

SUMMER 2004 No 7

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
- promote a sustainable local food economy
- support new and existing food projects
- advise local and regional authorities on supporting the growth of a local food sector in London
- celebrate London's food culture



Wiggler by
Stephen Turner

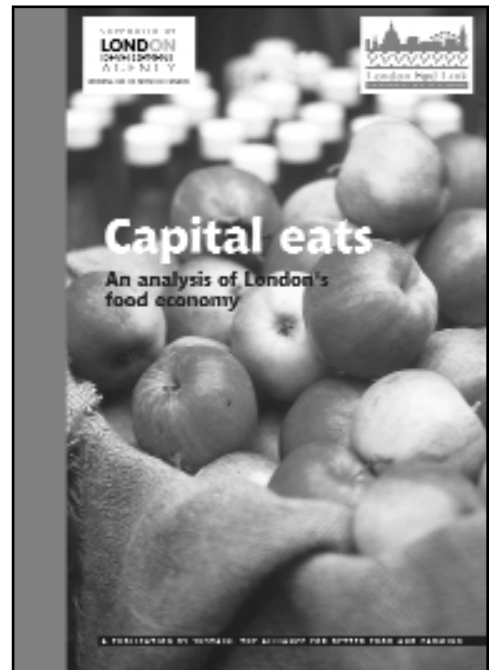
LONDON FOOD LINK
94 WHITE LION STREET, LONDON, N1 9PF
TEL: 020 7837 1228 FAX: 020 7837 1141
EMAIL: ben@sustainweb.org
WEB: www.londonfoodlink.org

Capital Eats launched

London Food Link's latest report, *Capital Eats: An analysis of London's food economy*, is now available. It raises issues about the environmental and social impact of what seems to be, in Europe's largest capital and perhaps the ultimate world city, a largely unsustainable food system. A staggering 80% of the food we consume in London is imported from overseas.

However, there exists a significant, albeit fragile, sustainable food sector and that, through co-ordinated action to strengthen it, it will better serve the health, well-being and economic prospects of more Londoners, and better support the habitats and communities from which its citizens draw their food.

This report explains the complexities and strengths of the food sector in London. It argues that it will not suffice to simplify the food sector, whereby specialist and/or organic foods are supplied for those who can afford it, and low-income consumers are left with standardised produce of a lower quality. This report is available from Sustain for £20 + £1 p&p.



Goodbye Mr Keech

It is with sadness, but also great pride, that we bid a temporary 'au revoir' to London Food Link Project Officer, Dan Keech. Dan has been the driving force behind London Food Link, and has been instrumental in bringing together such a range of people with food at heart. He would sincerely like to thank everyone who has been involved for all their support and enthusiasm over the last two and a half years.

Dan's talents are appreciated not just by Sustain, but also by the LDA (London Development Agency) where he has gone on full-time but temporary secondment. He'll be co-ordinating work on the London sustainable food and farming strategy.

Work on London Food Link will continue under the stewardship of Ben Reynolds, whose feet are already well under the desk here. He can be reached via ben@sustainweb.org Ben has previously worked at Sustain on the Organic Targets Bill and other agricultural programmes. If you need to contact Dan at the LDA, he is available on dankeech@lda.gov.uk.

Wriggle inside for...

- London Farmers Conference (p.3)
- Food Education in Schools (p.6)
- Farmers Market visit suppliers (p.8)
- Bread Street report launched (p.9)
- Spinach and Feta pie recipe (p.10)
- Hospital food project (p.11)

Bulletin

Open Garden Squares Weekend

More than 80 of London's beautiful private garden squares will be unlocking their gates for the seventh Open Garden Squares Weekend on Saturday 12 and Sunday 13 June 2004. Many public squares will also be taking part. A Gardeners' Fair in Bedford Square, Bloomsbury is one of the highlights of this year's two-day event organised by English Heritage, where experts from the world of landscaping, horticulture and conservation will be on hand to give tips and advice to visitors on a wide range of gardening topics. There will also be practical demonstrations, live music from Rag-A-Jazz and activities for children.

London's garden squares are amongst its greatest assets and are a vital part of what makes London unique as a world city. Open Garden Squares Weekend is run by the London Parks and Gardens Trust and sponsored by English Heritage, to draw attention to the contribution that London's 600 garden squares make to the capital's culture and environment and the importance of continuing to conserve them.

With more of the capital's hidden oases taking part than ever before, visitors will be able to discover romantic woodland walks, secret children-only play areas, herb gardens and rose-covered pergolas.

Gardens taking part for the first time this year, include: Brunswick Square, the Museum of London Nursery Garden, The Cleary Garden in the City, the Wildlife Garden at the Natural History Museum and the Knot Garden at the Museum of Garden History.

John Lewis Oxford Street will also provide a unique, one-off chance to see panoramic views of London from its fabulous garden rooftop on both Saturday 12 and Sunday 13 June.

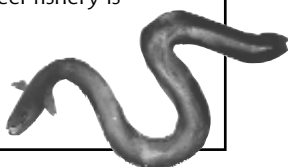
Visitors can enjoy a range of events and activities at a number of participating squares including, live music, Punch and Judy shows, Scottish dancing, Indian head massage and Tai Chi taster sessions. Refreshments ranging from Pimms and traditional cream teas to more substantial lunches will be available in some participating squares. At a number of gardens, plants and flowers will also be on sale.

