

# Food Link News

Newsletter of the Skye & Lochalsh Food Link Group

Summer 2005

Skye & Lochalsh Food Link, the Food Link Group, is a voluntary association of local producers, caterers, retailers and consumers with an interest in promoting fresh locally produced food. Its members believe that there are sound economic, environmental, health and community benefits to be gained from sourcing food direct from where it is produced and the award winning Food Link Van is just one way they can deliver local solution.

## THE FOOD LINK VAN

'Skye and Lochalsh' produces some of the best food in the world. The aim of Food Link is to make it available to the people of, and visitors to, Skye & Lochalsh.

The Food Link Van went into service in April 2000 and over the years has vastly increased the amount of local produce staying within Skye & Lochalsh. In 2001 it received the 'Best New Local Food Initiative' Award in the Soil Association's Organic Food Awards.

*'This service has been deemed to encapsulate the best attributes of local distribution and organic production and has met the high standards of the judges'*

In 2003 we received funding to expand the Food Link Group and the community business Food Link Skye & Lochalsh Ltd. The purchase of a larger van allowed us to deliver more produce. The van runs according to demand, normally once a week in spring, twice a week in summer, once a week in autumn, and as needed in winter. This year the busy season began earlier and a third day is planned for the summer (see *Trotternish Trial* next column). In addition to delivering to hotels, shops and restaurants, the Food Link Van can deliver produce to the Farmers' Markets, schools, and various local events and gatherings. Whilst it is impractical for the van to make individual deliveries to private households, it is possible for a number of households to receive a larger delivery to one address. With your support we will be able to increase the amount of produce staying within Skye & Lochalsh, and the benefits of

that income staying in the local economy, to be spent locally again.

### HOW TO USE THE FOOD LINK VAN

Customers should order from the producer who will organise collection and delivery with the Food Link Van driver. Producers will invoice customers for the goods. Payment should be made promptly in order to ensure a good working relationship and continuity of supply. The producer pays a small levy to the Food Link. See [www.foodlinkvan.co.uk](http://www.foodlinkvan.co.uk).

## WHAT'S NEW?

### Food Link Newsletter

This is the first edition of the newsletter. It will be produced quarterly and distributed to Food Link Group members, producers and customers. Good 'Food News' and recipes that use local produce will also be welcomed for publication in future issues.

### Marketing Co-ordinator

In 2004 the Food Link Group was awarded funding which enabled them to appoint a Marketing Co-ordinator to develop the work of the Group. The aim is to raise the profile of the Food Link Group and build networks between producers and customers who use the Food Link Van. Hotels, restaurants, shops, and communities can benefit from a local delivery service for quality local produce. The Marketing Co-ordinator, appointed in February 2005, is Lesley Linley, email [lesley.linley@btinternet.com](mailto:lesley.linley@btinternet.com).

### Trotternish Trial

A four-week trial of the Food Link Van delivering to Trotternish begins on 16<sup>th</sup> June. The people of Trotternish have waited a long time for this service; we hope it will be well used to ensure that it continues!

### Food Dates for Your Diary

July 22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup>

Great Taste of Skye & Lochalsh Broadford, Isle of Skye

July 30<sup>th</sup>

Dunvegan Show, Isle of Skye

August 13<sup>th</sup>

Plockton Horticultural & Handicraft Show

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## SKYE MEAT

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More local producers are taking the welcome step of bringing locally produced meats back to the island after slaughter. It is an expensive and lengthy process as animals currently have to travel some distance to the abattoir, and the meat is then transported back to the area. It is hoped that at some time Skye & Lochalsh will get its own facilities, thus reducing transportation costs, and keeping the product 'local'. In the meantime you can show your support by asking your butcher for local meat.

### Sausages

Keith & Rachael Jackson (Orbost) have some delicious meaty sausages for sale just now, but you will need to be quick, they sell out fast! They are made from Orbost wild boar crossed Gloucester Old Spot pigs reared and processed at Orbost. Wherever possible local ingredients are used to make the sausages. Most are gluten free. Choose from game, venison, venison & brandy, pork & apple, leek & Stilton, breakfast and Texas BBQ. Contact Rachael at Early Bird Enterprises on 01470 521 828 or email JacRch@aol.com

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## ASPARAGUS & QUAIL

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Skye & Lochalsh producers continue to surprise with the range of produce available. Quail eggs are now available on Skye (Ann Salter, Brunigill Farm 01470 521505) and Asparagus is being grown by Anthony Hovey of Skye Vegetables. What better way to combine Isle of Skye asparagus and eggs with West Highland Dairy's cheese, than in an asparagus and egg tart? Sounds good, but we'll have to wait a while for that Skye asparagus, as plants have to be two to three years old before spears can be cut, and they will not be fully productive until they are four or five years old.

