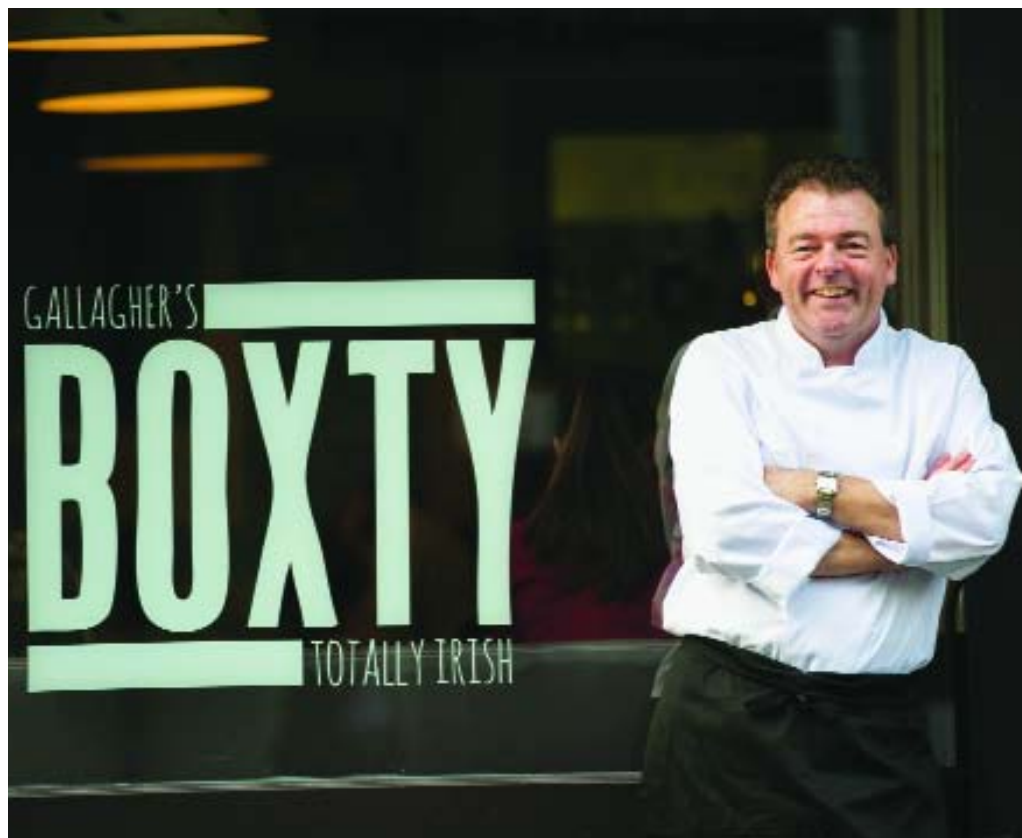


25 years Preaching the Word of Boxyty in Dublin

Pádraic Óg Gallagher

THEY SAY time flies when you are enjoying yourself and if the past 25 years are anything to go by the old adage most certainly rings true for me. It only seems like yesterday that myself and my brother Ronan set about transforming a locksmiths in a neglected part of Dublin city known (or as the case was in 1988, unknown) as Temple Bar. CIE had purchased a lot of the properties with a view to demolishing them to make way for Dublin's future central bus depot. Fortunately wisdom prevailed through intense lobbying by local stake-holders. The medieval quarter of the city was saved from destruction and one of the top

■ **Pádraic Óg Gallagher, chef and restaurateur from Mohill is pictured with his wife Colette after he received the chain of office on his election as the Restaurants Association of Ireland (RAI)**

