

An Invitation to a Burns Supper



CfE Link

- I can investigate a Scottish historical theme to discover how past events or the actions of individuals or groups have shaped Scottish society. **SOC 2-03a**
- I can discuss issues of the diversity of cultures, values and customs in our society. **SOC 2-16c**

Aim

I can explain what a Burns Supper is, why they are held and what goes on at a Burns Supper.

It's nearly the 25th of January and you've received an invitation to a Burns Supper!



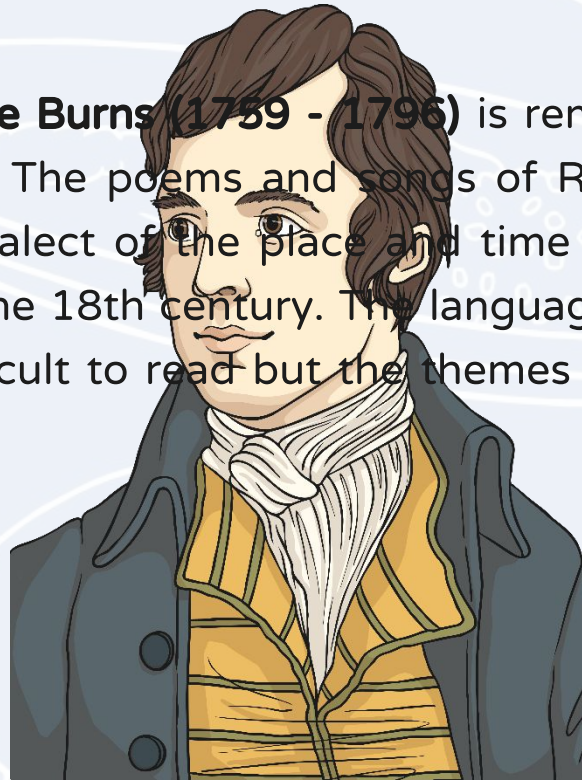
Do you know what a Burns Supper is or why they are held?

Here's some information that will help you become a Burns Supper Specialist...

The Burns Supper

Every January 25th, people in Scotland and all around the world celebrate the life of a man who is famous for the many poems and songs that he wrote. **Do you know which man this is?**

Robert Burns or **Rabbie Burns (1759 - 1796)** is remembered as Scotland's national poet or Bard. The poems and songs of Robert Burns are mostly written in the Scots dialect of the place and time where and when Burns was alive; Ayrshire in the 18th century. The language used in Burns' poems and songs can be difficult to read but the themes he wrote about are still important today.



The Burns Supper

On 25th January (Robert's birthday) Burns Suppers are held. They were first held by Robert's friends in his memory after he died but are now an important event for Scots people around the world.

Robert Burns lived in the 1700s, when the Scots and their traditions were travelling all around the world through trade or emigration. Knowledge of Robert Burns was carried with them.

In 1806 the first Burns Supper was held outside Scotland, in Oxford. In the USA and Canada, Burns Suppers have been held every year since 1820.

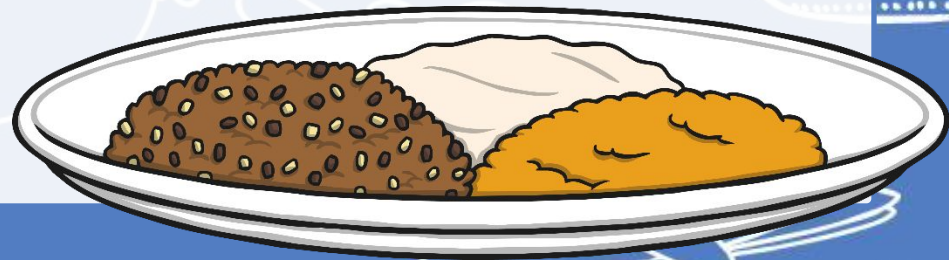


The Burns Supper

Burns Suppers celebrate many aspects of Scottish culture including music, whisky, tartan and dancing. There are many Burns clubs and societies around the world.

At a Burns Supper, a traditional meal is served and there are speeches and poetry recitals. The highlight of the meal is the arrival of the haggis. This Scottish dish is brought to the table with great ceremony to the words of Burns' poem *Address to a Haggis*.

A Burns Supper can be formal or informal as it is adapted to suit the guests. Good company, good food and some of Burns' poems or songs are at the heart of a good Burns Supper!



What Happens at a Burns Supper?

To begin the evening, guests are welcomed by a bagpiper or bagpipe music.

