



# sense of place traditional festivals

## spring festivals and celebrations

### St. David's Day

On March 1st people across Wales, and in Welsh societies across the world celebrate St Davids Day, or 'Dydd Gwyl Dewi' as it is known in Welsh. This day celebrates the life of St David, the patron Saint of Wales. Little is known of his life except for an account of his life written by Rhigyfarch at the end of the 11th Century.

According to Rhigyfarch's Latin manuscript, Dewi's mother was called Non, and his father Sant was the son of Ceredig, King of Ceredigion. Following an early education in Cardiganshire, Dewi set off on a pilgrimage through south Wales towards the West of England, where it is said that he helped to found religious centres such as Glastonbury and Croyland. It is even noted that he made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem where he was made archbishop.

After many adventures and travels, he eventually settled at Glyn Rhosyn (St David's) in south west Pembrokeshire where he established a very strict religious community. During this time, he performed many miracles, the most wondrous of which was performed while preaching at the Synod of Llanddewibrefi when he caused the ground beneath his feet to rise so that all those gathered could see and hear him.

While it is impossible to tell how much Rhygyfarch had elaborated the history of Dewi, his fame spread throughout south Wales towards Ireland and Brittany. St David's Cathedral became, and remains, a popular centre of pilgrimage after Dewi was formally recognised as a saint in 1120 by the Catholic Church.

The Feast day of St David has been a part of the church calendar since 1398, though it stopped being celebrated during the Protestant



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reformation in the 16th Century. Nevertheless, since the 18th Century, the day of his birth, March 1st has been a national festival and today it is celebrated in schools, cultural societies and Welsh organisations throughout Wales and the world. It is customary to wear a daffodil or a leek, two of Wales's national emblems on this day, and schoolchildren continue to dress up in national costume and parade through towns and villages – often en route to church service where they are reminded of the stories of the saint's miracles, and his lasting message – 'gwnewch y pethau bychain ac a welsoch ac a glywsoch gennyf i' – 'do the little things that you saw and heard me do.'

Cawl, a broth of root vegetables and lamb is traditionally eaten on this day. Each family's Cawl tastes slightly different, and recipes continue to be passed down from generation to generation, but in essence the making of Cawl involves the following:

### Cawl

The recipe begins with a piece of lamb - usually shoulder or breast (whichever is cheapest). Cover the lamb with water, roughly chop an onion and add it with about five crushed peppercorns and a good pinch of salt.

Bring the water to the boil and then allow to simmer until the meat falls easily off the bone. This will take up to a couple of hours.

Remove the lamb from the water and strain off the stock that is left. Once the lamb has cooled a little, remove all the meat from the bone and discard the bone and any excess fat, then cut the meat into bite size pieces.

Once the stock has cooled a little and the excess fat has risen to the surface, skim it off, or alternatively, leave the stock overnight and this will leave a hard fat covering on the top which can be removed in one piece.

You will then be ready to add the vegetables – a small swede, four large potatoes, three parsnips, four carrots and and three large leeks. Each of the vegetables must be cleaned, peeled and chopped into bite sized chunks.

Next, melt some butter in large pan and begin by softening the vegetables in the butter. Begin with the firmer vegetables such as carrots and swedes and

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leave them to fry for a little while before adding the potato and parsnip.

Add the leeks when the rest of the vegetables are nice and buttery and have begun to soften. Then add the previously strained lamb stock and lamb chunks.

You may need to add a little extra water at this point to make sure that the vegetables are covered at all times. Bring to the boil again and simmer for about one hour until the vegetables are cooked.

Towards the end of the cooking time add a handful of chopped parsley and some more salt and pepper to taste.

Cawl is best served piping hot with some freshly ground pepper and a good chunk of crusty bread and maybe a piece of good Cheddar or Caerphilly cheese. You may also hear people talking about 'cawl un dydd' this relates to the fact that cawl is often tastiest when re-heated on the second day as by then the flavours have had time to blend with each other, and the broth is richer.