



News

January 2004

No. 5

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All Change

Welcome to Oxfordshire Food Group News. Most of you will have heard that Jacqui has left her job here to run Wiltshire Food Links and this is what she said:

“with much sadness I will be taking leave of colleagues and Food Group members who have made the past 18 months such an exciting and enjoyable time. Thank you all and I hope I will have the opportunity and good fortune to work with you again at some point in the future”.

Tamara Schiopu started work as our new full-time projects manager on 12 January. Tamara has a wide range of experience, in particular organising training and promotional events for small businesses. We hope that you will have an opportunity to meet Tamara during the course of this year.

There are a number of events planned for the next two months and the emphasis is on catering and local food – a hot topic at present, as the government wants to encourage public sector organisations to purchase much more local food for their catering operations. See the Events listings on page 7 for details of what is happening this spring.

News and project updates

Government backs Oxfordshire Food Group

Oxfordshire's pioneering work in setting up a Food Group and appointing a coordinator in 2002 has inspired sufficient confidence in the South East England Development Agency for £137,000 of government funding to be earmarked to promote local food in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, for the next three years. As Oxfordshire now has a full time project manager, we will be taking the lead in managing the programme of work and are currently involved in drafting a business plan, with our colleagues from the two other counties. Whilst we still have to “match” this funding, by finding an equal amount from other sources, this is excellent news.

Welcome Tamara

Tamara is based at Tolhurst Organic Produce in the Reading area, having recently moved to the UK after working on rural development, training and consultancy in Moldova, (including a Plunkett Foundation programme of support to local farmers) and a period studying in California, where she gained an MBA last year. She has a range of experience, for example, in producing business plans for food production, preparing grant applications and feasibility studies, and organising training and promotional events for small businesses.



Congratulations to...

Winners from Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire at the British Cheese Awards, held at the end of September last year, at Blenheim Palace.

Our region won three of the fifteen categories for which we were eligible:

- *Wigmore ewe's milk cheese*, from **Village Maid Cheese** in Berkshire was judged both Best English Cheese and Best Semi-Soft Cheese.
- **Gill Draycott**, of **Wells Stores**, Abingdon, was "Cheese Person of the Year".

Other notable successes were the gold medals for:

- **Village Maid's**, *Wigmore and Waterloo (cow)*
- **Oxford Cheese Company's**, *Oxford Blue (cow)*
- **Abbeygold's**, *Troo Bloo You (ewe)*
- **Two Hoots Farmhouse Cheese**, *Barkham Blue (cow)*.

In the Export section a silver medal was gained by:

- **Oxford Blue**

Bronze medals went to:

- *Chevre Blanc and Dainty Herb*, **Windrush Valley Goat Dairy**, Oxfordshire
- *Warfield*, **Neustift Dairy Goats**, Berkshire
- *Leafield (ewe)*, **Abbeygold**
- *Barkham White (cow)*, **Two Hoots**.

Well done everyone.

British Food Fortnight

This took place between 20 September and 5 October last year and the main event locally was the British Cheese Awards, described above. Amongst lots of local events, the Food Art Festivals at the Botanic Garden, Oxford and Thames Valley Police serving British bobbies the best of British food, received special mention as unusual events. You can find out more about what went on and what is planned for next year, between 18 September and 3 October, by logging on to <http://www.britishfoodfortnight.co.uk/>.

Farming and Food at the Henley Show

South Oxfordshire's Leisure and Countryside team organised and sponsored a Countryside Marquee at last year's Henley Show, held in mid September. Over 25 different organisations, including the Food Group, took part by providing exhibitions and interactive displays on all aspects of the countryside, from farming and food to rights of way. The team estimate that over 3,500 people visited the marquee on the day, compared with about 1,500 the previous year.

