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Barmbrack: The Irish Loaf That Tells Your Future

Few foods capture the spirit of an Irish Halloween quite like barmbrack — that speckled, fruit-filled loaf that seems to whisper stories of the past.

For generations, this humble bread has been the centrepiece of Samhain gatherings, bringing families together not just to share a slice, but to glimpse what the year ahead might hold.

From Samhain to the Sitting Room

The origins of barmbrack stretch back to Ireland's ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, when people marked the turning of the seasons and honoured the spirits of their ancestors.

In later centuries, as Christian and Celtic customs intertwined, the loaf evolved into a Halloween fortune-telling bread — part treat, part tradition.

The name "barmbrack" (from the Irish *báirín breac*, meaning "speckled loaf") refers to the dotted appearance of dried fruit throughout the dough. In earlier times, bakers would stir charms into the mix — each one holding a meaning for whoever found it in their slice.

A ring meant marriage within the year, a coin promised wealth, a rag warned of hardship, and a pea or stick foretold bachelorhood or spinsterhood. Families would gather around the table with laughter and mock-serious anticipation, each slice dished out like a mini prophecy.

The Modern Barmbrack

Today, shop-bought versions appear in every supermarket by mid-October — but there's nothing like the homemade kind, rich with fruit soaked overnight in tea and spices.

It's the smell that brings back memories: the aroma of warm fruit, cinnamon, and nostalgia wafting through the house on a dark autumn evening.

Traditional Irish Barmbrack Recipe, You'll need:

- 225g plain flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 375g mixed dried fruit (sultanas, raisins, currants)

- 250ml strong black tea (cold)
- 125g light brown sugar
- 1 large egg
- ½ tsp mixed spice
- A pinch of salt
- Optional: a ring or coin (wrapped in parchment)

Method:

1. Soak the dried fruit in the cold tea overnight (or for at least six hours).
2. Preheat the oven to 170°C (fan 160°C). Line a 900g loaf tin with baking parchment.
3. In a large bowl, combine flour, baking powder, sugar, spice, and salt.
4. Add the soaked fruit (with tea) and the beaten egg. Stir to form a thick batter.
5. If using a charm, wrap it tightly in parchment and stir it into the mix.
6. Pour into the tin and bake for 1 hour, or until a skewer comes out clean.
7. Cool on a rack — and resist slicing until the next day, when it's even better.

Serving tip:

Barmbrack is best sliced thick, toasted, and spread with butter. Pair it with a cup of strong Barry's or Bewley's tea for the full Irish experience.

A Slice of the Past

Barmbrack is more than just a Halloween treat — it's a link to our ancestors, our stories, and those shared kitchen tables where laughter and superstition blended into one.

So this Halloween, skip the fancy cakes and carve out a bit of tradition instead. You never know — your next slice might just tell your fortune.

"One ring, one wish, one loaf — and a little Irish magic in every crumb."

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EDITORIAL

As the evenings are becoming shorter and the weather getting colder it gives us time to catch up on our reading and with that in mind we hope we have some interesting articles here for you.

Are you aware of the traditions behind the eating of the simple barmbrack and how it was meant to predict our future? An amusing read here for you all.

For those of us who enjoy the odd little tipple, are we really aware of its effect on us? See our article on Ireland's New Alcoholic Labels explained.

Finally, we have some dates for those of you who enjoy Christmas Markets showing when our top Christmas markets are happening.

.....until next time

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CLIMATE CHANGE SCENARIOS

We looked to the science to answer a pressing question: Is Ireland getting warmer or cooler? The overwhelming scientific consensus points to a warmer future, but with a crucial caveat involving the Atlantic Ocean.

The Overwhelming Evidence: A Warmer, Milder Ireland

The data shows a clear and ongoing warming trend for Ireland. We are already observing its effects: Ireland's average temperature has increased by approximately 0.9°C over the past century. This is reflected in a decrease in the number of frost and ice days, leading to winters that are noticeably milder than in past decades.

Looking ahead, projections indicate this trend will continue. By mid-century, average temperatures in Ireland are expected to be between 1.0 and 1.6°C higher. The exact amount of warming depends on global emissions, with projections ranging from a 0.5–0.7°C increase under lower emissions to a 2.4–3.0°C increase under high emissions. This will result in winters becoming less severe, with fewer frosts and warmer nights, while summers will experience more frequent heatwaves and drier conditions. The bottom line is that Ireland is expected to become warmer overall, with milder winters rather than colder ones.

The “Cooling” Hypothesis: A Note of Caution

Despite the consensus on warming, you may have heard theories that Ireland could face cooling. This idea is tied to the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC)—the ocean current system that includes the Gulf Stream and gives Ireland its relatively mild climate. The theory suggests that if the AMOC weakens significantly due to melting polar ice, it could lead to regional cooling for Ireland. However, this is considered a high-risk but low-likelihood scenario. While possible, a full-scale collapse is not the mainstream scientific projection, and the dominant view remains one of continued warming.

What If the Gulf Stream Does Slow? A Scenario Guide

While not the most likely outcome, a significant slowdown of the AMOC would profoundly change Ireland's climate. A dramatic slowdown could lead to colder, stormier winters, especially in the west, with some models suggesting temperatures 2–4°C lower than they otherwise would be. It could also cause wetter storm seasons due to a shifted jet stream and drier, windier summers in eastern counties. Furthermore, ocean ecosystems that depend on stable temperatures and currents would be severely disrupted. It is crucial to understand that this would not mean a new ice age, but rather a scenario of relative cooling, where Ireland becomes locally cooler while the rest of the world continues to warm rapidly.

