

# The Shamrock Shake-Down

Heidi accounts the madness that ensues in her home when the Shamrock Shake is back in town.

By [Heidi McDonald](#), Patch Poster | Mar 13, 2011 6:00 pm ET | Updated Mar 15, 2011 4:15 pm ET



March Madness at our house has nothing whatsoever to do with basketball.

[With apologies to Michelle Obama](#), it involves the gloriously delicious, minty-fresh cup of frozen coagulated animal fat known as the Shamrock Shake.

This seasonal delicacy arrives at participating McDonald's restaurants each Feb. 15 and disappears by St. Patrick's Day. The Shamrock Shake has [Facebook groups](#), and a fan-created [ShamrockShake.com](#), where users can log shamrock shake sightings and look up the closest location to them where it's available. It's not just a dessert beverage. It's a cultural phenomenon.

Punxatawney Phil can predict whatever he wants at the start of February and we don't really care. Any crocuses that venture out of the ground these days still stand the chance of being snowed on. It's the arrival of the Shamrock

Shake that's as exciting to my family as [the arrival of new phone books to Steve Martin in The Jerk](#).

Each summer, our family goes to the Outer Banks with my husband's parents, uncle and grandparents, his brother and his sister and their whole family. It ends up being 18 of us (four generations' worth) in a huge beach house for a week, both for better and for worse. My daughter's yearly contest is to see how many times over the course of the week she can get herself taken to Dairy Queen by one of the 10 adults in the house. (The fact that Pittsburgh also has Dairy Queen is entirely beside the point.)

[Subscribe](#)

She waits until each adult is alone and in a good mood because of the martinis, or she waits until the sun is at its highest point. Or else she'll suggest that because it's raining and we can't go in the water, maybe we should go to Dairy Queen. If she successfully hits up each adult once, that's 10 trips; her record is 12. She's a ninja like that.

I'd compare what happens around here with Shamrock Shakes to my daughter's Dairy Queen enterprise during beach week, just lasting a whole month and multiplied by three. There is always clamor for the first Shamrock Shake of the season, which we enjoy as a family. After that, the children keep score of who has had how many. Last week, I was on spring break and my husband and I snuck off for [a matinee](#) and a Shamrock Shake one day.

We should have thrown the cups away in the outside trash, because when the children saw empty Shamrock Shakes in the garbage, they morphed into little CSI investigators. Whose are these? How many Shamrock Shakes have you

had? Can I smell your breath to see if it's minty fresh? What color is your tongue? Where were you the afternoon of Friday, March 11?

Get caught going for a Shamrock Shake without the kids and the little boogers organize on you quicker than the Wisconsin AFL-CIO.

Tomorrow is St. Patrick's Day, and for many McDonald's in the area, Shamrock Shakes will have already run out for 2011. I've tried to make homemade Shamrock Shakes using vanilla ice cream, milk, peppermint extract and green food coloring, but they are never the same in taste or consistency. We all know you can buy [Keebler Grasshopper cookies](#) all year round, yet we still go out of our way to befriend a Girl Scout to get the original Thin Mints during those sacred couple weeks in late winter when the cookie sale is happening.

Would these things be as special if we could have them year round? I doubt it. These seasonal things are important because they give us something to look forward to. For me, they also mark the point at which I need to start saving up for trips to the Outer Banks Dairy Queen.