a bronze bird; not too large, as I don't want it to linger."

"After years spent working in the UK, I prefer chestnut stuffing to the traditional bread stuffing. We have Christmas pudding and trifle, and I love all the Christmas baking – making cakes, mince pies and puddings for the hotel – but I also look forward to January 6, when everything quietsens down."

On these pages you'll find every recipe you need to recreate a Dromoland Castle-standard, full bells-and-whistles Christmas feast for you and yours.

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Sunday Food



Elegant crabmeat and smoked salmon starter will ease you gently into Christmas dinner

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**DOONBEG CRAB AND BURREN SMOKED SALMON, WATERCRESS MAYONNAISE, APPLE AND SCALLION**

Serves 4

**What you will need**

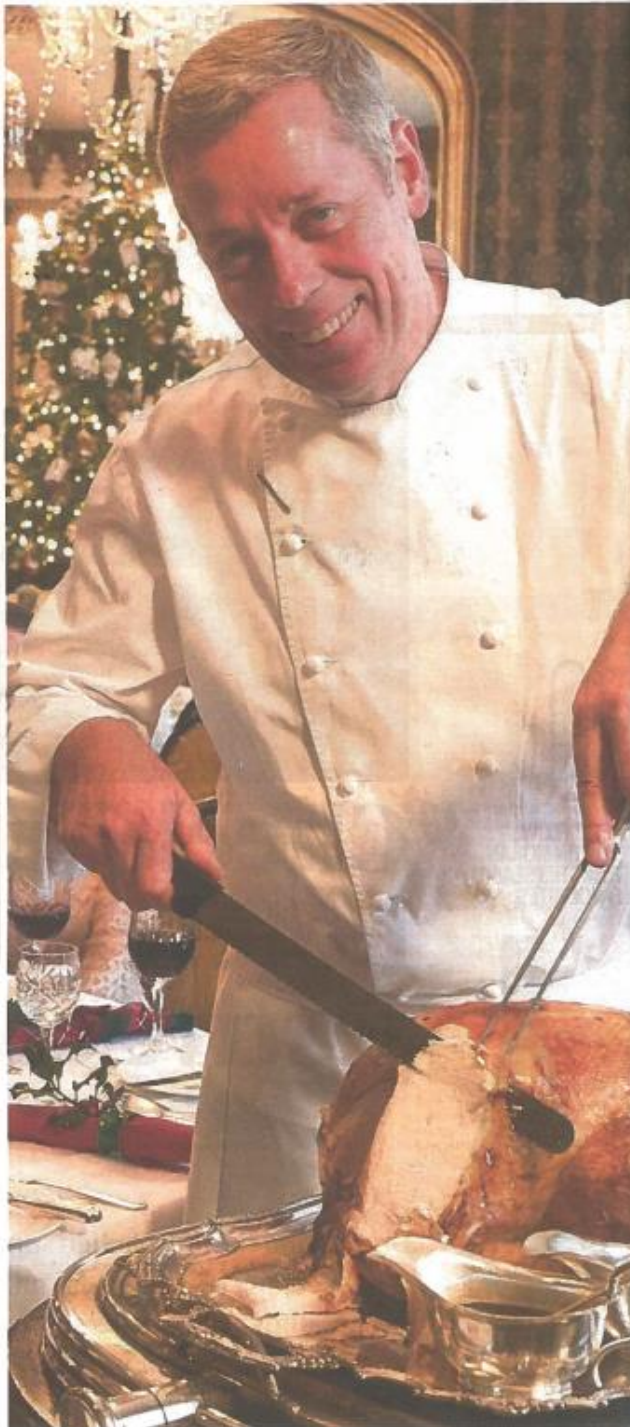
- 200g/7oz white crabmeat
- 1 tbsp natural yoghurt
- 4 scallions, peeled and sliced at an angle
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- Juice of half a lemon
- 8 large slices of smoked salmon, cut into small strips

- 1 tsp baby capers
- 1 tsp finely diced onion
- 1 granny smith apple
- Frisee lettuce, watercress and sorrel, for garnishing.
- For the watercress mayonnaise**
- 1 punnet of watercress
- 150ml/5 fl oz rapeseed oil
- 1 egg yolk
- ½ tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp white wine vinegar

**How to prepare**

The watercress mayonnaise is best prepared the day before. Liquidise the watercress with the oil and season with a pinch of salt; you may need to add a little cold water to loosen it up. Pass through a fine sieve, allow to settle, and freeze. On the day of use, salvage the watercress oil from the surface but discard the iced water on the bottom. Place the egg yolk, mustard and vinegar in a bowl, and whisk

together. Slowly add the watercress oil and whisk continually to make the emulsion mayonnaise (adjust the seasoning as you go). Meanwhile, pick through the white crabmeat to check for shell pieces. Place the crab in a bowl, then add the yoghurt plus some scallions and the garlic. Season with lemon juice, salt and pepper. Place the strips of smoked salmon in another bowl. Add the capers and diced onion, and mix together. Slice the apple and cut into batons. Reserve in a little iced water with a drop of lemon juice. To serve, place a metal plating ring on each plate and cover the bottom with a layer of the crabmeat. Next, place a layer of the smoked salmon mix. Pipe dots of watercress mayonnaise on top of the salmon, and pipe some evenly around the plate. Drain the apple batons and sprinkle them with some scallions on top of the salmon. Arrange the watercress, sorrel and frisee garnish on top.