A weaker Gulf Stream doesn't cancel global warming—it changes how we experience it, representing a climate “tipping point” that could quickly shift our climate balance.

The Path Forward

The good news is that a full shutdown of the AMOC this century is unlikely, with a partial slowdown being the more probable outcome. The single biggest factor determining our future is greenhouse gas emissions. By rapidly reducing emissions, we slow the melting of Greenland's ice and give the Atlantic's climate engine a better chance of staying stable. The choice we make today directly impacts whether Ireland's future is predictably warmer or unpredictably erratic.

Sources: climateireland.ie, epa.ie, met.ie, ICHEC, Ireland's Marine Institute

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Kildare County Council Announces ACRE Artist in Residence 2025/2026



Kildare County Council Arts Service and the ACRE Project are delighted to announce that Martina McDonald has been selected as the recipient of the ACRE Artist in Residence 2025/26.

The residency programme supports a professional artist to develop their practice and/or develop a specific artistic project, alongside a programme of public-facing workshops to engage communities from the local area.

A Visual Artist based in Clane, Co. Kildare, Martina McDonald brings over 16 years of experience in the creative sector, with a BA (Hons) in Fine Art Sculpture from NCAD Martina creates tactile, mixed media works, with a focus on painting and printmaking.

During the ACRE Project residency, Martina will explore themes of human change through the lens of nature's seasonal cycles. Observing how growth, decay and renewal in the natural world reflect our own emotional and physical transitions. During the residency her ambition is to create art inspired by and from the landscape, to broaden her arts practice through new processes and concepts. Additionally, Martina is planning a number of opportunities for people from the local community

to engage with art through nature. More information regarding these workshops and how to get involved will be available in the coming weeks. To register your interest please email info@acreproject.com

The ACRE Project Artist in Residence Bursary Award provides an artist with 30 weeks (1 day/week) access to facilities and the creative space at The ACRE Project, Celbridge, County Kildare. The residency is supported by Kildare County Council Arts Service, as part of its Arts, Health and Wellbeing programme, with grant aid from the Arts Council of Ireland. Now in its 4th cycle, previous recipients of the award were Ailish Claffey, Embrace Music (Sadhbh O'Sullivan and Sharon Murphy) and Krystal Sweedman. The ACRE Project (A Community Rethinking its Environment) is an eco-friendly community-based project located on the Maynooth Road in Celbridge, County Kildare. The project welcomes the local community to use its internal and external spaces, including sensory gardens, for activities, for learning and for reflection.

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Table for Trouble: The Challenges Facing Irish Restaurant Owners in 2025



Ireland's restaurant scene has never been so creative — or so fragile

Behind every perfect plate of hake, every candlelit table in a bistro, there's a story of survival. In 2025, Irish restaurateurs are juggling more than ingredients; they're wrestling with rising costs, staff shortages, and the slow squeeze of post-pandemic economics.

The Bill No One Wants to Pay

Even as customers return to dining out, the cost of running a restaurant in Ireland has soared.

From energy bills to VAT, insurance, and rent, the numbers just don't add up like they used to.

Chef-owner Clare McKenna of a small restaurant in Kildare says her monthly electricity bill has doubled in three years.

"We turn off every light we can," she laughs, "but you can't cook in the dark."

The return of VAT on hospitality from 9% to 13.5% has been a particular blow. For many small operators, it's the difference between breaking even and falling behind.

Even food costs are volatile — dairy, meat, and imported goods still fluctuate wildly due to global supply chains and the lingering effects of Brexit.

A Staff Crisis That Won't Go Away

Then there's the labour shortage.

The pandemic scattered Ireland's hospitality workforce, and many never came back. Chefs moved abroad; servers found steadier 9-to-5 jobs.

"We've become recruiters first and restaurateurs second," says Eoin Daly, who runs a café in Dublin 15. "Finding staff with experience — or just enthusiasm — is the biggest daily struggle."

Training new staff takes time and money, and burnout is real. Owners are working longer hours just to keep doors open.

Customers Are Changing Too

Irish diners have changed. They're dining out less often, spending more carefully, and expecting more — from dietary options to sustainability to slick service.

At the same time, delivery apps and rising home-entertainment habits mean restaurants must work harder

to tempt people out.

"People love eating out," says Clare, "but the cost of living means they treat it as a rare luxury now — not a weekly thing."

The Love That Keeps It Going

And yet, amid all the challenges, Irish restaurant owners keep cooking.

They do it for the love of food, for community, and for those moments when a table of friends laughs over dessert and the hard day melts away.

Local producers and chefs are banding together more than ever — sharing suppliers, hosting pop-ups, running farm-to-fork collaborations, and turning adversity into creativity.

"There's still magic in it," says Eoin. "It's just harder to afford the ingredients."

A Delicate Balance

Irish restaurants are part of the country's cultural identity — as vital as pubs, music, or sport. But in 2025, they need more than applause; they need structural support, fairer costs, and policies that let passion survive the paperwork.

Until then, the menus will keep changing, the lights will flicker on, and the chefs will keep showing up — because hospitality, in Ireland, isn't just a business. It's who we are.

"We're still feeding people," says Clare. "That's what matters most."

5 Pressures on Irish Restaurants in 2025

1. Rising Costs

Energy, insurance, and supplier prices have all surged.

- Electricity bills up by 80–100% since 2020.
- Food inflation running at around 6–8%, with imports hardest hit.

"Every delivery costs more before we even switch on the oven."

