

**Press Release 25 July 2013.**

**Reading Town Meal announces competitions: show us what you can do!**

The biggest ‘picnic in the park’ that Reading has ever seen will return to Forbury Gardens on Saturday 5 October and this year’s competitions have just been announced; bigger, bolder and more bonkers than ever.

Alongside a fun-filled day of live music, cookery demonstrations, local produce and of course the delicious meal itself, the organizers want you to take part to show us the finest Reading has to offer.

2011 competitor Sandra Robinson said “the competitions are a really cool way for local people to show how great produce being grown across Reading is put to use. It just goes to show what wonderful things you can make with these ingredients, all from your doorstep! The scarecrows look great and kids really loved helping to grow the giant pumpkins, we really hope we win!”

Town Meal 2013 will see the return of the much-loved **pumpkin growing competition**, taking entries from pumpkins grown by individuals and those grown by gardening groups or organizations.

Helping to ensure we don’t have any unwanted flying visitors come to peck at the puddings, the **scarecrow competition** will this year be based on the theme of “growing”.

New to the Town Meal, and ensuring the whole family can get involved, entries for **Vegetable Based Cakes** will be based on the 11 & under range, aged 12-17 and from the 18+ adult category.

Giving all condiment connoisseurs and preserve perfectionists a chance to strut their stuff, the **chutney and jam making competitions** will be sure to throw up some fascinating flavours.

Showing that serious supermarket vegetables don’t have to be the norm in your kitchen, the **most amusing vegetable competition** is sure to get the growers out there giggling.

Entries will be open to amateurs only. You can turn up and register your entry on the day from 12noon to 2pm.

Further information on all this year’s events and competitions is available at [www.readingtowntownmeal.org.uk](http://www.readingtowntownmeal.org.uk) or call 01189586692 and ask for Sharon Fitton.

**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 Cooperative, 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 and serve the Town Meal.
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 staged 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.