

## The Rise and Fall of the Celtic Tiger

The Irish economy's boom between 1995 through 2007 is often referred to as *The Celtic Tiger*, a term also applied to the country itself. The phrase originates in reference to the *East Asian Tigers*: Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea, who saw similar periods of rapid economic growth in the 1980s.

In a little over a decade, Ireland went from one of Europe's poorest countries to one of its wealthiest. Both its Gross National Product and Gross Domestic Product grew at astounding rates, from between 5-11%, while the unemployment rate dropped from 18% in the late 1980s to 4.5% in 2007. Many factors converged to contribute to Ireland's success including its EU membership, its state-sponsored economic development, a low corporate tax rate, and the increased participation of women in its workforce.

In 2005, *The New York Times* described Ireland as the "Wild West of European finance." After a number of banking scandals and a general perception that Ireland was rife with unchecked financial frauds, the Irish Financial Regulatory Authority was formed. Despite strict oversight, the global financial crisis loomed in 2007 and by 2008 Ireland was one of the first European countries to experience a sudden and deep recession.

In early January 2009, an *Irish Times* editorial declared, "We have gone from the Celtic Tiger to an era of financial fear with the suddenness of a Titanic-style shipwreck, thrown from comfort, even luxury, into a cold sea of uncertainty."

## The Naked Chef

British chef Jamie Oliver received worldwide attention in 1999 as the star of the television cooking show *The Naked Chef*. With the publication of an immensely popular book of the same title, Oliver reinvigorated British interest in cooking. Oliver grew up around food preparation as the child of pub owners, and began cooking at a very young age, receiving training as early as 16 years old. Though known primarily for his Italian cuisine, Oliver draws from a number of culinary traditions, having studied in France and England. He is now the author of a dozen books, the host of a handful of television programs, the owner of several restaurants and the designer of his own line of cooking equipment.

Oliver is also active in the fields of philanthropy and health advocacy. He promoted an interest in cooking among underprivileged youth by establishing a foundation which provided 15 young people with an opportunity to intern in his *Fifteen* restaurant in London. Documenting the process in the show *Jamie's Kitchen* in 2002, several other *Fifteen* restaurants have opened around the globe. Oliver has also become active in promoting healthier choices in British schools through his 2005 television show *Jamie's School Dinners*. The program, in addition to the public campaign "Feed me Better," finally convinced the British government to spend more money on school lunches in order to provide healthier menus.

In 2007, Oliver began hosting a program on urban gardening and home-grown produce entitled *Jamie At Home*. He then turned his attention to the United States in 2010 with the mini-series *Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution*, which focused on improving the eating habits of Huntington, West Virginia. While Oliver's greatest impact has been on the British approach to food preparation and diet, his influence upon culinary traditions reaches well beyond the British Isles.



## Boy Band Phenomenon

The Frankensteinian love child of record producers and talent agents, the boy band craze became immensely popular in the last twenty years of the twentieth century. Groups of young dancers and singers were carefully manufactured and marketed to teens who embraced them with astounding popularity and immense profits. While pop was the most popular musical genre, R&B boy bands were also marketed to the African-American demographic with groups like Boyz II Men, or to Latino audiences with Menudo. The phenomenon had its antecedents in groups like **The Monkees** in the 1960s and the **New Kids On The Block** in the 1980s, but saw its apex in the 2000s with bands like **\*NSYNC** and **Backstreet Boys**.



New Kids on the Block



Backstreet Boys



\*NSync



## Michael Flatley

Though renowned as a dancer, choreographer and producer, Michael Flatley is best known as the creator of *Riverdance* and *Lord of the Dance*. The latter toured internationally to sold-out venues, standing ovations, and set attendance records worldwide.

Flatley was born to Irish parents on the south side of Chicago, where he began dancing at the age of 11. His wildly popular dance performances brought unprecedented appreciation for Irish dance, and skyrocketed Michael Flatley to fame. Flatley's skill as a dancer earned him several entries in the *Guinness Book of World Records* including top dancing speed, highest-paid dancer and highest insurance premium placed on a dancer's legs. In 2004 he was awarded an honorary degree from University College Dublin for his contributions to Irish culture. Flatley is also an award-winning flautist.

