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# Tom Doorley



## EATS AND DRINKS

www.tomdoorley.com

**CELTIC WHISKEY BAR & LARDER**  
93 New Street, Killarney, Co Kerry  
Phone: 064 663 5700  
celticwhiskeybar.com

# Bar is set high and reached in whiskey emporium

**K**ILLARNEY, for most Irish people, is somewhere through which we pass on our way to somewhere more remote and interesting. I first did so, at the age of three, when my parents and I were en route to Glenbeigh, although I regret to say, it failed to make any impression that I can remember.

It's a town that gets a lot of stick. Sure, there's lots of tat and plenty of shops — and restaurants — that cater exclusively for what we might politely call the less discriminating American tourist. But the lakes are stunning, the national park is a treasure, the mountains make an impressive backdrop and there's the Celtic Whiskey Bar & Larder.

We went for Sunday lunch and, having forgotten quite how narrow and winding the N72 is, miscalculated how long it takes to get there from our Cork home. We also thought it would be quiet, with the lack of foreign tourists. Well, all of Ireland seemed to have descended on the place, so parking turned out to be a rather involved process.

As a result, we didn't need to worry about social distancing in the restaurant, by the time we got there, all the happy lunchers had gone and we had the place to ourselves.

The word 'bar' is significant. There is, indeed, a long and very impressive bar with hundreds of whiskeys from all parts of the world (and plenty of gin and other stuff too, including a dazzling selection of craft beers).

So, bear in mind that it's a bar and its raison d'être is whiskey. However, there's a short and rather lovely menu that covers all the bases from foie gras to roast



chicken and roast cod to Glenbeigh mussels with local nduja. And there's a short and absolutely brilliant wine list, which comes as no surprise because owner Ally McAlpine, is as fascinated by wine as he is about whiskey. He is also Ireland's leading proponent of sherry appreciation.

Another string to this bar's bow is some serious mixology. The short Sunday lunch menu has eight cocktail suggestions and I felt it would be foolish to pass on the opportunity to have an Old Fashioned subtly flavoured with lavender and I'm glad I did. We started by sharing a platter

of charcuterie (€9). Now such platters are increasingly common and a walnut one, a smoked version and usually the charcuterie comes from one of the big food services companies. There's no harm in that but that is, in a sense, commodity charcuterie. Not so here. It's all from Olivier Beaujouan in Castlegregory, genuinely hand-



made and outstandingly good. There was venison saucisson, a walnut one, a smoked version and a plain one. Plus splendid coppa, traditionally cured neck of pork. This was served with pickles, olives and lightly toasted sourdough bread.

The bread, somewhat more

toasted, made a second welcome appearance bearing slices of still slightly pink foie gras, fresh from a pan, topped with two molten-yolked poached eggs and an anointing with buttery hollandaise sauce.

The foie gras had been glazed with an oloroso sherry reduction.

At €11, this twist on eggs Benedict has to be one of Killarney's great bargains.

Crab ravioli (€11.50) was, in fact, one big crab raviolo with a generous filling of very fresh flesh scented with lemongrass, and served in a fennel broth (not really a bisque as the menu claimed).

### TASTEBUD TIP

The simplest sauce to make is brown butter or 'beurre noisette'. Just let your melted butter brown slowly in the pan. With ravioli, you could add some sage leaves. With fish, a few capers and a squeeze of lemon.

The pasta was good but the underneath had dried out a little and so was a little too leathery for comfort. I suspect that this doesn't happen when the kitchen is busier. We finished by sharing a tarte tatin (€8.50) in which the apple element had been cut in long strips and rolled up in concentric circles before being caramelised. As I never manage to find the energy to make a tarte tatin like this — I just pile in the apple — it was a sweet, toffee-ish treat with buttery pastry and a little silky vanilla ice cream to boot.

### WINE CHOICE

Not just a great small list but great value too. La Guita Manzanilla, an excellent dry sherry, is only €3.95 a glass and the amazing Hidalgo Tresillo 1874 Amontillado is €11.95. Montilla, very near Jerez, is represented by the Gran Barquero over 25 years old, for just €5.95. And you can have a 'flight' of any four fortified wines for €20. Table wines start at €5.25 or €20.95 a bottle.

Chateau de Santenay Merceurey Vieilles Vignes is €13.50 or €49.95 a bottle. Allain Chavy Puligny-Montrachet is €19.95 or €69.95 a bottle. The excellent Viña Alberdi Rioja Reserva is €39.95 by the bottle only.

