

# THE SMOKE HOUSES DINNER

FIVE SMOKEHOUSES | ONE DINNER | ONE NIGHT | MACREDDIN VILLAGE | 28TH MAY 2023

Five Irish Smokehouse Artisans with a combined knowledge of over 180 years of smoking foods come together to celebrate the art of smoking with a very unique Dinner menu on Sunday the 28<sup>th</sup> of May in Macreddin Village, Co Wicklow.

## The Idea

The kernel of this Dinner actually started back in 1985 when Evan Doyle opened his first restaurant in Clifden. At the time Evan was purchasing his smoked salmon from John Roberts in Ballyconneely. John, Bridget and some friends were in for dinner one night and afterwards conversation took place where John was describing a recipe where he used whiskey to deglaze. He then said that it was actually whiskey that he had inherited from his great grandfather. Evan couldn't believe this and some sort of barter took place where John was happy and Evan was happier with his bottle and a half of very, very old Antiquary whiskey.

The half bottle didn't last long but it had a better end of life with friends who appreciated it rather than being burnt off on a hot pan.

Thirty years or so passed and one night John's son, Graham and Saoirse were staying at the BrookLodge and eating in the Strawberry Tree. Evan told Graham the story of his father and the Antiquary. He said that he had been looking for a good excuse to crack the full bottle open and suggested perhaps a dinner with smoked foods would be the perfect occasion and so the concept of the Smokehouse Dinner was born.

## The Smokehouses

Smokehouses are like a good Bordeaux in that they take years to mature and develop their own individual taste and smell as the black tarry residue builds up and seasons. Each Smokehouse has its own individual fingerprint with the flavours it imparts on the foods that it smokes and it is this individuality that the Smokehouses Dinner wishes to explore and underline with produce coming from five unique and very different Smokehouses being:

Sally Barnes; Woodcock Smoke House, Skibbereen, Co Cork

Fingal Ferguson; Gubbeen Smoke House, Schull Co. Cork.

Graham Roberts; Connemara Smoke House, Ballyconneely Co Galway

Anthony Creswell; Ummera Smoke House, Inchybridge, Timoleague, Co. Cork

Evan Doyle; Macreddin Smoke House, BrookLodge, Macreddin Village, Co. Wicklow

## The Produce

If you're looking for smoked salmon on the dinner menu, you're probably going to be disappointed. Yes, all the Smokehouses could provide the very finest of smoked salmons...but that would be a competition. The Smokehouses Dinner is purely a celebration of the world class Smokers that we have here in Ireland and an opportunity to enjoy the individual flavours that the Smokers will bring to the table. And so for this unique Dinner all the Smokers have agreed to step outside their comfort zone and use their skills and knowledge to smoke foods that we might not normally associate with smoking. Although the menu has not yet been fully decided, conversations are taking place with mentions of lobster, razor clams, venison, squid, mushrooms, woodpigeon, oysters, chocolate and so much more.



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## The Dinner

The Smokehouses Dinner will be presented as a Tasting Menu with produce from the Smokehouses making cameo appearances throughout. Evan Doyle together with Jeffrey Gillick and the Strawberry Tree Kitchen Team will serve a menu that pays homage to the artisanal skills of the Smokers.

Smokehouses would normally produce a finished smoked food that is ready to eat and enjoy, however the Smokers, understanding that the Strawberry Tree Kitchen will be cooking with their smoked produce, are using their knowledge and skills to smoke in a way that takes this into account.

Obviously there's a fine line between, the cooking processes taking away the smoked flavours, or the smoked flavours overtaking the dish completely...and with multiple courses there is a desire for each of the individual Smokehouses unique fingerprint smoke to carry through to the dish but not be so overpowering that a government health warning is required. Acutely aware of this fine line, the Kitchen will serve a menu that promises to be a unique world first.

## The Wines

Evan together with Manish Pallear are working with Denise Kelleher from Febvre to source wines that will complement the Smokehouses Dinner. Discussions have taken place as to whether the wines should be smokey themselves or whether they should be complimentary and pay homage to the smoked foods.

