

## **Burns Night 2018: When is it, how is it celebrated and what's in the traditional supper?** **Maya Oppenheim, Monday 22 January 2018 .**

The poet, who was a tremendous source of inspiration to the founders of Liberalism and Socialism, penned more than 550 well-known poems and songs before he died at the age of just 37

### **What is Burns Night?**

Burns Night might conjure up<sup>1</sup> immediate images of washing down a forkful of peppery haggis with a wee dram of scotch but far less is known about the historical origins of the ritual.

Burns Supper is a celebration of the life and enduring legacy of the Scottish poet Robert Burns. While it was organised by his close friends and family after he died as a memorial it has morphed into a country wide event.

People celebrate the evening in their homes or in restaurants with traditional Scottish fare, music, and renditions of Burns' poetry.

### **Who is Robert Burns?**

The poet, who is also known as Rabbie Burns, penned more than 550 poems and songs before he died in 1796.

A massive source of inspiration to the founders of Liberalism and Socialism, the 18th-century writer is known for his astute social commentary and focus on all things political. Scotland's national poet is deemed something of a revolutionary figure there and beyond.

Dubbed the "greatest Scot of all time" by STV in 2009, the writer from Ayrshire died of rheumatic fever at the young age of just 37.

His funeral was held on the same day his son Maxwell was born. Burns' body was transferred from a churchyard grave to a mausoleum in Dumfries where his wife Jean Armour was also laid to rest after her death in 1834.

### **When is Burns Night?**

Burns Night falls on 25 January every year without fail to mark the iconic writer's birthday.

### **How is Burns Night celebrated?**

The main attraction of Burns Night is undoubtedly a Burns supper. This traditionally involves people donning tartan, listening to bagpipes, crooning *Auld Lang Syne*, which is also sung at New Year's Eve, and reciting the great writer's songs and poems.

Celebrations - whether at home or at a themed evening - often incorporate the Saltire, the national flag of Scotland.

While the first Burns supper was held way back in 1801 and new rituals have been appended since then, the crux of the celebration remains unchanged and revolves around paying tribute to Burns in whatever way feels fitting.

### **What's in the traditional dinner?**

The jewel in the crown of any Burns Supper is always haggis. For the uninitiated, haggis is a savoury pudding containing sheep's heart, liver and lungs, which is minced with onion, oatmeal, suet, stock, and a veritable plethora of spices. It is traditionally sheathed<sup>2</sup> in the animal's stomach.

Burns describes haggis as the "great chieftain o' the puddin'-'race" and a traditional Burns Night kicks off with a host reading his "Address to a Haggis".

Haggis is served with the classic side of mashed neeps and tatties (swedes<sup>3</sup> and potatoes). The food is of course accompanied by whisky.

Vegetarians and pescetarians<sup>4</sup> - or those who want to try something a little different - can choose haggis made without meat and seafood such as Cullen Skink soup made from smoked haddock.

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<sup>1</sup> to make a picture or idea appear in someone's mind:

<sup>2</sup> wrapped

<sup>3</sup> rutabaga

<sup>4</sup> someone who eats fish but not meat