Eel stock dangerously low

The Environment Agency's new report *Our nation's fisheries* has revealed that eel stocks have dropped to 1% of their peak levels in the 1970s.

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) has warned that the North Atlantic eel stock falls short of the safe biological limits and that the current eel fishery is therefore not sustainable.

More details are available via
www.environment-agency.gov.uk



Tickets cost just £5 (children under 12 free) for entry into all participating gardens as well as the fair in Bedford Square. They are available in advance from: the information desk at John Lewis in Oxford Street, W1, The Britain and London Visitor Centre at No 1 Regent Street, SW1 and the garden centre, C Russell Ltd based at 80 Earls Court Road, W8. Tickets will also be available during Open Garden Squares Weekend from all participating venues.

A ticket and information hotline, kindly provided by John Lewis, will be available from 3 May. Call: 0207 318 9299.

Wine making opportunity

John and Elizabeth Gibson, proprietors of Bearsted Vineyard, who sell their wine at farmers markets in London, will shortly be hanging up their secateurs and retiring. However the life expectancy of the vines and trellis is another ten to fifteen years so if another grower were interested in renting or share farming to make use of the vineyard, the owners would be pleased to talk about it.

It is a six acre site with several grape varieties originally planted on four acres. One of these varieties has already been grubbed out and more grubbing is planned for this winter if no better ideas emerge. There is still an on site winery but that too will have to go unless it is needed.

Actually there is a young man keen to look after about one acre in the coming season. He tended the half-acre of reds in the 2003 season and is now having a red wine made. He plans to tend the Bacchus (a white grape) to have a Bacchus wine made in the 2004 season. He is in the wine trade so moving the product should not be a problem for him. His long term interest could be satisfied with just one acre. The present owners have lots of ideas about what they would do if they were starting all over again and are willing to act as consultants to any genuine grower who hasn't yet tried growing grapes or making wine.

If you want to take it further get in touch with John or Elizabeth on 01622 736974 or vineyard@bearstedwines.co.uk

Land Restoration Trust

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has announced the creation of the Land Restoration Trust, a partnership between English Partnerships, Groundwork, the Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency to transform derelict brown-field land into green spaces. To find out more go to <http://www.landrestorationtrust.org.uk/>

Withdrawal of GM Maize

Bayer Cropscience has decided not to market its GM (Genetically Modified) Maize Chardon LL in the UK. This represents an extraordinary turn-around as only a few weeks previously, Secretary of State, Mrs Beckett had given Chardon LL the go-ahead. Her announcement indicated the Government's determination to drive something through despite widespread

More...

opposition. There was apparent total disregard for the findings of the House of Commons' Environmental Audit Committee published just four days earlier, that the Field Scale Evaluations "cannot be regarded as adequate grounds for a decision to be taken in favour of commercialisation." Bayer's withdrawal means that the UK will not see any GM crops being grown for at least 2-3 years. See <http://www.farm.org.uk/> for more details.

Children's Food Bill launched

Sustain launched its Children's Food Bill on 18th May. The Bill introduces a range of measures, including a ban on junk food marketing, which will improve children's current and future health. Following its presentation to Parliament, a large audience heard presentations in the Palace of Westminster from Debra Shipley MP, Alan Howarth MP, Charlie Powell from Sustain and Kath Dalmeny from the Food Commission.

The campaign for the Bill will now increasingly engage the public. Sustain is encouraging people to write to their MPs to ask them to sign the Children's Food Bill Early Day Motion 1256 tabled by Debra Shipley. Parents and other concerned individuals will be kept informed about the progress of the bill through regular campaign updates. To register your support, please visit: www.sustainweb.org/childrensfoodbill.

Food Donations Urgently Needed

RAMP (Renewal Refugee and Migrant Project) is an organisation based in Newham that assists refugees and migrants. Part of their work involves providing emergency food for refugees with no income. At the moment they are at crisis point with no food left. If you can make a donation please contact them on 020 8472 2785.

London Food Link first Farmers' Conference

Held in April at City Hall, London Food Link organised this conference as an opportunity for farmers to discuss the changing policy climate with key figures and to discuss topical issues. Amongst the presentations was a valuable contribution by Sir Don Curry on the need to get across the message of his groundbreaking report on the *Future of Farming and Food*; that of reconnecting farmers with consumers; working in London for London farmers; and to make a real effort on getting schools in London serving local and sustainable food in their canteens. Honor Chapman, Chair of the London Development Agency, and chair of the morning's session, explained how a new food and farming strategy developed specifically for the capital will help to address many of the obstacles and opportunities for London's farmers. Ken Livingstone has also set up a new mayoral body on food issues called London Food which will help steer the delivery of this strategy and assess policies in terms of how they affect how London farms and feeds itself.

