

Food Link News

Newsletter of the Skye & Lochalsh Food Link Group

Winter 2005

Despite the difficult year for food producers in Skye & Lochalsh, there have been some real success stories with new or previously little known producers emerging to find there are plenty of customers waiting to snap up their produce. Early Bird Enterprises is one success story; taking their produce to the Market in Portree showed Keith and Rachael that there was plenty of interest in their products, which frequently sell out early. Their Christmas Poultry, mentioned in the last newsletter has sold well. In response to readers' demands the back page of the newsletter now features more information about local produce, the range is growing all the time!

NEW YEAR RESOLUTION

'Tis the season to be merry', and also a time to make plans for the coming year. The spring may seem very distant just now but the long winter evenings are great times to ponder over those seed catalogues and cookery books and make plans. There are various ways that you can help bolster food production in the area. If you're not a grower just now you could grow a little produce at home for yourself, starting with a few salad crops and maybe some new potatoes grown in a tub. If you're already a food producer, why not consider increasing production or consider diversification? If you're unable to produce foods at home you can still support the local economy and your community by making a commitment to buy local produce. If you're some distance from the shops why not contact some neighbours or a community group to see if you can arrange a delivery of local produce to one address by the Food Link Van?

SLOW FOOD

The first meeting of the Skye & Lochalsh Slow Food Convivium took place at An Tuireann on Sunday 4th December. It was an opportunity for members and non-members to meet, to find out more about Slow Food and discuss the type of events, which could be organised locally. In addition we were all treated to the most wonderful tea, which included an extremely unusual, but delicious beetroot cake, all produced by Lisa, An Tuireann's in-house chef.

Slow Food is an international organisation with over 80,000 members worldwide; members are organised into local 'convivia' these 'represent and interpret the Slow Food philosophy at a local level.' Slow Food aims to 'link pleasure and food with awareness and responsibility preserving food heritage from disappearing due to the prevalence of convenience foods and agribusiness.'

The meeting started with a very interesting short film outlining some of the work Slow Food does to save artisan foods from extinction and ensure their continued production in the traditional manner. Slow Food's 'Ark of Taste' catalogues products at risk; in the UK these include Ayrshire's Dunlop cheese and Herdwick sheep. The working arm of the Ark called 'Presidia' assists artisan producers in guaranteeing a viable future for their products; here in the UK five products have been pinpointed including Gloucester cheese, Cornish Pilchards to Perry, a pear-based cider.

After the film, discussion ensued and a whole host of proposals were made for future events some practical and some academic but nearly all edible! Suggestions ranged from hands-on bread-making days to wild food forages, visits to local producers, a look at Highland traditions of food and its production, to a 'potato day' looking at varieties, taste and cooking. And of course talk of what might be on the menu at the quarterly Slow Food suppers; an opportunity for all to meet and enjoy what is locally available.

The Skye and Lochalsh Slow Food Convivia aims to support and promote local producers and traditions through a variety of events and initiatives, but also to bring

Food Dates for Your Diary

January
Make a resolution to buy more local produce

W/c 13th March
Food Link Van begins its run for the season

March 15th & 16th
Trade Show at Cuillin Hills Hotel

April 29th
Food Link Local Produce Promotion – all welcome

In this issue

New Year Resolution
Slow Food
What's New?
GM 'through the back door'
Cooking like Mamma
Cuillin Hills Trade Show
Local Produce
News from SLHDA
Skye Meat
Dunvegan Shop
Green Tourism
How to use the Food Link Van
Recipes
Local Producers
Contact Details

people together to enjoy and celebrate both local food and that of other areas in an informed manner and convivial atmosphere.

Those interested in becoming members of Slow Food can do so by contacting Carole Inglis the Convivium leader at slowfood@lochviewhouse.co.uk or by logging on to the Slow Food website www.slowfood.com.

Dede MacGillivray

WHAT'S NEW?

Catriona Wright from Breakish is producing a range of goods from home-made fudge to flavoured oils and vinegars, plus free-range eggs and traditional home made ice-cream. Some of this produce will be available at Woodrising Gallery when it opens for the season at Easter.

Catriona is happy to take telephone enquiries at Newleaf Croft on 01471 820105

GM

'THROUGH THE BACK DOOR'

The Soil Association has raised concerns* about the increasingly large amounts of GM** cereals coming in to the UK as animal feed. UK use of GM feed increases demand for GM crops grown in USA, Brazil, and Argentina.

In 1999 major UK supermarkets banned GM ingredients from food on their shelves, after consumer pressure to do so, but the use of GM is allowed in animal feed that is being used to feed livestock that produce non-organic meat, cheese & dairy products. Food from GM fed animals isn't labelled.