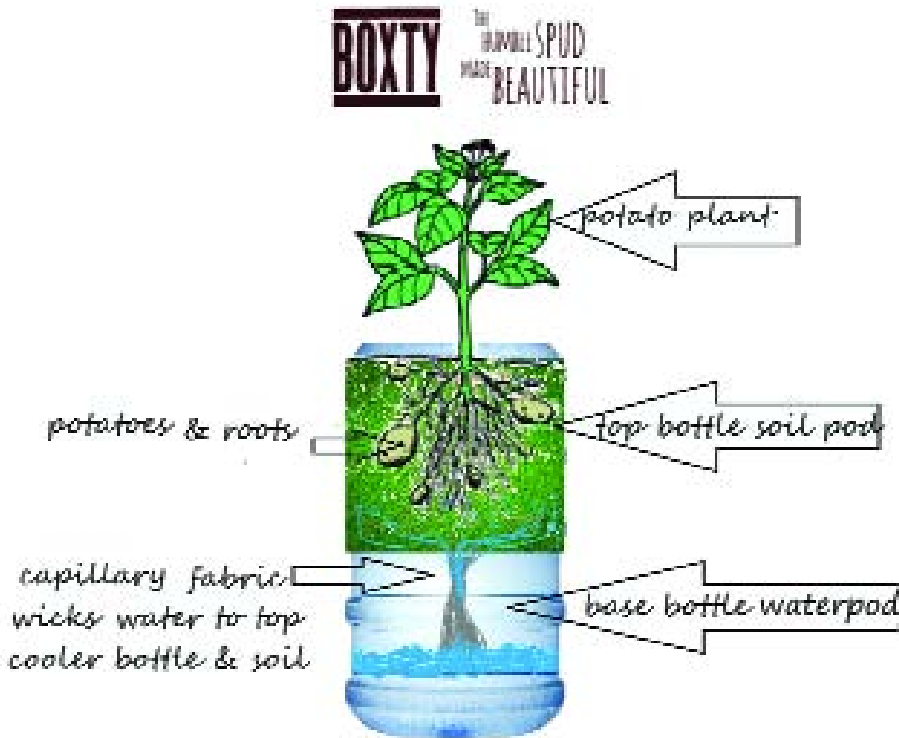


tourist attractions, with now world wide acclaim, was regenerated.

It took us four months to renovate the locksmiths to a 30 seat eatery, specialising in Irish food, centred on Leitrim Boxyty. While the building work was going on I tired from trying to explain my vision for an Irish eatery. The conversation would usually start about what kind of restaurant I was going to open? In reply to "an Irish restaurant" I invariably got "oh, that's nice, but what are you going to sell?" Now trying to explain Boxyty to the uninitiated is as easy as explaining calculus to a four year old. I'm not sure which was more difficult, but explaining how I proposed to develop the Boxyty into a savoury meal proved just as difficult to the diehard Boxyty aficionado. "Sure that's

not real Boxyty". Well what's life with out a challenge.

My dream back in '88 was to operate the restaurant for the season, March to October and head back out to the West Indies to work on the boats. October came and we had expanded into the dry cleaners next door and now operated an 80 seat restaurant complete with a full liquor licence thanks to the Restaurant Association of Irelands first successful lobbying campaign. This was a major milestone for dining in Ireland. Finally you could avail of an Irish beer or whiskey in an Irish restaurant. As current president of the association with over one thousand members I can tell you we work tirelessly for our members, with our most notable success in maintaining the VAT



invited food writers and bloggers down to pick their potato growing pod and harvest the spuds outside the restaurant. The excitement around getting your hands dirty, digging heritage potatoes out of an up-cycled old 20 litre water bottle not knowing what yield you would get from your particular pod was immense. What especially surprised me was watching french manicured nails scraping at the soil in search of much prized potatoes. The competition among the ladies was fierce. I hope to make the Temple Bar/Urban Farm potato harvest an annual event for the good people of the city to get down and dirty.



■ The late Hugh O'Regan

rate at 9% for tourism activities.

Temple Bar with its medieval streets leading to the unknown was full of character and characters. Across the road from the restaurant Eddie, the owner of the Auld Dubliner pub, would make the finest Dublin Coddle on a Sunday morning, dressed in large white wellington boots, Bermuda shorts, t-shirt and a long oilskin fisherman's apron. And by God it was the best Coddle you ever tasted especially after a late Saturday night on the town. It was so good that it wasn't until Eddie sold his pub that I dared put Coddle on the menu in the Boxy House. If somebody wanted Coddle they would have to wait for the Sunday morning ritual in the Auld Dub.

Back then, my day started in the market at 6:30am and worked through to lunch. We closed at 3pm and reopened at 6pm for dinner. During the break I would often go for a pint to a little bar down the street called Flannery's. They had a dart board and a ring board that often occupied my afternoon. This bar was purchased by the late Hugh O'Regan and turned into the iconic Temple Bar Pub,

probably one of the most photographed bars in the world. Hugh was one of the visionaries of Temple Bar. I first met Hugh in Mohill in the 70's when we had the Parting Glass pub.

Working our land in Rosharry and operating the pub in the town, grounded me in my love of food and hospitality. As a kid it felt like I was harvesting stones working the garden. I still don't like weeding but growing 160 varieties of potato on the rooftop of the old chocolate factory in Dublin's city centre was a fantastic opportunity to get back to the land in an urban setting. Through collaboration with the Urban Farm we were able to grow and harvest some of the Langford/Carey potato collection from Sligo's Lissadell house walled garden. Hopefully this fantastic house and gardens will soon be open to the public again and the potato collection on view.

Harvesting the potatoes at the Boxy House was an afternoon of great fun. We

Meanwhile I have just secured from Michael McKillop in the Glens of Antrim potatoes 35 tonne of Lumper Potatoes for our Boxy. The lumper was the potato predominately grown in Ireland pre the Great Hunger in 1845. It got a lot of bad press due to the blight but Michael has them grown on a commercial basis for the first time in 170 years and they will be available in Marks & Spencer's food stores for you to take home and cook.

If you are looking to treat yourself or your family you could do worse than drop into the Boxy House in Dublin's Temple Bar for a feed of Boxy and a side of Lumpers.

History on a plate.