2. VAT & Tax Pressures

The return of the 13.5% VAT rate on food service and hospitality has squeezed small independents.

Many had budgeted for the 9% rate to stay — meaning profits are wiped out almost overnight.

3. Staffing Shortages

Continues Page 10

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Hospitality remains one of Ireland's most understaffed sectors.

- CSO data shows vacancy rates above 12% in food service.
- Work permits help, but training and retention remain tough.

"We're always hiring — but rarely filling."

4. Changing Dining Habits

The cost-of-living crisis means fewer spontaneous dinners out. People plan more carefully, seek value menus, or opt for takeaways.

"Treat dining is replacing casual dining."

5. Mental & Financial Burnout

Behind the smiles, many owners are struggling with exhaustion.

• 1 in 3 restaurant owners surveyed by the RAI report considering closing within a year.

• Long hours, high stress, and razor-thin margins take their toll.

"You have to love it — or you couldn't do it."

Outlook

Despite the strain, Irish food culture remains strong. Community collaborations, local sourcing, and creative pop-ups show resilience.

The industry isn't just surviving — it's reinventing itself.



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Top Christmas Markets in Ireland 2025

Market	Location	Expected / Confirmed Dates	Highlights / Notes
Galway Christmas Market	Eyre Square, Galway	14 November 2025 to 4 January 2026	One of the longest-running and largest markets. Dozens of wooden chalets, food stalls, rides, and festive ambience.
Dublin Castle Christmas Market	Dublin city centre	27 November to 17 December 2025 (likely)	In the castle grounds. Free admission and a compact but festive setup.
Winterval	Waterford	21 November to 23 December 2025	A major festival combining Christmas markets, entertainment, lights, and family events.
Yulefest Kilkenny	Kilkenny	29 November to 23 December 2025	Includes markets, Santa's arrival, weekend festivities, music, and crafts.
Swords Castle Christmas Market	Swords, Co. Dublin	29–30 November and 6–7 December 2025 (weekend markets)	A local Fingal market held in the castle grounds; mix of indoor & outdoor stalls.
Cork Christmas / "Corkmas" & Marina Market	Cork city	From ~14 November through mid-December (dates TBC)	Includes city centre stalls, a Ferris wheel, carousels, and more at Marina Market and Emmet Place.
Stillgarden Christmas Market	Stillgarden Distillery, near Dublin	6 December 2025, 11:00–17:00	A one-day pop-up market at the distillery, free entry.

Tips & Observations for 2025

1. Start mid-November: Most markets begin in mid-November and run until late December or early January.
2. Galway leads the pack: Its market extends into January, making it ideal for late-season visits.
3. Free admission in many cases: Markets like Dublin Castle expect to remain free to enter.
4. Weekend & seasonal markets: Smaller markets (like Swords Castle) operate over specific weekends rather than full spans.

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Mattress Mick Book Release

Many have called him the people's princess. Others have urged him to run for the presidency of Ireland. But there's only one Michael Flynn — better known to the nation as Mattress Mick.

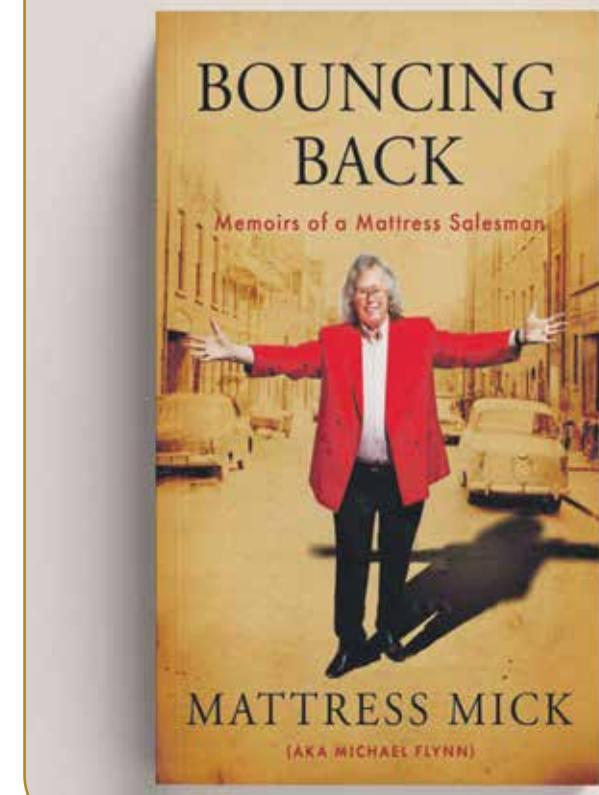
Now, the larger-than-life entrepreneur and marketing maverick has shared his incredible story in *Bouncing Back: Memoirs of a Mattress Salesman*, a book that charts his rollercoaster journey through fame, failure, and fierce resilience. From near-bankruptcy to becoming one of Ireland's most recognisable figures, Flynn lays it all bare the highs, the heartbreaks, and the humour that's defined his life.

Hailed as inspiring, heartwarming, and brilliantly funny, the memoir takes readers deep into the man behind the mattress. Mick opens up about the loss of his beloved wife Margaret in 2023, the adoption of his daughter Marina from Russia, and the personal battles that shaped his remarkable comeback. It's an unflinchingly honest portrait of an ordinary man with extraordinary spirit proof that even when life knocks you down, you can always bounce back.

Co-authored by Josephine McCaffrey, a writer originally from Leitrim, the pair met in the most unusual of ways, a story in itself, documented in the book. Josephine McCaffrey, who also wrote the musical inspired by Flynn's life, spent months working side by side with him to piece together his story, from his boyhood days on Pearse Street, through family joys and deep losses, to the unconventional marketing genius that made him a national icon.

At its heart, *Bouncing Back* is a love letter to perseverance, community, and creativity. It's about refusing to give up, no matter what life throws your way — whether that means thinking outside the box or, in Mick's case, outside the bed.

Today, Flynn stands as one of Ireland's most beloved public figures, known not only for his humour and hustle but also for his generosity and social activism, including his work with Apollo House. His story resonates deeply



with anyone who's faced hardship and kept going.

Bouncing Back: Memoirs of a Mattress Salesman is a celebration of resilience, laughter, and the unbreakable Irish spirit — available now online and in all good bookshops.

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Budget 2025: Small Boosts Big Hopes

Ireland's Budget 2025 isn't a splashy giveaway it's more like a cautious helping hand.



Designed to steady households still feeling the pinch from high prices, it mixes small tax cuts, modest welfare hikes and a few sweeteners for families and renters.

"A steady hand rather than a grand gesture — that's Budget 2025 in a nutshell."

Easing the Everyday Bills

Households will receive a €250 energy credit, split into two payments, and fuel allowance recipients get a €300 top-up. The reduced 9% VAT rate on gas and electricity stays until spring, while parents can expect some family-friendly perks:

- A €420 'baby bonus' for newborns,
- Free schoolbooks for Leaving Cert students, and
- Free public transport for children aged 5–8.

They're small moves, but they add up for homes juggling rising costs.

Tax Tweaks and Take-Home Pay

Middle earners get a bit more breathing room. The income tax band rises by €2,000, and the Universal Social Charge dips by 1%. Renters will welcome a bigger Rent Tax Credit — now €1,000 per person (or €2,000 for couples) — while new homeowners benefit from extended mortgage relief.

If you're earning the minimum wage, that also climbs to €13.50 an hour, helping lower-income workers keep pace with inflation.

Welfare & Public Spending

Core social welfare payments increase by €12 per week, while the Government commits €10.5 billion to infrastructure, housing, transport and healthcare. It's a "steady growth" budget — not revolutionary but aimed at improving services over time.

The Catch

Energy supports are smaller than last year, and several benefits — Child Benefit, Living Alone and Fuel Allowance — are frozen. Critics say inflation will eat into these gains, leaving some pensioners and low-income households no better off.

Winners:

- Working families and renters
- Parents with school-age kids

- Minimum-wage earners

Losers (relatively):

- Pensioners and fixed-income households
- Drivers and smokers (carbon & excise hikes)
- Low earners with little or no tax liability

Bottom Line

For most of us, Budget 2025 means a small but welcome lift — a little extra in pay packets, slightly smaller bills, and a few family perks.

But it won't transform household budgets overnight. It's a careful step forward, not a leap — and for many, the squeeze isn't over yet.



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Fuel Lines: Why Irish Drivers Are Heading North for Cheaper Petrol

If you've noticed a stream of cars heading towards Newry, Derry, or Enniskillen on a Saturday morning, you're not imagining things.

With petrol and diesel prices climbing again across the Republic, Irish drivers are crossing the border in their thousands — not for shopping this time, but for cheaper fuel.

In 2025, the price gap between filling up in Louth and topping up in Armagh has widened once more — and for many, it's worth the trip.

The Price Divide

At the start of autumn 2025, the average price of unleaded petrol in the Republic hovered around €1.85–€1.90 per litre, while Northern Ireland stations averaged roughly £1.39–£1.45 (or about €1.62–€1.68 after conversion).

That difference might seem small — but on a full tank, it can mean savings of €8–€12, and even more for diesel drivers. For families or commuters who drive daily, those euros add up quickly.

"People plan their shop around it," says Declan Byrne, who manages a forecourt in Dundalk.

"They'll fill the car, grab groceries in Newry, and make a day of it. We just can't compete."

Why the Gap Exists

Several factors drive the difference:

- Excise duty and carbon tax remain higher in the Republic.
- Currency fluctuations between the euro and sterling affect pump prices.
- Northern Ireland stations often buy in cheaper wholesale fuel due to UK tax structures and logistics.

While the Government in Dublin reintroduced some fuel excise duties that had been cut during the cost-of-living crisis, many motorists feel the timing couldn't be worse.

"Our costs are up — everything from school books to groceries," says Mary Quinn from Cavan. "You can't blame people for driving 20 minutes to save €10 on a tank."

Border Blues

For petrol stations along the southern side of the border, the exodus hurts.

In towns like Castleblayney, Carrickmacross, and Buncrana, once-bustling forecourts are quieter, while their Northern counterparts are thriving.

Some stations are diversifying — opening cafés, adding electric vehicle chargers, and promoting Irish-sourced fuels to hold on to customers. But it's an uphill battle.

"We used to see Northern drivers coming south for cheaper diesel," says Sean McGee, who runs a station near Clones. "Now it's the other way round. It's flipped completely."

The Road Ahead

Economists say the trend will continue as long as there's a meaningful price gap.

And while electric vehicle uptake is rising, for most rural Irish households, diesel and petrol are still daily necessities — not



luxuries.

The result? Cross-border fuel tourism is back, echoing the shopping trips of the early 2000s. It's good news for Northern retailers, but a slow bleed for forecourts on this side of the line.

The Everyday Reality

Back in Louth, Declan shrugs as another convoy of southern plates rolls past toward Newry.

"We're proud of our customers," he says. "We just wish we could serve them without sending them across the border."

For now, the tank may be full — but for many Irish petrol stations, the future feels like it's running on fumes.



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Kildare Communities Invited to Lead the Way on Climate Action

Applications open on 28th October 2025

COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION PROGRAMME PHASE 2 GRANT LAUNCH

APPLICATIONS OPEN: TUE 28th OCTOBER 2025

CLOSING DEADLINE: MON 22nd DECEMBER 2025

Funding is available for local, not-for-profit community groups and clubs. Eligible groups must be registered with their PPN, Tidy Towns, The Wheel or have a formal constitution and hold an AGM. Find the Application Form and all grant information here:

Kildarecoco.ie/AllServices/ClimateAction/CommunityClimateActionProgramme

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DROP-IN CLINICS: Come along for free advice, share your idea, and get guidance on the process.

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Naas Library & Cultural Centre	Wednesday — 15th October 6pm-8pm
Maynooth Community Library	Thursday — 16th October 6pm-8pm
Kildare Town Community Library	Tuesday — 21st October 2.30pm-4.30pm
Celbridge Community Library	Wednesday — 22nd October 2.30pm-4.30pm
Kildare County Council HQ Carpark Naas (Mount Lucas Rig - Climate Week)	Tuesday — 28th October 10.30am-12.30pm



For all enquiries, please contact: Stephen O'Reilly, Community Climate Action Officer climateactionoffice@kildarecoco.ie



€897,000 available to support local green projects

Big things are happening in Kildare — and they're all about small, local steps that make a big difference. Kildare County Council has just launched Round 2 of the Community Climate Action Programme, with nearly €900,000 in funding available for local projects that tackle climate change head-on.

From energy-saving initiatives and biodiversity projects to waste reduction, sustainable transport, and creative nature-based solutions, this fund is designed to help community groups, Tidy Towns committees, sports clubs, and residents' associations turn great ideas into real change.

"After a fantastic first round, we're excited to see what local communities will do next," said Stephen O'Reilly, Community Climate Action Officer with Kildare County Council. "This funding gives people the chance to make practical, visible improvements in their own towns and

villages — projects that not only reduce emissions but also strengthen community spirit."

The initiative, supported by the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment, is open to any not-for-profit group based in Kildare. To qualify, organisations should be registered with the Public Participation Network (PPN) or be part of a recognised collective such as The Wheel or Tidy Towns.

Applications will open on 28th October 2025 and close on 22nd December 2025, giving local changemakers two months to shape their proposals.

To help communities get started, the Council is hosting a series of free drop-in Library Clinics across Kildare this October, offering one-to-one advice on eligibility, project ideas, and how to make a strong application.

So whether you're dreaming of a pollinator-friendly park, a shared e-bike scheme, or a solar-powered community hall — this is your chance to bring it to life.

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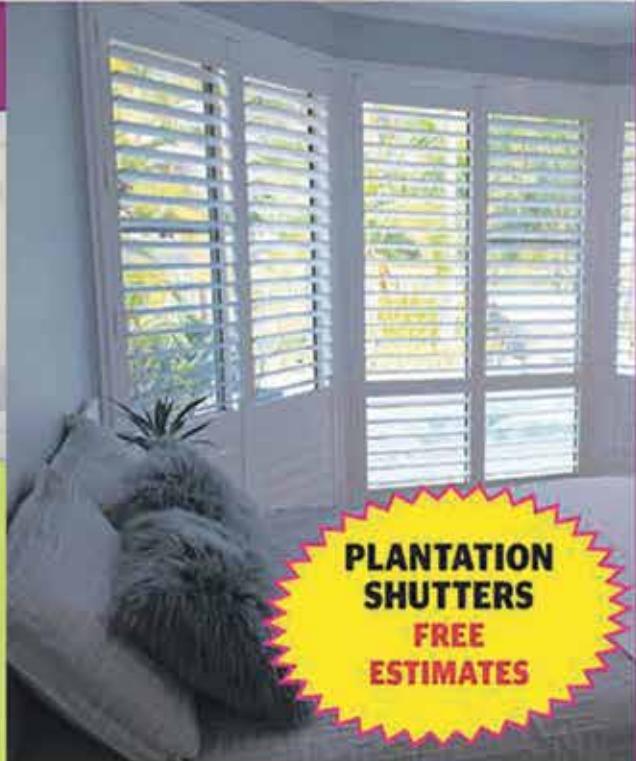
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Smart Ireland: How Tech Is Quietly Transforming Our Homes and Habits



Once upon a time, “smart homes” sounded like something out of science fiction — or Silicon Valley. But in Ireland today, they’re quietly becoming part of everyday life.

From rural cottages to city apartments, more and more households are discovering that small bits of technology — from voice-activated lighting to intelligent heating systems — can make life simpler, greener, and even a little more joyful.

The Subtle Revolution

It's not about robots or futuristic gadgets. The real Irish tech trend is practical, invisible convenience.

Smart thermostats like Google Nest or Hive, now standard in many Dublin homes, allow you to control your heating remotely — handy when you're halfway down the M50 and remember you've left the immersion on.

Smart plugs, video doorbells, and energy monitors are quietly changing daily routines, helping families cut down on bills while giving peace of mind.

“It's not flashy, it's functional,” says Aidan Byrne, a Blanchardstown-based electrician who's seen demand surge in the past two years. “People don't want gimmicks — they want things that save them money and stress.”

Sustainability Meets Comfort

In a country where energy costs bite and weather can't make up its mind, smart tech is becoming a key player in sustainability.

Solar-powered sensors, energy-efficient bulbs, and timed sockets are helping Irish households lower emissions — one app at a time.

According to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), even basic automation can cut energy waste by up to 15%. For many homeowners, that's reason enough to get smart.

Living Smarter, Not Louder

For design-conscious readers, the good news is that smart

tech no longer means ugly cables or blinking boxes.

Irish interior designers are embracing “invisible integration” — discreet sensors, soft-touch switches, and minimalist devices that blend seamlessly into contemporary homes.

“The new luxury is quiet technology,” says interior stylist Niamh Kelly. “It's about control without clutter — living smarter, not louder.”

Getting Started

If you're curious but cautious, start small:

- Smart lighting:
Set evening moods or wake-up routines.
- Connected heating:
Adjust temperatures room-by-room.
- Voice assistants:
Hands-free timers, recipes, and reminders.
- Energy monitors:
Track where your electricity really goes.

With most devices now plug-and-play, you don't need to be a tech wizard — just a little curious.

The Irish Way Forward

As Ireland pushes toward greener, more energy-efficient living, technology isn't replacing tradition — it's adapting to it. The kettle still boils, the fire still glows — but now, we can check both from our phones.

And that's the beauty of it: technology that fits Irish life, not the other way around.

“The best tech doesn't shout,” says Aidan. “It just quietly makes life better.”

5 Easy Smart Upgrades for Irish Homes

You don't need a tech degree (or a big budget) to make your home smarter.

Here are five simple, affordable upgrades that work perfectly

in Irish homes — from urban apartments to country cottages.

1. Smart Heating Controls

Devices like Google Nest, Hive, or Tado let you control your heating from your phone — ideal for unpredictable Irish weather.

SEAI estimates smart thermostats can save up to 15% on energy costs.

2. Energy-Saving Smart Plugs

Plug in lamps or appliances and schedule them to turn off automatically — no more wondering if you left the iron on.

3 LED Smart Bulbs

Set cosy evening light or bright morning wake-ups via your phone or voice assistant.

Works with Google Assistant, Alexa, or Apple Home — no electrician needed.

4 Video Doorbells & Security Cameras

Keep an eye on deliveries or visitors while you're away. Popular brands include Ring and Eufy, both with simple smartphone apps.

5 Smart Speakers & Voice Assistants

Add a Google Nest Mini or Amazon Echo Dot to your kitchen for hands-free timers, recipes, weather updates, and music.

Bonus: they double as your home's digital hub if you add more devices later.

Tip:

Check www.seai.ie for home energy grants that may cover smart heating or insulation — a great way to make your tech upgrades even greener.

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WHAT'S REALLY ON THE BOTTLE? IRELAND'S NEW ALCOHOL LABELS EXPLAINED

If you like to unwind with a glass of wine or enjoy a quiet pint, there's a big change coming to the way your favourite drink looks on the shelf.

Ireland is the first country in the EU to take a bold step toward telling the full story of alcohol — right there on the bottle.

A New Kind of Label

Under the Public Health (Alcohol) (Labelling) Regulations 2023, every beer, wine, cider, and spirit sold in Ireland will eventually carry new health information. The aim? To give drinkers the same kind of transparency they already expect on food packaging.

That means your next bottle of wine won't just tell you how strong it is — it will also spell out exactly how many grams of alcohol it contains and the calories inside.

And that's just the start. Labels will also feature a series of health warnings, including:

- The general dangers of alcohol use
- The risks of drinking during pregnancy
- A clear statement linking alcohol consumption with fatal cancers
- A reminder of its role in liver disease

Each label must also point readers toward AskAboutAlcohol.ie, a public-health website with information and support. Even pubs and bars will be expected to display similar health messages — so the message won't end at the supermarket shelf.

Why the Change?

Supporters say the move brings alcohol into line with the rest of our shopping basket. Just as we've grown used to calorie counts on sandwiches or sugar warnings on soft drinks, these new labels are meant to spark more mindful drinking and make the health risks impossible to ignore.

The World Health Organization has hailed Ireland's plan as a landmark for public health — the first of its kind in Europe.

Not So Fast

While the law is on the books, it won't hit bottles straight away. The rules were due to take effect in May 2026, but in mid-2025 the Government signalled that enforcement could be pushed back to 2029.

For now, that means most drinks will stay as they are, while producers and importers gear up for the shift.

Clashing with Europe

The new labels go further than EU law currently requires. Across the rest of Europe, alcohol over 1.2% ABV doesn't need to list calories, ingredients or nutrition details. Ireland's rules carve out an exception — and not everyone's pleased about it.



Some drinks companies have warned of trade headaches, extra printing costs, and confusion for exporters. Others see it as a chance for Ireland to lead the way toward a Europe-wide standard.

What It Means for You

When the changes finally arrive, every bottle, can, and cocktail on Irish shelves will carry clearer information than ever before. You'll know how strong your drink really is, how many calories it adds to your night, and exactly what risks come with it.

Whether you see it as a warning, a wake-up call, or just another label, one thing's certain: the humble drinks label is about to get a lot more honest.

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THE SILICON VALLEY OF KILDARE: HOW TECH IS CHANGING LIFE ON OUR DOORSTEP

When you drive through Leixlip, it doesn't look like the kind of place that helped change the world. Rows of houses, a quiet Main Street, and the River Liffey winding past the old manor walls.

But tucked just beyond the town lies one of the most advanced manufacturing campuses on Earth — Intel Ireland — and around it, a growing cluster of engineers, coders, start-ups, and innovators who are redefining life in North Kildare.

Leixlip, Lucan, and Maynooth have quietly become Ireland's tech triangle — a place where global innovation meets local life.

A Giant in the Valley

Since first breaking ground in 1989, Intel has invested over €30 billion in its Leixlip facility. Thousands of local residents have built careers there — from process engineers to security guards, cafeteria staff to logistics specialists.

When Intel announced its latest expansion, it didn't just add buildings; it cemented Kildare's place in Europe's high-tech future.

"You can feel it ripple through the community," says Aoife Nolan, who runs a café near the train station. "The engineers come in for coffee at six in the morning — they're part of daily life now."

New Work, New Rhythms

It's not just Intel. Remote and hybrid working have drawn more tech professionals to live in the area — people who log into Dublin, London, or San Francisco without leaving their Lucan kitchen tables.

Business parks in Leixlip, Maynooth, and Grangecastle now host software start-ups, med-tech firms, and green-energy innovators. The result: a subtle but steady shift in local rhythm.

Cafés open earlier. Co-working hubs have replaced old offices. Housing estates once filled with commuters now buzz during weekdays.

"You see people on lunchtime walks along the canal with laptops in their bags," laughs Paul Kearney, a software developer who moved from city centre living to Lucan. "It's calmer — but you're still connected."

Challenges Beneath the Shine

Yet with progress comes pressure. Traffic at peak times still tests patience. House prices have climbed faster than local wages. Some small retailers worry that global pay packets



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"It's wonderful seeing new energy," says Mary Sheridan of the Leixlip Business Network, "but we have to protect what makes these towns liveable — community, green space, and character."

Local councils are responding with plans for active travel routes, new housing zones, and sustainability initiatives designed to balance growth with quality of life.

A Generation of Makers

In schools, that balance is already inspiring a new generation. Robotics clubs in Confey College and Lucan Community College are thriving, while Maynooth University's Innovation District is helping young entrepreneurs test ideas before they leave college.

From AI to agritech, from climate apps to med-tech devices, Kildare's talent pool is quietly deepening.

"Kids here see technology not as distant or foreign," says Aoife. "It's normal — it's their neighbour's job."

The Shape of Tomorrow

What's striking about this corner of Ireland isn't just its global reach — it's how well it still feels like home. You can discuss microchips over a pint in The Salmon Leap Inn or spot Intel staff cycling down the Royal Canal Greenway after work.

The world's technology is being built right here — but it's happening amid stone bridges, coffee smells, and river walks.

That's the paradox of modern Kildare: high tech with human warmth.

As Paul puts it, sipping his espresso and checking Slack messages,

"It's the best of both worlds. We've got the future — and we

still say hello to our neighbours."

Tech Life by the Numbers: Kildare's Innovation Corridor

Intel in Leixlip

- Opened: 1989
- Investment to date: €30+ billion
- Employees: ~5,000 direct staff and 3,000+ contractors
- Expansion: New Fab 34 completed in 2024 — one of the most advanced semiconductor facilities in Europe.

Tech Ripple Effect

- Local job creation: thousands of secondary roles in catering, transport, housing, and services.
- Lucan, Leixlip, Maynooth & Celbridge now rank among the top areas for tech employment outside Dublin.
- Broadband coverage across Kildare exceeds 98%, supporting remote and hybrid work.

The Start-Up Scene

- Maynooth University Innovation District supports early-stage tech ventures in AI, green energy, and med-tech.
- Co-working spaces like The Landing (Celbridge) and Base Cowork (Clane) are booming, attracting creative freelancers and small firms.

Commuter Shift

- Around 40% of Kildare tech professionals now work hybrid or fully remote, spending more weekdays locally — great news for cafés and local shops.

The Human Side

Tech may dominate the skyline, but community remains the heartbeat. From lunchtime walks on the Royal Canal Greenway to local coding clubs and coffee meet-ups, Kildare's innovation boom is blending progress with personality.



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KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL CELEBRATES

SUCCESS AT IRISH PLANNING INSTITUTE



Kildare Shines Bright at Irish Planning Awards 2025

County Council scoops top national honours for visionary town planning and heritage revival. Kildare is celebrating a major national success story — and it's all about how we're shaping the places we live, work, and meet. At the prestigious Irish Planning Institute (IPI) Awards 2025, Kildare County Council walked away with not one but two national awards and a Highly Commended mention, recognising its creative, sustainable, and people-focused approach to planning.

The county took home the Planning Authority of the Year award, honouring its leadership in smart, forward-thinking development — from climate action initiatives to projects that put community wellbeing and quality of life at the heart of every plan.

Adding to the celebration, Kildare also won the Heritage & Culture Award for "The Revival of Naas Town Centre – Reimagining the Potato Market." The project has breathed new life into the heart of Naas, blending careful restoration of heritage details with striking public art and lively civic space — a perfect example of how old and new can work beautifully together.

The Council's collaborative spirit was also recognised with a Highly Commended award for the Maynooth Joint Local Area Plan 2023–2029, developed alongside Meath County Council. Designed to guide the sustainable growth of Maynooth as a university town and regional hub, the plan stands out for its strong evidence base, emphasis on walkability and active travel, and its smart focus on compact, climate-ready development.

Speaking about the wins, Alan Dunney, Director of Services, said:

"These awards are a testament to the dedication, creativity, and professionalism of our planning team. They also reflect the strong partnerships we've built with our elected members, local communities, and neighbouring authorities. We're honoured to see our work recognised at a national level."

The IPI Awards, held every two years, celebrate the best of Irish placemaking — from bustling town squares to visionary local plans. This year's event drew a record number of entries,

proving that great planning is now as much about creativity and collaboration as it is about maps and metrics.

With these latest honours, Kildare County Council continues to cement its reputation as one of Ireland's most forward-thinking local authorities — building a county where heritage and innovation go hand in hand.

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Bohermeen Student Wins Top Prize at Irish Skills Competition in Beauty Therapy

23rd Sept 2025: Ella Graham Harvey, a student at Dunboyne College of Further Education and Training (DCFET), has been crowned winner of the prestigious World Skills Ireland competition 2025.

Representing her college with professionalism, precision, and creativity Ella competed against the top emerging beauty therapists from across the country in the RDS last week and brought home the coveted national title.

A native of Bohermeen, Navan, Co. Meath, Ella showcased exceptional skill and dedication in a series of challenging practical tasks, ranging from skincare and makeup to advanced techniques in nail care and facial massage. Worldskills Ireland is a partnership between enterprise, industry, education, training and government that raises the profile and recognition of skills and apprenticeships and prepares the talent of today for the careers of the future. The Irish Skills Competition is recognised nationally for promoting excellence in vocational education and training, with beauty therapy being one of the most competitive categories.

Speaking after the win, Ella can't believe her success.



Pictured at a presentation to mark the success of Ella Graham Harvey, Dunboyne College student who won the World Skills Ireland competition in Beauty Therapy are Amanda Moore, Beauty Therapy Dept DCFET, Cllr Nick Killian, Chairperson LMETB & DCFET Board, Ella Graham Harvey, World Skills winner, Catherine Fox, Principal, DCFET and Nicola Clarke, Beauty Therapy Dept DCFET



"It still feels surreal. I've worked so hard over the past year, and to have it all come together on such a big stage is just amazing. I'm so grateful to Nicola Clarke and Amanda Moore, my tutors in DCFET for all their support. This experience has truly boosted my confidence and shown me how far dedication can take you."

Nicola Clarke, Beauty Therapy Department in Dunboyne College, praised her Ella's commitment and work ethic. "From the beginning, Ella showed exceptional drive and passion for beauty therapy. She consistently went above and beyond in both her practical and theoretical work. Winning this competition is no easy feat — it requires precision, creativity, and professionalism — all of which she demonstrated in abundance. We're incredibly proud of her here at DCFET. Her success is a testament to the opportunities available through further education and training in Ireland, and it highlights the growing development of our Beauty Therapy courses here in Dunboyne."

Amanda Moore, Beauty Therapy Tutor in DCFET praised Ella for her team spirit "Ella, is very hardworking, helpful, and always giving 100%! She was a real player and is a true inspiration to her peers and a star in the making."

The win not only places Ella among the elite of her field in Ireland but also opens up opportunities to participate at an international competition. The Irish Skills Competition often acts as a gateway to the WorldSkills and EuroSkills platforms, where top vocational students represent Ireland on a global stage. Ella is currently continuing her studies in Advanced Beauty Therapy in Dunboyne College. She is employed as a Beauty Therapist in Glamour Geek Athboy.

The Future Is Irish: Meet the Innovators Shaping Tomorrow's Tech

If you think the future of technology belongs to Silicon Valley, think again.

Across Ireland — from Dublin Docklands to Galway Bay — a new generation of innovators is proving that the next big idea might just come with an Irish accent.

They're not wearing lab coats or hiding behind jargon. They're teachers, engineers, coders, and dreamers — ordinary people using technology to make everyday life smarter, healthier, and more human.

Tech with Heart

In Dublin's Digital Hub, Siobhán Dunne, founder of HearMe, is building an AI-powered app that checks in on users' mood through voice tone and offers personalised wellbeing support.

"We wanted to make mental health help feel like a friend, not a form," she says.

"The goal isn't to replace human connection — it's to spark it."

Her startup has already partnered with several Irish universities to pilot the app among students, tackling stress before it spirals.

Innovation in the Fields

Meanwhile, in the heart of the Midlands, Tom Kearney, a second-generation farmer turned technologist, is turning data into sustainability. His company AgriFlow uses solar-powered sensors to monitor soil health, rainfall, and energy use.

"We're proving that technology doesn't have to mean screens and servers," Tom says.

"It can mean cleaner rivers, better yields, and smarter land use."

AgriFlow's software is now helping co-ops across Offaly and Westmeath cut fertiliser waste by up to 20% — a win for both farmers and the environment.

Galway's Green Dream

Out west, Maeve Ní Riain is leading a team of engineers designing ocean-powered energy turbines for coastal villages. Her start-up BlueVolt hopes to make small-scale, community-owned power a reality.

"We've always had the wind and the waves," she laughs. "Now we have the technology to use them wisely."

Her work has caught EU attention — and might just redefine how Ireland uses its greatest natural resource: the sea.

The Human Side of Irish Tech

What unites these innovators isn't just code or capital — it's care. Each one is driven by a distinctly Irish blend of curiosity and community spirit. They're not chasing headlines; they're solving real problems for real people.

From AI to agritech, healthtech to renewable energy, Ireland is quietly carving its place in the future — one smart, empathetic idea at a time.

"The Irish tech scene has heart," says Siobhán. "And that's our

competitive edge."

The Takeaway

Ireland's next wave of innovation isn't about gadgets — it's about goodness. It's about making life easier, greener, and more connected, while keeping the values that define us: warmth, wit, and creativity.

The future isn't coming — it's already here.

And it's unmistakably Irish.

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Date of experience: July 03, 2024



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Date of experience: April 22, 2024



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