

DUBLIN CODDLE

Said to have been a favourite dish of Jonathan Swift, Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral and author of the famous Gulliver's Travels, this dish is now rarely eaten outside Dublin. In the area of the inner city known as the Liberties it is a favourite Saturday night dish and also a funeral food – a humbler version of 'baked, funeral meats'. The reason is purely practical – it doesn't spoil if left cooking for an extra hour or two.

SERVES 4–6

Ingredients:

450 g/1 lb bacon bits*, **or** a streaky bacon joint, cubed

450 g/1 lb good quality (meaty) Irish breakfast sausages

3 large onions, peeled, and chopped

1 ¼ kg/3 lb floury potatoes, peeled

6 tablesp fresh parsley, chopped

freshly ground black pepper to taste

500 ml/16 fl oz/2 cups water

*Bacon 'bits' are off-cuts from various types of bacon (both smoked and pale) and are sold cheaply in Dublin pork butchers' shops specially for coddle. Normally they contain a fairly even mixture of fat and lean. Streaky bacon also works well; keep the skin on for more flavour.

Method:

Cut the potatoes into fairly large pieces (leave them whole if small). Chop the fresh parsley. Choose a heavy pot with a really tight-fitting lid. Put a generous layer of chopped onions on the bottom and then layer the other ingredients, giving each layer a generous twist of pepper. Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat to a bare simmer. Cover very tightly. Cook for 2–5 hours! The longer and slower the cooking, the better this dish will be. It cannot come to any harm

providing the lid is really tight. A very low oven is best, set at 120°C/250°F/Gas ½.

In some homes, what my son once christened 'slithery' (boiled and not browned) sausages are disliked. You can either lay all the sausages on top and, just before serving, set the pot under a grill to brown them. Even better, remove the sausages to brown under a hot grill just before serving, although this will probably be anathema to the coddle purists!

Dublin Coddle is traditionally served with buttered white soda bread and bottles of stout. You can also serve it with quickly-cooked green cabbage.



St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin.