

# Sweet dreams or rocky road: Options for opening your own tea room



**Alanna Gallagher**

If your dream is to escape the rat race to run a cafe, here are five options to whet the appetite

If you've been dreaming of a change of pace and want an opportunity to escape the rat race and set up a food business somewhere, then the time is now.

You could saddle up a food truck, but if you want to sink your teeth into something more substantial, a tea room is a genteel way to go – one that will also ensure that at least some of your evenings are spent off the shop floor, essential if you're going to also try and raise a family.

It's something veteran cafe and restaurant operator Helen Cunningham has first-hand experience of. She now runs the Phoenix Café in Dublin's Phoenix Park, a previous winner of the paper's Best Shops award, but when her family was young she ran Blaze's, one of the original late-night dining and live music spots in Temple Bar, and lived with her children above the eatery.

If you're living over the premises, she says, it isn't the late nights but being on call 24 hours a day that will affect you. Having separate access to accommodation is helpful. She spent years walking through the dining room at Blaze's to get home, often with the kids traipsing behind her.

If buying in an urban setting, consider a property that will give you the option to create some form of outdoor space. Cunningham put a roof terrace into the Temple Bar property. It gave her home an outdoor aspect and she also used it to grow herbs and vegetables for use in the restaurant.

Another essential is a good coffee machine. Expect to pay at least €5,000-€10,000 for one, she says.

If you're going to cook everything from scratch, it's going to be full on, Cunningham says. She makes everything from scratch at the Phoenix Café, from jams to bread, soups, stews and sauces, using the walled garden belonging to the Office of Public Works adjacent to the premises to grow the vegetables and produce she requires. She even sells the excess in the cafe. So if the property you like doesn't have its own land, consider leasing additional ground from a neighbour to grow your own.

Here are five tasty properties that may help sweeten your thinking.

## 1. Lakeside picnic potential

**Address:** Lake House, dance hall and tea room, Cloonee, Kenmare, Co Kerry  
**Agent:** SherryFitzGerald Daly  
**Price:** €400,000, €250,000 or €150,000

Situated 15km west of Kenmare and about 33km from the port of Castletownbere, this beguiling part of Co Kerry's lakelands comes with a menu of purchase options.

First up is a 1950s tea room, just 24sq m (264sq ft) in size, built about a decade after the adjacent dancehall to serve teas to the mainly dry, as in non-alcohol, dances, the origin of the term tea dance. The hall, built in the 1940s, has a further 129sq m (1,390sq ft) of space and could become a home, while you could operate the tea room as a mainly takeaway or outdoor cafe and picnic pick-up. The



Lake House, tea room and dance hall in Co Kerry



Time for a Rendezvous in Youghal, east Cork

property is located on the Wild Atlantic Way and on the Ring of Beara. Combined, these properties sit on 0.47 of an acre and are asking for €150,000.

Also for sale is the Lake House, which is situated across the road on 0.56 of an acre. It comprises a family-run country pub, famed for its trad music sessions, restaurant and five-guestroom accommodation. Asking for €250,000, this includes a seven-day bar licence with the pub running all year round, while the eatery operates from March to the end of September. All told, it extends to 386sq m (4,162sq ft) and the guestrooms could be turned into an on-site residence, but there is also scope to extend further out over the bar to give you living quarters.

## 2. French fancy in east Cork

**Address:** 61/62 South Main Street, Youghal, Co Cork  
**Agent:** SherryFitzGerald Hennessy  
**Price:** €185,000

If you do like to be beside the sea-side, then Youghal's Rendezvous might offer a live-over-the-shop option. The three-storey, end-of-terrace, double-fronted property has a cafe at ground level with a living room, small galley kitchen, store room and full bathroom on the first floor, and four bedrooms on the first floor.

The property needs work, most especially at its upper levels. Currently, it has old electric storage heating only and it does not have any outside space, so bin storage will be a consideration that needs attention.

The building, which extends to 137sq m (1,475sq ft) over three floors, is adjacent to the town's Clock Tower, which was built in 1777 as a gaol. The town has multiple sandy beaches with a timber



boardwalk linking Claycastle and Redbarn. A greenway connecting it to Midleton is due for completion in about 18 months so there's plenty of potential for a future takeaway business.

