

North Shore Magazine

Brendan Cronin: North Shore's Swiss Master

October 17, 2012 by [Northshore](#) ·



Swiss Master Chef, Brendan Cronin

From Irish farming and family cooking to world traveling and earning the prestigious title of Swiss Master Chef, Brendan Cronin has learned and mastered the ins and outs of the hospitality and culinary industry. Residing on the North Shore, Cronin is a professor at Endicott College in Beverly where he teaches Hospitality Management and administers the La Chanterelle Restaurant. Cronin takes a look back at his past accomplishments, hardships, and life experiences that have lead him to his success today. *By Kayla Carignan*

Cronin's accomplishments are greatly rooted in his desire for traveling and love of food, but his culinary starting point dated back to the 1950's. To cope with the tough times and economical effects of the war, Cronin's mother decided to take in lodgers as a way of income. As a young child, Cronin helped his mother with the kitchen work, feeding fourteen hungry stomachs for breakfast, lunch, and dinner day after day. Cooking was seen to him as a daily routine, not a talent or future career for a man.

It wasn't until years later that he realized the potential that the culinary industry had. He could use his talent as a way to get out of Ireland, but what Cronin wasn't expecting was that his talents would land him endless career choices.

"Over seven years, every chef helped me find a next job, so I never applied for a job. I've applied for one job in my life." said Cronin, referring to his time spent in Switzerland.

The numerous job offers continued to follow him, with his thirst for food and travel becoming hand in hand as he moved from one prominent position to another.

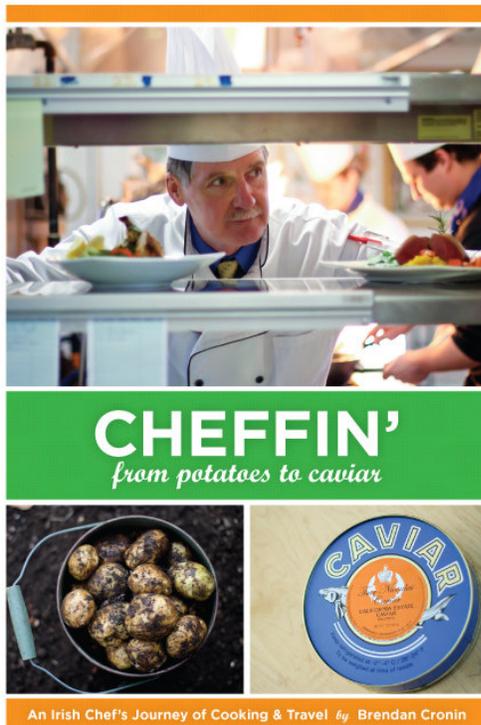
After a great deal of traveling and having a hand in many hotel restaurant start-ups, he decided to switch from the hectic days of a chef to a calmer, stable lifestyle of teaching. He took an offer at Les Roches

International School of Hotel Management back in Switzerland, which is now among the top three hospitality management schools in the world. It was here that Cronin decided to study in becoming a Swiss Master Chef, after discovering that many of his colleagues had already gained the prestigious title, which in return helped them with their teachings and accreditation. After one year in a preparatory course and two intense weeks of practical, theoretical, and oral tests along with an extensive cooking component, he was awarded the respected Swiss Master Chef title.

Researching into culinary records Cronin discovered that, to date, he is the only Irish chef to hold the Swiss Master Chef title. “I didn’t think about it until I left Ireland. Of course, here you are among chefs. You have Austrians, Italians, French, all these great countries we see with good food, Swiss, German, and then you’ve got the Irish guy in the corner,” he says laughing, “Where did he come from? We’re not on the international cooking radar. Now beverages are a different story.”

While at Les Roches, two of Cronin’s students went abroad to intern at the student-run restaurant at Endicott College. Cronin recalls that Dr. Richard E. Wylie, President of Endicott College, loved the idea of the hospitality restaurant, and was intrigued by the concept of giving students on the North Shore the ability for to learn, hands-on, in a professional environment within the industry, the exact concept Les Roches followed. Dr. Wylie was interested in bringing this idea to Endicott, and thus, The La Chanterelle restaurant was born. Then in 1995, after the restaurant had been running for a year, Cronin was brought on to spearhead the restaurant, and with that his whole family moves from Switzerland to Beverly, Massachusetts.

“I provide the pathway, but it’s the students with their interaction with the clients. There’s an energy in here that you don’t get in the industry,” he states about La Chanterelle. “You’re talking about 18 and 19-year-olds. Who gives them compliments today? They’re in that critical stage where they need that confidence, they need to be helped to believe in themselves. That’s what I think is missing today for the younger generation, that the generation before them needs to believe in the younger generation a little bit more.”



Today, he is very pleased with where life has taken him. The ocean side living reminds him of his childhood in Ireland, his daughter is successful and his son graduating. He is able to cook and teach his craft every day to eager students, and traveling has remained a passion throughout the years. He has been able to see many different American lifestyles and through the Study Abroad program at Endicott, he has taken numerous Endicott students to Switzerland to show off his lifestyle.

While at Endicott, between teaching, traveling, and being a family man Cronin was studying to get his Bachelors degree in Hospitality. For a class assignment he started writing a piece called '*Cheffin': From Potatoes to Caviar*' which documented his early childhood, work, travel, and culinary education. While writing Cronin realized he had started something bigger than a classroom paper. He decided to develop the assignment into his first memoir (of a trilogy to come) and to give readers a literal taste of his experiences, he added recipes to conclude each chapter.

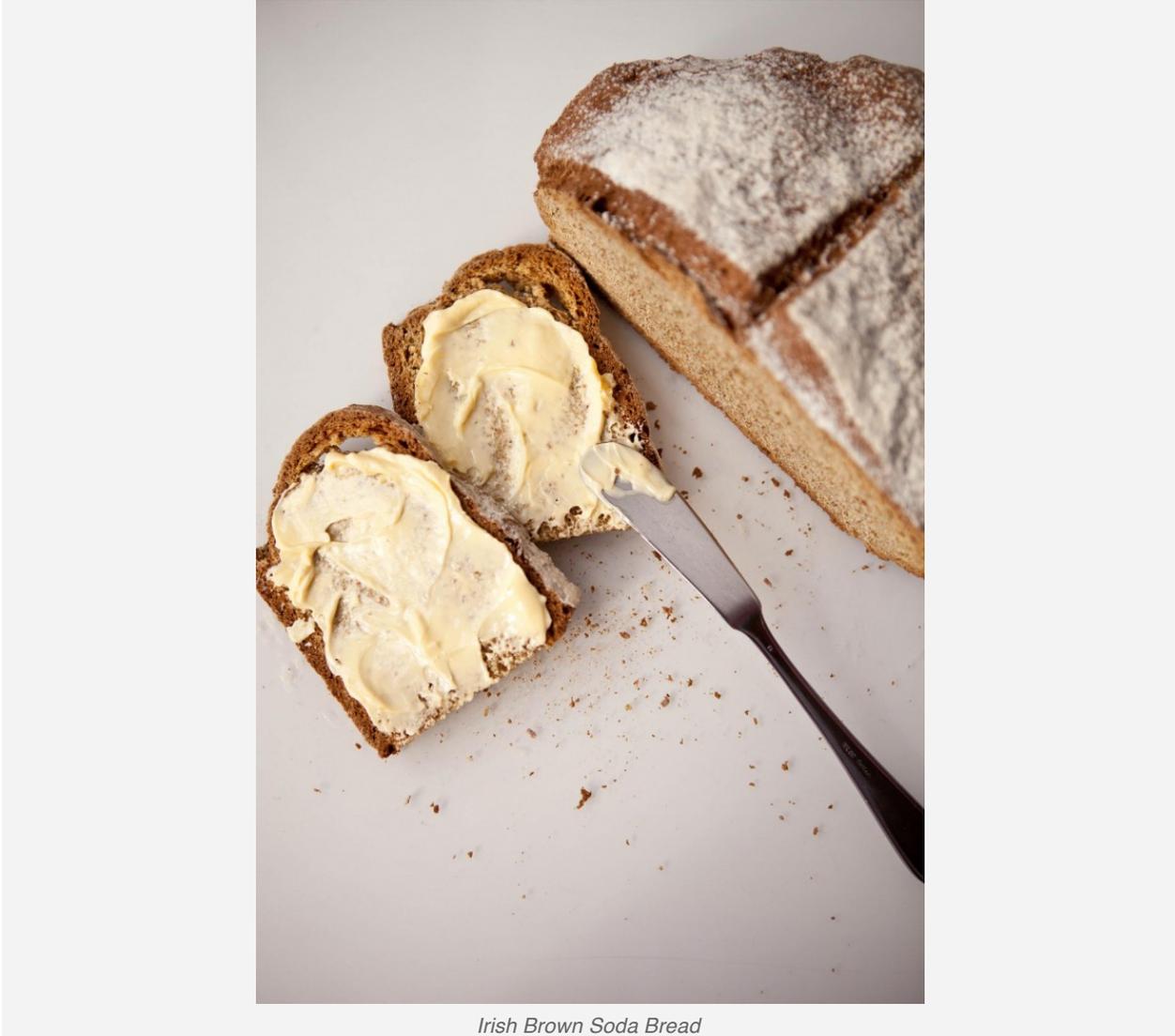
Dedicating the book to both parents, Cronin continuously mentions how integral his mother's presence and encouragement had in the writing process, as well as being his original inspiration for cooking. "I was very happy to give a copy of the book to my mother" he said. "For three weeks, every day she got out of bed at 7 a.m. and waited for the book to arrive."