Should a smoke tainted wine be served or do they all taste like ashtrays? This is something that is becoming all too common now with all the bushfires. The 2020 bushfires at harvest time in Australia and California caused havoc and grapes were either left on the vine to rot or when the grape juice was tested it was too tainted and millions of litres were poured down the sink. However there are a few winery's that decided to invest the time to finish their wines in the hope of making something good out of the disaster. Monterey's Santa Lucia Highlands produced a 2020 Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, and Oregon's Jackalope Winery produced rosé instead of red from their cabernet franc so that the skins would have less contact, are good examples that need support simply because of their doggedness.

Should volcanic wines be served? There is a substantial number of vineyards producing wines that are grown on the side of volcanoes not just in Europe but also in South America. On some level, it seems a little eccentric or nuts to make wine on the slopes of a volcano or on the plains beneath. After all, Sicily's Mount Etna has erupted four times in the past 10 years and the Cumbre Vieja volcano in Spain's Canary Islands has been spewing lava and ash for over a year now. But farmers have been growing vines in magma and mineral enriched soil since before Pompeii. Volcanic soils seem to help impart a distinctive character to the wine with some exhibiting a smokey flavour gleaned from the igneous soil.

Should natural smokey tasting wines be served? There are very few wines that have a natural smokey taste as opposed to a wood taste gleaned just from barrel fermentation. Mostly these are red and some examples would be Syrah from Northern Rhône or a Carménère from Chile or even a South African Pinotage. Or should wines that complement be served? Is there a requirement to serve a smokey wine surely the focus should be on the dishes. Should consideration be given that the wines simply provide a cut or a contrast to complement and pay homage to the smoked ingredients.

The wine conversations and sampling about what to serve at the Smokehouses Dinner continues between Evan, Manish and Denise but it seems that guests will have to wait until the night of the 28<sup>th</sup> May itself to find out.



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## Drink Pairings

Along with the wines, five or six of the courses at the Smokehouses Dinner will have a specially chosen drink to pair with it. Again lots of discussions on what to serve but here are some of the drinks being considered:

Sake is being considered, but more than likely it will be a Taru Sake; Taru is a very old style of sake and came about by accident. Traditionally, Sake being shipped from Nada to Tokyo was sent in wooden Yoshino cedar barrels.

So by the time the sake arrived in Tokyo it had taken on a honey colour, a woodsy-aroma and a distinct flavour. This unintentional conditioning meant that the people living in Tokyo experienced a very different sake to the people living in Nada where it was brewed. Kikumasa Brewery is a good example but there are now many breweries returning to this traditional Taru method.

Smoked Beers that are being considered; there are a number of Irish Craft Smoked Beers including a smoked porter from Cuilan, a good friend of Macreddin, at Whitefield Beer which is aptly called Old Smoke. Another beer that is being considered is the original Schlenkerla Beer. This smoked beer or rauchbier was developed in Bavaria in the Middle Ages with the most prominent made in Bamberg by the family-owned Weyermann Maltings. This malt is still made today by the traditional method of kiln-drying the germinated grain with seasoned beech wood.

Sherry is also being considered; there are some wonderful Oloroso with traits that would pair perfectly such as Lustau's Don Nuño with its smokey aroma and bitter chocolate and nutty flavours.

Macreddin's Wild Foods Pantry is also being raided. Trials are taking place to produce a smoked wild berry or herb drink for pairing with everything from a Lapsang Souchong tea wine with smoked woodruff to a smoked sloe berry schnapps being considered.

There are other drinks that need to be considered for the pairing. Whiskey would spring to anyone's mind and there are some wonderful Irish whiskey's to also consider from Barrelled to Double Barrelled to Peaty Malts. Madeira is also in the conversation as is the choice of Amari and Bitters from Italy.

With so many ideas on the Drinks Pairings it will be a difficult decision indeed to narrow it down to five or six drinks, however all will have to be decided upon by Sunday the 28<sup>th</sup> of May.

And then of course there is that bottle of very, very old Antiquary Whiskey that sparked off the idea of the Smokehouses Dinner in the first place. Graham has contacted Evan to say that his aunt had gone back through the family tree and that the whiskey came from his great, great grandfather and dates back to the early 1870's.

As promised Evan will open this bottle after the Smokehouses Dinner and although there are names in the pot already, five measures of this 150 year old Antiquary will be offered to guests that provide the best reason and story as to why it is them, that should be considered.

The Smokehouses Dinner takes place on Sunday May 28<sup>th</sup> and is limited to 100 guests. Further details are available [reservations@brooklodge.com](mailto:reservations@brooklodge.com)