Three excellent presentations from farmers in London outlined problems and developments for growing and rearing food close to the capital such as vandalism, planning obstacles, and innovative marketing opportunities. Vicki Hird gave a short outline of how the reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy will affect farmers and how UK policy is shaping up to address the challenges ahead. David Glasson of Acorus tackled the thorny issue of planning. A hospital food buyer and a London processor also gave valuable insight into what they need from suppliers and how they see the climate for food and farming changing in London. LFL hopes to produce a short report of the conference and is pleased to announce that the event sparked off a new coordination of London, SE and Eastern farmers in collaboration with the NFU. This should result in better communication and potential access to larger and more secure London markets through collaborative ventures.



London Food Link Farmer's Conference. (Sir Donald Curry, Honor Chapman CBE, John Witby, Ed Watts and Avril Watts)



Members News



Organic Express

Organic Express -Caterers who Care were featured in Neil Croft's interview on the BBC programme Heaven and Earth on 4th January. Neil is the author of Authentic Business, and Organic Express were quoted from his inspiring book. "Profits are like oxygen- essential but not what we get out of bed for." For further information go to www.organic-express.com and www.authenticbusiness.co.uk.

London Green Map Launch

Saturday 5 June – 2.00 - 6.00 pm
Waterloo

Come to add your project to the map, celebrate World Environment Day, London Sustainability Weeks 2004 and meet colleagues from across Greater London. There will be:

- Interactive displays
- Workshop on mapping London's alternative economy,
- Green drinks and the launch of www.london-green-map.org at 5.00pm.

Location: Living Space, a social enterprise and eco-building by the Waterloo Millennium Green Community Garden. There will also be organic gardening, wildlife and

recycling activities on the Green. Boroughs across Greater London will also be starting their green map on Saturday 5 June. If you are interested in finding out about your local green map, please contact vinciane@london21.org.

Picnic on the Green - 5th anniversary of farmers' markets in London

Sunday 6 June 2004 from 12pm
Islington Green

Come and help us celebrate the 5th anniversary of Islington Farmers' Market with a picnic on Islington Green. Jointly organised by Islington Council and London Farmers' Markets, this picnic also marks the beginning of London Sustainability Weeks. Islington Farmers' Market will open a small garden project in the corner of the Green.

The Council will demonstrate a range of projects and services, within its Getting Greener campaign, designed to help people live their lives without damaging the environment and to make Islington cleaner and greener. Other participants will include Freightliners City Farm, Ecotricity, and Nappy ever after. There will also be exhibits on such issues as composting, renewable energy and other green community projects.

You can buy food from the farmers' market and take it to Islington Green, where picnic tables will be laid out, with live music & entertainments. An anniversary cake will be cut and shared with everyone. Come early and savour a farmers' market breakfast at the S&M café on Essex Road, with ingredients from the farmers' market.

For more information please call Lisa McKendrick at Islington Council on 020 7527 8747 or LFM on 020 7704 9659
www.lfm.org.uk,
www.londonsustainabilityweeks.org
www.islington.gov.uk

A Family Celebration of Multicultural Initiatives for a Green and Healthy London

Sunday 6 June – 2.00 – 5.00 pm
Chumleigh Multicultural Gardens – Burgess Park, SE5

- Tour of the Multicultural Gardens
- Children Drama Workshop on Environmental Issues by the Turkish Group Happy Moon
- Tester Workshop of weaving with local plants and recycled materials by the Bangladeshi Women's Group
- Gardening for Wildlife and Community Composting

Member Feature: Deborah Agulnik - Ealing Food Links

My name is Deborah Agulnik and I am the current Food Links Development Worker for Ealing Council. This is a great new role in the Council and there is a lot of exciting work to be done. Over the next two months we are planning to create a directory of all the local initiatives that are promoting local food and healthy eating in the Borough and we will be creating an Ealing Food Links website. We are also planning a workshop for June to give local projects and people a chance to meet together and strengthen links. If any readers would like to be part of the loop, or know anybody else who might, please get in touch on 020 8825 8180 or Agulnikd@ealing.gov.uk.



MEMBERS NEWS

Workshops

- Displays by Multicultural Community Projects
- Launch of the Turkish Happy Moon Radio Play
- Launch of the London 21 report on Multicultural Initiatives for Green and Healthy London
- And much more!

If you have any other ideas or contributions for the event, please contact admin@london21.org.

Foodwise and Business Link Exhibition

16th June 11 - 5pm
Spitalfields Market

London food manufacturers will once again have an opportunity to exhibit their products to a wide range of trade buyers. This year, Foodwise has teamed up with Business Link for London's International Trade Team and Supply Chain Team and the Manufacturing Advisory Service to bring a range of European buyers and public procurement officers from key public sector offices to the exhibition, as well as local retailers, wholesalers and caterers. Exhibitors will be divided into regional pavilions to celebrate the quality and diversity of food, with flavours from around the world but actually made here, in London. Regions will include Africa, Caribbean, Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

This year, the London Food Exhibition is part of a package of support being offered to London's food businesses. As well as exhibiting, each business will be invited to attend a pre-event workshop and receive a free day of consultancy from the Manufacturing Advisory Service. The pre-event workshop will cover the following topics:

- What to expect from the exhibition
- Introduction to public sector contracts

- Supply opportunities at LB Barking & Dagenham
- How to improve productivity
- How to make the most of exhibiting

The exhibition will be arranged around a central networking and demonstration area, providing a vibrant atmosphere ideal for striking up new deals and developing relationships with customers and suppliers.

