

Media Release

Beans, bees, bubbles and a great big crumble coming to Reading Town Meal

A packed line up is announced today for the Reading Town Meal on Saturday 3 October in Forbury Gardens; and there's something for everyone to enjoy at this free event celebrating local sustainable food.

More than thirty local organisations, food producers, entertainers, and hundreds of growers, gardeners and volunteers are coming together to serve up the third Town Meal, which is set to be the biggest yet.

The centrepiece of the afternoon will be a delicious hot meal cooked by the catering students of Reading College from home grown produce donated by local allotment holders and gardeners. This year's lunch menu is planned to finish with an enormous fruit crumble to feed a thousand.

Free hands-on workshops on local food and growing your own will run throughout the afternoon. Topics range from beekeeping to winter vegetable plots and a make your own wormery session. Live music from the bandstand, a big family activities area boasting a bubble bicycle, circus skills and much more, plus a market place of Reading's local food treats, will keep everyone entertained from 12 noon to 4pm.

Neil Bardo, lecturer at Reading College will lead the team cooking up the Town Meal. He said, "Fruit crumble is a classic favourite dish and we're getting ready to serve a very special one to Reading's crumble connoisseurs on 3rd October! There will be a lot of hard work for the team to cook and serve a meal on such a big scale, but this is a wonderful opportunity to work with fresh ingredients straight from Reading's soil and to be part of this unique community event."

The winter vegetable growing workshop is being run by Isla Goldsmith, professional garden tutor, who commented, "If you'd like some tips on how to keep a garden growing through the winter and have your own supply of fresh food in the colder months, this session is for you. I'm looking forward to talking veggies with everyone, whether they are absolute beginners at gardening, or experienced growers ready to share some planting secrets."

Full details of what's on at the Town Meal and booking for all the workshop sessions are available at www.readingtowntownmeal.org.uk. Pledges to donate fruit and vegetables and join the volunteer team are still needed - see the 'Get Involved' section of the website or call 0118 958 6692.

Notes for Editors:

1. For further information or pictures contact Julie Roberts tel: 07934 716689.
2. Each of the previous Reading Town Meals held in 2011 and 2013 have served over 1,000 people with a free hot lunch cooked from tasty local ingredients grown locally, and filled Forbury Gardens with stalls and activities all celebrating local, sustainable food. A short film of the first Reading Town Meal can be seen here <https://vimeo.com/36269113>
3. Reading Town Meal 2015 is funded with generous support from the Big Lottery Fund and Reading Climate Change Partnership, as well as donations from local people and companies.

4. 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 Food Growing Network, Reading Borough Council Culture & Sport Services, True Food Community Cooperative, Transition Town Reading, Reading Voluntary Action and other volunteer members. Reading Borough Council is also supporting the event through logistical advice and support.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Reading Food Growing Network aims to promote and expand locally grown food through sharing knowledge, information and ideas alongside advice and support to local growers
8. Reading College Hospitality, Travel & Tourism department are contributing their expertise and use of kitchen facilities where their catering students will prepare and cook the Town Meal, which they will then serve in Forbury Gardens.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. Reading Voluntary Action (RVA) promotes strength within Reading's voluntary and community sector. RVA's Development worker, Community Involvement, Rachel Goater works to increase the number of people who are active in communities around Reading by improving communication and ensuring people know how and where they can get involved in social groups, community events, sports, volunteering and democracy.

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