### THE SMART MONEY

Very smart indeed. That foie gras Benedict for €11 is a bargain.

### AND ANOTHER THING...

There's a retail outlet for wines, beers and spirits with a great range.

### THIS WEEK I'LL BE EATING...

... fresh peas from the garden. The amount is declining as I wait for the second sowing to produce so I'll eke them out in dishes like this one. I pick and pod as many peas as I can, blanch them and plunge in cold water. I then tear up mozzarella, pop on the peas, grate lemon zest over, drizzle with olive oil and finally add some crisped prosciutto for a salty crunch and some finely chopped mint for freshness.

### LET THEM EAT CAKE!

An analysis of online searches for cake recipes has revealed that Europe's top choice is, surprisingly, tiramisu. It was the most searched for recipe in France, Belgium and, of course, Italy. Cheesecake was top in Greece and in the Czech Republic.

## weekend bites

Poland remained loyal to home with mazurek, a very sweet combination of pastry and sponge. Spain, home of the glorious torta di Santiago, favoured carrot cake! Ireland didn't feature but the UK went with chocolate cake.

### TEA-SY DOES IT

Solaris Botanicals, based in Galway, points out that pesticides and other chemicals that have long been banned in the EU are still commonly used in Asia. This is one reason why the company's teas — both herbal and conventional — are all organically grown. It

has an interesting offer at present: a heat-resistant tea pot, insulated drinking cup, a bamboo tray and three of its teas for €54.95. Its website is fascinating and reflects the fact that Jörg Müller is a master tea blender and medical herbalist. Visit [solarisbotanicals.com](http://solarisbotanicals.com)

### THE GREAT (AND TASTY) OUTDOORS

I'm often asked on Twitter to recommend Dublin restaurants where you can eat outside this summer. Well, here's a very personal selection: old school French at La Maison on Castle Market, cracking pizza and cocktails on the rooftop of Yarn near the Ha'penny Bridge, Temple Garner's eclectic cuisine at Bresson in Monkstown, and super seafood at Michael's in Mount Merrion. And don't forget that Princes Street in Cork has been pedestrianised and has some good food, especially at Nash 19.

## Tom cooks SPICY PORK WITH LETTUCE LEAF SCOOPS

This exceptionally tasty and healthy starter is one of our family favourites. The pork isn't minced here; instead, it's very finely chopped and the texture is therefore much better. The word 'savoury' could have been invented for this dish. Just make sure that the lettuce leaves you use are good and crisp. That way you will get the right contrast of textures.

- 5 pork medallions
- 1 tbsp sesame oil
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 4 cloves of garlic
- 2 green chillis
- a large knob of ginger
- 1 tbsp flour

Cut the pork medallions into thin strips, then cut the strips into very small pieces. Using a very sharp knife, and a rocking motion, chop the pork as finely as possible.

Heat the sesame oil and olive oil in a pan and add the pork. Toss gently until it is almost done. Peel and finely chop the garlic and grate the ginger. Add to the pork and fry gently for 2 minutes. Then split and de-seed the chillis, slice thinly and add to the pan.

If you want a very spicy effect, leave the seeds in, but beware: they will be very hot!

Sprinkle the flour evenly over the surface of the contents of the pan and stir in. Cook for a couple of minutes before adding the black pepper and the soya sauce.

The mixture should be moist but with no excess liquid. If it's too dry, add a little water.

Serve in a communal dish and let everyone scoop up the spicy pork in the crisp lettuce leaves.



## THE WINE LIST

Three worthy bottles every week — for three different budgets



### MAISON SUR LE LITTORAL SAUVIGNON BLANC

€7.99, ALDI  
In a striking blue bottle, this fresh, zesty white wine is the essence of Mediterranean chic. Green gooseberries, passionfruit and crushed nettle leaf. Perfect with salads or goat's cheese.



### KENDERMANN KALKSTEIN SAUVIGNON BLANC

€12, DUNNES STORES  
Quite a rarity, a Sauvignon Blanc from Germany. This Pfalz wine is everything a cool climate Sauvignon should be but a little less dry than usual. Not too pungent and very user-friendly.



### VENUGLIA PINOT GRIGIO DELLE VENEZIA

€14.95, O'BRIEN'S  
An antidote to all the dull, characterless Pinot Grigios out there: this is very fresh but with underlying ripeness and good weight. Green apples and grapefruit zest.