Dromoland in Newmarket-on-Fergus is a storybook gothic castle cut from blue limestone

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McCann, left, was named chef of the year 2018 by the Georgina Campbell Guides; above, the Dromoland Christmas dinner is a cracking experience



**TURKEY AND GRAVY**

Buy an oven-ready hen turkey from a good local butcher — be sure to have them remove the wishbone and truss the bird, and give you the gizzard and neck pieces. Remove the bird from the fridge about an hour before cooking. You will need a deep roasting tray with an inner rack.

**Serves 8-10**

**What you will need**

- 1 sprig of thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 medium onion, peeled

- 1 carrot, peeled
- ½ lemon
- 5-6kg/11-13lb 3½oz turkey
- Gizzard and neck pieces
- 2 tbsp softened butter
- Salt and pepper, to season

**How to prepare**

Preheat the oven to 200C/gas mark 6. Place the sprig of thyme, bay leaf, onion, carrot and lemon into the cavity of the bird, along with the gizzard and neck pieces. Rub the softened butter onto the breasts and season well.

Place the turkey on a deep roasting tray with 1mm of warm water in the base. Cover it with a sheet of parchment paper and then completely seal it with a large sheet of tinfoil, making sure the tray's

rim has a tight seal. Place in the oven for 30 minutes, then reduce the oven temperature to 165C/gas mark 2 and cook the bird for 40 minutes per kg (that's three hours 20 minutes to four hours for a 5-6kg bird).

Remove the tinfoil and parchment paper 45 minutes before the end of the cooking time, to brown the turkey. Remove the bird from the oven and let it rest for 40 minutes in a warm place before transferring to a serving platter.

To make the gravy, take the gizzard, neck and juices from the cavity of the cooked bird. Roughly chop the gizzard and neck, then pour the juices into a container and allow the fat to settle on the surface, then remove the fat. Heat a heavy-based pan, add a little butter, then fry the neck

and gizzard until browned. Next, add the turkey juices and reduce by half. Dissolve some cornflour in a little red wine and add to the liquid to thicken the gravy. Adjust the seasoning and pass through a sieve before serving.

**CHRISTMAS HAM**

**What you will need**

- 2.5kg/5 lb 8oz boneless ham joint (unsmoked)
- 2 carrots, peeled
- 2 onions, peeled and halved
- 2 bay leaves
- 15 peppercorns
- A few whole cloves

**For the glaze**

- 2 tbsp whiskey
- 100ml/3.5 fl oz maple syrup
- 2 tbsp honey
- 1 tsp ground allspice
- 80g/3oz dark brown sugar
- 100ml/3.5 fl oz balsamic vinegar
- 2 tsp Dijon mustard

**How to prepare**

Place the ham in a large pot and cover with cold water. Bring to the boil and skim the foam residue off the surface. Reduce to a simmer and add the carrots, onions, bay leaves and peppercorns. Allow 40 minutes cooking time per kilo of ham (about one hour 40 minutes). Preheat

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The golden rule for great roast spuds is to use plenty of goose or duck fat



Brussels sprouts are boiled quickly then tossed in a saucepan with lardons



A side of roasted carrots, parsnips and swedes can take centre stage



Red cabbage with cranberries should be prepared on Christmas Eve

→ Continued from page 7 the oven to 180C/gas mark 4. Peel away the skin of the ham, leaving the thick layer of white fat. Using a knife, score the fat diagonally to make a diamond pattern, being careful not to cut into the meat.

To make the glaze, place the whiskey in a pan with the maple syrup, honey, allspice, sugar and balsamic vinegar. Bring to the boil and simmer for five minutes, until slightly thickened. Whisk in the Dijon mustard to form a paste.

Stud the ham with the cloves and place on a rack in a large roasting tin, with a little water in the base to prevent the bottom from catching and burning. Brush a layer of the paste all over the ham, reserving the remainder. Cook for about 40 minutes, brushing on another layer of glaze every 10 minutes until it's used up and the ham is a deep golden colour (increase the cooking time by 15 minutes if the joint has a bone). Remove the ham from the oven, transfer to a serving platter and leave to rest for 20 minutes before slicing.