Research now suggests that we should be concerned about the effects of GMO's on human health. Despite these concerns, the Food Standards Agency still approves new GMO's for imported animal feed.

Find out more at www.soilassociation.org

*Soil Association mailshot 'Animal feed GM through the back door...'

**Genetically Modified

COOKING LIKE MAMMA

Recent TV programmes showed Jamie Oliver somewhat frustrated by the Italians' reluctance to embrace his adventurous recipes. They preferred the simple high quality dishes 'like mamma makes'. He seemed to miss the point that if you have top quality, flavour-packed and nutritious ingredients there's little you *need* to do with them.

Adventurous and highly trained chefs undoubtedly have their place and it's great to go out for a culinary treat that is beyond the skills of most of us, but isn't it great to hear that people who eat the *finest foods* at home like to eat simply, in ways that we mere mortals can manage?

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

CUILLIN HILLS TRADE SHOW

The Cuillin Hills Hotel Annual Trades Exhibition takes place on 15th and 16th March. Producers are encouraged to attend in order to meet their customers. Make those contacts before your competitors do! It's a great opportunity for chefs to meet producers and find out how the Food Link Van can help in making those local food deliveries.

Shirley Spear, Head Chef and Co-Director of The Three Chimneys & The House Over-By at Colbost, Dunvegan, explains the importance of the service:

"Over almost twenty years, Eddie and I have built-up a worldwide name for The Three Chimneys. For a restaurant of its calibre to thrive and grow in such an off-the-beaten track location is unusual. One of the reasons behind our success is that I have been proud to use fresh produce from Skye. My reputation as a Scottish chef has grown because I have taken pride in always promoting my use of Skye produce, plus everything connected with Scotland's superb natural larder and its exceptional culinary heritage.

The Food Link Van has proved to be a vital accessory to the growth of The Three Chimneys and its far-flung reputation as a leading Scottish restaurant. Allowing easier access, with a regular delivery schedule, to the wealth of produce from Skye and Lochalsh has been enormously beneficial to

us as a small, rural business. I hope that the excellent service provided by the Food Link Van will continue to grow and prosper to the benefit of all food providers in this area. The more fresh, local produce available for sale, the more people will taste and enjoy it. Customers will continue to come back for more, making eating-out in Skye and Lochalsh a more memorable and enjoyable experience all-round.

The Three Chimneys at Colbost will be making regular use of the new Food Link Van from its first day in service. We wish everyone involved with this superb enterprise, every success for the future."

LOCAL PRODUCE

Local produce can be found at these outlets, (all subject to season and availability).

West Highland Dairy (Achmore)
Cheeses, crème fraiche, yogurt, ice cream.

Ardvasar Stores (Ardvasar)
Beef and lamb

Sleat Trading (Armadale)
Tablet, ales, whisky, water

Clan Donald Centre (Armadale)
Tablet/Venison

Mace (Broadford) *Ales, Whisky*
Woodrising Gallery (Broadford)
Tablet, ice cream

Isle of Skye Seafood (Broadford)
Fresh & smoked fish & shellfish, herbs

Skye Surprises (Broadford)
Tablet, Ales, Whisky

The Stop Shop (Carbost) *Ales*
Talisker Distillery (Carbost) *Whisky*

Dunvegan Shop (Dunvegan)
Fish, tablet

The Fruit & Nut Place (Dunvegan)
Cheese, Crème Fraiche, yogurt, Herbs, Eggs, soft fruit.

Glen Stores (Glendale) *Eggs, salads*
Glendale Village Shop (Glendale) *Salads*

Lochalsh Butchers (Kyle of Lochalsh)
Local meat and fish/shellfish & herbs

Early Bird Enterprises (Orbost)
Sausages, bacon, ham, venison, 'Christmas' poultry.

Jackson's Wholefoods (Portree)
Cakes, bread, preserves, eggs, soft fruit

Vanilla Skye (Portree)
Chocolates, ice cream, tablet

MacKinnon's (Portree) *Soft fruit*

McRae Jones Stores (near Balmacara)
Seafood, herbs, meat

Pieces of Ate (Staffin)
Seafood, cheese, ales.

Isle of Skye Brewery (Uig) *Ales*

Rankin's Bakery & grocery store (Uig)
Water

NEWS FROM SLHDA

Skye and Lochalsh Horticultural Development Association members attended the Christmas Market in the Gathering Hall in Portree on December 6th, with a range of greens and root vegetables, herbs, salads and preserves. Early Bird Enterprises were also at the market with Christmas poultry, ham and other meat products. The people who attended the weekly market last year have benefited tremendously from meeting their customers and more producers are to join them in the square next season. The weekly SLHDA market will continue and meat and cheese producers will join them perhaps once a fortnight or once per month to complete the shopping experience, you can join them, start planning now! If you are a potential customer speak to the producers now to discuss your requirements for next season.

