

Natural Selections

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

Photo courtesy of MEGAN E KELLEY

Saint Patrick's Day in New York City

GRETCHEN M. MICHELFELD

The New York City Saint Patrick's Day Parade is one of the oldest, largest, and most famous Saint Patrick's Day celebrations in the world. It began when a group of homesick Irish expats and soldiers stationed with the British Army in the colony of New York decided to march through lower Manhattan to honor the fifth-century missionary who became the patron saint of Ireland. On March 17th, 1762, fourteen years before the start of the American Revolutionary War, people proudly wore green (a symbol of Irish pride that was banned by the British in Ireland), played Irish pipes, sang Irish songs, and gloried in speaking their native language.

More than 250 years later, today's Saint Patrick's Day Parade boasts over 200,000 participants and millions of spectators who line the streets or watch the festivities on television. If you're planning to attend, the parade starts at 11:00 a.m. and travels up Fifth Avenue from 44th Street to 79th Street. Everyone should experience this New York tradition at

least once in their lives, but if you're looking for a quieter, more intimate way to honor the day, here are a few suggestions:

Take the Irish Outsiders tour at the Tenement Museum. Learn about Irish culture, traditions, and faith on this daily guided tour of an apartment at 97 Orchard Street on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Immerse yourself in the lives of the Moore family. In the mid-nineteenth century, the Moores were one of only two Irish Catholic immigrant families who lived at 97 Orchard. They struggled through poverty and disease and faced rampant anti-Irish prejudice. Tour their home as it stood in 1869.

Check out the weekly Irish Music and Dance Session at Paddy Reilly's. Located on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, Paddy Reilly's has been presenting live Irish music sessions since 1986. On Thursday nights, Niall O'Leary, the acclaimed founder of the

School of Irish Dance, hosts musicians and Irish step-dancers from around the world.

Join the Irish Arts Center at Symphony Space for the 8th Annual Celtic Appalachian Celebration. On Friday March 13th at 8 p.m., hear Irish, West African, and Appalachian themes woven through a range of American folk tunes, played by Green Fields of America, Danny Paisley and the Southern Grass, Nora Brown, Stephanie Coleman, and Megan Downes. Love Bluegrass? Clogging? This celebration is for you.

Experience a traditional Irish céilí! A céilí is an old-fashioned house party or community social. The word is derived from the Old Irish céle meaning "companion." It later became céilidhe and céilidh, which means "visit" in Gaelic. Later Irish orthography reformed the spelling as céilí. Every year, Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Parish Center hosts a St. Patrick's Day céilí that is open to the public. On Sunday March 8th, you can purchase your \$25 tickets at the door (230 East 90th Street) and enjoy all the corned beef, cabbage, and live Irish music you want from 12:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. There will be a cash bar and dancing.

Many people also choose to celebrate with a cozy day at home and some fun Irish cooking. Local Irish artist Anne Heffernan recently told me about her St. Patrick's Day traditions: "I always make Catherine Fulvio's Guinness Casserole served with Irish flag-colored veggies and bake shamrock shaped shortbread," she said. Anne's pet peeve? "It is not 'St. Patty's Day!' It's either St. Patrick's Day or St. Paddy's Day!" ■



Photo courtesy of THE TENEMENT MUSEUM

Good For Your Waist—Good For The Environment

ANNA AMELIANCHIK AND GLENIS GEORGE-ALEXANDER

Veganuary is long over, and you may need a little push to continue to reduce your meat consumption. Sustainability science is here to help. A recent study published by researchers at the University of Oxford and the University of Minnesota considered the health and environmental impacts of fifteen food groups, including chicken, fish, and processed and unprocessed red meat. First, they evaluated the impact of these foods on people with type II diabetes, stroke, coronary heart disease, and colorectal cancer, and then compared it to the average risk of each of these diseases. In addition, the study looked at the overall risk of mortality associated with different food groups. The researchers also considered environmental impacts of producing one serving of each food group on greenhouse gas emissions, land use, water use, and two different forms of nutrient pollution.