The demonstrations are exciting and will attract trade visitors who are passionate about food. They are:

- Paul Rankin, Celebrity Chef who previously ran Roscoff, voted Restaurant of the Year in the 1996 BBC Good Food Magazine Awards. He has since appeared on Masterchef, Ready Steady Cook, Food & Drink and Light Lunch.
- Robyn Piccioni, Patisserie Risque - Producer of delicious biscuits in all sort of cutting-edge styles. Dior and Christian Louboutin have already placed orders.
- Skelligs Chocolates, the Irish handmade chocolate company, are offering a Chocolate masterclass and tasting.
- Paul Gayler, Celebrity Chef and Executive Chef at London's prestigious Lanesborough Hotel.
- Innocent Smoothies - fabulously successful drinks company.
- Rupert Wollheim providing tutored wine tasting.

If you know of any food businesses who may be interested in exhibiting at this event, and would like to take advantage of the pre-event workshop and free day of MAS consultancy, please contact Jenny Young on 020 7010 1542.

Growing Schools open day

17th - 19th June,
Eltham

Learning through Landscapes in London in association with the

Greenwich Environmental Curriculum Centre and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) are holding open events at the Growing Schools Garden in Eltham on Thursday 17th June and Friday 18th June from 5pm to 9pm and Saturday 19th June from 10am to 1pm.

The Growing Schools Garden was first showcased at the Hampton Court Palace Flower Show in 2002. Following its success at the show, the garden has been re-built in the grounds of the Greenwich Environmental Curriculum Centre, SE9 2PE.

The open events will give you the opportunity to experience the Growing Schools Garden firsthand and to meet organizations and schools that are involved in food, farming and countryside activities. You are welcome to bring family and friends and light refreshments will be served.

Places for the open events are limited. If you would like to book a place on one of the events please email [Jenny McInnes](mailto:Jenny.McInnes@ltl.org.uk), Information Officer, Learning Through Landscapes in London at jmccinnes@ltl.org.uk Or for more information call Learning Through Landscapes in London on 0208 850 3112. See next page for more information in our 'Choose and Chew' article.



Pumpkin time at one of the Growing Schools open days

Choose and Chew

Food Education in Schools

Concerns about the diet and nutrition of children led to the £2.2 million 'Food in Schools' Programme. Growing Clubs are one of the pilot projects funded by the Department of Health. Healthier tuck shops, healthier vending machines, healthier lunch boxes, healthier breakfast clubs, cookery clubs, dining room environment and water provision are the projects in different regions of the UK.



Wimbledon Park Primary School, March 2004
Choose and Chew - Children's Consultation

The national school grounds charity Learning Through Landscapes, in partnership with The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens are running the Growing Clubs project in London. Fifteen schools across London are setting up or developing their own "Growing Club". Schools develop an action plan which leads to children growing fresh fruit and vegetables in their school grounds - often right outside their

classrooms and sometimes at a nearby allotment. "Choose and Chew" workshops were run at a lunch club or after-school club before Easter. The children paired up, one wearing a blindfold, and they were given a tasty bite sized fruit or veggie. Generally the others kept a secret what it was...except with strawberries when a unanimous IT'S STRAWBERRIES! rang out giving the game away.

The children were asked what they were eating, whether they like it (teaching them to grow what they like to eat) and if they'd like to grow it in the garden. The children drew their favourites and wrote what they liked: "The strawberry was best lovely, yummy brill, good" wrote Ella from Wimbledon Park Primary School and "I shosed the apple because it was jossi" wrote Hafsa from the Alton school. Having selected their favorites the children were all set to plan their garden and choose plant varieties from the catalogue. We thought we'd better choose an early or late cropper or else the children would be on holiday and wouldn't get to enjoy the fruits of their labours.

Kazien Primary School in Tower Hamlets taught the children that plants need water, soil and light to grow. Kazien children have planted a brick to see if they could grow a house - we will keep you posted!

by Zoe Elford

For more information contact Steve Moizer, Project Manager smoizer@ltl.org.uk or 'phone 020 8850 3112 ext 214. See page 5 for up and coming Growing Schools events.

Farm Gate

Does the new CAP fit better?

In February 2004, Secretary of State for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, Margaret Becket announced the 'most radical reform of the common agricultural policy (CAP) since its inception'. She said, "The link between the subsidy paid to farmers, and the level of production has been broken". Farmers will no longer be compelled to produce what the subsidy system dictates; this will allow farmers to produce what the market desires.

Under the new Single Farm Payment farmers will be able to claim 'entitlements' to an annual subsidy equivalent to the number of eligible hectares they have in 2005. The value of those payments will be determined in two parts. A small but increasing element will be a flat-rate amount across all eligible land in England. The initially greater, but declining element will be based on growers' historic subsidy receipts, if any. By 2012 the historic element will have been phased out and there will be a single flat-rate payment. Most agricultural land will be eligible, including land used to grow 'soft' fruit, but not, sadly, what are termed as "permanent crops", i.e. orchards.

