

It's Blarney Meets Chutzpah, over Red Wine and Green Beer

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The hosts hoped to bring two ethnic groups together, so the invitation included a glossary:

St. Patrick's Day—"An Irish festival involving lots of alcohol celebrating St. Patrick on his special day. (a k a: a great opportunity to drink.)"

It went on to define a lesser-known observance.

"Purim—A Jewish carnival involving lots of alcohol celebrating the defeat of Haman by Mordecai and Esther and the saving of the Jews. (a k a: a great opportunity to drink.)"

It is a quirk of two calendars. While St. Patrick's Day always falls on March 17, the date of Purim follows the Jewish lunar calendar. So tonight, for the first time in 19 years, the Irish, the Jews and anyone eager for mischievous revelry with a little drink can get together, as Purim begins at sundown.

St. Patrick's revelers at the Fitzpatrick Manhattan Hotel on Sunday probably didn't know Mordecai from Haman, and that was even before they had their first drink.

For two roommates, Alexander Robinson and Charlie Stocks, the coincidence was a cause for a celebration. On Saturday, Mr. Robinson, who is Jewish, and Mr. Stocks, who is Irish, got started early and held their first St. Patrick's Purim Party at their Chelsea apartment.

"It was a double whammy," Mr. Robinson said. "We started looking at the connections, and the strongest link for us seemed to be drinking. We thought it was divine inspiration to promote multiculturalism."

The Purim celebration includes a reading from a scroll that recounts the story of the Jews' deliverance from a planned massacre in ancient Persia. Tradition dictates that revelers become so intoxicated that they cannot tell the difference between Mordecai, a hero of the story, and Haman, who plotted against the Jews.

St. Patrick's Day commemorates the Irish saint who helped to bring Catholicism to the country and has long been an important part of New York culture. Bars and pubs typically have lines out the door, with customers traveling from all over the world.

The connection between the festivals runs deeper than beer and wine, said William B. Helmreich, a professor of sociology and Judaic studies at the City University of New York Graduate Center.

While the Irish have corned beef, Jews munch on hamentaschen, triangular cookies that resemble the hat Haman wore. And Jewish communities often parade in costume and have carnivals for children.

"Both holidays create and maintain group solidarity and religious identity," Mr. Helmreich said. "Whether you bring the Irish together in a parade in Manhattan or bring the Jews together in a synagogue in Queens, the intention is the same."

While most bars throughout the city will be catering to shamrock-wearing partygoers, B. B. King's in Times Square will hold a Purim party, with two Jewish rock bands and kosher food. Michael Fancher, a club manager, said he expected as many as 600 people, though most may not be old enough to drink.

"Most of these guys will have bottled water and soda," he said. "But it's nice. It means you won't get those once-a-year amateurs. We'll have an early night."

Perhaps they do not expect the same crowd as Mr. Robinson had at his party.

"When everybody left, they couldn't tell the difference between Haman and a leprechaun."

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