



COULD YOU  
  
 HAGGIS?

**Katie Landeck** Providence Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK

**H**aggis is one of those dishes that elicits a strong reaction. ● A lot of people just can't stomach the dish, which historically was made with sheep's lung, liver and heart – and a stomach used as the casing. ● But the St. Andrew's Society of Rhode Island – which is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, making it the oldest Scottish organization in the state – thinks it's time for the general public to reconsider its stance on Scotland's infamous national dish.

See **HAGGIS**, Page 11A

98-year-old Scot-Canadian swears it's better than you think

“It's a lot of haggis over the dam.”

**John MacLean**



**Enoch Valentine, left, and chef Donald Blais, members of the St. Andrew's Society, stuff the haggis meat mixture into the casing.**

KATIE LANDECK/PROVIDENCE JOURNAL

**TOP: 98-year-old Scot-Canadian John MacLean checks haggis for proper spices recently at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Pawtucket.**

DAVID DELPOIO/PROVIDENCE JOURNAL



Enoch Valentine in the kitchen with ingredients. DAVID DELPOIO/PROVIDENCE JOURNAL

# Haggis

Continued from Page 1A

In fact, they want you to try to make it in your kitchen.

## The haggis patriarch

If there's anyone in the state of Rhode Island who knows about making haggis, it's 98-year-old John MacLean, a Scot-Canadian who has been making it for more than six decades. He's had an assembly line of people in his kitchen making haggis for St. Andrew's Society of Rhode Island events. He's learned lessons the hard way, like when he didn't have proper ventilation in his kitchen and the steam caused the wallpaper to start falling off the walls. He's recited the Robert Burns poem "Address to Haggis" at so many events that he can launch into it at the drop of a hat.

"It's a lot of haggis over the dam," MacLean said.

For years, he's kept secret his exact recipe, shared with him by a prominent Scottish restaurant that requested he keep it to himself. But given the momentous occasion of a 100-year anniversary and the amount of time he's kept the secret, he felt like it was safe to finally share the recipe.

And so, MacLean recently gave his recipe to society member and chef Donald Blais, who on an afternoon in early August assembled a team of helpers to prepare haggis from scratch and record a guide to making the Old World food

under MacLean's watchful eye.

## What is in haggis?

It's worth noting that the historical recipe for haggis isn't the one cooked today. Lung meat is out (and banned by the Food & Drug Administration) and the stomach has been replaced by a conventional casing.

The recipe MacLean follows calls for beef liver, heart and shoulder clod plus some suet, with a mix of oats and spices in a beef casing.

At the invitation of the 100th-anniversary committee chairman Jim Kelleher, I was one of Blais's assistants in the kitchen. I mixed and toasted the oats, helped to stuff the sausages and, yes, I did eat some. No, I had never had haggis, or even liver, before.

Blais told me liver was the dominant taste, and I'll take his word on that. The oats make up the dominant texture. It's really not bad, especially when you add a sauce to it. I've had plenty of foods that I've liked a lot less.

But you don't have to take my word on that. A step-by-step video of how to make haggis along with the recipe has been posted to their website.

If you would like to try some haggis but don't want to make it yourself, the St. Andrew's Society of Rhode Island will be serving some of the haggis they made at their 100th Anniversary Celebration on Oct. 22 at the Crowne Plaza in Warwick. The event, like the society itself, is open to anyone Scottish or Scottish at heart. Tickets can be purchased on the society's website.