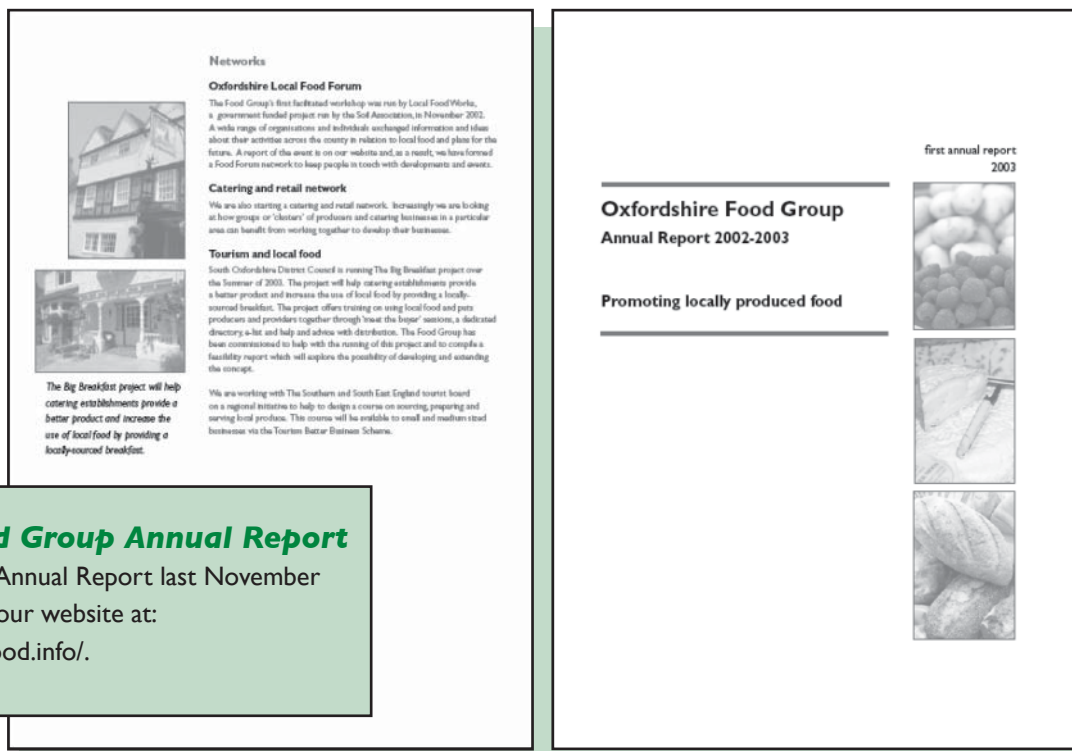
For information about next year's event, contact either Dominic Lamb, Countryside Officer, Leisure and Countryside team, on 01491 823133, email: dominic.lamb@southoxon.gov.uk or Paula Havlin, Countryside Assistant, on 01491 823127, email: paula.havlin@southoxon.gov.uk.

Food Directory

This year's 60 page Food Directory, published again by the *Oxford Times*, covers Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. 55,000 have been printed and a copy is enclosed with this mailing. The Directory was distributed with the *Oxford Times* in November and is also made available through the District Councils, tourist accommodation operators, farmers' markets, the public libraries and other outlets. We are keen to keep on improving this directory, to make it really useful for producers, retailers and caterers, as well as consumers. We would be very pleased to hear from you if you have any suggestions for making the directory meet your needs and we will do our best to incorporate your suggestions next year. Do let us know what you think of it.

Community Supported Agriculture

Oxfordshire Food Group hosted a workshop at Braziers Park, Ipsden, South Oxfordshire last December. Greg Pilley, coordinator of the Soil Association's Cultivating Communities Project introduced the concept as "a partnership between farmers and consumers where the responsibilities and rewards of farming are shared". He



Oxfordshire Food Group Annual Report
 We published our first Annual Report last November and you can view it on our website at:
www.oxfordshirelocalfood.info/.

described several projects in the UK and explained that Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is distinguished from box schemes, farm shops and farmers' markets by the additional support and commitment, often financial, offered by consumers, for example each household pays for a year of vegetables. Consumers often put time as well as money into projects, getting involved in growing and production. A number of people from different sectors attended the workshop, including the health sector, local authorities and education and small groups discussed how we could get something going in Oxfordshire.

Braziers Park itself is an obvious candidate for CSA as they have land and a grower available. What is needed is support from the community. We decided to try and link in with the Sustainable Wallingford project, in order to attract support, both financial and time, from local people. It was generally agreed that we should publicise CSA through our networks and perhaps take groups of people to see examples of successful projects. Oxfordshire Food Group's role is to put people in touch with one another and report on progress with any CSA initiative, which we very much hope will result from the workshop.

For more information on Community Supported Agriculture, see <http://www.soilassociation.org/web/sa/saweb.nsf/Manuf/csa.html> and the Cultivating Communities website at <http://www.cuco.org.uk/>. Contact the Soil Association for free leaflets and we also have a supply. Ring us on 01865 484116.

Wolvercote Farmers' Market

Since starting on 12 October 2003, the weekly Sunday market has been going from strength to strength and as an

enthusiastic visitor, I can personally attest to its popularity. All the producers, many of whom are registered organic farmers, come from Oxfordshire, some from only a few miles away.

A café sells snacks and drinks, including all day breakfast, in the same building and people take the opportunity to relax with the Sunday papers when they have done their shopping. The market is popular with families, offering an opportunity for everyone to go, by contrast with most other markets which are held on weekdays.

The products on offer include:

- Meat:** Organic beef from Hill Farm, Duns Tew, free range and organic meats from Mr Finn, Corner Farm, Horton-cum-Studley, and organic pork from Foxcombe Hill Farm, Boars Hill.
- Vegetables:** North Aston Organics alternate with Sarsden Organics. The newly-established Clays Organic Market Garden in Warborough will sell some vegetables in due course.
- Fruit:** Clays Organic Market Garden, in season only.
- Cheese:** Abbeysgold cheese from Goosey, near Wantage, will be available twice a month
- Eggs:** Willowbrook Farm, Hampton Gay
- Plants:** Meadow Nurseries, Ducklington
- Other:** It is hoped to establish a collaborative stall so that producers without the resources to run a stall themselves can offer their produce in conjunction with others. This could include home made pasta, Mariella Bliss's focaccia and other goodies.

Wolvercote Farmers' Market is seeking producers of goods not currently offered and if you are interested, please contact Shadiya Kingerlee on 01865 310693 or shadiya@tiscali.co.uk.

Wolvercote Farmers' Market is every Sunday from 10am to 2.30pm, in Wolvercote School Hall, opposite the church. Go soon.

Flourishing Fairtrade

Local residents and visitors to Oxford have an increasing choice if they want to buy fair. The city is now rapidly on the way to becoming an official Fairtrade City, with more and more restaurants, shops, and schools serving up Fairtrade goods across the city. From tea and coffee to chocolate and bananas, items carrying the Fairtrade mark guarantee a fair deal to the people who produce them.

By making this choice, shoppers can help tackle poverty in poorer countries, with extra money often spent on schools and hospitals. The same principles apply to Fairtrade as to purchasing local food, in that the producer is guaranteed a fair price and the supply chain is shortened, so that a larger proportion of the price paid by the consumer is received by the producer. Typically, Fairtrade goods are foodstuffs grown in warmer countries, such as tea, coffee, chocolate and bananas.

Oxford City Council is supporting the declaration and makes Fairtrade tea and coffee available for meetings. The Oxford Fairtrade Coalition coordinates the project and their website lists places in Oxford selling Fairtrade goods and news of upcoming events.

Are you getting a fair price for your produce? We do not see why Fairtrade should not apply to UK small primary producers of food. Often these are forced to sell at a lower price than they deserve. We invite you to the Forum (www.oxfordshirelocalfood.info) to express your views and suggestions as to how producers of local food can be supported to get fair deals for their produce.

See www.fairtrade.org.uk for more information on official Fairtrade Cities; www.oxford.gov.uk/fairtrade for information about Oxford's initiative; and www.fairfox.org.uk for news of upcoming events and to find out where you can buy Fairtrade goods.

Research and reports

Good Food on the Public Plate

Oxfordshire Food Group is organising a Seminar on Public Sector Catering and Local Food, to be held at Oxford Brookes University on 24 March 2004. We have commissioned some research to assess the scope for purchasing local food and are contacting public sector organisations (local authorities, schools, hospitals, colleges, police, armed forces) in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire to find out how they purchase food, from whom, and whether certain types of food could be sourced locally. We also want to build a list of producers who may be able to supply into catering contracts, either now or in future. If you are interested in opportunities to expand your business by supplying public sector organisations, please let us know.

Phone Tamara on 01865 484116 or email localfood@brookes.ac.uk. And don't miss the Seminar on Wednesday 24 March (see Events for more details).

Local Sourcing – Opening the Door for Small Businesses

HRH The Prince of Wales launched a new (free) guide for small businesses looking to work with large food retailers and foodservice or catering companies. "Local Sourcing, Opening the door for small business", is the first step by step guide taking small producers through every step of the process of getting their products listed.

The practical 'how-to' guide includes information gathered from the local sourcing workshops and from discussions with many major supermarkets, convenience chains, foodservice distributors and operators in the UK. The combined experience of all those contributing to this guide means it is an essential read for small businesses looking to work with larger customers. It takes potential suppliers through a detailed breakdown of the process to help them understand the listing process, specific departments and the differences between supermarkets and convenience chains. It also gives a detailed view of the foodservice or catering sector which now accounts for 30p in every £1 spent on food (Institute of Grocery Distribution estimate), and includes an invaluable glossary of who is who and what is what.

Copies can be downloaded from www.bitc.org.uk or www.igd.com/localsourcing. Alternatively you can get a copy from the South East Food Group Partnership, email: info@buylocalfood.co.uk.

If you have an event you would like included in our newsletter please let us have the details as soon as you can.

HACCP

From December 2004, it is a legal requirement for food processors to have HACCP requirements in place.

What is HACCP?

HACCP stands for Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points and is a Food Safety methodology that relies on the identification of Critical Control Points (CCPs) in food production and preparation processes. The CCPs are closely monitored in order to ensure that food is safe for consumption.

If you or your staff need training regarding HACCP, contact us on 01865 484116. We will be offering subsidised courses during 2004, so make sure you sign up well in advance!

You can get general information about HACCP, rather than technical training, by attending our seminar at Oxford Brookes University on 24 March.

Getting in touch

It would help us enormously if you could send us your email address and also your telephone number, so that we can update our records. This is particularly important when we are preparing the food directory each year, as we often find that the details we hold on our database are out of date.

We promise not to inundate you with bulletins, as we know how busy you are, but we would like to let you know about events that might interest you. Our current reliance on a quarterly newsletter and other mailshots means that we cannot let you know about certain events or give you enough notice of them. Please email localfood@brookes.ac.uk and give your telephone number and website address if you have one. As Jacqui said in the last newsletter, if you are already receiving information from us by email, there is obviously no need to do this, unless your contact details have changed very recently.

Can you help?

“We’re trying to reduce our food miles and we have lots of young mouths to feed. We want the students to think about where their food is coming from.”

Stansfeld Field Study Centre, Headington Quarry, Oxford (run by Birmingham Education Authority) are looking for local producers, possibly producing organic food, to supply their field studies centre, where 3 meals a day are provided for up to 60 residents. Every week during term time, students (ranging from 7 years old to adults) come down from Birmingham for environment based field studies. The Centre already provides fresh home cooked food and now wants to start to source this locally and include some organic ingredients.

How you can help

Could you become a supplier to us? We need meat, fruit, vegetables, dairy products, bread, flour and dried goods. We hope that the size and frequency of our orders will help to keep our costs at a reasonable level, as we are controlled by the City of Birmingham School Meals Service.

We will need supplies to be delivered to us in Headington and will make efforts to cook with seasonal produce as much as possible. We will of course need to specify what is supplied, rather than relying entirely on what is available in any particular week.