It is hoped that the de-linking (called 'decoupling') of subsidy from production will reduce adverse environmental effects by removing the incentive for intensification and over production, by making farmers comply with a range of environmental standards to qualify for the payments, and by freeing more money for rural development and 'green farming' schemes. DEFRA predict that the changes could also mean reduced food prices and better marketing of UK produce.

That's the theory anyway. In reality, farmers fear the changes and are scratching their heads over what they should plan next year. One confusing aspect is that EU member states were given considerable discretion in how they implement these reforms. So a beef farmer across the channel (or in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland!) will be receiving completely different support from a beef farmer in England, and so on. It is really no longer a 'common' agriculture policy. No one really knows how this will affect production and therefore supply to our shops and canteens.

FARM GATE

One key issue for farmers will be how the basic compliance conditions will work and what changes, if any, they will have to make, to qualify for the payments. The other change will be the new Environmental Stewardship Scheme grants, which all farmers can obtain by going beyond basic good practice and making changes to benefit the environment.

All in all, taxpayers will still pay a large subsidy bill, but it will be a bit greener and a whole lot more complicated for a while. But someone is happy. Sir Don Curry, at the recent London Food Link Farmers Conference expressed deep satisfaction at the CAP reform outcomes. He'd got what he asked for in his report on the Future of Food and Farming in 2002. His other wishes have also begun to emerge such as the new English Food and Farming Partnership to encourage greater farm collaboration and cooperation. Strategies on the food industry, animal health and welfare and food and health are still in development but the Food Chain Centre has begun its process of measuring costs in the

food chain. And as mentioned, the new farm environmental scheme is nearly ready and new support for organic farming is bearing fruit with more UK organic food for UK consumers than ever before.

From the London perspective, however, little has changed as the focus has been out of the capital. London Food Link, and others will now need to develop a challenging but achievable set of activities and targets to achieve the objectives which Curry outlined in his report: to reconnect farmers and consumers; and make the London food system more sustainable.

Two Sustain Briefings on the new CAP are available at www.sustainweb.org/agtrad_index.asp



Allotment Slot

Tool Abuse

The lease for our site insists that no shed can be larger than 7 x 5. A builder friend once dumped the bits of an old 8 x 5 shed on my plot, so in a spirit of conformity my home from home has a recessed entrance with a foot-wide porch. At the far end was a glass window, which was too tempting for passing lads with nothing much to do and stones to do it with, so I replaced it with a wooden shutter, kept in place by a wooden sill at the bottom, never secured that well, and a sliding mirror clip at the top that vibrates in strong winds. This was in the 90s, when the site was swept by a passion for regeneration and anything seemed possible. A decade on the shutter regularly falls out when there are gales from the west, and my palace is filled with 6 x 5 of 'stuff awaiting a new use' (or to use the technical term, rubbish). So I improvise. The shutter is impaled on my long handled weeding fork, the blunt end of which is jammed against a spar at the other end of the shed. No long handled weeding this summer then. Mind you, with weather this wet the weeds will soon be tall enough to invest in a machete - already a much-loved weeding tool for some Afro-Caribbean growers, though I think doubling it up as a digging tool rather detracts from the swashbuckling romance of the instrument.

My favourite tools are the trusty if distressed fork, rake and hoe. The fork once landed me in an ambiguous gender zone, for it is short, light and narrow, and a former neighbour (and digger for victory - last heard of annoying people on some other luckless site) regular berated me for using a 'lady's fork', when I had a real man's fork sitting in the shed. I was rather hoping he'd get so annoyed he'd insist on showing me how to use it, so I could play slow learner and not get the hang of it until he'd dug the whole plot for me. Alas, pure fantasy - and now he's gone. Hurrah!

The head of the rake falls off, though a nail would fix this, several boxes of which lie buried in that 6 x 5. No matter: it's the other end I like. Pressing down on soft soil, I can make a precision hole to a depth of six inches, which I can hit with a broad bean seed from five feet above. This is great when your physique has long since answered the call of gravity, and you're not sure where your knees are any more. And the hoe? Handle marked at four inch intervals, so if it lay it down I know where to make the holes. And when sharpened, and the weeds are as they are this spring, it doubles as a battle-axe.

by Richard Wiltshire
QED Allotments Group

Allotments Conference

The Greater London Allotments Forum (GLAF) will be holding its second conference at City Hall on Friday 23rd July. As well as looking back on the previous year's achievements, the conference will provide an opportunity for attendees to meet others interested in allotments and help shape the GLAF's agenda for the forthcoming year.

Please contact Helen Cox on 0207 983 4406 or helen.cox@london.gov.uk by the start of June to guarantee a place.

Farm visit for Islington market customers

Two cars set out on Wednesday morning taking Islington Farmers' Market customers to visit three farms in Kent. Despite delays due to tunnel and motorway closures, we eventually reached our first destination, Chegworth Valley fruit farm. The early arrivals walked through the orchards and admired the blossom, particularly that of the Bramley's. The owners, David and Linda Deme treated us to tea and apple cake, and showed us through the process of juice-making, including a taste of the ny-pressed, which retains extra enzymes for the first twenty minutes. We followed this process in its entirety, from washing and sorting, right through to bottling, labelling and preparations for distribution. The juice is distributed via eight weekly London Farmers' Markets and at the Borough Market. It is also supplied direct to shops and restaurants, delivered by two courier companies. Beyond apples, the Demes grow a range of fruit from strawberries and raspberries to red-, white- and blackcurrant bushes. They even grow blueberries outdoors, in pots of special compost netted against the birds. The farm consists of 70 acres, of which 15 are now completely organic and the rest in conversion, encouraged by customer demand.



The Demes' farm, Chegworth Valley by Jessica

Throughout the visit we were introduced to the staff. Apart from Linda and David, there are six full- and part-time permanent people including their son Ben and some locals, and a number of seasonal students mainly from Poland and Latvia. The students are recruited through a special educational scheme and are housed in mobile homes sited picturesquely in the orchards. David explained that generally they are cooperative, hard-working and eager to learn. You may have met some of them helping out at markets.

The second visit was to Brockman's Perry Court Farm, whose produce is sold at six markets. This, interestingly, is a 'biodynamic' farm, which means they use an organic system based on the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner. They explained some of the principles of this process while we were shown their crops growing in several polytunnels, beds and fields. As well as vegetables, they have a beef herd and grow wheat that is milled into flour. At the end of the tour we were taken to their attractive small farm shop and the packing room where they also organise their local organic

box scheme. They have 200 acres, and employ six local people, as well as a varying number of WWOOFers (Willing Workers on Organic Farms), who work for bed and board, in return for learning and experience in organic production.

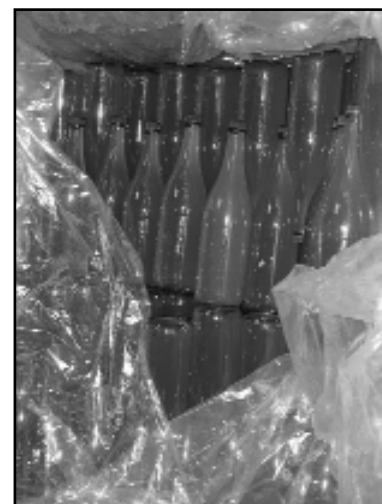
Onwards to our third and final destination, Martin and Heidi Fermor's farm, also called Perry Court. Here we were revived by a delicious ploughman's lunch. We then availed ourselves of a "shopping opportunity" at their excellent and rather large farm shop and garden centre, before Martin led us off along muddy tracks, across fields and through polytunnels, accompanied by two dogs and several geese. Martin was extremely gracious and patient, and determined that we should see everything - plums, gages and cherries, as well as many different kinds of blossoming fruit trees, including some of those unusual apple varieties you might have seen in their Apple Day display in October. We saw experiments with peaches and nectarines growing in polytunnels, a field of magnificent rhubarb flowers from which Martin is going to collect the seeds to register a new hybrid, and a large glasshouse containing seedlings and transplants at various stages. There were also some examples of mixed cropping with vegetables growing in rows interspersed between bushes, and one polytunnel of raspberries partly shaded by a row of trees, providing filtered light.

On our return we were busily making plans for the next visit, particularly an earlier start so we could see more. If you want to be part of one of these visits in future, please email farmvisits@blueyonder.co.uk. We will set a few provisional dates in advance so people can put them in their diaries. Visits have to be on weekdays because at the weekends the farmers are, of course, in London selling at the markets.

by Jo Foster



By Norman Beddington



Diverse dough consigned to bread bin?

Much like buses you wait ages and then two reports arrive together. London Food Link's other report out this month, *Bread Street: the British baking bloomer*, identifies the threat to food diversity posed by that symbol of standardisation: sliced bread.

From Roman spelt bread to the Chelsea bun, this report traces the delight taken by London's eighteenth century population in flour mixed with chalk, alum and bone

ashes, so long as it looked right. Despite the huge diversity of breads, approximately 80% sold in the UK today is sliced, wrapped, and made from the industrial Chorleywood Bread Process.

Standardised bread is not only contributing to the erosion of variety in baking, but is also often unhealthy, being high in salt and saturated fat, and stripped of many of its nutrients. One reason it may be so popular is its low price, with many supermarkets selling this bread as a loss leader i.e. at prices below its cost of production.

This disregard for quality over cost is emphasised by the interviews with home and commercial bakers in London, which are transcribed to give the reader a picture not only of the health of baking in London, but an insight into the backgrounds of bakers from Poland, Somalia, Kosovo, and India amongst others. One home baker from Italy commented, "People are obsessed with the price of food. Here you want everything cheap."



The report features photographs that some of you may have seen in the exhibition of Sara Hannant's work currently housed in Gunnersbury Gallery in Acton. This free exhibition will be moving to Three Mills, Bromley-by-Bow on August 12th.



Accompanying this report is a set of 12 postcards taken from the exhibition. These postcards are available from Sustain at 60p each or £6 for a set. The report is available for £15, and together with the set of postcards for £18. There is a charge of £1 p&p per order. Additional discounts are available for London Food Link members.