**ROAST POTATOES**

What you will need

Maris Piper potatoes (as many as your table requires)

Jar of goose or duck fat

Sea salt

How to prepare

Preheat the oven to 180C/gas mark 4 and place a roasting tray inside. Peel the potatoes and shape them into evenly sized pieces. Place them in a saucepan and cover with cold salted water. Bring to the boil and simmer for five minutes. Drain well.

Remove the hot roasting tray from the oven and add plenty of the goose or duck fat. Then, add the par-cooked potatoes and coat in the hot fat. Season with sea salt. Return to the oven to cook until well browned (about 30 minutes, but it depends on the size). Drain all the fat residue before serving.

**ROAST ROOT VEGETABLES**

What you will need

Equal amounts of carrots, parsnips and swedes (as many as your table requires)

A few large glugs of rapeseed oil

1-2 bay leaves

Bunch of thyme

5-6 garlic cloves, unpeeled

Handful of shallots, peeled and halved

Dash of balsamic vinegar

How to prepare

Preheat the oven to 180C/gas mark 4 and place a deepish baking tray or earthenware dish inside.

Wash and peel the root vegetables, cut into large evenly sized pieces and place in a bowl. Drizzle in the rapeseed oil, add the bay leaf and thyme, and season. Stir to coat all the vegetables in

the seasoning and oil. Tip the vegetables into the hot earthenware dish and roast for 10 minutes, then add the garlic and shallots, and reduce the oven temperature to 165C/gas mark 2. Roast for a further 30 minutes, or until the vegetables are lovely and golden. Then, add the balsamic vinegar and toss the veg around. Return to the oven for 5-10 minutes more.

**BRUSSELS SPROUTS WITH SMOKED LARDONS**

Serves 4

What you will need

24 brussels sprouts

4 slices thickly cut smoked bacon

Rapeseed oil, for frying

How to prepare

Trim the bottoms of the

brussels sprouts and remove the outer leaves. Cook for four minutes in boiling salted water, drain well and cool. Cut the sprouts in half lengthways, and set aside.

Cut the bacon into small batons or lardons. Heat a heavy-based frying pan and add a little rapeseed oil. Fry the bacon until golden-brown, remove and set aside.

Return the pan to the stove and place the brussels sprouts flat-side down in the bacon fat. Reduce the heat a little and cook for about 10 minutes, or until the sprouts are browned.

Return the cooked bacon to the pan, toss with the sprouts and adjust the seasoning.

**RED CABBAGE WITH CRANBERRIES**

Serves 4

What you will need

2 large onions, peeled

and sliced

3 apples, cored and thickly sliced

½ head of red cabbage, thinly sliced

1 cinnamon stick

½ tsp clove powder

80g/3oz dark brown sugar

150ml/5 fl oz red wine

50ml/1½ fl oz balsamic vinegar

60ml/2 fl oz apple juice

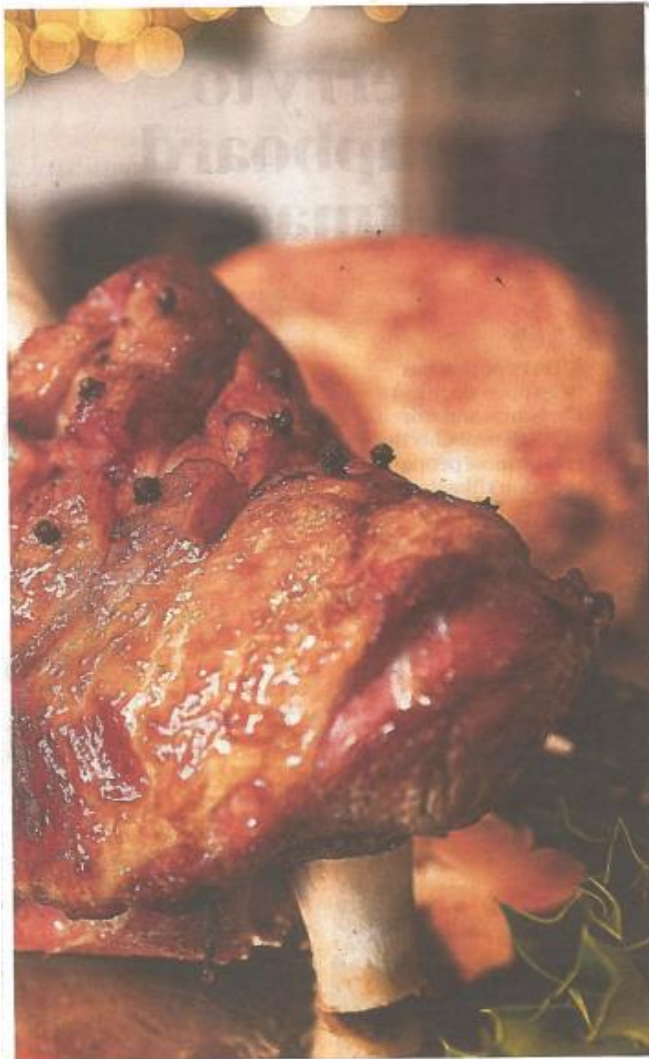
150g/5oz cranberries

How to prepare

It's best to start this on

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Christmas Eve. Place all the ingredients, except the cranberries, into a bowl. Mix together, cover and place in the fridge overnight. Next day, place the mixture in a large pot, and season. Bring to the boil, cover and reduce to a simmer for 90 minutes, stirring regularly. Add the cranberries and simmer for a further 10-15 minutes.

