

Continuing our growing series showcasing the People Behind the Business - I interview Mark Murphy who has two businesses in Dingle - [The Dingle Cookery School](#) and the fabulous Little Cheese Shop.

Why do you do what you do?

I just love food and everything about food, and that is where the idea of the Cookery School started, in conjunction with my business partner Muireann Nic Giolla Ruaidh. I had done a Masters in IT Tralee, and I loved the idea of passing on a skill, and a love of food, to somebody else.

Why Dingle?

I originally came to Dingle for the first time, just for one day and fell in love with the place. I got a job in Novacento making the most amazing pizzas and then I applied for college. My work placement during college was in Longueville House in Mallow, which was the most amazing culinary experience for a catering student. It was a completely life changing experience for me and gave me such inspiration. That is where I learned about food. There was one man there who taught me all about vegetables, and that everyone should know how to cook any vegetable, a few different ways. A lesson that I still use with my students in the Cookery School.

I then went to work for Derry Clarke in l'Ecrivain in Dublin, went to Johnson Wales College in the US, and came back to Dingle, and started work in the Global Village. I then opened the Cookery School with Muireann and the rest is history.



What obstacles did you overcome opening your business?

We had to do a lot of groundwork for two years before opening the school. What we have today is a result of all the hard work behind the scenes, and the building up our contacts. I had experience of teaching students, and knew that I had the skills, and, that I could interact with people to develop a rapport and ensure that everyone had a good time at our lessons, while also learning a skill. It is such a privilege to be able to pass a love of food, and cooking food, to someone, so that they will enjoy cooking at home.

Who is your greatest culinary influence?

In an Irish context I would have to say that the Ferguson family who make Gubeen Cheese have a food philosophy that I really admire - they are true masters of their craft. I also love the style of cooking in Italy, and Piedmont stands out in my mind. Family life revolves around food and traditional family cooking there. Their food is a respected, and an especially important, part of their culture.

Tell me about your other business The Little Cheese Shop.

The previous owner, a Castlegregory cheesemaker, Maya Binder, was leaving her Dingle shop to concentrate on another business, so I was delighted to continue the business. It was a good fit with my existing business, and I had always loved the shop. I try to have as many Irish products as can be available in the shop, and am always looking for complimentary

products for our cheese range, which I am proud to say is now 90% Irish cheese.

Where is your favourite place on the Dingle Peninsula?

I have a special place in my heart for Kinard Beach, as I use to live there. But I also love Dunquin and Feothanach

What would be the first thing you would do if you won the Lottery?

I would continue to do what I do every day because it inspires me. But I would also like to set up a food co-op for the area, to allow every producer on the peninsula could showcase their products.

In conversation with Mark Murphy - June 2020

We regularly run packages including cookery demonstrations with Mark, or hampers from his Little Cheese Shop, for guests whilst staying with us in Castlewood House Dingle.