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## GROWING PAINS

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Most of you will be only too aware that the storms that hit Skye and Lochalsh hard on January 11th caused a huge amount of damage. Apart from the obvious distress and inconvenience caused by damage to residential property, the damage to polytunnels and crops was considerable. Early salad and vegetable crops were badly

affected but growers have worked extremely hard to repair the damage and get back on track for this season. The support of customers is crucial to the growers at such difficult times.

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## GROWING BUSINESS

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New growers are sought and existing growers are being encouraged to increase production, to satisfy demand for local produce. Skye and Lochalsh Horticultural Development Association will be able to offer advice. Getting food to customers need not be a problem as the Food Link van can collect produce and deliver it to local businesses, schools, the SLHDA stall, and also the Farmers' Markets. This way, producers can dedicate their time to the products instead of delivering that produce and they can also avoid the expense of having their own transport. Business customers can have one delivery with a variety of produce, rather than several vehicles all delivering small amounts of produce.

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## FEAST YOUR EYES

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The range of fruit and vegetables being grown on Skye is increasing all the time, with unfamiliar names such as Lingon berries and Cloudberries being grown alongside the much more familiar raspberries, strawberries, currants and blueberries. Apart from being tasty and attractive these berries are also extremely good for us, being important sources of vitamins and antioxidants. Most berries and currants (with the exception of strawberries) freeze very well in their natural state.

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*'Food in Skye & Lochalsh is of the finest quality to be found anywhere'*

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## PRODUCERS 2005

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### Donald MacDonald

Donald is growing early and main crop potatoes, broccoli, cabbages, kale, sprouts and cauliflower this year. Tel: 01478 640276

### Donallan Strawberries

Strawberries, raspberries and, if sufficient fruit is available, jam. Tel/fax: 01470 532385.

### Lusta Fungi.

Neal Christie and Brigit McLaughlin are currently producing organic (Soil Association certification) Shiitake mushrooms, and will have Oyster mushrooms available later in the year. Tel: 01470 592209

### Isle of Skye Fresh Produce Co.

Roger & Fiona Whiddon are growing a wide range of herbs, oriental salads, and other leaf crops in their polytunnels at Orbost. Fiona and Roger downsized from a large horticultural business in Europe and now supply fresh produce to outlets in Skye and Lochalsh. Tel: 01470 521812.

### Skye Vegetables.

Anthony Hovey has taken over from Malcolm and Sheelagh Golding at Totaig. Some attractive and unusual varieties of vegetables are being grown here in polytunnels and outdoors, along with a range of herbs and fruit. Tel: 01470 511285

### Skyeberries.

Ian Brown is growing blueberries, raspberries, and red, white and black currants plus smaller quantities of other fruits. Although not 'certified' organic Ian follows organic principles in his fruit production. Tel: 01470 582462

### Glendrynoch Garden

Watercress provides a rich source of vitamins and minerals at times of the year when other crops may be in short supply. Grown hydroponically (without soil) in Skye spring water by Deirdre Peppe this watercress really is a source of natural goodness. Tel: 01478 640218

### Loch Eishort Mussels

Skye's mussel man, Peter MacAskill will be busy again this month after a break from harvesting during May. The mussels are not at their best during May and Peter likes to maintain the high standards that his customers appreciate. Tel: 01471 822309.

### Isle of Skye Oysters

Kenny Bain's Pacific Oysters are reared in the waters of Loch Harport. Although oysters are often reserved for special occasions such as Valentine's Day there is no reason why you can't enjoy them all year round. Tel: 01478 640313

### **Skye Fruit & Fungi**

In South Skye, Lisa Mehan and Val Piddock are growing strawberries and mushrooms (without herbicides or pesticides). Shiitake mushrooms are available now; oyster mushrooms will be available in the autumn. Logs inoculated with mushroom spore are also available for purchase for you to 'grow your own'  
Tel: 01471 855245/310.

### **Oakes Marine**

Hand dived, wild ranched, King Scallops are of exceptional quality and environmentally responsible too. Oakes Marine was Highly Commended in the 'Waitrose and The Times' Small Producers Awards in 2002 and 2003. This is a product where quality takes precedence over quantity, though you can of course have both if you wish!  
Tel: 01478 650304

### **Glendale Salads**

Salad leaves and herbs that are certified organic by the Soil Association. Early salad leaves and edible petals made an attractive display for the trade show in February and curious visitors were able to taste the petals. The colour and variety of produce available means that there's plenty available even for those who don't like 'greens'.  
Tel: 01470 511349.

