

SUMMER 2002 No 1

**London Food Link** aims to help producers, consumers and retailers make a positive choice for sustainable, local food. This means better access to affordable, high quality and seasonal food, shorter supply chains and campaigning for policies which promote a thriving local food economy and culture.

**London Food Link intends to:**

- establish a local food network for London
- foster active partnerships to develop within this network
- support new and existing food projects
- advise local and regional authorities on supporting the growth of a local food sector in London
- administer a grants scheme to assist the development of community-led local food schemes

## What's the issue?

**Food production in London:** Over 10% of Greater London's area is farmland (13,566 hectares) with 300-400 farms occupying this area. Five hundred hectares is under fruit and vegetable cultivation producing an estimated 8,400 tonnes per year, contributing about £3 million to London's economy, and providing around 3,000 jobs. Horticultural production is mainly in the Lea Valley, beginning on and around the London boundary and extending 20-30 miles beyond central London. Smaller horticultural enterprises are struggling and do not receive any support through the Common Agricultural Policy. Overall the area under cultivation is in decline although there are still around 30,000 active allotment holders and 1,000 beekeepers in London.

**Food income:** London's food industry contributes significantly to the city's overall GDP, and accounts for around 11% of the total number of jobs in the city although these are very often low status, badly paid, and temporary in retail and catering. The dozen or so London farmers' markets contributed £2.5 million to the economy last year and they are growing in number and scale, although most of London's food still comes from all over the world.

**Food miles and waste:** Each year Londoners eat 2.4 million tonnes of food. Over half of the vegetables and 95% of the fruit we eat is imported – this adds to pollution, not least in London, contributing to health problems such as asthma, and to global warming. The by-product of food - waste - adds to the environmental problem. London produces 883,000 tonnes of organic waste a year. Households contribute 607,000 tonnes to this - 40% of the total waste they produce. Its disposal costs the taxpayer around £66 million per year.

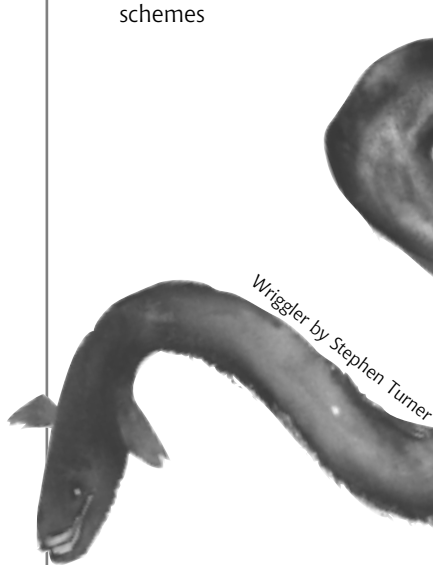
**Food on a budget:** Socially excluded groups in London – such as people living on low incomes - experience particular difficulties maintaining a good diet. Socially excluded

groups have to spend a larger proportion of their income on food and, whereas other parts of their expenditure are fixed, their food budget is flexible and can be reduced when there is a shortage of money.

**Food for health:** Londoners' health is a major casualty of our food system. Children's diets and nutrition are particularly poor and many people suffer from diet related diseases. Cardiovascular disease accounted for 41% of premature deaths in London in 1996, followed by cancers at 24%. Better nutrition could have prevented many of them. Research suggests increased fruit and vegetable consumption could in fact reduce the incidence of cancer by at least 20%, while around 30% of coronary heart disease is diet-linked.

**Food and Farming:** Farmers in the South East are in crisis. Average farm incomes last year were just £5,200 and 50,000 farmers are predicted to leave by 2005. Farming is being squeezed by overseas competition and the supermarkets' oligopoly in the UK. More than two millennia of agricultural influence, exerted by London's market for food on the landscapes and rural economies of its surrounding counties, has been unravelled in two generations. The temporary migration of Londoners from many ethnic backgrounds to hopfields, orchards and strawberry patches has declined as the celebration, through food, of seasonality has been eroded.

**Food choices:** Consumers lack confidence in the food system. Labelling can be unclear – is it better to buy imported organic or to look for the red tractor? What does either really mean? While we worship at the altar of consumer choice, a little scrutiny will expose that we are offered a poor choice. The same handful of fruit varieties most of the year round, from the hundreds we can grow; ubiquitous bacon and ham injected with water to squeeze out a few more pence per pound; misty-eyed fish from over-exploited stocks. Consumers apparently demand consistency. They have the right, runs the mantra, to buy the same produce from Paisley to Plymouth. In fact, this kind of creeping homogeneity helps to erode diversity, knowledge and choice.



**LONDON FOOD LINK**

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# Local food systems work

**There are at least 30 local food networks in Britain delivering social, environmental and economic benefits, in town and countryside from Bristol to Leicester, from the Tamar Valley to the Forth Valley.**

The time is right for a London Food Link network. London offers unique challenges as one of the world's largest cities containing almost 10% of the nation's population. However, there are also many unique opportunities, including the well developed transport networks, and a contained centre surrounded by and interspersed with many open areas. These have been protected by the planning system and could be adapted for food production.

