



Citation Ivan Day

Ivan Day is a British food historian, culinary antiquarian, and master of historical cookery, widely regarded as one of the foremost authorities on the British kitchen and table from the medieval period to the nineteenth century. Born to an Irish family, his mother was a renowned sean-nós singer from Donegal and his father, an Uilleann pipe player, was a fireman stationed at the Tara Street fire station in Dublin. Ivan grew up between Dublin and England and has fond memories of childhood of eating his grandmother Ellen Ryan's soda bread (which he makes to this day), colcannon, and spending time with her in the kitchen. He plays the fiddle, banjo, and mandolin, and counts his grandmother's oatcake stand among his most cherished possessions.



His discovery of food history was unplanned. Playing truant one afternoon in Colchester at around the age of thirteen, Ivan and a friend had each swapped their regulation school trousers for brand-new Levi's when it began to rain heavily. They ducked into the nearest shelter, an antiquarian bookshop where the owner was decidedly unimpressed by the arrival of the two damp schoolboys and warned them not to touch anything. Ivan, with the nonchalance particular to thirteen-year-olds, made his way to a nearby table and began leafing through the pages of a historical cookery book. Shortly afterwards, having haggled the shop owner down from the twelve and sixpence to ten shillings, he left with **The Cooks and Confectioners Dictionary**, published in 1723 and written by John Nott, chief cook to the Duke of Bolton. He was so captivated by the "language, musicality, and poetry" of its recipes that he spent every spare penny on antiquarian cookery books, many of them from that same bookshop. He went on to study History of Art before pivoting to Botany, completing a Masters at the University of Athens with fieldwork in Crete where he also cooked his first spit-roasted Easter lamb for local villagers; the beginning of a lifelong pursuit of cooking with fire and historical equipment

Ivan's working collection of culinary objects, housed in his seventeenth-century farmhouse in the English Lake District, spans thousands of items from the fifteenth to the early twentieth century, and include a medieval cauldron and carved gingerbread moulds from Shakespeare's lifetime. He describes these objects as "the silent culinary witnesses of our past food culture," and his methodology which combines period equipment, along with manuscript and printed primary sources, and an innate understanding of culinary aesthetics, has resulted in a career of extraordinary range. His 1994 exhibition **The Tempting Table** at the Bowes Museum in northern England which centred on elaborate period dessert courses and confectionary, drew the attention of art historian Sir Roy Strong who declared it better than the exhibition on the royal tables of Europe which was taking place at the Château of Versailles the same year. From there, invitations followed from major institutions on both sides of the Atlantic, including the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles, where his celebrated **Edible Monument** exhibition was so popular it was restaged in 2016 before travelling to the Detroit Institute of Arts. Further highlights include a recreation of Empress Maria Theresa's coronation table at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, **Supper with Shakespeare** at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, a permanent eighteenth-century dessert table display at the Gardiner Museum in Toronto, and **Feast and Fast** at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge. He is currently advising on the restoration of the medieval kitchen at Alnwick Castle and recently led the restoration of the kitchen and table volante at Český Krumlov Castle in the Czech Republic. He is the author of several books, including **Ice Cream: A History**, **Over a Red Hot Stove**, and **Cookery in Europe 1660-1860**.

The Dublin Gastronomy Symposium Fellowship Award is being presented to Ivan Day in recognition of his outstanding contribution to food history, and for his unique ability to bring our culinary past so vividly and authentically to life, as anyone who has attended his courses can testify. We are especially delighted to welcome him back to Ireland. In light of all of the above, the Dublin Gastronomy Symposium is delighted to present the 2026 Fellowship Award to Ivan Day.