

EDUCATION - the Essential Ingredient in a Vibrant Local Food Economy

THE ARTISAN AND THE EDUCATION SYSTEM
The Taste Council
Food Summer School 2011

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AIM OF THIS SESSION

Taste Council's aim in this session is to examine
*“the opportunity to engage and influence Transition
Year Second Level students and Third Level Catering
and Agriculture students via space on their
curriculum for a module on the role and importance
of the local food economy”*
in order to *“influence the next generation of food
consumers and food producers”*.

- The Taste Council have called this session ‘The Artisan and the Education System’ and this is their aim for the session.....this is taken as the parameter of the presentation. Therefore, it will refer to Local and Artisan Food and will look specifically at Transition Year and relevant Third Level courses.
- Although it will look at what the ideal world scenario would be, the presentation will attempt to look at what is achievable in the short to medium term.

Background – Why do we need Food Education at all?

Positives

- Agri-Food economy thriving
- Growing interest in & demand for local food
- Genuine desire to support local
- Better understanding of value
- Becoming more discerning
- Responsive industry
- New artisans emerging
- More Chefs using local food

Reality Check

- Don't have a real 'food culture'
- Disconnect between consumers and how their food is produced/where it comes from
- Don't put high value on food
- Don't demand the best
- Status of farming & cooking
- Many people can't cook
- Farms not sustainable businesses
- High level of food imports
- Restaurant industry in staffing crisis
- Health problems associated with diet

NEED TO FOSTER A STRONGER FOOD CULTURE FROM THE GROUND UP

FIRSTLY, FOOD IS CENTRAL TO OUR LIVES – for health & for pleasure

Farmers, Food Producers & Cooks/Chefs are the people who feed us, and therefore should be looked at as highly valued careers. Is there a more important role?

We have a lot of positives – not least the economic importance of the agri-food sector.

But those of us who are involved in the food industry, particularly the so-called 'artisan' food industry, exist in a bubble. We must not fool ourselves about the state of our food 'culture'.

Don't have a real 'food culture' – by this I mean, we don't have a culture of constantly thinking about & discussing food, we don't have a culture where people commonly recognise the difference between good and inferior food (across age and socio-economic spectrums), we don't have a culture in which people demand good food and feel they deserve to have the best.

As well as a disconnect between consumers and food production, there is a disconnect between farmers and the market. Do not see themselves as food producers. Many agricultural products are sold at a loss, farms are not sustainable from a business perspective. Very very few people in Ireland who do not come from a farm family choose farming as a career. There is very little diversification on farms and little on-farm processing.

Processors and Retailers are hugely powerful, but they will always refer to consumer choice. Clearly the Irish consumer does not make strong enough demands for high quality locally sourced food.

Presentation Summary

- Why education on local & artisan\Real Food?
 - Why is local and artisan food important?
 - What are the goals of education in this area?
- Government Policy & Current Initiatives
- The need for a coherent and holistic approach
- Ideal World vs Low Hanging Fruit
- What issues? What messages?
- TRANSITION YEAR– Why? How? What needs to be done?
- THIRD LEVEL– Who? How? What needs to be done?
- Summary of Proposals

Will explain why I am not happy with the terminology being used, but why 'local' is probably the best of an unsatisfactory bunch.

FOOD EDUCATION

BROAD

- Nutrition
- Cooking
- Growing Food & Farming
- Seasonality
- Buying food, understanding labels, understanding ingredients
- Origin & Provenance
- Environmental implications
- Processing, Food technology, biotechnology, novel foods....

CROSSES

CRAFT
LIFE SKILLS
SCIENCE
BUSINESS
ECONOMICS
HISTORY
GEOGRAPHY

SO WHY FOCUS ON LOCAL FOOD & THE ARTISAN?

The idea of Food Education is broad and encompasses many things. It also crosses over many disciplines.

From the Euro-toques perspective, in our work on Food Education, we have always firmly believe in a holistic approach.

We believe it is wrong, and ineffective, to focus solely on nutrition and the idea of 'healthy eating', where people are told what they should and shouldn't eat and perhaps 'guilt-tripped' into certain behaviours, which will not be sustained.

Most important thing is to nurture and interest and pleasure in food – everything else will follow.