**CHESTNUT STUFFING**

Serves 4-6

**What you will need**

- 120g/4oz butter
- 100g/3½oz chestnuts, peeled and roughly chopped
- 100g/3½oz diced onions
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 tsp fresh sage, chopped
- 2 tsp fresh parsley, chopped
- 200g/7oz sausage meat
- 150g/5oz fresh white breadcrumbs
- 1 egg
- Salt and pepper

**How to prepare**

Melt the butter in a heavy-based saucepan and add the chestnuts, onions and garlic, and cook until soft, without colouring them. Add the sage and parsley, mix well and allow to cool. Mix the sausage meat and breadcrumbs together in a large bowl. Next, add the chestnut mixture and the egg, then season and combine well. Make a large sausage shape with the mixture, roll in clingfilm several times and tie both ends of the clingfilm. Wrap in tinfoil and poach in simmering water for about 50 minutes, until completely cooked through.



Star-studded Christmas ham, left, and a chic chocolate and mandarin orange trifle, above

**CHOCOLATE AND MANDARIN ORANGE TRIFLE WITH COOLE SWAN LIQUEUR**

Serves 10

**What you will need for the sponge**

- 130g/4½oz butter
- 130g/4½oz caster sugar
- 3 eggs
- 100g/3½oz self-raising flour
- 75g/2½oz cocoa powder
- 1-2 tsp milk
- Apricot jam

**For the custard**

- 2 tbsp cornflour
- 200ml/9 fl oz milk
- 130g/4½oz caster sugar
- 250ml/9 fl oz cream
- 1 vanilla pod or essence
- 3 egg yolks

**For the meringue**

- 3 egg whites
- 100g/4½oz caster sugar

**For the topping**

- 200ml/7 fl oz cream
- 100g/3½oz mascarpone

- 40g/1½oz icing sugar, sifted
- Coole Swan Irish Cream Liqueur
- 8 mandarin oranges, peeled and sliced
- 50g/2oz chocolate, grated

**How to prepare**

Preheat the oven to 165C/gas mark 2. Line a cake tin with buttered parchment paper. Start with the sponge. Cream the butter and sugar together until white and light. Slowly add one egg at a time until combined. In a separate bowl, sift the flour and cocoa together, and slowly fold into the egg mixture. Add a drop of milk if you need to adjust the consistency of the mixture. Pour the mixture into the cake tin and bake for about 22-25 minutes, or until a skewer inserted into the centre of the sponge comes out clean. Allow to cool.

When the sponge has cooled, cut it into half horizontally. Spread the sponge with the jam and sandwich the halves together. Cut into 2cm/0.8in cubes. For the custard, mix the cornflour with 50ml/1½fl oz of the milk. Place the sugar, cream and split vanilla pod in a pot with the remaining milk, and bring to the boil. Whisk in the cornflour mixture to thicken. Place the yolks in a big bowl and pour in half of the hot cream mixture, whisking all the time. Return this egg yolk/cream mixture to the hot

mixture, again whisking. Bring the custard to a simmer and cook for five minutes. Pass through a fine sieve, cover with clingfilm and cool.

To make the meringue, preheat the oven to 80C/gas mark ½ and line a baking tray with parchment paper. Place the egg whites in a large, clean bowl and whisk with an electric whisker on medium speed until the whites reach "stiff peak" stage. Turn the mixer to a higher speed and add the sugar a little at a time, until the whites are stiff and glossy, but do not overwhisk.

Pour the meringue onto the parchment-covered tray and spread with a palette knife to cover the tray. Bake for 1½ hours and turn off the oven, leaving the meringue to set in the oven for an hour.

For the trifle, whip the cream and mascarpone together, and add the icing sugar. Flavour with Coole Swan liqueur to taste. Arrange a line of sliced mandarin oranges around the sides of the serving bowl. Fill the bowl with sponge cubes to just above the level of the orange. Pour any surplus orange juice over the sponge, and drizzle on some of the liqueur.

Place the remainder of the oranges on top of the sponge. Next, add an even layer of the cold custard followed by the cream mixture. Break up the meringue into even-sized pieces and scatter over the top, then garnish with the grated chocolate.