London, as the capital, represents a flagship or lead for the country. Making local food work for London will have major positive ramifications for other areas in both the UK and elsewhere. Here's what local food systems have already achieved:

## Economic benefits

- Every £10 spent with a local food business is worth £25 for the local area, compared with £14 spent with the supermarkets
- 20 large and 280 small box schemes supply 60,000 families every week
- There are over 390 farmers' markets in operation now (the first UK farmers' market started 1998)
- A study of 81 food shops in East Suffolk found they were buying local food from 295 local producers
- 26% of local food businesses have created jobs during the last year compared to 8% of non-local food businesses
- Farms in the south west producing food which is sold locally, employ an average of one additional employee per farm
- 25% of local food businesses increased the value of their local purchases in the last 12 months
- At least 2,143 enterprises are currently listed in local food directories
- Nearly twice as many local food businesses are involved in collaborative ventures compared to non-local food businesses

## Social benefits

- Over 50% of local food businesses believe that their involvement in the sector has improved their local community's access to fresh produce
- 55% of local food sales are through existing shops and markets
- Those involved in the local food sector are nearly four times more likely to have received training than those involved in comparable non-food enterprises
- 74% of local food businesses have direct contact with some of their customers compared to 35% of non-local food businesses
- 35% of local food businesses provide information on the health benefits of eating fresh food compared to 13% of non-local food businesses
- A quarter of local food businesses involve local people in their enterprise activities, compared to 10% of non-local food businesses

## Environmental benefits

- More than twice as many enterprises involved in the local food sector are involved in waste reduction practices compared to those outside the sector
- A study of three farms involved in the local food sector revealed that on average 48% of food produced was sold within 15 miles of the farm
- Local food producers are significantly more likely to be certified organic than non-local producers
- Traditional breeds and old varieties are present on nearly twice as many local food enterprises compared to non-local food businesses
- Local marketing and branding initiatives link products to the protection of the landscapes from which they originate

Source – *Foundation for Local Food Initiatives, April 2002*



# Bulletin

## The East London Food Access partnership

The East London Food Access (ELFA) partnership, works to support and foster community food initiatives in Tower Hamlets, Newham and Hackney. In many areas access to an affordable, balanced diet is difficult because of low income, poor choice of fresh goods in local shops, or transport difficulties. Food co-ops, community-run cafes and school schemes including tuck shops and breakfast clubs have been established by local people wanting to make a difference.

ELFA has been concerned that some of these food schemes, especially those in areas ear-marked for regeneration investment, may not be sustainable beyond the duration of their grants. The fact that some fresh product delivery schemes bump into one another when making purchases at Spitalfields market indicate that early rises could be alternated and delivery vans could be shared to cover a bigger East End drop off. Therefore, ELFA is applying for funding from the SEED Fund (Social, Economic and Environmental Development programme - [www.rsnc.org](http://www.rsnc.org)) to set up an East London food distribution company to co-ordinate a daily delivery to as many schemes as require it. Further details from Kate Smith, ELFA Co-ordinator: [katesmithuk@hotmail.com](mailto:katesmithuk@hotmail.com)

### Stop press:

- The Newham Food Access Partnership is launching a new web-site, funded by Newham Council, which will give details of the community co-ops, cafes and box schemes it operates. [www.nfap.org.uk](http://www.nfap.org.uk)
- An accredited course in Food Access is to be established under the banner of West Ham & Plaistow New Deal for Communities. Details from Eric Samuel on 020 8586 9493 or [alethin442@aol.com](mailto:alethin442@aol.com)

## Food & Nutrition Strategy for East London

The draft consultation of the Food & Nutrition Strategy for East London was launched on 10th April and followed up by borough-wide consultation in the three primary care trust areas as follows:

- 12th June - Newham  
(contact Paul Nethercott 020 8271 1347)
- 17th July - City & Hackney  
(contact Marlene D'Aguilar 020 7301 3044)
- 23rd July - Tower Hamlets  
(contact Linda Hill 020 7377 7919)

The strategy will be targeted at three areas:

- diet and disease (with foci on healthy eating to reduce heart disease and cancers, obesity and diabetes);
- links with other issues affecting a balanced diet (access to affordable foods, supporting initiatives to eat more fruit & veg and links with physical activity);
- general health issues (promoting breast feeding, stopping smoking and managing blood pressure).

## London Rebuilding Society

London Rebuilding Society has now been going for a year and is beginning to offer loans, usually between £5,000 - £50,000 to small community enterprises delivering services to London's communities. Applications in the pipeline include community transport, recycling and arts schemes. Community food enterprises such as co-ops and food processing schemes can also be considered. Funding comes from the London Development Agency, London Boroughs Grant Committee and the Phoenix Fund.

- Contact Amanda Paul on 020 7682 1666. Tell her you heard it from London Food Link!

**“The naming of the streets is established upon the food which is purchased there. The city may be defined, then, as that place where people come to buy and sell.”**

Peter Akroyd *London: The Biography* (Vintage, 2000).





# Members News




## GLA and London Food Link

The Greater London Authority (GLA) is developing new work on access to healthy, affordable food. The GLA has drawn up an analysis of issues relating to the supply and consumption of healthy, fresh food in the capital. London Food Link has been consulted and will continue to work with the GLA on food issues in London. A workshop is planned for late July which will consider the findings of the analysis.

## Farms and Gardens Map Launched

On 10th June the London Federation of City Farms & Community Gardens launched a new map detailing London's 49 green jewels in the midst of the urban jungle. The launch celebration, headed by Samantha Heath, Chair of the GLA's Environment Committee, took place at Meanwhile Community Gardens in the shadow of the Trellick tower block off Goldborn Road in west London. Meanwhile Gardens is one of the original gardens which emerged with the then National Federation of City Farms over two decades ago and boasts an under-fives drop-in service and therapeutic wildlife garden.

 Further details from Kathy Maund, London Federation of City Farms & Community Gardens  
Tel: 020 7485 5001 or [www.farmgarden.org.uk](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk)

## Women's Environmental Network (WEN)

WEN is a national charity campaigning on environmental and health issues from women's perspectives.

WEN's *Cultivating the Future* project recently held workshops on organic gardening in London. There was also Compost Awareness Week, which was marked on 8th May by a workshop at Stepping Stones Farm in Stepney. The workshops are supported by the Hanson Environmental Fund, which has provided more than £3000 towards workshops in East London. Groups in East London and other inner city areas have been growing organic food for several years.

 More details from Caroline Fernandez on 020 7481 9004. [food@wen.org.uk](mailto:food@wen.org.uk) or [www.wen.org.uk](http://www.wen.org.uk)


## Survey of Sustainable Caterers

London Food Link is undertaking a survey of 'sustainable' caterers on behalf of the London Sustainability Exchange (LSx). The survey, which will be used to inform an October event on sustainable business operations for voluntary and community-based groups, explores what motivates caterers' purchasing decisions, such as seasonality, organics or fair trade. LSx and the London Regeneration Network are organising the event for voluntary and community-based organisations to provide access to service providers who can help them integrate environmental concerns into running their offices and organisations. There will be practical sessions showing how to evaluate projects against sustainability criteria.

 Further details from Dan Keech at London Food Link [dan@sustainweb.org](mailto:dan@sustainweb.org)


## Croydon Food Project Directory

Croydon Council's Local Agenda 21 initiative can help with ideas, advice and fundraising (including grants) for food projects and other schemes which promote sustainable living.

 Contact Community Initiatives Officers Emily O'Brien or Rachel James at: Croydon Borough Council Local Agenda 21, Taberner House, Park Lane, Croydon, CR9 3BT. Tel: 020 8760 5640.  
E-mail: [Emily\\_o'brien@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:Emily_o'brien@croydon.gov.uk) or [Rachel\\_james@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:Rachel_james@croydon.gov.uk)  
[www.croydon.gov.uk/la21/foodprojects.htm](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/la21/foodprojects.htm)


## Exhibition of OrganicLea Photographers

An exhibition of OrganicLea photographers in residence showing from 10th - 24th June at Vestry House Museum, in Walthamstow, has now moved to Walthamstow central library. The exhibition of photos and stories explores the Lea Valley's food growing roots, follows the OrganicLea story of community food growing and distribution in the context of these roots one year on, and invites people to participate in a community publication about local food growing.

 Further details from Clare Joy, OrganicLea [Clare@wdm.org.uk](mailto:Clare@wdm.org.uk)

### Community Kitchens Network Launched

In April the Community Kitchens Network was launched in the presence of the Mayor of Southwark. Community Kitchens Network promotes healthy eating and better nutrition in Bermondsey, Elephant & Castle and Southwark, through a dozen community centres which provide food from many cultures, free food for those in need and cookery and arts events for local people.

 Further details from Malcolm Shepherd  
malcolm@cknetwork.fsnet.co.uk

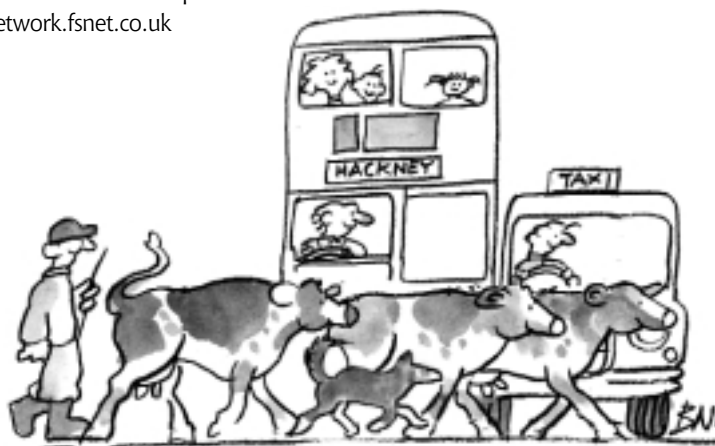
### Henrietta Green's Food Lovers' Fairs

London Fair Dates for 2002:

- September 16/17/18, The Restaurant Show, Olympia, London
- November 1/2/3, Covent Garden, London



More details from Food Lovers Fairs Ltd, 17 Hopefield Avenue, London NW6 6LJ. Tel: 020 8968 5510. E-mail [isla@foodloversfairs.com](mailto:isla@foodloversfairs.com) or [www.foodloversbritain.com](http://www.foodloversbritain.com)



### London Farmers' Markets dates

#### BLACKHEATH SE3

Sundays 10 am - 2 pm  
Blackheath Rail Station Car Park,  
Blackheath Village, SE3.

#### EALING W13

Saturdays 9am - 1pm  
Leeland Road, West Ealing, next to  
Barclays Bank West Ealing.

#### ISLINGTON N1

Sundays 10 am - 2 pm  
Essex Road, opposite Islington Green.  
Tube: Angel

#### NEW ADDINGTON, Surrey

3rd Saturday each month, Central  
Parade 9.30 - 1.30  
Tramlink from Croydon, Beckenham,  
Elmers End and Wimbledon. Buses:  
464, 130, 64, 314.

#### NOTTING HILL W8

Saturdays 9 am - 1 pm  
Car park behind Waterstones, access  
via Kensington Place.  
Tube: Notting Hill Gate

#### PALMERS GREEN N13

Sundays 10 am - 2 pm  
Palmers Green Rail Station Car Park.

#### PECKHAM SE15

Sundays 9.30 am - 1.30 pm  
Peckham Square, Peckham High St  
Buses: 12, 36, 171, 345 Rail:  
Peckham Rye or Queens Road.

#### PIMLICO ROAD SW1

Saturdays 9am - 1pm  
Orange Square, corner of Pimlico Rd  
and Ebury St.  
Tube: Sloane Square. Buses 211, 11  
& 239

#### SWISS COTTAGE NW3

Wednesdays 10 am - 4 pm  
02 Centre Car Park, Finchley Rd.  
Buses: 13, 82 & 113 Buses 268 &  
187 go into Homebase car park.

#### TWICKENHAM TW1

Saturdays 9 am - 1 pm  
Holly Road Car Park, Holly Rd, off  
King St, Twickenham.

#### UXBRIDGE UB8

Sundays 10 am - 2 pm  
Forecourt of Uxbridge Civic Centre,  
High St, Uxbridge  
Tube: Uxbridge. Opposite *The Chimes*  
shopping centre.

#### WALLINGTON, Surrey

2nd Saturday each month, 9.30 am  
- 1.30 pm  
Old Town Hall and Library Gardens  
Buses: 127, 151, 157, 463, 612

#### WIMBLEDON PARK SW19

Saturdays 9 am - 1 pm  
Wimbledon Park First School,  
Havana Road  
Tube: Wimbledon Park

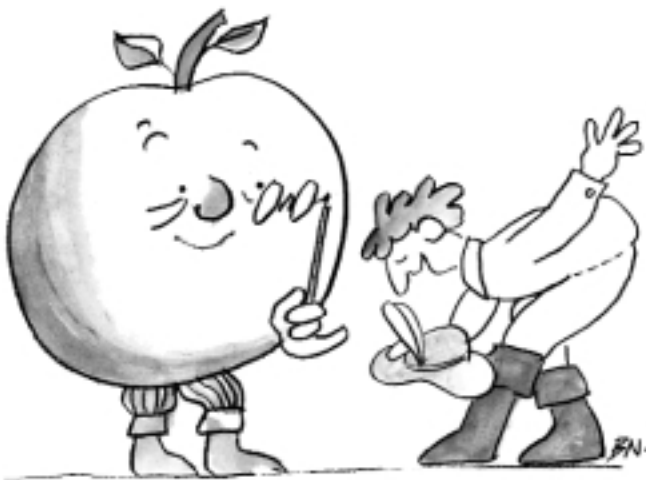


# A Nation of Grocers

Local grocers have an important role beyond providing last minute necessities after hours. Many shops fulfil a social role: a place to chat and catch up with neighbours, a local labour exchange for baby-sitters and gardeners, informal debating chambers and holders of petition lists for community campaigns from car parking to school matters. Small shopkeepers often live above or near the shop so they are as much a part of the neighbourhood as the customers and will be affected by the same local issues.

The purchasing policy for local shops can be more flexible than for supermarkets, even if some benefit from franchise support through corporate associations. Alongside the ubiquitous Golden Delicious, Iceberg and 'baking potatoes', seasonal appearances in the form of Lord Lambourn, Little Gem and Jersey Royals may be found among the Lincolnshire sausages, fresh bagels and farmhouse cheddars from named Somerset farms, not to mention plantains, chillies and various types of salami. How many times has the butcher at your supermarket meat counter glazed over while passing you a parcel of tripe and exclaimed 'I love it but, honestly, it goes straight to my waist'?

Yet shops in some areas of London can barely boast any fresh fruit and veg, let alone seasonal variety within the range. Will shopkeepers working all hours give much of a care to whether their stock supports farmers in Kent or Kenya as long as the product shifts? Surely the supply system is now so well established, perhaps honed by long-standing custom, that it would be more trouble than it's worth to start meddling.



**"My Lord Lambourn, I presume?!?"**

Yet the tripe scene is not imaginary. Local food is getting ever more popular with consumers. Research out this spring from the Institute of Grocery Distribution claims that one in three shoppers look for local foods. Many farmers' markets, which have a supplier range of around 30 miles, (100 for London,) are showing that at one end of the scale, seasonal fresh fruit and veg such as apples, sweet corn and potatoes, is cheaper than in the supermarket; and at the other end that people are prepared to pay up to £10 for a large free range chicken bought face to face from the farmer, because they are questioning the sort of bargain they (and the chicken) are really getting at £1.99 in some big stores.

Local food makes good sense for the environment by cutting down food miles. Because local is about geography – prevailing weather, soil, tastes, knowledge, recipes, ethnicity, traditions (new and old) – small enterprises can be supported. Many small producers are what have shaped the patchwork of the English countryside and fostered its diversity over centuries. By contrast, in two generations our food and farming policies have done a fair job of turning somewhere into anywhere. But let's put away the violins. Local food makes economic sense because it can allow for flexibility in packaging and may be easier for cultivating a good relationship with the producer, who, if running a small enterprise, will be keen for your custom. Seasonal produce helps to extend the range on sale and keeps the customers keen, even expectant. Of course, consistency is important but produce in season means it is at its best, most abundant and therefore well-priced. It gets even better: the Curry Commission's report of food and farming published earlier this year is recommending business rate relief to retailers who take local food.

## How can London Food Link help?

- Our membership includes farmers, producer groups, local and national government, community food co-ops and chefs. We have a lot of knowledge and expertise under our umbrella and members are keen to trade.
- We offer small grants for food initiatives which benefit local communities – which could include setting up local partnerships with nearby producers to supply local outlets.
- We can help arrange seminars to encourage London independent retailers and franchises to think local.

Don't hesitate to get in touch!

### The Metamorphosis of the Italian Deli

The area around Clerkenwell was known in Victorian times as 'Little Italy'. Even today if one strolls around the streets from Kings Cross to Farringdon one finds sandwich bars, caffs, barbers (plus the Scuola Guida Italiana), all patriotically marked with red, white and green Italian flags or signs. The area's Italian food shops are another direct reminder of the area's Italian heritage. The way in which these shops are changing over generations reflects the way in which immigrant communities move away from original neighbourhoods and become absorbed and assimilated.

Kings Cross Continental Stores on Caledonian Road is a small, homely old-fashioned Italian food-store: "Often I'm the only person here speaking English," laughed an elderly lady customer on my visit. Leo Giordani took over the shop in 1964. "We've kept everything the same," he says, gesturing to the Parma hams hanging from the ceiling. "Our old customers still come but now they travel from Kensington, Chelsea, Fulham or Finchley; they don't live around here anymore. The younger Italians are different; they don't cook so much. They are happy to buy a ready-made lasagne from Sainsbury's instead of cooking it freshly."

Now in her eighties Mrs Giacon, whose family ran a delicatessen called Servini founded in 1912 in Mount Pleasant, remembers just how important these shops were "They were a focal point where Italians could meet each other. People would come in with all their troubles. Because they didn't know how to read and write in English we would help them with forms. I would go with women having babies to hospital to translate for them. This was all on a voluntary basis; our customers became part of our family. Even now I see the great grand-children of the people who used to come to our shop."

In the historic heart of London's Italian community, next to St Peter's Italian church in Clerkenwell, is Terroni's, the nation's oldest Italian food-shop, established in 1878. Now run by John Annessa, who took over 21 years ago, Terroni's was also far more than just a food shop. The Terroni family provided advice and help on everything from taxes to immigration papers. Sunday mornings still sees Terroni's filled with Italian customers, who come to the shop following Mass to touch base and catch up with the news. During the week, however, it's a very different story. "Over the last 20 years business here has changed dramatically," explains John. "When I took over my customers were mostly Italian and we had drawers full of loose pasta, pulses and rice. Now my

customers are 80% English, 20 % Italian and the range of what we stock has really increased. Let me give you an example: before we used to sell two, maybe three, types of panettone, these days at Christmas we stock around 30 different panettones. Among my English customers now there's a demand for better quality Italian products, like single estate extra virgin olive oil, and people also want information, they want to know how to use these ingredients."

Over the last few years Italian food shops such as Carluccio's in Neal Street have tapped into the new English appetite for la cucina Italiana, offering beautifully packaged, distinctly upmarket luxuries rather than everyday foodstuffs. While Terroni's successfully combines both its traditional social role for the Italian community, with a new one as a purveyor of quality foodstuffs to non-Italians, the traditional delis are disappearing. Leo Giordani of Kings Cross Continental Stores is philosophical about what's to come. Gesturing over the road at a huge building site he says "Now they're redeveloping the area even King's Cross will become too expensive. In two or three years we'll have to go."

**Jenny Linford is a food writer specialising in London's ethnic foods and their influence on the capital's food culture and society. She is author of 'Food Lovers' London' (Metro Publications 2002).**



### Orchard Fruits: Greater London & Middlesex

**Apples:** Barchard's Seedling, Cellini, Chad's Favourite, Fearn's Pippin, Grange's Pearmain, Hounslow Wonder, London Pearmain, Merton Beauty, Merton Charm, Merton Delight, Merton Joy, Merton Knave, Merton Pearmain, Merton Pippin, Merton Prolific, Merton Reinnette, Merton Russet, Merton Worcester, Mitchelson's Seedling, Morris's Russet, Reverend W Wilks. **Pears:** Merton Pride. **Plums:** Kirke's Blue, Pond's Seedling, Prince of Wales.

**The Common Ground Book of Orchards (2000)**

# Allotment Slot

## Eels and Allotments: Slippery Thoughts

We've no eels (yet) on the plots down here at Dartford-below-the-Salt, but with so many ponds going in for wildlife it surely can't be long before we live up the title of this very welcome newsletter. A prize to the first person who finds some local food in or around one of these waterholes - a passing duck for the pot perhaps, a frogleg meal for a very small person, crispy freshwater weed. All of which misses the point: the ponds are about projecting an image (based on a strong element of truth), that allotments are good for wildlife, that wildlife is good for gardeners (sometimes), and wildlife is great for the defence of open space (always - just as long as it's cuddly wildlife - or newts, Mr Mayor sir).

Allotments are there to provide food for the cultivator and (in the charming language of yesteryear) "his" family to consume, but these days that's not enough. The plot is about holding on to the land, and food alone just doesn't justify the expense: tiny to the gardener, and the enormous expense to the landowner and taxpayers, especially in London. The trick is to combine the statutory use of allotments with social, economic and environmental benefits beyond the individual plotholder. It's not an easy trick. Overheard: an enthusiast waxing lyrical about the vixen and her cubs sipping at that waterhole. Observed: the plotholder next door, looking at another crushed crop of onions, and muttering dark thoughts about shotguns, piano wire - and deep pain for the fox as well.

If animals have a down side, try children. You hear it all the time: "we must get the kids interested, they're the gardeners of the future". Hm. Ever tried growing a burger and fries? Or getting young Brooklyn to eat anything that looks remotely like a vegetable? But I digress. What does young Brooklyn do when he spots the pond? Marches through the onions,

throws a brick at the fox, and drowns. So, who's liable for that last bit? I don't mean for pushing him in (that's just the luck of the queue), but who gets bitten by the no-win no-fee shark (to sustain the metaphor beyond its useful life). Local food sounds like a cuddly animal too, methinks. Who wouldn't sign up for that! So what's the catch? Selling stuff, that's what, to which we'll return next time. But for now, I'm off to the plot, to crush some asparagus beetles (do it now: they don't see you coming because they're too busy, uh ... mating, as it were).



**"It means the pond's two feet deep, dear."**

**Richard Wiltshire helps run the QED Allotments Group (Quality Environment in Dartford) and is co-author of 'Growing in the Community: A Good Practice Guide to Allotment Management'.**



*Allotments: A plot holders guide* is a free 24 page guide for existing and potential allotment gardeners. Published by the DTLR (Dept of Transport, Local Government and the Regions ) February 2002.

In honour of our first edition, **Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall** shares his favourite (and, until now, unpublished) eel recipe.

## Hugh's Szechuan Style Crispy Eel Fillets

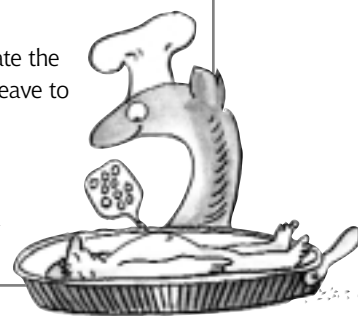
- 500g skinned eel fillets
- 2 large clove garlic, finely chopped
- 3cm piece fresh ginger root
- 1 teaspoon fresh chopped red chilli (or 1/2 tspn. dried chilli flakes)
- salt, black pepper
- plain flour for dusting
- oil for frying (sunflower or ground nut)

Dipping sauce. Mix together the following:

- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1 spring onion, finely sliced

Cut the fillets at a 45-degree angle into 3cm strips, and place these in a shallow bowl. Add the garlic. Grate the ginger and squeeze the juice onto the fillets. Add the chilli. Season well with salt and black pepper, and leave to marinade for between 30-60 minutes.

Dust the eel pieces with flour and deep or shallow fry in hot oil, in batches, for 2-3 minutes until golden brown. Drain on kitchen paper. Serve at once with the dipping sauce. To make this a meal, rather than a starter, serve with plain boiled rice and braised Chinese greens, such as pak choy, or Brussel's tops.



# School Dinners

## Healthy Eating in Newham

**Carrienne Hurley is the London Borough of Newham's NDC Healthy Schools Coordinator. Here she outlines some of the programmes within the New Deals for Communities (NDC) area of West Ham and Plaistow.**

There are several projects that are running in and around schools to promote healthy eating, and to raise awareness of access to fresh affordable food for all. We are aiming at a holistic approach by working with pupils and parent in several different ways.

### Breakfast clubs

Portway Primary School, Eastlea Community School and Lister Community School offer a breakfast service, where pupils can go between 7.30am and 8.30am and get a breakfast before they start school. On offer are cereals, fruit, toast, fruit juice and hot drinks. This service is usually delivered free to pupils. It is proposed that the other four NDC schools will have breakfast clubs set up within the very near future.

### Free Fruit Scheme

NDC has teamed up with local schools and the local education authority to provide a piece of free fruit to all primary school children at breaktime everyday. The local Newham Food Access Partnership provides and delivers this fruit.