'French Paradox' has long been discussed and wondered at. The French eat many things which we are told detrimental to health; butter, cream, cheese, wine etc, but they do not get fat and do not suffer the same levels of dietary related diseases (heart disease, diabetes and so on) as people in the UK & IRL, for example.

Many conclude that it be because the French ENJOY their food. They take pleasure in it and approach it with balance and consideration. Their priority is TASTE.

Look at the countries we associate with strong Food Culture; we mainly think of the Mediterranean Italy, France, Spain, but the same applies in most Asian countries. Food is ever-present, people ask each other what they have had for lunch, food is part of every celebration, every cultural event.

At the centre of how all these cultures approach food is BALANCE – something which is a central governing principle in all Asian food and for any good chef or cook. This intuition around balance cannot be learned from a book!! And it can't be learned through guilt or Food Pyramids.

TERMS – What are we talking about?

- FOOD EDUCATION
- LOCAL
- ARTISAN
- REAL
- Fresh, Quality, Natural, Homemade...

FIRSTLY, A QUICK LOOK AT THE TERMS BEING USED

EDUCATION here is a limited word, in that it evokes book learning. What we are talking about is a practical and, again, holistic approach.

FOOD EDUCATION – incorporates agriculture – all the facets mentioned

Local – implies being able to attain full knowledge of how and where the food was produced, even the possibility of influencing that. Within it, it contains the characteristics of Seasonality & Sustainability

Artisan – John McKenna 4 Ps Personality of the Produce, The Place it comes from, The Product provided and the Passion that goes into it.

Talking about Skill, Know-how, Terroir, Character,
Responsibility for production often lies with an individual, or family

REAL Yale Sustainable Food Project the intersection of many food movements;
just, local, sustainable, organic, humane, and fair trade

Other terms, 'Fresh, Quality, Natural, Homemade' much abused.

REAL – maybe a little too pretentious for us

ARTISAN – can be perceived as specialised, even elitist

What I am talking about is educating children, young people, all consumers about basic agricultural food products, Primary Produce – seasonal fruit & veg, properly reared meat, fresh sustainable fish.

So artisan in the sense of people who are doing it the Right way, not luxury/gourmet produce.

Local & Artisan as the basis for a Holistic Food Education

A Practical medium to educate on many different facets of food, food industry and agriculture.

Local makes it more real.

Nurtures a sense of responsibility to your own place & community.

Food as relevant to everyone
Food as pleasure
Again, a balanced approach.

Why Educate on Local & Artisan Food?

- Local Food Multiplier Effect , New Economic Foundation, London
£10 spent in local business= £25 in local economy
- Artisan Food Sector is recognised as important to the overall economy
“the artisan sector has the potential to enrich Ireland’s tourism while, in turn, tourism can be a vehicle to enhance the image of Ireland and Irish food production internationally” Food Harvest 2020
- Entrepreneurialism, innovation, rural enterprise, jobs
- Environmental Sustainability
Green Image vs Green Reality
- Health
- Focus on what is uniquely Irish/Regional

- Business & Economic reasons are many
 - New Economic Foundation - Every £10 spent in local food businesses is worth £25 to the local economy, compared with just £14 when same amount is spent in a supermarket. A pound or euro spent in a local business generates more than twice as much income for the local economy. When businesses are not locally owned, the money leaves the community
 - Importance in overall economy - Food & Beverage exports major contributor to strong export performance – Artisan Foods important in marketing of Ireland.
Food Harvest 2020 recognises that “the artisan sector has the potential to enrich Ireland’s tourism while, in turn, tourism can be a vehicle to enhance the image of Ireland and Irish food production internationally
 - Entrepreneurialism, innovation, rural enterprise – seeds for the next generation of Irish food businesses
 - Believe Irish competitiveness will be based on quality, differentiation – need to show the opportunities for specialisation
- Environmental sustainability and our ‘Green’ image is seen as pivotal in the branding of Ireland on export markets. Must ensure we are not just marketing this image but also delivering it. Teaching principles of local and seasonal sourcing and small-scale sustainable agriculture will provide our future farmers and food producers, as well as food buyers and consumers , with a better understanding of how food is produced and the real value/cost of food, and help them see the benefits of good stewardship of the land
Food Harvest 2020 consumers in key markets will learn to recognise implicitly that, by buying Irish, they are choosing to value and respect the natural environment”.

