



**Town Meal returns to Reading: bigger and better!**

The biggest 'picnic in the park' that Reading has ever seen will return to Forbury Gardens on Saturday 5 October and the organisers want the local community to get involved now.

In 2011 this celebration of local and sustainable food was highly praised in the local press: "We think the Town Meal was a simply inspired idea....the meal was delicious... you could browse local stalls of produce, watch cooking demos and if you didn't know much about growing food you could learn a little or sign up to learn more".

This October the partnership of community groups, Reading College, local growers and Reading Borough Council will bring the Town Meal back to Forbury Gardens. A delicious meal, cooked by Reading College catering students from produce grown and donated by local allotment holders and home growers will be served free to over 1,000 people.

Forbury Gardens will be filled with fun activities, cookery demonstrations and local food producers. Community groups will be setting out their stalls and music from local bands will keep the tempo going all afternoon.

Town Meal Steering Group chair, Paul Harper, said "We are planning another a fun-filled family day out with free food and we are again calling on volunteers to help make the meal happen. There are lots of different opportunities to get involved; Town Meal Makers can help out with a range of essential jobs on the day and growers are needed to donate some of their crops for this celebration of local food."

Organisers are encouraging local growers to plant a few extra crops now, ready to donate to the Town Meal in the autumn – the catering students have already worked out the menu, so they know what's needed. Christine Christy, one of the hundreds of growers who donated some veg for the last Town Meal said "I gave some squashes and onions last time, just a few but then if everybody gives a bit it all adds up and, when I saw everybody enjoying the meal on the day, it was brilliant to think that my crops were in there as part of that".

It's not too late to grow a bit extra for the Town Meal now, whether it's tomatoes, carrots, beans, onions or squash – the full list of ingredients is on the Reading Town Meal web site [www.readingtowntownmeal.org.uk](http://www.readingtowntownmeal.org.uk)

To volunteer as a Town Meal Maker, either growing produce or helping out on the day, please email [volunteers@readingtownmeal.org.uk](mailto:volunteers@readingtownmeal.org.uk). Further information is available on the web site [www.readingtowntownmeal.org.uk](http://www.readingtowntownmeal.org.uk) or call 0118 958 6692 and ask for Sharon Fitton.

ENDS.

## Editors Notes:

1. The Town Meal Steering Group is organising this event and comprises: Food4Families (a BIG lottery funded project managed by Reading International Solidarity Centre (RISC)), Reading College, Reading Borough Council Culture & Sport Services, True Food Community Co-operative, Transition Town Reading and other volunteer members.
2. Food4Families aims to work with communities across Greater Reading to increase the amount of food grown locally and sustainably and has created 20 community gardens across Reading where people learn how to grow their own food under the guidance of professional tutors.
3. RISC is the biggest Development Education Centre in the UK, working with schools and community groups to build understanding of sustainable development and promote social justice.
4. Reading College Hospitality, Travel & Tourism department are contributing their expertise & use of kitchen facilities where their catering students will prepare & cook the Town Meal, which they will then serve in Forbury Gardens.
5. Transition Town Reading is a local group of the UK network that aims to promote resilient local economies and co-ordinate the transition of our community to one that is less reliant on fossil fuels; has a smaller carbon footprint and reduces the impact of climate change.
6. True Food Community Cooperative is a social enterprise, owned and run by its members, that enables its members and others to buy affordable organic food and other produce and supports local food production.
7. Reading Borough Council is supporting the event through logistical advice and support.
8. In 2011 we successfully stage the first Reading Town Meal, feeding over 1,000 people with produce grown by local growers, an event that was described as 'inspired and 'one of the best community events in Reading this year'. (Editorial, Reading Evening Post, October 2011).
9. The 2013 Town Meal will again promote the wealth of local food produced on our doorstep through a variety of stall holders in Forbury Gardens. Following the success of this in 2011, there are plans to extend this to include a Farmers' Market on the same day in the nearby Buttermarket.
10. Community group stalls will again provide a host of activities and information such as juicing locally picked fruit, bee-keeping, growing-your-own and much more.
11. A series of Town Meal competitions, open to all, will be announced in the next few weeks.

Further information and photos available from:

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