## 3. Asian influence in the marble city

**Address:** 49 High Street, Kilkenny, Co Kilkenny  
**Agent:** Keane Auctioneers  
**Price:** €700,000

This is a striking, three-storey over ground level townhouse on one of Kilkenny city's best streets for footfall. Situated opposite Dunnes Stores, it has operated as a sizeable



Tea rooms at Silver Strand House, Malinbeg, Co Donegal



This former service station in Kilmacthomas, Co Waterford, could have potential

Chinese restaurant for the past 30 years but has been closed since the start of Covid restrictions.

It offers a total of 851sq m (9,170sq ft) of space which includes a large eatery set over the ground and first floors, which extend to 565sq m (6,081sq ft), and a further two storeys of accommodation, 286sq m (3,078sq ft), currently set out in four flats.

These haven't been upgraded in decades and will need attention. There is a small yard to the rear, and the possibility of putting a small roof terrace at first-floor level, subject to planning. This is west-facing.

## 4. Cupán tae sa Ghaeltacht

**Address:** Silver Strand House, Glencolmille, Co Donegal  
**Agent:** DNG Dorrian  
**Price:** €265,000

In the Co Donegal Gaeltacht parish of Glencolmille, Silver Strand House sits just 150m from one of this part of the county's most beloved beaches, the Silver Strand in Malinbeg. It is a townland that is

teeming with tourists during the summer months, but you'll have the place to yourself during the winter.

Built in 1993 and extended a decade later to 220sq m (2,374sq ft), Silver Strand House has been operating as a tea room, but there is scope to extend up under the roof to create accommodation above.

Sliah Liag is about 15km to the south, while you're about 8km from the nearest national school in the village of Cashel. The nearest secondary school is in Carrick. This is currently a seasonal business and the property is set on 0.32 of an acre.

## 5. From fossil fuels to oaty edibles

**Address:** Kilmacthomas Service Station, The Square, Co Waterford  
**Agent:** Barry Murphy Auctioneers  
**Price:** €85,000

This former service station on The Square in Kilmacthomas could, with the right kind of deep pockets and flair, become a really smart tea room. The location is framed by the Comeragh Mountains to the back and is within a few minutes of the Waterford Greenway. Waterford city is 24km away, while Dungarvan is 22km. The village is home to a viaduct that forms part of the greenway and to Flahavan's Mill, where the Flahavan family has been milling locally grown oats for more than 200 years. There could be some potential synergies with the supply of raw ingredients from oats for flapjacks and porridge to oat milk for the non-dairy brigade.

The property comprises two single-storey, lock-up units that extend to about 167sq m (1,800sq ft) and would require complete rebuilding to possibly a two-storey set-up with an indoor/outdoor tea room on the forecourt, all subject to planning.

## Dublin 2 €895,000



## Three-bed home in a cosy city enclave

### 24 Grand Canal Street Lower, Dublin 2

**Description:** Smart three-bed mid-terrace home in the south city centre  
**Agent:** Owen Reilly

JOYCE HICKEY

It's not immediately apparent, if you use Grand Canal Street Lower as a route to somewhere else, but the people who live here have forged a community whether they have lived here for generations, or decades – or, like the owners of number 24, almost seven years. There's even a WhatsApp group for Jimmy, Fred, Sophie, Oscar, Bruno, and all the other dogs who meet for a regular game of Fetch and a sniff around Merrion Square.

The humans are pretty friendly too, say Eddie and Niamh, who moved to number 24 in 2015 from nearby Fenian Street. When they bought it, in late 2014, it had been vacant for two years and was in three flats but most of the original fabric survived. "The essence of the house was there," says Eddie; "and we knew we could grow into it," continues Niamh. Grow into the 1,625sq ft (151sq m) three-bed they did, but they have gradually grown out of it and are "reluctantly" looking for a house with a fourth bedroom. Number 24 is now for sale through Owen Reilly, with an asking price of €895,000.