Could you supply our needs and work with us to support our philosophies? If so, we would love to hear from you.

Contact: Claire Poulton, Carol Chandler or Jane Annett on 01865 762475

Would you like to sell in Waitrose?

We are starting a marketing programme with Waitrose Buyers to select and support the best local producers (our members) to sell in Waitrose.

If you are interested, please contact Tamara (01865 484116) for details. Your products will be sold with special “locally produced” ticketing and you will be able to display your own brand.

Waitrose Small Producers Awards 2004

These awards, worth £5,000 to category winners and £10,000 to the Supreme Champion, were launched on 8 January and applications need to be received by Friday 5 March 2004. If you are a small producer and employ fewer than 10 permanent, full or part-time employees, and your turnover is no more than £1.5 million, you are eligible to enter. Categories are Drink, bakery, grocery, dairy and ice cream, fresh produce, and fruit and vegetables.

You can request an application form from: Small Producers Awards, Waitrose Press Office, Doncastle Road, Bracknell, Berkshire, RG12 8YA or log on to <http://www.waitrose.com/>. Telephone 01344 824787, email smallproducersawards@waitrose.co.uk. All applications must be received by 5 March 2004.

Village Shops News

Jane Barker joined Oxfordshire Rural Community Council's Village Shops Development Team last summer, as part time Village Shops Fieldworker, to provide support and help for the independent village stores in the county. Jane ran the village shop and post office in Kingham for nearly ten years, so she has some experience of the challenges, rewards and commitments involved in providing a community with the vital rural amenity that is the village shop.

Jane works alongside Helen Datson, who has worked as Village Shops Development Worker for the past four years but is now specialising in community shops.

Contact Jane on 01608 659010, email: jane.barker@oxonrcc.org.uk, or Helen on 01608 810098, email: csdw@clara.co.uk.

Producer Portfolios – another opportunity!

We have funding for a further set of these, which are used to promote our wonderful local produce to trade buyers. If you've not seen an example yet, have a look at our website www.oxfordshirelocalfood.info/. Because of the delay in producing this newsletter, time is short and we would ask you to contact Tamara on 01865 484116 as soon as possible if you are interested in having a portfolio for your products. An invitation letter is enclosed with this newsletter and please note the deadline.

Training for our Members

We have funding to subsidize our members who want to attend training events organised by various Training Providers. Please, see our website for Training and Advice and if you find something useful for your business, ask Tamara for support (www.oxfordshirelocalfood.info). Again, time is short (invoices must be turned in by the end of March, 2004) and you need to act immediately.

Activities, events and opportunities

February

EU PROTECTED FOOD NAMES

“Clinic” at Oxford Brookes University - Safeguarding Britain’s Food Heritage

3 February 2.30pm to 4pm

What do Stilton cheese, Newcastle Brown Ale, Welsh Beef, Kentish Ale and Cornish Clotted Cream have in common? The answer is that they are among a select list of products whose identity is legally protected by EU legislation against imitation, similar to the familiar ‘Appellation Contrôlée’ system used for wine. Europe-wide research has shown that consumers are willing to pay, on average, 18% more for such products. Most food and drink products (but not wines and spirits) are potentially eligible for registration provided that they can be shown to have a link to the geographical area in which they are produced or are made to a traditional recipe. There are three schemes; Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) and Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG) – highlighting regional and traditional food whose authenticity and origin can be guaranteed through an independent inspection system.

If you are interested to find out more about the potential, as a producer or as part of a producer group, you can attend a free ‘clinic’ at Oxford Brookes University, on 3 February, from 2pm to 4.30pm. After the talk there will be time for you to discuss a possible application further with Simon Johnson from DEFRA.

There are no costs; please reserve your place and/or make an appointment after the talk to discuss your possible application with DEFRA by phoning the South East Food Group Partnership on 01730 893724 or email: info@buylocalfood.co.uk with your name and contact details.

Confirmations will be issued a week before the event.