Unsurprisingly, minimally processed whole grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, and olive oil reduced the risk of one or more diseases and mortality. However, it turns out that good news for your waist means good news for the planet as well: the same foods that improve your health and help you live longer also have a lower average environmental impact. In contrast, processed and unprocessed red meat is associated with an increased risk for all four diseases included in this analysis. An additional serving (about 100 grams, or 3-4 ounces) of red meat per day also increases overall mortality. And if burgers and steaks seem worth it when it comes to your own health, consider the health of the environment. Producing a single serving of unprocessed red meat has nearly double the environmental impact of producing dairy, nuts, olive oil, and even processed red meat (because of the smaller serving size). In fact, the environmental impact of producing a serving of

unprocessed or processed red meat is ten to one hundred times larger than that of plant-based foods. This translates to increased land and water use, greenhouse gas emissions, and water acidification and eutrophication (a dream come true for algae, but bad for the rest of us). Overall, foods associated with an increase in disease risk and mortality (unprocessed and processed red meat) also have the highest environmental impact, which adds (vegan) brownie points to a plant-based lifestyle.

Not ready to go full vegan? Good news: scientific research found no negative health outcomes associated with the consumption of dairy, egg, and chicken. The negative effect of these foods on the environment, although highly variable, is also lower than that of red meat. Although it is difficult to estimate how consumption of fish impacts the environment since production methods vary greatly, fish has widely been praised as a health food. Research suggests that in order to avoid further damaging the environment with greenhouse gas emissions, we should avoid consuming fish farmed in bottom trawling fisheries and recirculating aquaculture systems.

Reducing the consumption of red meat and opting for whole grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts, legumes, and olive oil has multiple health and environmental benefits. However,

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ASSORTED FRUITS AND VEGETABLES | CREATIVE COMMONS

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before you cut all animal-based products from your diet, consider the nutritional composition of the foods that you would consume to beat your meat habit. For example, one serving of red meat contains 23-28 grams of protein and one serving of chicken—19 grams of protein. Protein is an important macronutrient needed to build and repair body tissues, muscles, and organs, which also helps combat infections and illnesses. The Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for protein varies depending on the age and sex of the person. For example, a female aged 31-51 years needs 46 grams of protein per day, while a male of the same age needs 56 grams. Therefore, about half of the recommended daily protein intake for an average sedentary man or woman can come from a single serving of meat. This means that if you choose to not eat meat, you need to select plant-based foods that can fill the nutritional void left by its absence from your diet.

Fortunately, protein can be obtained from plants as well as animals. In fact, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics states that a plant-based diet can be nutritionally adequate and provide healthful benefits for preventing and treating certain diseases. Keep in mind that non-animal sources of protein or plant-based proteins may lack some of the essential amino acids (organic compounds that cannot be made by the body). However, one can get all the essential amino acids by consuming a variety of plant-based protein foods throughout the day. In addition to including a variety of plant-based sources of protein in the diet, one can also consume slightly more protein than the RDA, which would make up for the lack of the essential amino acid lysine in plants.

The guide below will help you identify plant-based foods that can fulfill your nutritional goals while lowering your impact on the environment (and helping you lead a

healthier and longer life!). Some of the best plant-based protein sources are:

Quinoa: Quinoa is an “ancient grain” that is eaten as a starch but is actually a seed. Quinoa is a complete protein that has all the essential amino acids that the body cannot produce.

- One serving of cooked quinoa (1/4 cup): 6 grams of protein.

Soybeans & soy products: Soybean is a legume that originated in East Asia and is now widely consumed throughout the United States. Soy is also an excellent source of complete protein.

- One serving of steamed soybeans (1/2 cup): 4 grams of protein.
- One serving of tofu (1/2 cup): 6 grams of protein.
- One serving of soy milk (1 cup): 7 grams of protein.
- One serving of edamame (1cup): 8 grams of protein.

Hummus: Hummus is a thick paste or spread that originated in the Middle East and is usually served with bread or vegetables. This dish is a complete protein when made with garbanzo beans and tahini.

Note: Some other plant-based high protein foods are beans (black, kidney, lima, pinto, snap peas, lentils, split peas, and chickpeas), nuts (walnuts, peanuts, hazelnuts, almonds, chestnuts, and pistachios), seeds (pumpkin, sesame, flax, hemp, chia, and amaranth), seaweed, spirulina, potatoes, and spinach. ■

Natural Expressions

Performance

On Friday, March 6th at 8 p.m., Collette Ryder of The Rockefeller University Office of Sponsored Programs Administration will be performing *The Hidden Mass* at St. Bartholomew's Church on 51st Street and Park Avenue. Ryder will accompany the New York Choral Society as a soprano, joined by organist David Hayes and conducted by Paolo Bordignon. *The Hidden Mass* is a concert of works written by twentieth century composers Frank Martin and Zoltán Kodály, and features a pre-concert discussion at 7 p.m. with Hayes and Bordignon. Tickets are \$30 through February 26th when purchased through Ryder at cryder@rockefeller.edu, and \$40 through the box office. More information can be found at the [New York Choral Society Website](#).