"I don't know whether it's luck, or what," says Eddie, but the couple feel everyone who worked on the house did their very best for them. "This house has been good to us," they say.

They did all the big things before moving in – replumbing, re-wiring, replacing the floor in the basement, installing a zoned heating system – and later, once they had what their builder called the "envelope", they added shutters, repaired the coving and made a new bathroom so there is one on each floor. The Ber is C2. A mid-terrace house, one of a pair built in 1905, number 24 presents a modest façade but the interior

surprises, with the hall about 3m (11ft) tall and the cornice decorated with eight-pointed stars and stylised tulips. And while the paint colours – mostly neutrals such as Patio Stone and Bye Bye Love – feel modern, the owners have added light fittings and other pieces from their family homes to add period flavour. They also found furniture and a handsome Edwardian cast-iron fireplace in antique shops and at auctions.

To the left off the hall is the drawing room, from which you can see but not hear passing traffic, and behind this is the first bedroom, big but cosy and with a shower room beside it. Upstairs are two more fine bedrooms, both with painted fireplaces, and wardrobes by Legacy Woodcraft. The view from the back room extends as far north as the Convention Centre, and the gracious main bedroom spans the front. The third bathroom, with bath and separate shower, is at the top of the house.

The kitchen/livingroom extends the length of the basement, which is surprisingly bright even on a grim wet day, with a family dining table in the middle and a brick fireplace by the sofa. There is utility and storage space under the front steps, a small bathroom at the back and an ingenious office at the bottom of the hall stairs.

Ample cupboards and a huge wood-topped island anchor the kitchen end, and patio doors open to the back garden which is designed so that the two levels trap the sunlight. From here, Eddie points out the homes of friends – and neighbours who have become friends – and Niamh highlights the connections from the house to the people and places that featured in the 1916 Rising.

But it's not close only to Boulders Mills: number 24 is really well connected, with two cycle-share stations, the Dart and buses nearby, and there is permit car parking on the street. With easy access to sports grounds, schools, parks in town and in Irishtown, upmean Docklands workplaces and all kinds of local shops, it's easy to see why this family – and their dog – want to stay within close range.



## On view



**8 Seabury Meadows, Malahide, Co Dublin**

**€570,000, O'Farrell Cleere Auctioneers**  
Four-bedroom semi-detached house extending to 123sq m (1,314sq ft). The property, which lies in a mature residential estate close to Broadmeadow Estuary, is within walking distance of local amenities. Ber C1  
On view: Strictly by appointment at ofarrellcleere.ie



**24 Johnstown Court, Cabinteely, Dublin 18**

**€595,000, Sherry FitzGerald**  
Three-bedroom mid-terrace house extending to 116sq m (1,249sq ft) located in a quiet cul-de-sac off Johnstown Road. The property, which has a new bathroom and internal doors, is within easy reach of the villages of Killiney, Cabinteely and Foxrock. Ber B3  
On view: Strictly by appointment at sherryfitz.ie



**23 Richmond Grove, Monkstown, Co Dublin**

**€995,000, Lisney**  
Four-bedroom semi-detached property extending to 156sq m (1,679sq ft) that has been recently upgraded. The property, which has solar panels for hot water, and underfloor heating, has an additional 17sq m (186sq ft) of room in the converted attic. Ber B2  
On view: Strictly by appointment at lisney.com



**166 The Oak, Charleville Square, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14**

**€395,000, DNG**  
Two-bedroom first-floor apartment extending to 70sq m (753sq ft) set in a gated development with underground car parking. Surrounded by landscaped gardens, the property has an east-facing balcony and an upgraded fire safety system. Ber B3  
On view: Strictly by appointment at dng.ie



**83 Sandymount Road, Sandymount, Dublin 4**

**€750,000, Bennetts Auctioneers**  
Three-bedroom semi-detached Edwardian property extending to 114sq m (1,227sq ft). The property, which has a good-sized south-facing rear garden, is in the centre of Sandymount village, close to all amenities. Ber E1  
On view: Strictly by appointment at bennettsauctioneers.ie