

A taste for the good things

I still prefer black pudding fried, just simple," says Sean Kelly, "but now you have chefs using it in all sorts of recipes. You hear it mentioned in the same sentence as foie gras."

We meet Sean at Kelly's Butchers Shop, which has stood on the main street of Newport, County Mayo, since his father opened it in the Thirties. It's the sort of place I wish I had on my doorstep. We watch as a steady stream of customers come for their bacon, chops and sausages, if not just for a natter.

But it's Kelly's traditional black and white puddings that have put the place on the gastronomic map. They're recognised not simply as an essential ingredient of the traditional Irish breakfast, but a unique artisan product that's famous around the world.

"We've won many awards," Sean tells me. "As well as our All Ireland prizes, we won gold medals at the Great Taste Awards in Britain and a bronze in a competition in France. I've been told that the French almost never give awards to outsiders."

One of Sean's innovations is a double pudding which has a white-pudding core encased in a black-

pudding layer. "That came about when my wife said I could only have one slice of pudding with my breakfast," he tells us, patting his paunch. "Marriage is about compromise!"

We're keen to try these delicacies. Happily, Sean knows the chef at the Knockranny House Hotel in Westport, where we are staying, who conjures up two special dishes for us.

The white pudding is whipped into melt-in-the-mouth croquettes, served with sweet, seared scallops; the richer black pudding is used to wrap tender medallions of lamb, presented on a bed of pomegranate seeds. Both are spectacular, as is the panorama from the dining room, over Clew Bay and the 2,500ft Croagh Patrick.

We later raise a pint of Guinness to Sean and his puddings in Matt Molloy's in Westport, one of County Mayo's most famous pubs. Owned by the flautist of trad group The Chieftains, this attracts Irish music enthusiasts from all over the world, and a session is well under way. Good food, good drink, good music, and plenty of all three – it's a holy trinity indeed.



Delicious: Sean Kelly creates gourmet black and white puddings