Your views needed on distribution research

As part of the LFL Hospital Food Project, food link member Westley Consulting Ltd are researching barriers to distributing local and organic food into London. We have been talking to producers, wholesalers and other intermediaries about the practical issues and will be drawing conclusions in July.

The rise of supermarkets has pushed traditional methods so far out of the mainstream that they have almost ceased to exist. If local food is to establish itself in London, new methods of securing efficient distribution will have to be developed. With such a huge market, a degree of organisation is essential. Farmers and food producers will have to collaborate to get the volume and range that customers need.

The logistics of distribution is a specialist business and local food producers will need to learn lessons in efficiency from the big boys. New infrastructure may be needed for processing and preparing produce, and for sorting and distributing it. There needs to be a renewed focus on quality, specifications and due diligence. Requirements may differ from the supermarket trade, but local food will not succeed unless it can show that it delivers what it promises. As such, a better exchange of information is needed right along the foodchain from the farmer and grower through to the customer and consumer.

Some of these issues were debated at a South East Food Group Partnership (SEFGP) seminar at Loseley Park on 31 March. Speakers included Tony Noble of Petty Wood (ambient wholesalers) who outlined how professional distributors could

take much of the hassle off the shoulders of small producers. He made the point that producers needed to make it attractive for retailers to buy the product, but this would require a margin of the order of 60%, shared between distributor and retailer. Katharine Rayner of Common Cause Co-operative in East Sussex outlined her research findings on barriers to supplying the School Fruit Scheme, including the need to make the scheme more flexible and accessible for local fruit. Finding English fruit of the right size and price is a problem. Adam Irvine of Farm to Fridge (a new distribution business in Maidstone) said his model was a 'farmers market on wheels'. The key issues with this were relationship building with suppliers and customers; accounts and stock control; website development; food labelling; fair margins; and brand-building.

Syndicate sessions from this seminar brought out a range of views from participants:

- Any initiative needed clear market focus. Primary produce was more suitable for a county-level initiative. Higher value branded goods might be more suited to national marketing. Frozen food did not have a quality image for consumers (though useful for foodservice). There could be advantages in offering high and low value goods together.
- Consumers expected information about provenance and production methods, especially for primary produce.
- Distribution needed a dedicated operation, and should not be left to individual producers.
- Producers should talk to one another. Local food groups

Spinach and Feta Pie - Serves 6

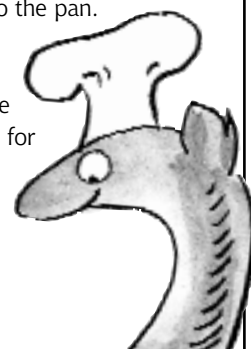
Great picnic fare: a lighter-than-traditional Greek spinach pie, or spanokopita with a deep layer of nutmeg-scented spinach, feta and ricotta encased in crisp filo pastry. Filo is easy to work with as long as you do it quickly and don't expose it to too much air during preparation.

- 1 kg organic spinach (grownup, not baby)
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 4 spring onions, finely chopped
- sea salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 200 g organic feta cheese
- 250 g organic ricotta cheese
- 4 organic eggs, lightly beaten
- Grated nutmeg
- 2 tbsp finely chopped dill
- 1 packet filo pastry, thawed
- 125 g melted butter
- dill for serving

1. Heat oven to 180C/Gas 4.
2. Trim any major stalks off the spinach, and rinse the leaves well in two changes of cold water. Drain and roughly chop.
3. Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan and add the spinach

- and spring onions, tossing until wilted down. Season with salt and pepper and toss well. Drain and set aside to cool.
4. Drain off excess juices again when cool, and lightly squeeze.
5. In a big bowl, mash the feta cheese, mix with the ricotta, and beat in the eggs, nutmeg, chopped dill and lots of pepper. Add the spinach and mix well.
6. Cover the filo pastry with a lightly damp, clean cloth, and remove the top layer of pastry. Brush with melted butter, and place in a lightly oiled 20 x 28 cm ovenproof baking dish, allowing some pastry to overlap sides.
7. Continue brushing the sheets with butter and laying them on top until you have six layers, then fill the dish with the spinach mixture and top with six more layers of buttered pastry, again allowing a short length to overlap. Roll the edges under, trimming if too bulky, and tuck them in to the pan.
8. Bake for 60 minutes, until the top is crisp and golden and the filling has set.
9. Cool for 10 minutes, then cut into large squares to serve. Leave in the baking tray for easy transport if picnicking.

From Jill Dupleix, author of Very Simple Food, Quadrille.



YOUR VIEWS NEEDED ON DISTRIBUTION RESEARCH

- could help. National organisations - Soil Association, etc could provide advice and lobbying.
- The right producers needed to be involved - those with vision and a professional approach. The majority may be unsuitable or uninterested.
- The public sector was perceived as being difficult, with special procedures. But in fact it was supplied by wholesalers, who needed to get their food from suppliers, like anyone else.

- Potential difficulties included distrust between producers and distributors; reluctance to take risks; and coping with growth.

What do you think? The London market clearly poses special challenges. If you have supplied local or organic food to London, or considered doing this, we would like to hear your views on the barriers, and how to overcome them. Please contact Henry Brown on 020 7222 3918 or henrybrown@btconnect.com.