### **Loch Bracadale Crabs**

At Rick Simons' family business, crabs are cooked, prepared, then packaged in a variety of ways. Crabmeat can be purchased as white meat only, or white & brown meat, in the shell or cartons. Crabmeat freezes well so you can keep a supply in. For those of you who like a 'hands on' approach to your seafood, crabs legs can be bought by the kilo.  
Tel: 01470 572264.

### **MacKenzie's Bakery**

This bakery in Portree produces bread, cakes, scones, oatcakes, and shortbread. Call in to see the full range or speak to Neil or James to find out more.  
Tel: 01478 612028.

### **Isle of Skye Seafood Company Ltd**

Based in Broadford the Isle of Skye Seafood Company, run by John Gilbertson supplies fresh and smoked fish and shellfish year round according to availability and weather conditions.  
Tel: 01471 822135.

### **West Highland Dairy**

Kathy and David Biss of Achmore won Silver and Gold Awards in the World Cheese Awards in 2003 and 'Best British Cheese' at the World Cheese Awards 2003. The product range includes soft and hard cheeses, ice cream, yogurt and cr me fraiche. Kathy also travels worldwide to teach people how to make cheeses.  
Tel: 01599 577203.

Having gone through 'main course ingredients' let's not forget that a 'little of what you fancy' does you good.

### **Vanilla Skye**

Good news for 'chocoholics'; you can also have some local produce. For a special treat, how about some hand-made chocolates from Skye's only chocolate shop? Made with quality ingredients, the chocolates are produced in both traditional and more adventurous flavours. Try their great ice cream too!  
Tel: 01478 611295

### **Isle of Skye Fudge Company**

Made to a traditional recipe in open pans, in Original flavour or made with Talisker Single Malt Whisky. It's the perfect gift for your customers to take home, over the sea from Skye.  
Contact great-taste@skyefudge.co.uk.

All of the products mentioned here can be collected and delivered by the Food Link Van.

This list gives some indication of what is grown/produced. For details on what is currently available you should contact the producer. For an A4 list of producers and contact details, please email lesley.linley@btinternet.com and state if you would like to receive your list by email or conventional post. Alternatively visit the website [www.foodlinkvan.co.uk](http://www.foodlinkvan.co.uk).

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## **NEWS FROM SLHDA**

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We (Skye & Lochalsh Horticultural Development Association) will start running the market stall in Portree on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June this year. Last year we found that we could have sold a lot more produce than was supplied. Now's the time to think of planting extra and earning a bit more too!

For those who have not participated in the stall before it's simple. You deliver

your produce on Saturday morning, it is sold at a full retail price and you get the proceeds minus a small levy. You will be expected to help once or twice with staffing the stall. This is an interesting way of meeting the customers and seeing what they enjoy. If delivery does not fit your schedule or you are too far for it to be economic would you let Ian Brown know? He is researching whether it would be possible feasibly and economically to use the Food Link Van which runs in most parts of Skye and also the part of Lochalsh close to Skye. Although there is also a small levy for this it would offer a simple way of selling more.

If we can make this work collection would be on a Friday. Contact 01470 582462 or [ib@skyeberries.com](mailto:ib@skyeberries.com)

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## **PRETTY AS A PICTURE**

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A few of you may be aware that some flowers are edible but how many of you have tried them? As with mushrooms and fungi, if you're not sure of a positive identification get expert advice! A wide variety of wild and cultivated edible flowers are available from Glendale Salads, regular winner of the Soil Association Local Food Awards.

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## **FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

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Skye businesses are reporting an increase in early season bookings. These are being attributed to the abolition of the Skye Bridge tolls and the early arrival of Easter.

Whatever the reason, more visitors to 'Skye & Lochalsh' mean that more food will be required. This is an excellent opportunity for any grower, however large or small, to increase production. The Skye & Lochalsh area is enjoying the benefit of increased interest in high quality local food. The Food Link Group is interested to hear from any producers/growers who can increase production, and from customers about other produce they would like to obtain locally.

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## **FARMERS' MARKETS**

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It is hoped that the Farmers' Markets will be held on Skye once per month throughout the summer this year.

*Continued overleaf*

The Farmers' Markets are in addition to the SLHDA stalls that are held weekly during the summer.

It is anticipated that the first Farmer's Market will be held in July. Look out for details in the press, community notice boards, and your local shops.