### Healthy Eating in Schools

As NDC Chef Trainer I am running healthy eating workshops within the school curriculum, in PHSE (Personal Health and Social Educational) and Food Technology classes in senior schools, and healthy eating workshops in primary schools. SNAGs (School Nutritional

Action Groups are also being established), where representatives from each year group meet on a regular basis to discuss what changes they would like to see made to their school lunches. Also present are two school governors, Principal Catering officer (Newham Council), myself and a teacher representative. A representative from Newham Catering Service is also present whenever possible. I have also compiled a new recipe manual with Newham catering services that contains low fat and reduced sugar recipes. The cook supervisors, who are working within the school meal service, will use this as a point of reference. There are training sessions and on-the-job training in progress at the moment, and these will continue into the future.

### Food Co-ops

The Newham Food Access Partnership runs food co-ops within the NDC area based in and around schools, at Woodlands, West Ham, E15 (Mondays) Plaistow North, Plaistow, E13 (Tuesdays) Gaiansborough school, West Ham, E15 (Thursdays) Star school, and Canning town E16 (Fridays). The local people can purchase fresh fruit and veg at reasonable prices, some of which they would not otherwise be able to afford. These co-ops are located in what has been identified as food desert areas, where fresh affordable food is not readily available. We are also planning to run cooking classes in unused school kitchens in the school holidays, to teach local people to cook the food they can purchase. Because very often people don't buy particular food because they don't know how to cook it. We are also planning to set up training for local people to cook food for the over 50s lunch club that meets once a week in a local community centre.

**Carrienne Hurley**

**Tel: 020 8430 5063 Fax: 020 8430 5017**

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## Italian Organics

Italy was the first EU nation to attempt to develop a sustainable school meals system - motivated by a desire for safe, sustainable food prompted by various food scares in the US and EU such as BSE and GM. New laws passed in 1992 and 1995 obliged local authorities to include organic and quality products in their menus. Each Italian region is currently in the process of formulating a similar law which will insist on the use of organic and/or certified products in the schools catering service.

There are now over 300 examples of organic school meals services in Italy, mainly in the North and the Centre of the country, but now expanding to the South and the Islands. Many of these only use organic fruit and vegetables but many of them have reached 80, 90 and some even up to 100% organic ingredients.

In one example, a town called Ferrara (population 133,000) began by commissioning a feasibility study and established a list of seasonal healthy foods that could be used without significantly increasing costs. After two years, 50% of the food was organic with this rising to 80% for nurseries. The conclusion of many in Ferrara has been that public procurement of better food for schools is possible without incurring excessive increases in costs.



For more information on the Italian school meals system see [www.sustainweb.org/chain\\_index.shtm](http://www.sustainweb.org/chain_index.shtm)

# Farm Gate

## Free Advice For Farmers & Growers

The Farm Business Advice Service (FBAS) was launched by MAFF (now the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) for delivery through the Business Link network in October 2000. The service is available via the National Call Centre, 0845 600 9006 or you can telephone your local Business Link directly (listed in the phone book).

Many farmers and growers acted on the letter they received inviting them to participate and are pleased that they did; so pleased in fact that they have recommended the service to others. Across the South East over 900 farmers are being assisted currently.

FBAS aims to help farmers respond to the changing face of the industry by providing free tailored advice on how to develop the farm business in future. An average of 3 days of adviser time is allowed under the scheme. The business is reviewed, aspirations of the owners discussed and options for the future examined, creating a plan for action. The advisers used have been specially selected for their experience and breadth of knowledge and can be a useful sounding-board for your ideas. Unlike many others you may talk to, they are unbiased and wholly objective in their advice. They may also prove a useful source of ideas and information about how you can obtain grant aid.



In the difficult times that farming faces, the possibility of a new look at the business might be refreshing and rewarding. Many have been helped to get funding from the England Rural Development Programme (ERDP) and other schemes, and to find additional sources of guidance and training.

We would welcome groups of farmers with a common business objective to get together to use the service. For example, farmer-members of London Food Link with a common business objective might like to pool their "entitlement" to advisory days to use the adviser time to help explore a particular business development idea. That might be a project to help design a system for collective marketing of produce in and around London or other ideas for collaboration.

To be eligible for the service you must farm in England, have a CPH number and spend at least 75% of your working time on your core farming business. The service may be of most use to those who have not had business advice recently but all sizes and types of farms are registering. The budget is limited so we suggest that you get on the phone to your local Business Link as soon as possible for a confidential discussion. Do it now!

**Sue Scott, is the Farm Business Advice Service Manager for Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and London and SE Regional Coordinator.**

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## Food Links UK

Food Links UK was launched in the House of Lords on 25th April, hosted by the Baroness Miller of Chelthorne Domer, the Liberal Democrat spokesperson for Agriculture and Rural Affairs. Food Links UK is an association of 26 local food link organisations, including London Food Link, covering cities as well as rural counties and provides a national voice for local food groups which aim to achieve a fairer, healthy and sustainable local food system. Food Links UK also works in association with national bodies including Sustain, the Soil Association, the Countryside Alliance, the National Association of Farmers' Markets and the Foundation for Local Food Initiatives.

