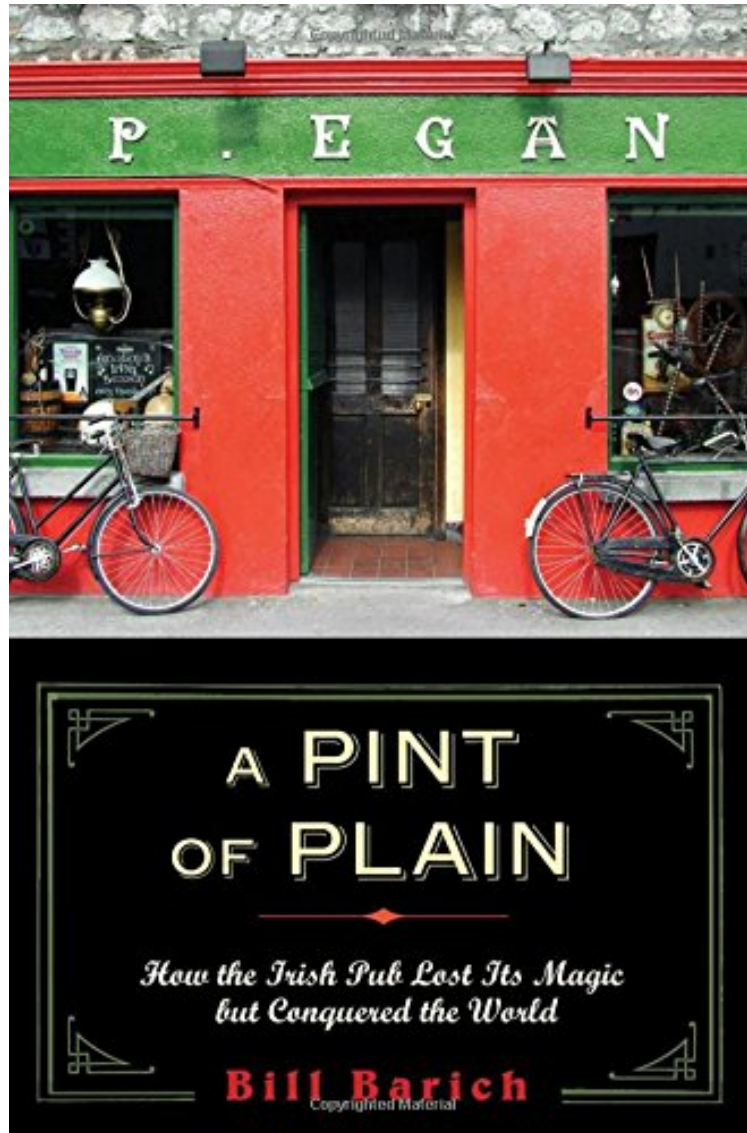


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A Pint of Plain: Tradition, Change, and the Fate of the Irish Pub

Bill Barich

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Bill Barich : A Pint of Plain: Tradition, Change, and the Fate of the Irish Pub before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Pint of Plain: Tradition, Change, and the Fate of the Irish Pub:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Pretty InterestingBy D. HurtThis was an interesting book. I checked out a few of these pubs in Ireland and the descriptions were accurate. I especially liked the Grave Diggers Pub next door to the Glasnevin Cemetary. It's not a flashy sports pub but it is one of a kind.2 of 3 people found the following

review helpful. It's still Ireland...which is fine with me. By David Zelz In a Pint of Plain, Bill Barich takes the reader with him as he searches for the "traditional" Irish pub in post Celtic Tiger Ireland. Weaving tales of some of Ireland's more colorful and notable pub dwellers and a discussion of the evolution of Ireland's pub culture into his urban and rural jaunt, the author is clearly disappointed with what he sees as an Ireland embracing a modernity that replaces what to him might have been a more charming past. At the end of the day, who's to say what defines "traditional"? I'm confident that Barich didn't draft his manuscript with a quill and that his search was not executed on horseback. So, as slick and contemporary as it may have become, why begrudge an Ireland eager to embrace a higher standard of living and an Ireland that is not content to be someone's museum piece? Why condemn smart and business savvy publicans who understand and respond to the wants and expectations of a changing clientele? Shunning anything that runs afoul (read: television and recorded music) of his pub ideal and dismissing those shops that flirt with an atmosphere that might be defined as "traditional" by most standards as prepackaged, prefabricated, Ireland-by-Disney shlock, Barich seems more interested in simply finding a pub that suits him. Opining on how Ireland's culture is being exported while concurrently being diluted at home, the author's search seems to be more a quixotic quest that has no more chance of success than a search for Waltons Mountain or Walnut Grove. Ultimately, what he is nostalgic for in the Irish pub is rooted in a time when Ireland suffered poverty, economic stagnation and an oppressive theocracy. Would he be content to assume that baggage as part of his desire for "tradition"? Overall, A Pint of Plain is an enjoyable, fun read. I'm sure Mr. Barich's pub is out there somewhere. He may just have to go to the Bunratty Folk Park to find it. Or he could go to Tom Collins on Cecil Street in Limerick. I'd be interested in his opinion of that shop. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Changed Society By Debbillgood story of the history of the public houses in Ireland and how society and DUI laws have changed things.

