

Food Link News

Newsletter of the Skye & Lochalsh Food Link Group

Spring 2006

Spring is here, and with its arrival comes hope for a good season for hoteliers, restaurateurs and producers. For a few businesses last season's trade was good, but generally there seemed to be disappointment, especially after hopes for a busy season were raised with the removal of the Skye tolls. Quality, locally produced foods remain high profile and there is an opportunity to develop the 'quality eating experience', where quality of service, environment and the atmosphere in which the food is served play an important part in making a meal a memorable experience. See *'The Three Chimneys comes of age'* on page 3.

NEW SEASON, NEW IDEAS

At the time of preparing the last newsletter the spring seemed very distant but here we are, officially in spring. As locally grown herbs, salads and vegetables begin to become available how many of you, the consumers have made that pledge to buy local whenever possible? How many of you will try growing something at home? Those first attempts at 'grow your own', whether it's growing mustard and cress on the window sill at home, or a garden full of potatoes, may grow into something greater.

NEW PRODUCER LED LOCAL FOOD AWARD

In recognition of their customers, Skye and Lochalsh Food Link Group are delighted to announce their new annual award and accreditation scheme: *'A Taste of Local Food'*. These innovative awards, acknowledging their very own 'local food heroes', are to be presented in July of this year.

Not so long ago it was well nigh impossible to enjoy the range of local produce now available in Skye and Lochalsh; the hard work of the Food Link Group has created a link from producer to plate, unimaginable ten years ago, but without the support and loyalty of the hospitality and retail sector, this could not have become a reality.

The awards, individually designed by five local artists using inspiration and in some cases materials from the surrounding

environment, will go to the overall highest users, nominated by Food Link Group producer members in five categories; hotel, restaurant, B&B, retail and educational establishment. Accreditation plaques, for exterior display, bearing the new *'A Taste of Local Food'* logo will be presented to award winners and the top twenty 'local food users', with all regular purchasers receiving *'A Taste of Local Food'* certificate.

'Local' has become the food buzz word and this scheme will firmly put those on the map, who promote and sell the plethora of delicious produce harvested in Skye and Lochalsh. With the growing demand for traceability from a discerning public, the reputation of an establishment can only be enhanced by strong links to local food. So make sure you begin purchasing or increase your purchase of local food so that you are not left behind!

For details of the scheme contact Dede MacGillivray
dedemacgillivray@hotmail.com

It is hoped to broaden the scope of the award next year, as the group are aware that there are more producers out there, supplying on an individual level. If you are a local producer from Skye or Lochalsh, and would like to nominate a local business for the 'Taste of Local Food' awards, why not join the Food Link Group today – it's only £15 membership with loads of benefits.

Food Dates for Your Diary

April 29th
Food Link's
'Incredible Edibles'
event at Aros
- all welcome
Cookery events, speakers, food tastings, will you take the Skye Bush Tucker Challenge? see page 2

6th May
Food Link AGM

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SLOW FOOD

The Slow Food movement is something that is relatively new to the UK, but growing in stature, maturing slowly, as all good things do. Slow Food Skye and Lochalsh is most definitely not elitist; it's an organisation of like-minded people from all walks of life who believe in the value of good food and its importance to our culture, our health and our heritage. A number of meetings throughout the year give members a chance to come together for relaxed 'Slow Food' lunches and dinners and to share various food related activities. The programme of events for the coming year includes bread making for beginners, a sausage and mash supper, wild food forages and a beach barbecue.

If you're unsure about joining why not attend a meeting or lunch as a non member before committing yourself to membership? Contrary to some perceptions, 'ball gowns and dinner suits' are not required at Slow Food dinners, though there's no reason why you shouldn't dress up if you wish!

Anyone interested in participating in Slow Food activities or 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. You could also come along to the Slow Food stand at Aros on 29th April.

WHAT'S NEW?

As usual the new season starts with many changes to ownership, management and staffing of hotels and restaurants.