## Sustainable Food and Farming: Working Together

In March the government published its post-Curry consultation, *Sustainable Food and Farming: Working Together*, asking for views on specific questions on issues such as animal welfare, food chain efficiencies, agri-environment payments and the local food sector. London Food Link, with East Anglia Food Link and the Dorset Food and Land Trust, submitted comments on behalf of Food Links UK, underscoring that the best way to reconnect farming to land use and the producer to the consumer, is to support local mechanisms which achieve this. Differences between local and locality food were also drawn out, suggesting that the local food sector produced much wider and more sophisticated benefits than simply maximising financial return from the product. It also brings more jobs, greater re-investment in the local area, opportunities for better collaboration between producer and consumer groups, and makes the most of local differences in food, growing conditions, husbandry and knowledge.



Further details on Food Links UK and the consultation response are available from James Petts at Sustain [james@sustainweb.org](mailto:james@sustainweb.org).

### On the Edge - Farming in Greater London

There are approximately 30,000 acres (12,000 hectares) of farmed agricultural land or woodland and between 300-400 registered agricultural holdings in the Greater London area. Whilst all operate under the same regime as the rest of the country's farmers, we in London have extra difficulties to contend with, such as the planning system, lack of infrastructure, urban population pressure, vandalism and theft, better competing sources of income and a regional development authority, which so far has concentrated on the urban areas of the capital. We have a planning system which does not understand farming or its need to change, and councillors whose motivation to keep the Green Belt obscures their appreciation that farming and horticulture are businesses that have to adapt to changing circumstances. There is little connection between planning policy documents produced by central government and their implementation by local government. Landfill tax increases cause an immediate increase in illegal tipping. Every week one sees something dumped - from fridges, conifer trees, cars and skips to whole loads of waste soil.

In addition, livestock numbers are continuing to decline because of a lack of slaughtering facilities, vandalism, sheep worrying by dogs, residents who do not like livestock near their properties for environmental reasons, and the difficulties of marketing animals. The fewer animals kept, the less likely a local abattoir will be built - would it be possible to obtain planning consent anyway?

If one wants grassland something has to graze it, now nearly always horses. The infrastructure is no longer there to support the old type of mixed farm. There used to be local markets for the sale of local produce. These no longer exist although farmers' markets have certainly revived interest in local produce. Large areas where once horticulture thrived have been turned over to arable crops. The standard of living derived was too low, family members would not take such a business on and with London on their doorstep there are more secure ways of earning a living.

I would not want to paint a totally gloomy picture of farming in London. We have a huge market on our doorstep. However, the fact remains, unless you are totally committed to farming and you can operate at a scale to actually make it pay, then small scale farmers will continue to find other ways to supplement their income and I'm afraid it will not be by producing food.

**Charles George, NFU, farms in the London Borough of Bromley.**

### What's in season (July - September)

- Apples
- Basil
- Beans (French, runner, broad)
- Beetroot
- Blackcurrants
- Blackberries
- Callalou
- Cannabis
- Cardoons
- Carrots
- Celery
- Chard
- Cherries
- Chillies
- Coriander
- Courgettes
- Damsons
- Gooseberries
- Grapes
- Hazels
- Landcress
- Lettuce
- Loganberries
- Mange tout
- Marrows
- Methi
- Mint
- Moulis
- Nasturtiums
- Pak choi (and other Chinese cabbages)
- Parsley
- Peas
- Pears
- Plums
- Plums
- Potatoes
- Pumpkins
- Quinces
- Radishes
- Redcurrants
- Raspberries
- Rocket
- Shallots
- Spinach
- Strawberries
- Tayberries
- Tomatoes
- Watercress
- Whitecurrants
- Wineberries

**Thanks to Richard Wiltshire.**



# Join London Food Links Now!

## The benefits of membership of London Food Link include:

- The Jellied Eel, our quarterly members' newsletter
- A chance to influence policy-making on food issues including contributing to food access and nutrition strategies, government consultations on the future of farming and the London Plan.
- Access to an on-line directory of members and producers.
- Membership of an interactive e-mail group with news, events, jobs and developments around food issues in London.
- Discounts off London Food Link events, conferences, seminars and publications.
- A grant fund to support community food schemes.
- A Free copy of *Growing Food in Cities* to new members and 50% off the *City Harvest* report.



## To join or for further details on London Food Link, please contact:

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TEL: 020 7837 1228. FAX: 020 7837 1141.

EMAIL: [dan@sustainweb.org](mailto:dan@sustainweb.org) WEB: [www.londonfoodlink.org](http://www.londonfoodlink.org)

## London Food Link members and supporters include:

City & Hackney Primary Care Trust, Community Kitchens Network, Crisis Fairshare, First Fruit Co-op, Greenwich Primary Care Trust, Islington Primary Care Trust, Jenny Usher Organics, London Borough of Croydon, London Development Agency, London Federation of City Farms & Community Gardens, London Farmers Markets Ltd., London First, London Sustainability Exchange, Quality Environment Dartford, OrganicLea, and the Women's Environment Network.



THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS MAGAZINE ARE NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF LONDON FOOD LINK.

ILLUSTRATIONS: 'WRIGGLER' EEL BY STEPHEN TURNER. ALL OTHERS BY BEN NASH.