GOALS OF EDUCATION ON LOCAL & ARTISAN FOOD

- Educate on the important role of food and agriculture in economy & society
- Teach a respect for food and those who produce it
- Encourage more Young People to choose careers in Agriculture & Food
- Encourage a sustainable, 'quality' approach
- Empower young people to make better food choices
- Provide the knowledge required to be responsible future consumers
- Foster Pride and a Real Food Culture

Show that it makes business/economic sense – employment opportunities etc
Change attitude towards food

Change mind-set towards careers in agriculture and cooking – Not for the person who wasn't smart enough or didn't work hard enough to get points for a 'profession'. Not inferior to 'professions' or academic pursuits and should not become overly academic. Needs to be respected as a craft.

The right people, the right approach – enterprising, innovative thinkers, but based on quality approach. Farmers who want to add-value and diversify, see themselves as food producers. Recognise their hugely important, essential role, in feeding people.

Need high-value, not commodity, ag.

Artisan producers & Chefs who will contribute to a vibrant, diverse and high quality food culture. Not an 'open the packet' approach.

Need more consumers who seek out quality sustainable food – demand, affect the power of the retailers.

Breed a future regulatory environment more favourable to a vibrant food culture.

ALL BENEFITS IRISH ECONOMY IN LONG-TERM – mre likely to choose Irish food, higher value food

How does Local & Artisan Food Education fit with Government Policy?

- Food Harvest 2020
- Pathways for Growth
- Just Ask, Bord Bia
- Failte Ireland
 - National Food in Tourism Implementation Plan
 - 'Place on a Plate'
- Teagasc Rural Development Programme

Selling Ireland on an image of green, small-scale, quality agriculture. Recognition of the importance of food and agriculture to the economy, and indeed the contribution of artisan to this and to Ireland's reputation.

In Euro-toques we have always recognised need for 2 streams of agriculture/food production, but believe Ireland's selling point will be quality (can't compete on volume/price). Fantastic to see official recognition of need for differentiation, can't concentrate solely on commodity markets and scale.

We need to be unique.

At State level, clear drive to promote 'local food', both from point of view of domestic market for our food/ag products and from Tourism perspective. Also, promotion of idea of on-farm diversification and rural business development at official level.

Non-Government Bodies Promoting Irish Food & Agriculture

Agri-Aware	Slowfood Ireland
TASTE Council	Euro-toques Ireland
GIY Ireland	Love Irish Food
IOFGA	Organic Trust
Seedsavers	Good Food Ireland
IFA, ICSA, ICMSA	Restaurants Association

Many local & regional initiatives

Also, a plethora of other non-governmental bodies working on similar areas.
Many of these have Educational Projects & activities

FOOD EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

Takes many formats:

Food Workshops, Cookery demos/Talks, School Gardens, Healthy eating programmes

Many Projects and Initiatives on-going:

Food Dudes, Euro-toques School Workshops, Agri-Aware mobile farm, Green Schools, Slowfood School Gardens, SEED

Schools have changed a huge amount since most of us were there – don't underestimate this. Things have definitely improved in relation to awareness of environmental issues, food & farming, healthy eating etc.

Existing 'Food Education' activities in schools take many different formats.
Some of the specific initiatives that already exist

Govt – Food Dudes – much more to food education than nutrition/healthy eating.
Again, need to take broader approach – where food comes from. How it grows, the pleasure of cooking and eating

RECOGNITION & COHERENCE

- Obviously need for Food Education is recognised
- But NO STRATEGY & NO COHERENCE
- Need Buy-in and a Coherent simplified policy involving:
 - Government Depts; Agriculture, Health, Education
 - State Agencies; Bord Bia, BIM, Failte Ireland, Teagasc
 - Industry Practitioners via TASTE Council or other representative bodies

The number of different bodies involved in Food Education and no of different initiatives in existence shows there is undoubtedly agreement around the need for Food Education and don't think anyone would dispute this.

BUT NO OFFICIAL POLICY, NO STRATEGY.

Everyone working on their own with limited resources.

Need COHERENCE. Need a VISION of what we want the future to look like and how Food Education fits into this. Then we need a STRATEGY and ACTION

Where do we start?

