



Main picture: Aoibheann Mac Namara
Above: granola with seasonal fruit compote

ANDREW DOWNES
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The height of good food from Ard Bia

The food served up at Ard Bia at Nimmos in Galway city has its origins in Aoibheann Mac Namara's travels

Words: Gillian Nelis



While studying for a postgraduate degree in arts administration in NUI Galway, Aoibheann Mac Namara managed to get a part-time job in Nimmo's, a well-known restaurant in the city. It didn't go all that well – she ended up getting

fired – but her current stint in the Spanish Arch premises has been much more successful.

Mac Namara travelled and worked in art galleries around the world before beginning her cooking career at Soho House and Babington House in Britain; she describes it as “where her real education began”. After returning to Ireland,

she cooked at a Buddhist centre in Cavan before opening Ard Bia Café in Donegal in 2001.

She moved the business to Galway two years later, originally running it from a premises on Cross Street and then above Tigh Neachtain on Quay Street, before relocating it to the Nimmo's building in 2008. Ard Bia at Nimmos now



comprises a café, art gallery, wine bar and restaurant, where Mac Namara serves up dishes inspired by her travels over the years.

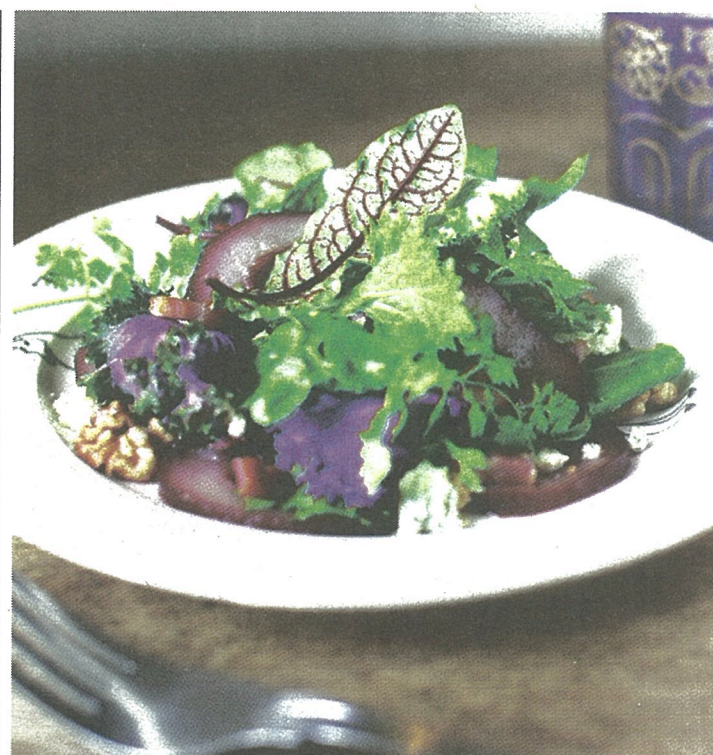
Her Berlin Brunch of ham, smoked cheese, green beans, pickles, organic tomatoes, beet relish, a boiled egg and crusty bread is a favourite in the café while, in the restaurant, produce such as James McGeough's Connemara lamb is

paired with chipotle aioli.

Later this month, Mac Namara releases her first book, *The Ard Bia Cookbook*, which she has co-written with food blogger and journalist Aoife Carrigy. It's available to pre-order on Amazon and here are four recipes from it to try at home.

Granola with seasonal fruit compote, serves 10 to 12

Granola is one of those things that can be expensive to buy but super-cheap to make, and easy too once you have the ingredients in your cupboard. Stored in an airtight container, it will keep for a good three weeks, thanks to the candying effect of the sugar and honey, so feel free to increase the quantities depending on how many are living in your household.



Above: salad of pickled pear and blue cheese with walnuts and lardons. Below: seared hake with roast beets and wilted greens

ERIC TUCKER



Ingredients

200g oats
50g sunflower seeds
50g raisins
50g flaked almonds
50g hazelnuts
2 tbsp brown sugar
3-4 tbsp honey
4-5 tbsp light olive oil or sunflower oil

Method

1. Preheat oven to 140C/275F/gas mark one. Combine all the dry ingredients, then mix the honey, sugar and oil together to integrate and drizzle this in. Toss the mixture well to coat and moisten the oats and seeds.
2. Bake at a low heat for about 30-40 minutes, or until everything becomes caramelised and golden brown, while stirring

occasionally to ensure even cooking of the mix. The browner you dare to go, the crunchier the results – but take care not to burn the oats or flaked almonds.

3. Allow to cool and store in an airtight container for up to three or four weeks. Serve with natural yoghurt, seasonal fruit compote and honey. At Ard Bia we like our food as natural as possible, so we use local orchard syrup and natural probiotic yoghurt.

Chef's tip: for a seasonal fruit compote, just cook down some fruit in a little water or juice, adding honey or sugar to taste and maybe a little sweet spicing. Peach with vanilla is great in summer.

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