Hospital Food Project

The Hospital Food Project, which aims to increase local and/or organic food into four London NHS hospitals, is now in its fourth month.



Mushroom growing in London: Agridutt (Int) Ltd under the North Circular at Manor Park

Meetings have been held with all of the hospitals (Brompton, Ealing, Lambeth, St Georges) to identify how increased local and/or organic supplies could work both inside and outside existing hospital procedures. The hospitals are developing lists of key products they would like to buy from local and/or organic sources. Target local products include organic strawberries and cream, seasonal summer salads, free range eggs and various cuts of lamb, beef and pork.

To kick start supply into the hospitals, existing distributors already approved for supply into the NHS through PASA (the NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency) could be used and local and /or organic suppliers routed into these. This is to keep additional administration burden for the hospitals to a minimum, and to ensure that certain due diligence requirements are met. Duncan Eaton, Chief Executive of NHS PASA said "Sustainability and improving the health of the nation must be integral to public procurement. Sustainable food procurement offers the opportunity to deliver benefits across the board, from working with UK suppliers to improving environmental and health outcomes."

The studies on distribution barriers and on the economic and health effects of the project have been commissioned. The New Economics Foundation will be carrying out the economic evaluation using the "Local Multiplier 3" tool which enables assessment of how a particular organisation strengthens the local economy, and how to improve that impact. We hope to measure, over the course of the project, how the hospitals' spending circulates within (or leaves!) the economy of London and the South East.

Potential producers and producer groups are being identified and discussions regarding involvement in the Hospital Food Project are underway and enquiries from potential farmers and producers interested in supplying are welcome. We are particularly looking for suppliers of fruit and veg grown in the South East.

Suppliers will need to meet NHS standards which include systems such as HACCP. One potential supplier grows mushrooms under the North Circular in Newham! Mr Datta of Agridutt (Int) Ltd said "It has made sense for me for quite some time that mushrooms grown in London should be supplied to London hospitals, not Dutch mushrooms. I hope this project will be the start of something really good for Agridutt, which provides flexible, local and part time work to the multi-ethnic community of Newham."

Several training events for hospital staff and for producers are also being planned with the Soil Association for the coming months. These include organic certification training for hospital staff and distributors, a farm visit for hospital staff and a workshop for potential producers to aid understanding of the supply requirements of the public sector. For more information please contact Fiona Cairncross at London Food Link on 0207 837 1228 or at fiona@sustainweb.org



Join London Food Link 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 and nutrition strategies, government and GLA consultations on food, farming, planning and the economy.
- 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.
- Free membership directory.
- A Free copy of **Growing Food in Cities** to new members and 50% off the **City Harvest** report.



To join London Food Link or for further details contact:

Ben Reynolds, LFL Co-ordinator, c/o Sustain, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF. Tel: 020 7837 1228. Fax: 020 7837 1141.
ben@sustainweb.org
www.londonfoodlink.org

London Food Link members and supporters include:

Academy of Culinary Arts, Adrian Audsley (individual), Patrick Andrews (business advisor), Barts & The London NHS Trust, Bexley Primary Care Trust, Calthorpe Project Community Garden, Camden Primary Care Trust, Celtic Bakers, City & Hackney Primary Care Trust, Community Kitchens Network (Southwark), Community Kitchens Project/Manor Gardens (Islington), Matthew Conrad (individual), W.H. Cragg Associates (farmers' network), Crapes Fruit Farm, Crisis Fairshare, Dalgarno SRB, Maria Davies (University of Westminster), East London Food Access, East London Organic Growers, East Thames Housing Association, First Fruit Co-op, Food Commission, Foodlink Shrublands, Jo Foster (Manager, Islington Farmers' Market), Greenwich Co-operative Development Agency, Greenwich Primary Care Trust, Greenwich Organics, Growing Communities, Haringey Primary Care Trust, Health Development Agency, Henrietta Green, Jenny Usher Organics, Kids' Cookery School, the Learning Trust, Lighthouse Bakery, London Borough of Croydon, London Borough of Ealing, London Borough of Haringey, London Federation of City Farms & Community Gardens, London 21 (Sustainability Network), London Farmers' Markets, London Food Centre, London First, London Sustainability Exchange, Rachel McLoughlin (individual), Elizabeth Mitchell (individual), Museum of Culinary History and Alimentation (MoCHA), Newham Food Access Partnership, Newham Primary Care Trust, Newlon Housing Trust, Organic Express (Caterers), OrganicLea, Quality Environment Dartford, Reunite Edmonton, Roots & Shoots (community garden and horticultural training centre), Slow Food, Soil Association, South London & Maudsley NHS Trust, Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming, Patrick & Katie Treherne (Organic Market Gardeners), Waltham Forest Primary Care Trust, Westminster Primary Care Trust, Women's Environmental Network, Lindsay Wright (London Potato Fair).

London Food Link is guided by a working party comprising:

Guild of Food Writers (Chair), Countryside Agency, Greater London Authority, Government Office for the South East, London Farmers' Markets, London Development Agency, London First, London Metropolitan University, National Farmers' Union, Newham Food Access Partnership, QED allotments group, Soil Association, Sustain,



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.