Recent announcements in the press include:

The opening of 'Sea Breezes' restaurant on the quayside in Portree, by Neil MacNeil, owner and chef. Sea Breezes offers freshly prepared food using local ingredients.

The Skeabost Country House Hotel at Skeabost Bridge is now owned by the Swallow Group. The hotel will now be

known as Swallow Skeabost Country House. The Swallow Group also owns the Dunollie Hotel in Broadford, the Kings Arms in Kyleakin and the Kyle Hotel and aims to buy another 30 hotels in Scotland this year.

'INCREDIBLE EDIBLES'

The Skye & Lochalsh Food Link Group is holding a local food promotion day at Aros on Saturday April 29th. This event is intended to be a 'food fun day' for all the family and business people too.

A final programme of events will be available nearer the time but the day will include various food related activities. In the auditorium children will cook alongside Dunvegan Primary school cook Agnes Bessant, visiting chef Mike Keen and local chef Robert MacAskill. There will be talks on local and seasonal produce by Shirley Spear and Claire Macdonald, who will also be available to sign copies of their cookery books. Skye archaeologist Steve Birch will give a talk on Local Food in the Iron Age. This will include a display of finds from the dig at High Pasture Cave, at Strath Suardale in South Skye. Investigations at this 2000 year old site revealed that High Pasture Cave was home to Iron Age pig farmers. A forerunner of Early Bird Enterprises perhaps? There will be samples of fresh locally produced foods to taste and exciting new recipe ideas.

Outside (weather permitting) market stalls feature local produce; cheese, chocolate, salads, confectionery etc. Perhaps of greatest appeal to the children and more adventurous among you, the *Skye Bush Tucker Challenge*, a blind tasting and touch identification of more exotic local foods! Children should bring their parents or a responsible adult along with them.

Aros will be screening *Chicken Little* in the afternoon so why not come early and make it a family day out?

Admission to Incredible Edibles is free.

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

THE CUILLIN HILLS TRADE SHOW

The Cuillin Hills Hotel Annual Trades Exhibition took place on 15th and 16th March. The show took place later in the season than last year in an attempt to secure better weather but deep snow the preceding week kept everyone guessing whether exhibitors would be able to attend.

The Food Link stand has been a regular feature at the show since the Group was formed. The stand was staffed full time, once again, by Brigitte Hagmann of Glendale Salads. Fiona Whiddon of Isle of Skye Fresh Produce Company, Deirdre Peppe of Glendrynoch Garden and Rick Simons of Loch Bracadale Crab were also on hand to answer customer enquiries about the produce on display. Thanks go to all the above for giving their time and expertise. Produce was donated for sampling at the show by Isle of Skye Oysters, Isle of Skye Fudge Company, New Leaf Croft, Talisker Distillery, Isle of Skye Brewery, Glendale Salads, MacKenzie's Bakery, Loch Bracadale Crab, Loch Eishort Mussels, and Oakes Marine. Contact details for anyone wishing to purchase from these producers are on the back page.

The Food Link Group is grateful to Highland Council for their financial assistance with this important local food promotion event, and to the Cuillin Hills staff for their assistance.

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*
 Fasgadh Stores (Dunvegan) *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, 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, tablet.
 Isle of Skye Brewery (Uig) *Ales*
 Rankin's Bakery & grocery store (Uig)
Water
 Sligachan Hotel (Sligachan) *Ales*
 If you know of a retail outlet in Skye and Lochalsh that sells locally produced food & drink but is not included here, please contact Food Link's Marketing Co-ordinator (see back page for contact details).

NEWS FROM SLHDA

The Skye & Lochalsh Horticultural Association will run their weekly market stall in Portree again over the summer. Look out for day and dates in the local press or ask SLHDA members. Other food producers are able to join them to make a regular Farmer's Market, but there is flexibility as Farmer's Markets are usually held once a month. Here in Portree the SLHDA market is held every week over the summer and other producers can attend once a fortnight or once a month as suits them.

