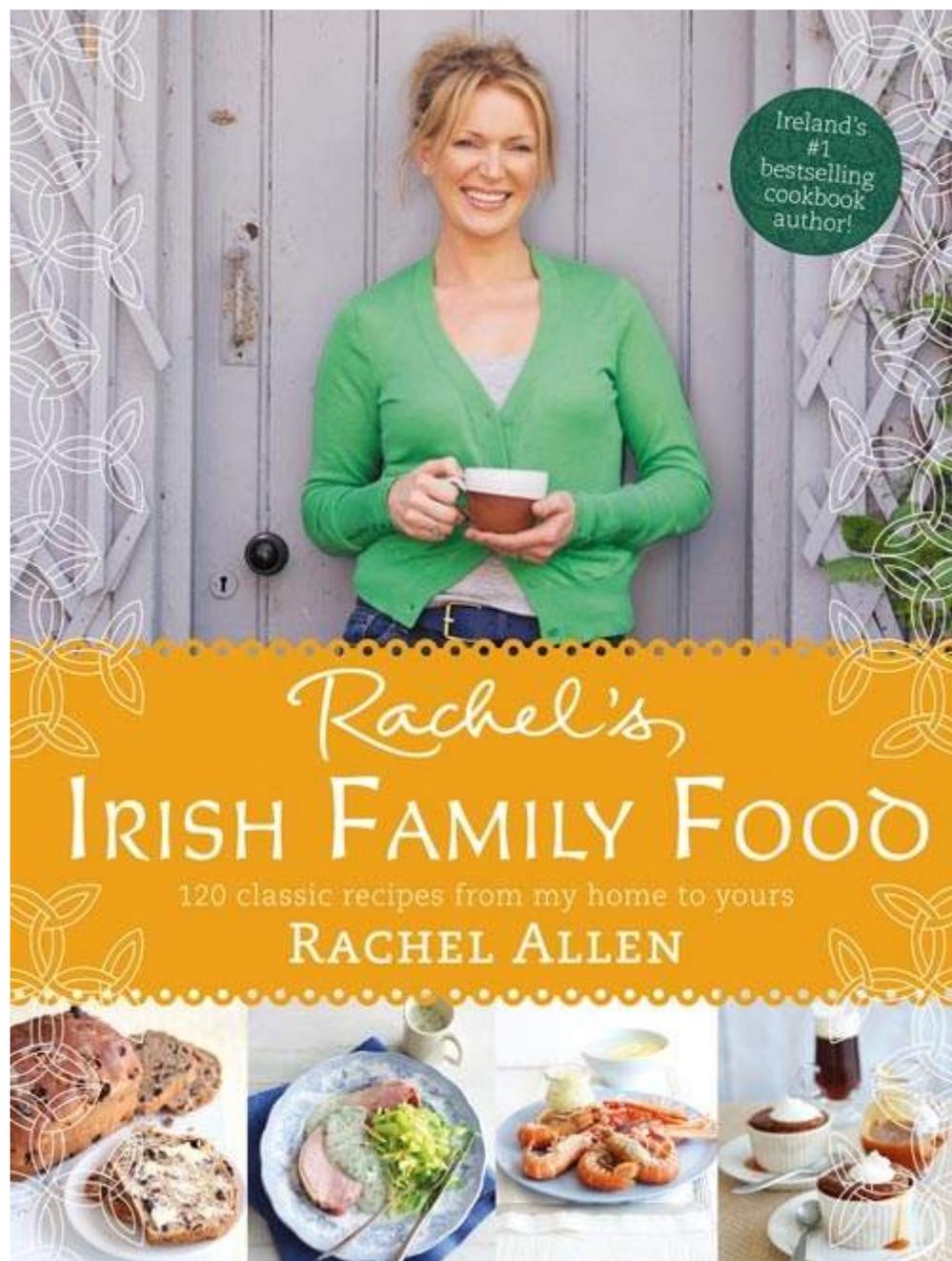


Cook the Book: 'Rachel's Irish Family Food'

KATE WILLIAMS



With St. Patrick's Day just around the corner, some of us will spend this week preparing their livers and stomachs for an onslaught of green Guinness, Jameson, and more than a few pounds of alcohol-absorbing French fries. (French fries do absorb alcohol, right?) For others, this week is prime time to plan an Irish-themed menu. Whether or not you enjoy dumping green food coloring in just about everything on March 17, you should still save room in your belly for potatoes, soda bread, and maybe some green cabbage.

For inspiration, we will turn to [Rachel Allen](#), BBC's "Irish Cooking Queen." Think of her as the Nigella Lawson of Irish cooking. In addition to her television appearances, Allen is a teacher at the venerable [Ballymaloe](#) cooking school in

Country Cork. Her new cookbook, *[Rachel's Irish Family Food](#)*, is a testament to Ireland's embrace of simple, practical food.

And while the humble potato makes countless appearances, the bright and sunny tone of Allen's book makes for an anything but dreary kitchen companion. The book is designed around small family meals: protein-heavy mains make up the bulk of the book, with chapters organized by difficulty level. Short chapters on sides, breads, and simple desserts rounding things out. It makes for easy meal planning, whether the meal is served on a regular weeknight or on a holiday like St. Patty's.

This week, we'll plan for a blow-out Irish feast. We'll start with Allen's entirely-from-scratch recipe for **bangers and mash**, perfect for breakfast, lunch, or dinner. Then we'll broil **mussels with garlic and bread crumbs**, braise a rich **Irish stew**, simmer **potato leek soup** (with bacon!), and bake a loaf of **brown soda bread** to eat with just about everything.

Win 'Rachel's Irish Family Food'

Thanks to the folks at HarperCollins, we have five (5) copies of *[Rachel's Irish Family Food](#)* to give away this week. All you need to do to win is tell us your **most memorable (hazy or otherwise) St. Patrick's Day meal** in the comments section below.