

SHAMROCK & ROLL

Breaking down the icons of St. Patrick's Day

Shamrock

The significance of the three-leafed shamrock comes from St. Patrick, who used it to describe the Holy Trinity in an effort to convert people to Christianity. The three-leafed clover is also often associated with faith, hope, and love.



Celtic Cross

Originating in the early Middle Ages and fusing Christian and pagan traditions, the Celtic cross features a ring at the intersection of its vertical and horizontal arms. The circle was a pagan symbol for eternity and was also easily associated with Christ's victory over sin.

Corned Beef and Cabbage

Corned beef has been a staple in many cultures for centuries. It gets its name from the "corns" or large grains of salt used to cure the meat. In the 17th century, Ireland was known for exporting corned beef. However, Irish people couldn't afford to eat it themselves — their traditional dishes used corned pork. Then, when Irish immigrants arrived in the U.S. in the 18th century, bringing with them the notion that beef was an expensive luxury, they opted for the cheaper salted beef brisket. Cabbage was also affordable and readily available, so they combined the two, creating the dish that so many enjoy today.

Green Theme

St. Patrick's Day was once linked to blue, long seen as Ireland's traditional color on old flags and in the Order of St. Patrick. In the 1790s, green rose as a symbol of Irish nationalism and resistance to British rule, helped along by the popularity of the "Emerald Isle" nickname. Today, green signals Irish pride — echoed in the shamrock and Ireland's "Emerald Isle" identity.

St. Patrick's Breastplate

St. Patrick's breastplate (or lorica) is a fifth-century Celtic prayer of protection and spiritual armor historically attributed to St. Patrick. It invokes the protection of Christ in every direction — above, below, besides, and within the believer.

A Bishop's Crozier

A bishop's crozier is a pastoral staff, shaped like a shepherd's crook, that symbolizes his role as a shepherd guiding the faithful. St. Patrick is often depicted carrying one, representing his authority and role in establishing Catholicism in Ireland.



Driving Out the Snakes

Historians note that Ireland doesn't actually have any wild, native snakes. Rather, in a Catholic context, the depiction of St. Patrick driving snakes out of Ireland symbolizes him driving out paganism and the "serpent" (Satan) to evangelize.

