Dublin Meets the Pacific Northwest

I decided to apply for my sabbatical after speaking with a friend of mine, Steve Wooten, an associate professor of Food Studies at the University of Oregon. Dr. Wooten had recently attended a symposium in Dublin, Ireland, sponsored by the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT).

The topic of the symposium was “Gastronomy, Food and Distribution.” Dr. Wooten had been very impressed with DIT and their food studies programs, both in culinary arts and hospitality management. He was asked by Dr. Mairtin, the conference facilitator, to present a paper and did so with little notice. Upon returning to Oregon he met with me and suggested I contact Dr. Mairtin with the intent to lecture at DIT. Dr. Wooten had found the DIT faculty very interested in the food/wine culture of the Pacific Northwest, especially Portland and Seattle.

Following Dr. Wooten’s advice I contacted Dr. Mairtin via email and received a positive reply. For the next month we corresponded about possible lectures, housing, visa, etc. I have attached his letter and other materials to this sabbatical report.

I decided to leave for Dublin before their term started in early September. I had finalized a list of topics for my eight lectures that Dr. Mairtin had approved. He also helped me find a room to rent in Dublin for $1,000 a month, not far from the university.

I arrived on August 15th. I was pleased that my roommate, Paul McSweeney, taught at DIT. I settled in and attended faculty meetings prior to the start of the semester. The meetings were similar to ours, faculty and management discussing their interests, etc.

I found the faculty lacking diversity. Everyone I met was white and Irish, except one professor from Germany. Less diversity than Lane. I was not given a desk, however, with seven faculty members sharing one large room, space was at a premium. How I missed my private office at Lane! All the faculty were very supportive of my visit.

I sat in on various classes the first week. I especially liked the graduate class in “The Study of Gastronomy.”

The second week of classes I presented a lecture on Menu Management for a culinary class of twenty students. I used a PP presentation from my class at Lane. The lecture was well received.

During the next seven weeks of the semester I delivered seven more lectures. I was given space in the Blue Room in late afternoon. The Blue Room was used for lunch service, like our Renaissance Room. It seated 50 people in restaurant style.

My first lecture was Food and Menu trends in America. It was well attended. I spoke for thirty minutes and had a ten minute Q&A. I used a presentation from the National Restaurant Association, the other NRA.

Week three’s topic was the Wines of Oregon, including viticulture and oenology, history of the Valley, etc. I also delivered this talk to the wine class which met twice a week in another building. There were twenty students in the wine class. The instructor purchased three bottles of Oregon wines so the students were able to taste the wine as well. I had previously spoken with King Estate about shipping some of their wine to me in Dublin but they weren’t interested.

At this time I also started attending Dr. Mairtin’s graduate level class in the history of Gastronomy. For the rest of the semester I participated in the class, including outside activities.

I also pursued an articulation agreement with the dean of the Culinary Arts program at DIT. I met with Frank Murphy and discussed our possible association. I had also asked Jennifer Falzerano to contact Dean Murphy which she did. Dean Murphy was more interested in establishing agreements with four-year universities. As for a student overseas exchange program the high cost of living in Dublin and the absence of any student housing at DIT would make it financially challenging for any LCC students to participate.

One of the highlights of my experience was attending a day-long baking class with DIT’s senior baking instructor. I worked with two culinary professors and we made five different types of bread.

I also spent time in the student-run dining rooms and observed the training of students to serve guests. The dining rooms serve both lunch and dinner and offer bee/wine as well, unlike our Renaissance Room.

Although I wasn’t able to complete an agreement with DIT I gained a tremendous amount of knowledge of Irish foods and culture. I observed different teaching techniques from the many classes I sat in on.

Thanks again for an amazing experience.