Cronin has been as active as ever, going to universities to speak about the hospitality industry, attending book signings at numerous places around the North Shore, and talks of a TV spot coming soon. Cronin continues to be incredibly humble and astonished with his success. Published in March, there are currently just under 6,000 Amazon Kindle downloads of *Cheffin'* in addition to print sales.

"I didn't start out to write a bestseller. The satisfaction to me came in writing the book and the satisfaction also of seeing my family read it."

Cheffin' can be purchased through brendancroninbooks.com or at the Endicott College bookstore.

**Cronin supplied two recipes which can be found in his book: *Cheffin' From Potatoes to Caviar*.
Photographs by *Shannon Cronin Photography*



Irish Brown Soda Bread

My Mother's Irish Brown Soda Bread

Ingredients:

8 oz. white bread flour (high gluten)

8 oz. whole wheat flour or bran (bran adds density – and fiber – to the baked loaf)

2 teaspoons baking soda

1 teaspoon baking powder

1 teaspoon salt

1.6 cups buttermilk or sour milk

2 oz. butter

Optional: 4 oz. raisins or 1 teaspoon caraway seeds

Directions:

Heat the oven to 350F degrees.

In a bowl, combine the dry ingredients.

Add the butter and rub in with the finger tips until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs.

Stir in the buttermilk to form a soft dough.

Turn the dough onto a floured surface, knead very briefly and shape into a round flat loaf about two inches thick.

Cut an "X" in the top with a sharp knife.

Sprinkle with a little flour and bake on a floured baking sheet for approximately 50 minutes. Makes one 9 inch round loaf.

Tip: To check if the loaf was baked my mother would lift the hot bread off the baking sheet and knock on the bottom of the loaf with her knuckles. A hollow sound indicated it was baked. A dull sound meant it required further baking.



Lobster Salad with Mango

Lobster Salad with Mango: Serves 6

6 cooked, shelled lobster tails

12 cooked, shelled lobster claws

6 cherry tomatoes

6 finely shredded romaine lettuce leaves, (mesclun greens are a good substitute)

Two ripe mangos

2 tablespoons sherry vinegar

4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

Salt and black pepper mill to taste

Optional: chopped black truffles

Directions: Salad:

Place the shredded romaine in the center of a large plate.

Slice the lobster tails and arrange attractively on the romaine.

Decorate the lobster tails with the mango sauce.

Finally add the lobster claws with the point facing upwards and add the cherry tomatoes and a sprig of chives.

Directions: Sauce:

Remove the stone and skin from the mango and cut the flesh into pieces.

Puree in a blender and drizzle in the oil with the motor running.

Add sherry vinegar to taste.

Season with salt and pepper mill.

Tip: Stir in a little sour cream or plain yoghurt to the sauce for added creaminess and an extra sharp flavor



Noisettes D'agneau Aux Gambas

Noisettes D'agneau Aux Gambas – Lamb Cutlets with Jumbo Shrimp: Serves 4

12 lamb cutlets approx 3 oz each – well trimmed

12 pieces of large deveined shrimp with the shell on

24 pieces of Parisienne potatoes- small potato balls

16 oz. julienne* of carrots and green beans

2 oz. butter

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 cup demi glace – brown stock

Salt and pepper to taste

Sprigs of thyme for garnish

Directions:

Boil or steam the potatoes until partially cooked.

Pan fry them in olive oil until golden brown, season – keep warm.

Sauté the julienne in butter until cooked but still crunchy, season to taste – keep warm.

Season and sauté (or grill) the shrimp until firm – keep warm.

Season and pan fry the lamb to medium or medium well – keep warm.

Assembly:

Arrange the julienne in the center of each plate.

Place each lamb cutlet with one shrimp around the julienne with the bones upright.

Decorate with the potatoes around the outside.

Drizzle with demi glace.

* Julienne – very fine two inch strips of vegetables.

Potatoes can be made using a melon baller and can be replaced with sautéed potatoes slices or

Fingerling potatoes.

Tip: Use the touch method described in Chapter 14 of Cheffin' to check the degree of cooking for the lamb.