IDEAL WORLD vs
LOW HANGING FRUIT
&
NECESSITY

In an Ideal World – start as early as we possibly can.

All about Taste – educate the palate.

In fact, if we are serious about Taste Education and broadening the palates of our children, we need to start with new born babies. Better promotion of Breastfeeding is the first step to better eating in future. Introduces range of flavours from day one, avoids 'dumbing down' the palate.

Then throughout the national school curriculum, an overriding theme – school gardens, tastings, visits to restaurants and farms

But for today, we are looking at

The Low Hanging Fruit – TRANSITION YEAR – easy to access, appropriate and flexible

Absolute Necessity for Immediate Action – THIRD LEVEL (no-brainer to introduce trainee foodservice industry to local-sourcing)

Students per Year
Transition Year – 30,000
Agricultural Science – 2,100
Culinary Arts – 2,500
= circa. 100,000
Farmers, Food Producers, Chefs,
Regulators, Policy-makers
& CONSUMERS
of the (near) future

What we can achieve just by addressing these areas.

In a 3 year period, access and influence almost 100,000 farmers, food producers, chefs, regulators, policy-makers, inspectors and BUYERS/CONSUMERS/CUSTOMERS who will be entering the marketplace in the very near future

TRANSITION YEAR

Why?

To promote the personal, social, educational and vocational development of pupils and to prepare them for their role as autonomous, participative and responsible members of society

FORMAT

FLEXIBILITY

EMPHASIS

REVIEW OF CURRICULUM & ASSESSEMENT

WEAKNESS – Every School devises own programme

Food Education fits perfectly with the ethos of TY.

The Format

Core Subjects (English, Maths, Irish and so on)

Taster Subjects (try out other Senior Cycle subjects)

TY Specific Modules (Called TY Units, these are the way other non-academic areas are introduced in TY. Some units carry certificates)

Calendar Events (Field Trips, Guest speakers etc)

Schools can introduce any approved TY units they like, or create their own. And these can change from year to year. Very flexible.

Strong Emphasis on Enterprise, innovation, business start-up.

Review of Curriculum and Assessment currently under way.

BUT the fact that every school devises their own programme they cannot (as it stands) be forced to deliver a particular unit.

CURRENTLY

SOME FOOD & AGRICULTURE RELATED TY UNITS AT PRESENT

- **Tourism Awareness Programme, Good Food – The Irish Experience, Tourism Studies – The Irish experience**, Created by Failte Ireland
- **Food Matters**, Created by Kerry Miles, St. Joseph's College, Lucan
- **Cook it! Nutrition Education**, Community Nutrition & Dietetic Service, HSE North East
- **Safefood for Life**, created by Safefood

NO REASON WHY TASTE COUNCIL CANNOT DEVISE A TY UNIT

But need Buy-in from Government and agencies, as part of a coherent strategy

But need Buy-in from Government and agencies. Needs to be promoted as part of a long-term strategy to support & develop farming, food production, tourism, catering & small business

What do we want to teach?

BROADLY

- Provenance
- Business/Employment value of food and agriculture
- Sustainability, seasonality, local sourcing
- Impact of their food choices

SPECIFICALLY

Farm Gate sales, food enterprise, Local food markets, Irish Artisan sector, seasonality, Food ingredients, Health benefits, Food Cycle, Local food multiplier effect, Third level study in food and agriculture, careers in food and agriculture, Cooking, carbon footprint, the real cost of cheap food....

- CURRICULUM ELEMENT & CALENDAR ELEMENT
- RESTAURANT

Introduce a TY Unit encompassing these themes, and also Calendar Events to compliment – visiting chef/food producers/farmers, visits to farms & restaurants.

If every Secondary School student was brought to eat in a top restaurant, I have no doubt that it would result in more choosing careers in food

THIRD LEVEL

Agricultural Science

- Diversification
- Premiumisation
- Sustainability
- Real Markets, real value
- Become FOOD PRODUCERS

Culinary Arts

- Curriculum Content
- Industry Input
- Procurement
 - Cooking ingredients
 - On-site Catering

Whole mind set around how we train farmers, food producers and chefs needs to change. Yes, we need thinkers, but they are useless if we have no practitioners left. These are Crafts, Skill-based. Let people learn the craft first. They can theorise later. Need to ask if CAO is correct route for these? A course becomes popular, points go up and next thing you know you need 500 points to train as a chef. What has happened to apprenticeships? Why has this become a dirty word? At the same time as Artisans have been calling for the creation of apprenticeship programmes for artisan food production, apprenticeships are being done away with for chefs.