SKYE MEAT

Skye's meat producers continue to find local markets for their lamb, beef, pork, sausages, bacon, ham, venison, wild boar and poultry. Make sure you ask for local meat when shopping in the New Year.

DUNVEGAN SHOP

Getting local food to local people is pretty tricky – it's easier to get it from Edinburgh! Well at least that was how it was before we had The Food Link Van; an essential service for local food producers in Skye & Lochalsh. What a wonderful opportunity to have fresh, locally & healthily grown or produced food.

At Dunvegan Shop we've used the service from the earliest days. But it's not always easy to coordinate our needs & the needs of customers with delivery schedules; the majority of our sales are before lunchtime – if goods don't arrive until the afternoon they don't have as good a chance of selling and sit on the shelf for another day – the ever ticking "sell by date"!..... Bread from Portree Bakery and fish from Isle of Skye Seafood are good examples. Plus we really need local food packed for retail sale – we're not allowed to do it on site. Small quantities and frequent supplies are much preferred. Point of sale

material also helps a lot. Local customers often demonstrate strong "local brand" loyalty and tourists just love it! However we retailers are a wary bunch! Sometimes we need to be reminded of the quality & value for money of local produce (especially to the wider community) but I'm confident that we could be wooed and persuaded to take more local produce with a little negotiation & imagination. After all, few of us can resist a good opportunity and unique sale!

Jan MacDonald

GREEN TOURISM

Marcus & Linda Ridsdill Smith of Lyndale House, Edinbane are members of the Skye Organic Growers Association, Slow Food and the SLHDA; they also have luxurious Bed & Breakfast facilities which have for some years been featured in the Alistair Sawday publication 'British Bed & Breakfast Special Places to Stay'. This year they have been given a special 'Green entry', along with just five other businesses in the book. This recognises the part they play in promoting green tourism, using local and environmentally responsible produce. Breakfasts are made using produce from their organic garden and eco friendly cleaning products and organic soaps are used in the house. The 300-year-old house with walled garden stands at the end of a ½ mile drive and enjoys wonderful sunsets reflected in Loch Greshornish. It is described in the publication as 'a quiet, delightful retreat'. Contact linda@lyndale.net or see Entry 610 in the book.

HOW TO USE THE FOOD LINK VAN

Customers order goods directly from the food producer. The producer then organises delivery with the Food Link Van driver and invoices customers for the goods. Invoices should be settled promptly to ensure a good working relationship and continuity of supply.

You do not have to be a business customer to use the van if you are on an existing route and a producer is able to supply a reasonably large order for your household and a few neighbours to one address (maybe a community

centre or village hall?). Producers will be able to advise on availability. If you have any suggestions to make the Food Link van work better for you please contact the Marketing Co-ordinator.

RECIPES

After all the gorging and excesses of the festive season, simple food that is comforting and reviving is in order.

CARROT, LEEK & GINGER SOUP

Soup is a great restorer and the ginger in this one takes it to a really curative level, warming the body and stimulating digestion.

*3 large winter carrots, chopped
3 leeks, chopped (only use some of the green)
2-3 inches grated ginger (according to taste)
1 clove garlic
1.2 litres hot vegetable stock (Marigold is very good)
Salt and pepper*

Sauté vegetables with the ginger and garlic until they begin to soften, then add the stock. Bring back to the boil, lower the heat and simmer for 20 minutes or until soft. Blend until smooth and serve with crème fraiche and chives.

KALE, BACON AND BEANS

A very quick and tasty supper dish.

*Large bunch of kale, coarsely chopped
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 tbsp olive oil
4-6 rashers bacon, chopped
1 tin cannellini or haricot beans (or same of cooked)
1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
2 tsp brown sugar
Salt & pepper
Grated parmesan to taste*

Sauté bacon in oil then add garlic continue cooking until soft. Add kale and stir-fry until just wilted. Throw over about ½ cup of water and allow to steam until kale is cooked. Add beans, vinegar, sugar, salt and pepper. Simmer to warm up beans, check seasoning and then serve in bowls with cheese and crusty bread.

Recipes supplied by Dede MacGillivray

Carrots and leeks, garlic, bacon and kale are available from local producers.

FOOD LINK DELIVERIES

Deliveries will begin again week commencing 13th March.