Seamlessly blending history and reportage, Bill Barich offers a heartfelt homage to the traditional Irish pub, and to the central piece of Irish culture disappearing along with it. After meeting an Irishwoman in London and moving to Dublin, Bill Barich? a "blow-in," or stranger, in Irish parlance? found himself looking for a traditional Irish pub to be his local. There are nearly twelve thousand pubs in Ireland, so he appeared to have plenty of choices. He wanted a pub like the one in John Ford's classic movie, *The Quiet Man*, offering talk and drink with no distractions, but such pubs are now scarce as publicans increasingly rely on flat-screen televisions, rock music, even Texas Hold 'Em to attract a dwindling clientele. For Barich, this signaled that something deeper was at play? an erosion of the essence of Ireland, perhaps without the Irish even being aware. A Pint of Plain is Barich's witty, deeply observant portrait of an Ireland vanishing before our eyes. Drawing on the wit and wisdom of Flann O'Brien (the title comes from one of his poems), James Joyce, Brendan Behan, and J. M. Synge, Barich explores how Irish culture has become a commodity for exports for such firms as the Irish Pub Company, which has built some five hundred "authentic" Irish pubs in forty-five countries, where "authenticity is in the eye of the beholder." The tale of Arthur Guinness and the famous brewery he founded in the mid-eighteenth century reveals the astonishing fact that more stout is sold in Nigeria than in Ireland itself. While 85 percent of the Irish still stop by a pub at least once a month, strict drunk-driving laws have helped to kill business in rural areas. Even traditional Irish music, whose rich roots "connect the past to the present and close a circle," is much less prominent in pub life. Ironically, while Irish pubs in the countryside are closing at the alarming rate of one per day, plastic IPC-type pubs are being born in foreign countries at the exact same rate. From the famed watering holes of Dublin to tiny village pubs, Barich introduces a colorful array of characters, and, ever pursuing craic, the ineffable Irish word for a good time, engages in an unvarnished yet affectionate discussion about what it means to be Irish today.

From Booklist Shhhhhh. . . Don't tell, but this is really a book about globalization, not about "your only man" (i.e., the well-pulled pint of porter). With "Irish" pubs cropping up in every burg and burb, what has happened to the originals? American emigrant Barich starts looking around his new neighborhood in Dublin for the pub of his dreams, where the pints are frothy and the conversation lofty. He finds the locals, both the pubs and their patrons, displaced by glamorous versions of themselves, and he discovers that he has unwittingly become part of a global plot to replace the real with the faux. He finally does find a few remaining magical places (once he gets out of Dublin, which for some readers will not be soon enough), but they are hanging-on-by-the-thumbnails operations in danger of going poof or pouf. Most browsers will pick this up because they want to read about Irish pubs, but they will get much, much more than they expected. An excellent, however sneaky, addition to the literature of globalization. --Patricia Monaghan "With scholarly rigor, he surveys the literature on the history of drinking, drunkenness and pubs before rewarding himself with the grueling and perilous fieldwork of sampling deeply from the 12,000 outposts in Ireland where alcohol is sold by the glass." Mr. Barich's picaresque meander through the Irish bloodstream is an entertaining survey of the culture and commerce of Ireland at a tremulous moment in its history. "Fascinating." ?William Birdthistle, *Wall Street Journal* Barich weaves a never-ending stream of oddly engaging historical and literary references into every dead end. Barich's passion for boozy subjects is broad and undeniable. He's equally at ease covering the effects of the temperance movement and introducing regional

slang terms for being drunk." James Oliver Cury, New York Times Book Review; The American writer Bill Barich moved to Ranelagh, on Dublin's south side, some time ago and set out to find the perfect Irish pub. *A Pint of Plain: Tradition, Change, and the Fate of the Irish Pub* is an engaging account of his quest and investigations." Katherine A. Powers, Boston Globe; Nicely researched, intelligently written, his book is a fun read tinged with melancholy at the thought of time passing and things changing; appropriately Irish, I think." Laurie Hertzler, Minneapolis Star Tribune About the Author Bill Barich has written for the New Yorker and other publications for many years. He is the author of the classic *Laughing in the Hills*, as well as *Crazy for Rivers*, *Carson Valley*, and most recently *A Fine Place to Daydream: Racehorses, Romance, and the Irish*. He lives in Dublin, Ireland.