SKYE MEAT

Locally available meat produce includes lamb, beef, sausage, bacon, ham, venison and poultry. This high quality local produce comes without artificial colourings, additives etc.

Make sure you ask for local meat when shopping and eating out.

THREE CHIMNEYS COMES OF AGE

April 1st was celebrated in some style this year, with the 21st birthday of The Three Chimneys proving that Shirley and Eddie Spear were anything but April Fools when they opened their restaurant so far away from 'the beaten track' 21 years ago.

It may not have seemed such a wise move at the time but as The Three Chimneys continues to win high profile awards for both the quality of the food and the beauty of the environment, Shirley & Eddie should be very satisfied that what began as a dream, continues to reward.

The rewards are not just enjoyed by Shirley and Eddie; their continually growing business provides jobs and training opportunities for 28 staff. In addition to this direct employment, use of local foods at The Three Chimneys supports local producers and much of this produce is delivered by Food Link's 'Food Link Van'.

The Three Chimneys has recently been voted the restaurant with the best location by readers of the 'Observer' newspaper. Tributes were paid to The Three Chimneys by food writer Nigel Slater and Philip Riddle Chief Executive of VisitScotland. Carole Inglis, Enterprise Development Manager at Skye & Lochalsh Enterprise said 'The Three Chimneys fully reflects our goal, to promote Skye & Lochalsh as a high quality food destination within a unique natural and cultural environment. The quality of our food and drink is second to none, and Shirley's inspirational menus and attention to detail have established The Three Chimneys restaurant as a beacon of excellence, showing that getting off the beaten track can lead you to outstanding restaurants in unexpected places.'

Three Chimneys has three AA rosettes and has appeared in the Which? Good Food Guide 20 times. The 'House Over-by' has a VisitScotland 5 star rating in the 'Restaurant with Rooms' category.

We wish all at The Three Chimneys continued success.

GREEN TOURISM

Rosemary & Neil Colquhoun of Greshornish House Hotel join Marcus & Linda Ridsdill Smith of Lyndale House, in the Alistair Sawday publication 'British Hotels, Inns and Other Places, Special Places to Stay'. Details were submitted to the Sawday publication ahead of the 'Green Tourism' inspection but Rosemary & Neil hope to have a 'green entry' in future publications.

The Greshornish House Hotel is situated on the western shore of Loch Greshornish facing Lyndale House, and has recently undergone refurbishment of the kitchens and dining room. The licensed restaurant and the new conservatory are now open to non-residents for coffee, lunches, teas and dinners. The new Head Chef, Graham Stewart is keen to use local produce in the quality dishes that you'd expect from such an establishment. 'Regular' chef Andy Millar will be at Greshornish House for his third season. Work has also begun on renovating the walled garden with the intention of providing future guests with some home grown organic produce. We wish them well on their re-opening and look forward to forging good 'Food Links' with them.

HOW TO USE THE FOOD LINK VAN

Goods are ordered directly from the producer who 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. Families often enquire about obtaining deliveries from the Food Link Van; these deliveries need to be practical and viable - just as they do for business customers. If you are on an existing route, could you take deliveries for yourself and a few neighbours? If so a delivery should be possible. Box schemes and similar methods of distribution have to be standardised in order to make them practical for the producer, and will vary according to availability, but the benefits are fresh, local, seasonal produce. If you're not able to organise a box scheme why not ask your local shop to order produce for you?

LOCAL PRODUCERS

PLEASE UPDATE YOUR RECORDS as the last newsletter gave incorrect email addresses for Isle of Skye Fresh Produce Co. and Loch Bracadale Crabs.

Armadale Meats

Aberdeen Angus and Skye Lamb available 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.freeseerve.co.uk

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

Gillian Barrett

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

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.co.uk

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@lochbracadale.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.freeseerve.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/Oyster Mushrooms, Autumn.
Tel: 01471 855245/ 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 £15, 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. Please submit copy to Marketing Co-ordinator by 22/05/06.

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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