Nick Didkovsky, Bioinformatics Group Supervisor in the Laboratory of Molecular Biology at Rockefeller, will be performing multiple concerts in Germany this month:

- On Thursday, March 12th at 8 p.m. at domicile (Hansastraße 7, Dortmund) and Sunday, March 15th at 6:30 p.m. at rock'n'pomuseum (Udo-Lindenbergl-Platz 1, Gronau), Didkovsky will perform his band Doctor Nerve's record "SKIN" in its entirety, live with The Consort Ensemble.

- On Friday, March 13th, Didkovsky will join Erhard Hirt for an electric guitar duo performance at the Black Box Theatre in Muenster. For tickets or more information visit [Black Box](#).

Email Megan E. Kelley at mkelley@rockefeller.edu to submit your art/music/performance/sporting/other event for next month's "Natural Expressions" and follow [@NatSelections](#) on Twitter for more events. ■

Culture Corner

Films of Exploration and Adventure: *The Lost City of Z* and *The Lighthouse*

BERNIE LANGS

Spoiler alert below!

In the time of movies featuring a multitude of superhero comic book stories, clichéd comedies, and explosive action adventures with mindless plots and throw away dialogue, we can still rejoice knowing that studios will occasionally take chances on more complex and thoughtful cinematic ventures. The box office and critical success of Greta Gerwig's *Little Women* and the sophisticated comedic murder mystery *Knives Out* come to mind. There are other genres to be found by audiences among the artistic rubble of the explosions presented in many blockbuster stories. These include thought-provoking tales of adventure and period pieces delving into the psyche of obsessive individuals stretched to the breaking point. Two recent movies are grand examples of this: *The Lost City of Z* (2016) and *The Lighthouse* (2019).

The Lost City of Z is a creatively intellectual and extremely entertaining movie. Directed by James Gray, who also wrote the screenplay, the story is based on the book of the same title by David Grann. *Z* centers on the true events of the life of explorer Percy Fawcett, played with nuance, bravery, and dashing elegance by the English actor Charlie Hunnam. As a British military officer in the early years of the twentieth century, Fawcett is unexpectedly conscripted against his career wishes by the Royal Geographic Society and the British government to lead a surveying expedition and settle a boundary dispute between Bolivia and Brazil that will have important implications for the lucrative rubber trade and industry. Fawcett's transformation from an unwilling participant in the discoveries of uncharted Amazon into an excited and obsessed groundbreaking explorer is a captivating and endearing tale.

Hunnam's portrayal of the understated Fawcett is a work of art as he survives the trials and tribulations of disease-ridden jungle and river exploration. Fawcett is at times forced to act quickly and with daring imagination to find life-saving ways to communicate that his team comes in peace to wary native inhabitants. On his return to London, he must deal with resistance from the Royal Geographic Society's snobbish members about the possibility of a lost city—a previously unknown, sophisticated ancient civilization in the Amazon, which the Society deems “savage.”



Photo courtesy of AMAZON

In addition, Fawcett has to justify and explain his years of absence to his growing eldest son, and the limits of his enlightenment are tested as he struggles to recognize and fully respect the intellectual equality of his wife. Sienna Miller lights up the screen as Nina Fawcett, who suffers for years worrying for the safety of her husband and bearing the sole responsibility of raising their children. Percy Fawcett eventually manages to learn from and understand Nina, and there are emotional moments in the movie as his son starts to idolize his father's courageous exploits and even secures funding for further exploration from the likes of U.S. newspapers and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Father and son (the latter now a young man), set out together into the danger-filled Amazon for a final attempt to locate the Lost City, now experienced simultaneously as both an ancient reality and a fragment of a dream within the explorer's psyche.

Robert Pattinson is fantastic in his role as Fawcett's second in command, Corporal Henry Costin. He is smart and witty, and the actor hides his *Twilight* good looks under a beard and a ravaged explorer's body. Pattinson's Costin is a throwback to the sidekick companion of old-timey movies and we delight in his growing devotion to and friendship with Fawcett.

Quality films set in the past that delve

deep into the inner psychology of men and women plagued by labors that take them to the limits of sanity are few and far between. Director John Huston's 1956 adaptation of the novel *Moby Dick* (1956), for example, showcases Gregory Peck as the infamously tormented Captain Ahab. Ahab's rage and quest to kill the white whale not only boils to overt fury and self-destructive action, but also softly simmers during his rational, quiet conversations with officers of his crew.