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## SLOW FOOD

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The Slow Food Movement was founded almost twenty years ago as a reaction to the opening of a McDonalds Restaurant near the Spanish Steps in Rome.

*'The Slow Food Movement was founded in Italy in 1986 to promote food and wine culture, but also to defend food and agricultural biodiversity worldwide. It opposes the standardisation of taste, defends the need for consumer information, protects cultural identities tied to food and gastronomic traditions, safeguards traditional foods and cultivation and processing techniques, and defends domestic and wild animal and vegetable species.'*

Members of Slow Food Bergamo (Italy) visited Skye in early June, enjoying a visit to Talisker Distillery and a lunch of local foods at the Sconser Lodge. Contact Carole Inglis for info/membership at [slowfood@lochviewhouse.co.uk](mailto:slowfood@lochviewhouse.co.uk)

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## AS SEEN ON TV

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Those of you with a 'keen eye' will have noticed one or two familiar faces on the TV in recent months. John Gilbertson of Isle of Skye Seafood and Lady Claire MacDonald of Kinloch Lodge have appeared on BBC's 'Landward'. You may even have caught a fleeting glimpse of Anthony Hovey of Skye Vegetables.

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## VILLAGE SHOPS

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Dunvegan leads the way with village shops. The Fruit and Nut Place in Dunvegan is an important link in the local food chain. Tony and Nora Warby sell a large variety of produce in the shop and take regular deliveries of cheeses from West Highland Dairy at Achmore; a significant distance for a 'local' product to travel. This is made possible by use of the Food Link Van, which goes through Dunvegan twice a

week from May till October. Tony also owns the former Bracadale stores in Struan, and we hope that it will soon be as successful as the Fruit and Nut Place, which is a valuable asset for the area.

Another Dunvegan store, the Dunvegan Shop, run by Alastair Macdonald, stocks Isle of Skye Seafood and Isle of Skye Fudge. It is hoped that more local shops will begin to stock local produce, as this benefits the community and the local economy and also provides an extra attraction for visitors to the area.

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## HOTEL MEMBERS

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The Food Link membership has some new additions from the hotel sector, the most recent of these being the Sconser Lodge and the Bosville Hotel.

The inclusion of hotels, restaurants and shops in the membership in addition to producers, means that the views of all sectors of the food business community are represented.

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## EU SCUPPER SCALLOPS

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As reported recently on BBC's Landward the EU proposes changes to regulations that could badly affect King Scallop producers. Restaurants want King Scallops alive and in the shell, believing them to be superior to the prepared product, but new EU regulations will make this difficult. Producers would be required to test each batch of scallops for ASP at an estimated cost of £200 per test. These costs would be prohibitive, potentially putting the environmentally friendlier scallop divers out of business and leaving the way open for large-scale scallop dredging. Methods of ensuring that the product meets regulations need to be found to protect both the consumers and producers. Ideas being considered involve licensing restaurants to shuck (prepare) the scallops.

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## SUPPORT FOOD LINK AND YOUR COMMUNITY

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The Food Link Van is co-ordinated by Food Link Skye & Lochalsh Ltd, a non-profit making company whose directors are drawn from Skye & Lochalsh Food Link Group. You can help to support the Food Link and promote local produce and tourism by

joining Skye & Lochalsh Food Link Group for an annual membership of £10. Producers and regular customers can be included on the Food Link Van website [www.foodlinkvan.co.uk](http://www.foodlinkvan.co.uk). All members will receive copies of this newsletter, and produce is promoted at the Annual Hotel and Catering Trade Show at the Cuillin Hills Hotel.

To join the Skye & Lochalsh Food Link Group please ask the Marketing Co-ordinator for an application form, email [lesley.linley@btinternet.com](mailto:lesley.linley@btinternet.com). If you simply need to renew your membership, please send your cheque payable to *Skye & Lochalsh Food Link Group* to:

Alison Oakes, Skye & Lochalsh Food Link, Old Mission House, Sconser, Isle of Skye, IV48 8TD.

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## MOVING ON

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Jan MacDonald has now sold the Tables Hotel in Dunvegan. We would like to thank Jan for her support of local producers during her time at the Tables Hotel. We wish her every happiness and success.

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## NEXT ISSUE

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Contributions are welcome from growers, producers, retailers, and members of the public, please submit by 8th August.

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## DISCLAIMER

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Whilst all information included in this newsletter is accurate to the best of our knowledge, Skye & Lochalsh Food Link Group accept no liability for any inaccuracies or omissions. The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Skye & Lochalsh Food Link Group.

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