

Paul Fleming

Spending time with Nana in her kitchen

ONE OF THE BEST THINGS ABOUT travelling through Ireland's countryside is the charming little villages you'll inevitably encounter. The pace is relaxed, not much is needed here to get by; perhaps just a place of worship, a school, a post office, and a shop or two. Or maybe the post office is the shop. But at the heart of any quintessential sleepy village is the local café—a community hub providing enough tea, tasty food, and talk to keep villagers fed, watered and up to speed on local news.

In north Carlow, Rathvilly is that small but perfectly formed Irish village; sitting on the River Slaney by the foothills of the Wicklow Mountains, this delightful place is home to less than 1000 souls. You decide to stop here and rest awhile; perhaps try some angling on the river or watch herons doing their own fishing. But first, your empty stomach requires your urgent attention. Enter the Green Lemon Café, supplying Rathvilly with sustainable coffee, freshly baked artisan bread, scrumptious cakes, and meals from breakfast to Sunday lunch. Established in December 2021 by Executive Pastry Chef Paul Fleming and Head Chef Tracy Corcoran, you'll find it in a prime spot next to St Patrick's Church.

Paul Fleming learned his craft as he worked his way up the pastry ladder at a series of prestigious hotels in neighbouring counties. While his café may show off his wealth of experience and flair with elegant little bakes almost too pretty to eat, he hasn't forgotten to include traditional favourites on the menu as well, like his wonderful scones. "This is my nana's recipe — she taught it to me when I was a little kid."

Thanks to his early excursions into the world of baking, Paul's eventual course was set early in life. "I spent my childhood in the kitchen with Nana. When the rest of my cousins would be out in the yard or making stuff with Grand Dad, I was always inside with her. She taught me everything she knew; bread, scones, sweet pastry...

and it was always hands-on, she let me make everything step-by-step from scratch. There was no sitting around and watching!"

Paul affectionately remembers Nana's clever and efficient ways in the kitchen. "She never wasted the smallest bit. Even the offcuts of pastry from making apple tarts were used for little jam tarts; she would show me how to make them using her homemade jams."

"I loved spending time together in her kitchen as a kid. She always had me cooking or baking something. I would rather spend my time with her in the kitchen baking than be out running around in the fields. My fondest memories are of that time together."

In remembrance of Nana, there's a treasured memento that Paul sees every day as he serves up home-baked goodies in his Rathvilly café. "I still have the weighing scales she got as a wedding present; they're on display now in the Green Lemon, and every time I see them I think of her."

Paul is proud to be a part of the Carlow food scene, along with so many other talented and hardworking business owners here. "We take pride in it, appreciate it — and there's nothing so satisfying as taking the time to sit back, relax and truly enjoy what the area has to offer."

Paul Fleming with his nana's weighing scales.



◆ Makes: 8-10 scones (depending on cutter size)

Prep: 10 mins / Cook: 20 mins

Difficulty: Easy



Nana's Almond and Blueberry Scones

“My Nana showed me how to make these when I was small. She taught me so much about baking; from apple or jam tarts to bread and these scones... there was nothing I loved better than spending time together in her kitchen.”

Ingredients

For the scone mixture:

- ♦ 450g self-raising flour
- ♦ pinch of salt
- ♦ 50g caster sugar
- ♦ 50g cold butter or margarine, cut into cubes
- ♦ 290ml buttermilk
- ♦ 125g fresh blueberries
- ♦ 100g flaked almonds

Egg wash:

- ♦ 1 egg, beaten
- ♦ splash of milk

butter, jam, whipped cream for serving

Method

- 1 Preheat the oven to 155°C / 135°C (fan oven).
- 2 Sieve flour and salt together into a mixing bowl.
- 3 Add the caster sugar and mix.
- 4 Rub the butter or margarine into the dry ingredients (using your fingertips, two butter knives or a pastry cutter) until crumbs form.
- 5 Add the buttermilk and mix to make a soft dough.
- 6 Carefully add the blueberries.
- 7 Turn the dough out onto a floured worktop and gently knead to remove all the cracks.
- 8 Roll out lightly to a 1.5" thickness.
- 9 Cut out scones with a scone cutter dipped in flour.
- 10 Place on a preheated baking tray dusted with flour, brush the tops of the scones with the egg wash and sprinkle each with flaked almonds.
- 11 Bake in the preheated oven for 20 minutes.
- 12 Once the scones are done, they will be golden brown underneath.

Best served warm with butter, homemade jam and whipped cream. The scones will keep for up to three days in an airtight container.