Melville wrote his sea adventure in 1851 and set the launch of the doomed Pequod from New Bedford, Massachusetts. Robert Eggers' film *The Lighthouse* also takes place in the late nineteenth century and is set somewhere in northern New England. Actors Willem Dafoe as Thomas Wake, and (once again) Robert Pattinson as Thomas Howard/Ephraim Winslow, are paired together to work a stint at a lighthouse on a tiny island, with Wake as the older and more experienced keeper. The backbreaking work amid lonely isolation leads to more and more sarcastic bickering and stinging jabs and arguments, and the two men reach a breaking point when they realize that the team scheduled to relieve them from their duties is not going to appear and allow them to return to the mainland.

With its unrelenting barrage of crazed

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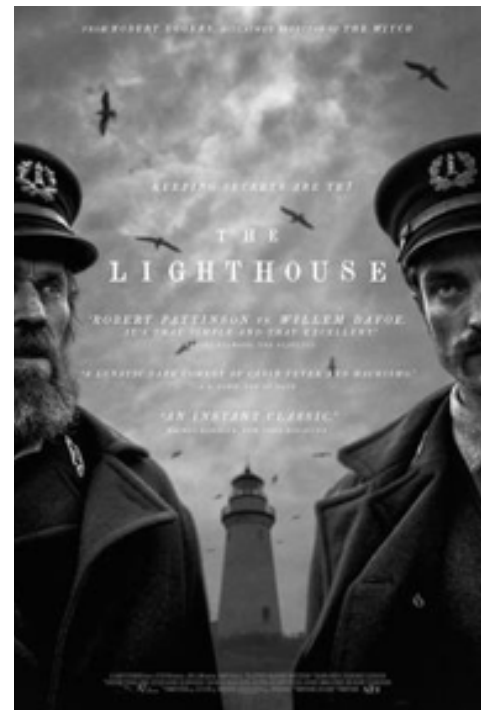


Photo courtesy of A24

situations and behaviors, I would not recommend that everyone see *The Lighthouse*. Prior to viewing the film, I read some superlative reviews touting the incredible acting by Dafoe and Pattinson and I did find their superlative portrayals worthy of Academy Awards. The audience is also treated to a study in black and white cinematography and the unusual horizontal shrinking of the actual film space. This “narrow vintage aspect ratio” gives the movie a more realistic nineteenth century feel and enhances the mood of stress in the claustrophobic living space shared by the duo. As the two main characters become more and more unhinged, the dive into their insanity plays out like a fascinating live theater-like stage rendition of immediate violence. There

are mystic hints of a moral and religious reckoning, complete with chilling visions of hallucinatory mermaids and sea gods. The mystery of the blinding white light of the tower lantern of the lighthouse becomes a powerfully charged character on its own, an unknown entity, which may be abstractly fueling the deadly struggle between its two attendants.

As I left the multiplex after *The Lighthouse*, I was in a state of shock from the continuous horror the pair go through and inflict on each other, and although I didn’t “like” the experience, I (sort of) inexplicably did, and plan to watch it again as a rented movie at home. The interactions between Dafoe and Pattinson bounce around the emotional spectrum and the destruction of their lives and souls unravels and unfurls with a rarely viewed intensity, one without relief or pause

for the audience to take a breath in recovery. The movie’s greatest moment, oddly tinted with humor, initiates as a petty argument over the quality of Wake’s cooking and ends up devolving into the fury of a legendary curse invoked by him upon the life and soul of his young worker. Dafoe masterfully delivers a harsh, yet poetic verbal assault, piling up a list of vengeance that draw from the history of sailors’ myths and fears. Dafoe’s character also dives deep into plagues worthy of the Old Testament on the life of his hapless co-worker. That speech alone makes *The Lighthouse* worth the viewing. *The Lighthouse* ends with a new take on violently creative punishments, reminiscent of those in ancient Greek mythology. That brand of complex allusion is what draws filmgoers to sit through such a difficult and hard-to-take story. ■

New York Rhymes

PARA-DICE

There are few images
that come clear in my mind
when I think of paradise.

It is Nina Simone, singing Baltimore
and Miles Davis playing the Sketches of Spain
Homer composing the Iliad
And el Camarón tearing off his shirt
while smoking pot.

And when the tune changes to
Serge’s Decadanse,
you are there.

Whenever I think of paradise,
you are there.

By Konstantina



POETRY: DR. KONSTANTINA THEOFANOPOULOU (INSTAGRAM: @NEWYORK _ RHYMES)

ONE LINE ART: MIKAELLA THEOFANOPOULOU (INSTAGRAM: @M _ THETA _ ART)