

Grow some veg and win prize for the pledge

Reading's very own Town Meal event is returning to the beautiful Forbury Gardens on Saturday 1st October and this year it is definitely not an event to be missed. Organisers are encouraging everyone to get involved because 2016 is looking to be the biggest and best one yet.

Reading Town Meal has been an extremely successful event, going from strength to strength since its beginning in 2011. The event itself is a celebration of locally grown fruit and veg and will see over 1,000 people enjoy locally grown food in the form of a meal cooked by the generous and enormously talented students at Reading College.

A great way to get involved is to contribute vegetables to be used in the meal. This applies to current growers, where it is just a matter of planting a couple of extra seeds, as well as those who have never grown before, where it is a chance to learn a new and very useful skill. So we know what you are planning to donate please 'pledge your veg' at <http://www.readingtowntmeal.org.uk/growersform.cfm> or email us on growers@readingtowntmeal.org.uk. Everyone who makes a pledge before the 20th September will be entered into an exciting prize draw for a chance to win a meal at Reading College's *'The Kitchen'*, an industry standard restaurant.

Not only will there be a delicious meal but there is also something for everyone at the event when it comes to entertainment. Music will fill the air, stalls will be buzzing and the creativity will be flowing in the form of fun-filled workshops. Town Meal Steering Group Chair, Sharon Fitton, explains "Past years have been such a success and I cannot wait for what the 2016 Reading Town Meal has to offer the community. The day really is packed full of fun for all of the family, so save the date."

Community volunteers are vital in making this event possible. Volunteering roles range from helping with set up, supervising parking, organising exciting competitions, handing out flyers to invite people to join the fun, generally overseeing the running of the event and pack down. We have numerous returning volunteers who are keen to help again and it would be great to get as many of the community involved as possible – the more the merrier.

Each Town Meal we have outstanding feedback from the volunteers, who thoroughly enjoy the day. To join our expanding team to help on the lead up or on the day itself, then go over to our website at <http://www.readingtowntmeal.org.uk/volunteerform.cfm> or email us on volunteers@readingtowntmeal.org.uk.



Notes for Editors:

- 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.
- 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
- 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.

- 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
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Reading Borough Council is supporting the event through logistical advice and support.
- Each of the previous Reading Town Meals held in 2011 , 2013, and 2015 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>
- The photo shows Ashleigh Pienaar at Coley Park Community Allotment watering the green beans they are growing for Reading Town Meal