According to his official web site, "Michael Flatley's path to stardom proves what the human spirit can accomplish when relentless drive and determination converge with dreams."



## 1986 World Cup Maradona goal

In 1986, Mexico hosted the World Cup which pitted England against Argentina. Coming on the heels of the war between two countries over the Falkland/Malvinas Islands only four years before, the tournament was highly charged and hotly contested. The Argentine player captain Diego Armando Maradona dominated the games, scoring two goals which led to Argentina's victory. One earned him the FIFA World Cup Goal of the Century award, while the other goal should not have counted because video replays showed Maradona had illegally hit the ball with his hand. The latter became infamous and was dubbed the "Hand of God" goal.





## Meerlust South African wine

The Meerlust estate, a vineyard located in South Africa's Coastal Region lies approximately 20 miles east of Cape town. Dating back to the late 1600s, Meerlust is one of the oldest wineries in the Stellenbosch wine district, one of the premier grape-growing areas in South Africa. Known for their robust red wines, the region produces Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Shiraz (Syrah), and Pinotage.

South Africa is currently the world's ninth-largest wine producer, but during the Apartheid years the industry suffered tremendously due to the embargos and trade sanctions imposed by dozens of nations. In 1994, with the election of Nelson Mandela and the institution of democracy, South African wine became available in Britain for the first time in over a decade. In the several years that followed London wine connoisseurs consumed South African wines in unprecedented amounts, demonstrating a fascination for vintages like those from the Meerlust estate.





## The Berlin Wall

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, it reunited a city, a people, and a country which had been divided for nearly 30 years. *Der Berliner Mauer* in German, the wall was erected on the night of August 12, 1961, by the East German government as a protection measure. Nearly 2.5 million German workers had immigrated to West Berlin between 1949 and 1961. Fearing they would lose the skilled workers, intellectuals and professionals that were central to the communist economy, the East German government instituted this sudden and dramatic barrier.

The original structure of cinder blocks and barbed wire was later replaced by concrete walls 15 feet high, topped by barbed wire or electrified fences and guarded by watchtowers. The wall stretched for 28 miles, separating East from West Berlin, and then extended another 75 miles around West Berlin, which was entirely surrounded by East Germany. The Berlin Wall was actually two walls, separated by an area known as "the death strip," which was planted with mines and heavily monitored by guards. Though the East German government did allow its citizens to pass through checkpoints to travel to and from West Berlin, after a rise in defections to the West, the government tightened its restrictions. Approximately 5,000 East Germans successfully crossed the wall by various means, while 5,000 were captured in the attempt and 191 were killed during the crossing.

The Berlin Wall came to symbolize the barriers separating East and West during The Cold War. It was toppled after months of unrest in East Germany during a wave of democratization which spread through Eastern Europe and led to the end of the The Cold War.

## The Troubles in Northern Ireland

The ethno-political conflict in Northern Ireland between Roman Catholics and Protestants officially ended in 1998 with the "Good Friday Agreement." Known in Irish as *Na Trioblóidí*, or "The Troubles," the struggle over Northern Ireland's identity and sovereignty began in the 1960s but had its roots in the British occupation of Ireland, dating back to the 17th century.

The modern conflict concerned the disagreement over whether Northern Ireland should unite with the Republic of Ireland, a view supported predominantly by Catholic Nationalists, or whether it should continue to be part of the United Kingdom, a view held primarily by Protestant Unionists. The issue was complicated by the ancestral and ethnic ties of the Unionists to Britain, the British military's presence in the region and the paramilitary groups on both sides.

The Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Ulster Volunteer force both formed in the late 1960s, clashing in periodic violence in the decades to follow. In 1972, 27 unarmed Irish civilians were shot, of which 14 later died, at the hands of British Army during a civil rights march in Derry. The incident, which became known as "Bloody Sunday," had the highest number of casualties in a single day of the conflict. It was immortalized by the band U2 with their song, *Sunday, Bloody Sunday*.

The Troubles also led to the multiple IRA bombings in the United Kingdom throughout the 1980s and the 1990s. Overall, the bitter conflict claimed the lives of over 3,500 individuals, most of which were civilians.