February and March

How to Profit from the Local Food Supply Chain

5 and 24 February, 10 and 30 March 2004, 4pm to 6pm

Four free seminars have been arranged by Business Link to look at the routes to market for local produce, including caterers, retailers, farm shops and farmers’ markets and wholesalers. The aim is to reconnect the local food supply chain and the seminars will include the experiences of those already buying local produce; those who are seeking to buy more; the pressures they face and how you as a producer can meet their needs; as well as opportunities to add value to your production and supply.

Speakers include Sean Parker, chef at Witney Lakes restaurant and Debbie Rouget of Tourism Better Business on ‘Supplying the Catering Trade’, and Jerry Vallance from Hook Norton Brewery and Peter Couchman from Oxfordshire, Swindon and Gloucester Co-op on ‘Supplying the Retail Trade’.

There is no charge for the seminars, however a tour of Hook Norton Brewery has been arranged on at 2.30pm on 24 February, which costs £7.50 and must be pre-booked.

Book by phone to the Business Link Customer Service Team on 0845 606 4466 or email events@businesslinksolutions.co.uk.

May

Fine Food, Wine and Spirits Fair 2004

8 and 9 May 2004, The Stables, Waddesdon Manor

The National Trust are seeking exhibitors for this event, to be held indoors and the fee for the two days is £100, including 6 foot trestle table and electricity if requested in advance. Contact Stephanie Swann, the Public Events Officer, on 01296 653259

September

Wychwood Fair

5 September 2004, Lower Farm, Ramsden

Last year’s Forest Fair at Shipton-under-Wychwood was very successful for some local food producers, who sold out by mid-afternoon. This year, the organisers want to make local food one of the main themes of the Fair and have invited the Food Group to get involved. We will publish more information about the Fair as the plans develop and producers will be invited to come along and sell their products.

New members and membership profile

Welcome to a number of new members who have joined since the last newsletter. Nina Gaylard and Liz MacDonald run Food for Functions and specialise in providing buffets using as much local produce as possible. Kieran Daniels is a chef and runs the Three Tuns Food House in Henley. Kieran used to be at the Half Moon in Cuxham until it tragically burnt down, so we are very pleased to hear that he is still in Oxfordshire. Kieran can offer cooking demonstrations, talks and recipes using local food. William and Janey Cumber produce organic milk, beef and lamb, selling their meat locally, whilst Lutfi and Ruby Radwan produce organic eggs at Willowbrook Farm and sell at Wolvercote Farmers' Market. Another new member is the sustainability advice firm Consumer Sd3, who are looking to source local food, in particular farm food or box schemes (including organic) for delivery in the Temple Cowley area of Oxford. Finally, Taste of the Country Ltd run three shops including one in Moreton in Marsh, selling local and British foods.

Oxfordshire Food Group: New members Retailer member profile

Sean Parker is the Head Chef and an Associate Director of Greens Restaurant at the Witney Lakes Resort. Over the last few years, Sean has been sourcing food for the restaurant locally wherever possible and says that, since we sent him the Oxfordshire Food Directory, he has been getting more interested in local produce and has been genuinely surprised by the excellent produce on offer.

The restaurant's À la Carte menu includes locally produced cream, eggs, venison, pork, beef, and flour for the home-baked breads. Cheese is made by Rodney Whitworth of Abbeygold at East Hanney and Sean says Rodney's Bulldog Blue is definitely the best blue cheese he has ever tasted. Sean is supplied with fantastic vegetables from a local garden, including pear tomatoes, which he had never heard of before. He has been inspired and educated by visiting local suppliers.

Although there can be some frustrations when first making contact and arranging for deliveries and invoicing, Sean feels that the rewards from local sourcing far outweigh these, and these rewards are measured in commercial terms as well as giving personal satisfaction. All of the foods mentioned are obtained at competitive prices and customers like the fact that the restaurant is supporting the local economy.

Sean says "I am convinced that buying locally produced food is right for our business. In fact, I would love to hear the argument for not using locally produced food."

Supporters and funders



For further information contact:

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