LOCAL PRODUCERS

Armada Meats

Aberdeen Angus and Skye Lamb from Ardvasar Stores.
Bill Currie. Tel: 01470 844214

Catriona Wright

Free range eggs, home made tablet and ice cream, flavoured oils and vinegars, muffins, bread etc. by request.
Woodrising Gallery 01471 820300
Catriona Wright. 01471 820105
catriona@scarycorrie.freemove.co.uk

Gillian Barrett

Organic salads, fruit and vegetables.
Soil Association Certification.
Gillian Barrett. Tel: 01478 650311
email gillcamus7@aol.com

Donald MacDonald

Potatoes, cabbages, broccoli, kale etc.
Available July to December
Donald McDonald. Tel: 01478 640276
calina@cgmeynort.fsbusiness.co.uk

Donallan Strawberries

Strawberries/raspberries. May to Sept.
Jam. Available all year
Elizabeth O'Connor-Pierce
Tel/fax: 01470 532385.

Early Bird Enterprises

Gourmet sausages, venison, ham, bacon
Christmas poultry.
Keith & Rachael Jackson
JacRch@aol.com Tel: 01470 521828

Glendrynoch Garden

Watercress grown in Skye spring water.
Available April to December
Deirdre Peppe. Tel: 01478 640218
email peppe@drynoch.demon.co.uk

Glendale Salads

Organic salad leaves, herbs and edible flowers. Available spring, summer, autumn and Christmas.
Soil Association Certification.
Bridget Hagmann. Tel: 01470 511349
email glendalesalads@tiscali.co.uk

Isle of Skye Fresh Produce Co.

Herbs, oriental salads, and leaf crops
Roger & Fiona Whiddon.
Tel: 01470 521812.
email rogerwhiddon@hotmail.com

Isle of Skye Fudge Company

Hand made tablet, in original or Talisker flavours.
Contact great-taste@skye-fudge.co.uk.

Isle of Skye Oysters

Pacific Oysters reared in Loch Harport.
Available all year.
Kenny Bain. Tel: 01478 640313
email skyeoysters@aol.com

Isle of Skye Seafood Company Ltd

Fresh and smoked fish and shellfish.
Available all year.
John Gilbertson. Tel: 01471 822135
email sales@skye-seafood.co.uk

Loch Bracadale Crabs

Crabs, cooked and prepared.
Available all year
Rick Simons. Tel: 01470 572264
email crabs@bracadale.co.uk

Loch Eishort Mussels

Rope grown mussels from Loch Eishort. All year except May.
Peter MacAskill. Tel: 01471 822309.
email PMACASKILL@aol.com

Lusta Fungi

Soil Association Organic Shiitake, Lion's Mane and Oyster mushrooms.
Neal Christie and Brigid MacLachlan
Tel: 01470 592209
them@camuslusta.freemove.co.uk

MacKenzie's Bakery

Bread, cakes, scones, oatcakes etc.
All year. Neil and James MacKenzie
Tel: 01478 612028.

Oakes Marine Dived Scallops

Hand dived, fished & wild ranched,
King Scallops, live in the shell.
Available all year.
David Oakes. Tel: 01478 650304
email oakesmarine@btopenworld.com

Skyeberries

Blueberries. August to September.
Also raspberries, currants etc.
Ian Brown. Tel: 01470 582462
email ib@skyeberries.com

Skye Fruit & Fungi

Strawberries, July/August. Shiitake, May/September. Oyster, Autumn.
Tel: Lisa Mehan 01471 855245
Tel: Val Piddock 01471 855310
email misty.croft@btinternet.com

Skye Vegetables

Attractive and unusual varieties of vegetables plus herbs and fruit.
Anthony Hovey. Tel: 01470 511285
email jetone@fsmail.net

Vanilla Skye

Hand-made chocolates. All year.
Pam, Lesley, Linda or Barbara.
Tel: 01478 611295
email info@vanillaskye.co.uk

West Highland Dairy

Soft and hard cheeses, ice cream, yogurt and crème fraiche (Feb to Dec)
Kathy & David Biss Tel: 01599 577203
email info@westhighlanddairy.co.uk

CONTACT DETAILS

Website www.foodlinkvan.co.uk

Annual Memberships

Send cheque for £10, made payable to *Skye & Lochalsh Food Link Group* to Alison Oakes, Skye & Lochalsh Food Link Group, Old Mission House, Sconser, Isle of Skye, IV48 8TD

Food Link Van Levy

Send cheques made payable to *Food Link Skye & Lochalsh Ltd* to Gloria Bain, Beach View, 26 Fiskavaig, Isle of Skye, IV47 8SN

Marketing Co-ordinator

lesley.linley@btinternet.com

NEXT ISSUE

Contributions are welcome for the next issue (due end of March). Please submit to Marketing Co-ordinator by 28/02/06.

DISCLAIMER

Information included in this newsletter is accurate to the best of our knowledge but Skye & Lochalsh Food Link Group accepts no liability for any inaccuracies or omissions. Opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Skye & Lochalsh Food Link Group.

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