Need to look at content, teaching methods and inputs for both Ag Science and Culinary Arts – Food production straddles the two, not many courses specifically on this. Also, need to include in this how we educate EHOs, Agricultural inspectors etc.

WE need to think about our vision for the future. Are we planning for this vision?

From Euro-toques perspective our area of Culinary Arts/Chef Training, so concentrate on this:

If we can't teach trainee chefs about local sourcing and if we don't use locally-sourced ingredients in our chef courses, we are we headed with campaigns like Just Ask and Place on Plate. How are we developing the future of our culinary sector?

Don't forget the importance of chefs in championing our artisan producers and in building (even creating) a country's food reputation (Think Ferran Adria of El Bulli in Spain and Rene Redzepi of Noma in Denmark).

Chefs have to set the standard.

Procurement in our Third Level insitutes is a disgrace. Even the ingredients used in the

WHAT CAN BE DONE - NOW

- IF DESIRED, A BODY TO DEVISE AN OVERALL COHERENT FOOD EDUCATION POLICY
 - Have enough talking shops, need action, but a STRATEGY on this is necessary.
- 3 THINGS THAT ARE ACHIEVEABLE & CAN BE AGREED TODAY

SECOND LEVEL – TRANSITION YEAR

TY UNIT: *LOCAL FOOD IN THE ECONOMY*

- Commitment to form an industry/education working group to devise a Transition Unit on Local & Artisan Food
- To deliver a Transition Year Support Service Course to Transition Year Coordinators, Home Ec Teachers, Business teachers etc on this unit
- To provide appropriate contact and resources to schools to arrange 'Calendar Layer' activities relating to this unit (ie. List of businesses or relevant orgs to arrange farm visits, guest farmers/artisan producers/chefs, restaurant visits etc)
- and to strongly publicise and promote this Transition unit option to schools and teachers, highlighting how it is aligned with future economic plans and strategies

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THIRD LEVEL – CULINARY ARTS

Local Philosophy & Local Procurement

- That all courses devised/funded by Failte Ireland and delivered through Institutes of Technology and Further Education Colleges should
- encompass artisan modules and emphasise local & seasonal sourcing,
- have a procurement policy based on quality fresh cooking ingredients, sourced locally & in season, for use on both their programmes and campus catering
- be re-focussed with the input of industry to deliver outcomes which are based on industry needs now and into the future
- That institutes delivering courses on behalf of Failte Ireland should be obliged to work on an on-going basis with industry and adapt to industry developments/needs

TEENAGERS IN RESTAURANTS

DISCUSS

We don't see Teenagers in restaurants. In any healthy food culture, teenagers (and of course children) go to restaurants with the friends and their families.

How can we start seeing this happening in Ireland?

Vision

Addendum – Closing Comments at the Day's Discussion

Education, Education, Education – it is pivotal to everything discussed here today.

MIDDLE FARMING – Education is also about respecting those who produce our food and giving them respect for themselves

FOOD BRAND IRELAND – this vision re-affirms the need for a coherent policy, a strategy and a vision.

1. OFFICIAL POLICY & COHERENT STRATEGY – Depts. Of Agriculture, Health & Education, Bord Bia, Failte Ireland, Teagasc, Educators & Industry
2. PRIMARY LEVEL – Immediate action: various bodies join forces; Educate the Educators
3. SECONDARY LEVEL – Food as an overriding theme across the curriculum, TY UNIts, School Gardens
4. THIRD LEVEL – Immediately adapt to industry needs and plan for future needs, Use local ingredients
5. AT ALL LEVELS – visits to Farms and Restaurants
6. RESTAURANTS/CHEFS – Step up to the mark. A decent welcome and decent food for children. What we serve to children in this country is a disgrace. They deserve better.

ONLY BY DOING ALL THIS CAN WE DEVELOP THE PRIDE, RESPECT & APPRECIATION THAT WILL BRING US TOWARDS A REAL FOOD CULTURE.