

## The Beer Geeks: Toasting a few in Boston

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Special to The Herald

Article Last Updated: 04/02/2008 02:06:50 AM PDT

Most major cities in the United States take pride in their ethnic diversity. Chinatown embodies San Francisco; New York has a large Italian population; and in Boston, it's all about being Irish.

Boston is already a great city to visit, but to be there on St. Patrick's Day is a special treat; the Guinness flows, the bodhran beats and the lads and lassies dance.

People often ask us if we're Irish. We listen to Irish music, both traditional and punk, we know Irish history, and I can even speak a few Gaelic phrases — "Gabh mo leithscéal" "Go raibh maith agat." Chris is, in fact, one-third Irish. His great-grandparents came from Donegal to New York and eventually settled in the Boston area.

In Boston, you can't toss a leprechaun without hitting someone who is of Irish descent, if not actually from Ireland. Me, on the other hand, I got nothin'. No Irish in me. Actually, Patrick wasn't Irish either, but on St. Patrick's Day, everyone is Irish.

As a beer traveler, I find that people need very little excuse to party. This year, with March 17 falling on a Monday, people partied like Shane MacGowan all weekend. The pubs were filled on Saturday because, well, it was Saturday. Or maybe it was because the Catholic Church deemed Saturday the official St. Patrick's Day this year so as not to interfere

with Holy Week.

Sunday was the famous St. Patrick's Day parade in South Boston. And Monday was, of course, the day we celebrate the man who drove the snakes out of Ireland. Boston's famed parade is really more of a neighborhood affair attended by close to a million people. Ol' Patrick himself made an appearance, as did the Irish Prison Service Pipe Band, every local politician, an accordion band from County Donegal, Ireland and a group of 40 or so teenagers dressed in purple uniforms playing accordions — now there's a sight to behold. Even the local Star Wars fan club was represented. Hey, there's Darth Vader, followed by a platoon of Storm Troopers wearing green plastic bowlers and shamrocks on their uniforms. That just seems wrong somehow. But, like I said, on St. Patrick's Day, everyone, even the enemy of the Galactic Alliance, is Irish.

We kicked off our St. Patrick's Day with a full Irish breakfast at the famous Irish pub, the Black Rose. It was great people watching, including our own friends, who showed up wearing kilts, feather boas and large beer mug hats. The T-shirts were interesting to read, as well — "Irish today, hung over tomorrow" "Everyone loves a drunken Irish girl" "Kiss me if you're Irish." One congenial fellow in a shiny green bow tie weaved throughout the pub handing out beads. Sharing our table, we even met a Polish born Canadian, a jolly lad, who dressed in green and danced a few jigs. Yes, even he was Irish for a day.

Merideth Canham-Nelson and her husband Chris Nelson have a beer travel Web site, [thebeergeek.com](http://thebeergeek.com). For more information on the Year in Beer and their other travels, go to [thebeergeek.com](http://thebeergeek.com).

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