

Burns Night

Fact Cards



Burns Night

The first Burns Night was held in 1801, just 5 years after Robert Burns died. Nine of his friends gathered in Burns Cottage to read some of his poetry and to talk about him and remember him. They had such a good time that they decided to do it again the following year.



Burns Night

Burns Night is celebrated on 25th January. It celebrates the life and works of Scottish poet, Robert Burns.



Burns Night

Burns Night is celebrated in many different ways, but almost always, the night will involve eating some haggis, reading or singing some of Robert Burns' poetry, laughing, dancing and having fun with family and friends.



Burns Night

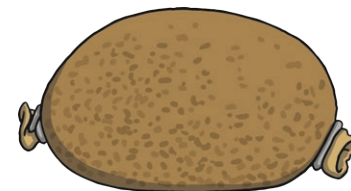
At first, Burns Suppers were small celebrations, with only about 12 – 20 men taking part in a few areas around Scotland. Now, Burns Night is celebrated across the world in many different ways.



Burns Night

One day, Robert Burns had dinner with the Earl of Selkirk. Before they began to eat, Robert Burns said:

Some hae meat an canna eat,
And some wad eat that want it;
But we hae meat, and we can eat,
And sae let the Lord be thankit.



This became known as the 'Selkirk Grace', and it is now said at the start of a Burns Supper.

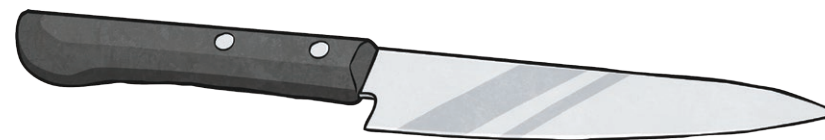
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In a traditional Burns Supper, the haggis will be 'piped in'. This means that someone plays the bagpipes as the haggis is brought to the table.



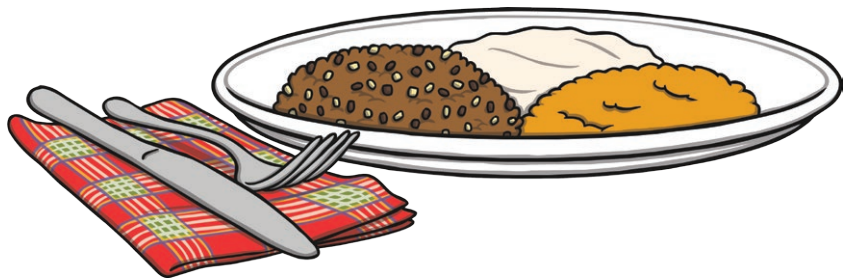
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The 'Address to the Haggis' was written by Robert Burns. It is recited when the haggis is placed on the table. There is a line in the poem which says 'His knife see rustic Labour dight', and when this is said, the person saying the poem cuts the haggis open with a sharp knife.



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A traditional Scottish meal often served at a Burns Supper is called 'Haggis, Neeps and Tatties'. 'Neeps' are turnips, and 'tatties' are potatoes.



Burns Night

It is tradition to sing Auld Lang Syne at the end of the night. Everyone stands in a circle and holds hands by crossing their arms. Auld Lang Syne is sung to reflect on the past and to celebrate friendships. As well as being sung at Burns Suppers, it is sung on Hogmanay – not just in Scotland, but around the world!



Burns Night

Although we think of Auld Lang Syne as a Robert Burns song, he described the song as:

“...an old song, of the olden times, and which has never been in print, nor even in manuscript until I took it down from an old man.”



Robert Burns will have added words and new verses and made the song his own, but he himself said that he 'collected' some of the lyrics when he saw the old man singing the song.