If it's a formal occasion, the host will welcome all of the guests before Burns' poem ***The Selkirk Grace*** is recited:

The Selkirk Grace

*Some hae meat and canna eat,
And some wad eat that want it;
But we hae meat, and we can eat,
And sae let the Lord be thankit.*



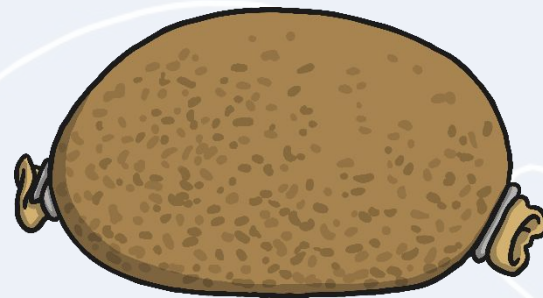
All of the guests then stand as a piper leads the chef into the room. The chef brings the haggis to the table. The haggis is the star of the show!

What Happens at a Burns Supper?

Next, another poem by Robert Burns called ***Address to a Haggis*** is recited. The speaker will dramatically plunge the knife into the haggis so that the pudding is sliced open!

As the final lines of the poem are spoken, the plate of haggis is lifted up to the words *Gie her a haggis!* These words are followed by great applause!

A toast is then given to the Haggis and it is taken away to be served later.



What Happens at a Burns Supper?

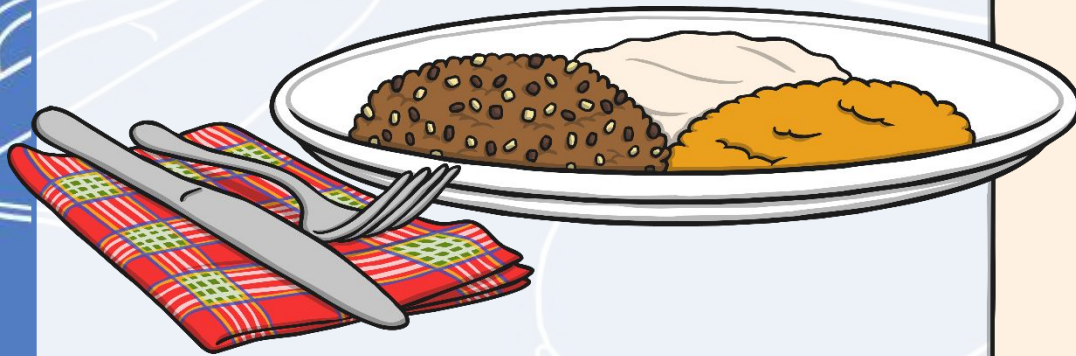
Address to a Haggis

*Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face,
Great chieftain o' the pudding-race!
Aboon them a' yet tak your place,
Painch, tripe, or thairm:
Weel are ye worthy o'a grace
As lang's my arm. ...*

*... Ye Pow'rs, wha mak mankind your care,
And dish them out their bill o' fare,
Auld Scotland wants nae skinking ware
That jaups in luggies;
But, if ye wish her grateful prayer
Gie her a haggis!*

What Happens at a Burns Supper?

The meal at a Burns Supper is usually three courses and might be made up of dishes like these:



Burns Supper MENU

Starter

Cock-a-leekie Soup

A traditional Scottish soup of chicken and leek with rice or barley.

Main

Haggis

Served with bashed neeps (mashed turnip or swede) and mashed tatties (potatoes).

Dessert

Cranachan

A mixture of oats in whisky with raspberries, honey and whipped cream.

What Happens at a Burns Supper?

More speeches and performances of Burns' poems and songs take place after the meal. Popular choices from the works of Robert Burns are the love song ***A Red, Red Rose*** or the spooky tale ***Tam O' Shanter***.

Next, the Immortal Memory speech is made about the life of Robert Burns. It is usually an entertaining speech that talks about Burns' work and his character. The speaker always finishes by inviting guests to toast the Immortal Memory of Robert Burns.

The Toast to the Lassies is then made by one of the men at the supper. This is a funny speech about women, to amuse both the women and men present. The speaker always finishes by inviting guests to toast the Lassies.

A female guest then gives a reply to the Toast to the Lassies. This is usually another funny speech about men and thanks the previous speaker for his words about the Lassies.

What Happens at a Burns Supper?

After the speeches, the host will give a vote of thanks and the evening may continue with more poems or songs, or a ceilidh. The evening traditionally ends with Burns' most famous song ***Auld Lang Syne***.

This is a farewell song, sung at the end of an event, and it has an important place in Scottish culture today. All of the guests join hands in a large circle and sing the words. At the line *And here's a hand*, you cross each of your hands over and hold the hands of those standing on either side of you.



What Happens at a Burns Supper?

Auld Lang Syne

*Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?*

*Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And auld lang syne!*

*For auld lang syne, my jo,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne. ...*

*... And there's a hand, my trusty fiere!
And gie's a hand o' thine!*

*And we'll tak a right gude-willie-waught,
For auld lang syne.*

*For auld lang syne, my jo,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.*

Now that you know all about a Burns Supper, you're ready to go!



A Burns Supper is quite a party.
Do you think Robert Burns would have enjoyed it?

