



eat:Festivals

Our Nutritional Values

There is nothing naughty about food. So many of the values food is imbued with by mainstream culture are more about control, emotional coercion or quasi religious adherence to a regime than about nutrition. Foods are regularly called sinful, naughty but nice, a treat, a reward, a guilty pleasure. No wonder we see this stoke up the worst kinds of self-punishment, negative thoughts and anxieties. Forget it! Why do we let the marketeers disconnect our brains from our bodies? Selling us their idea of goodness, their 'value range' rarely has anything valuable for health. Food can be simply the daily way we find the nutrients we need to make our bodies function well. And it's entirely up to us what other values we ascribe to it. If we engage our brains, learn a bit, we can not only keep ourselves healthy but may make ourselves happy in the process.

Food can be fun. We celebrate it in our cultures, in our family traditions, amongst our friends. Cooking good food brings people together and allows us to share. Together people laugh and swap ideas, challenge each other and laugh some more. This is how positive change comes about. Which makes life happier for us all.

When we moved to Somerset we navigated our way around our new home by following our taste-buds. We ate and drank our way around the west country. Sharing the stories of the food and drink with our new friends as we shared meals, we found we were becoming proud of the farmers and artisans who produced such wonderful things. As we wended our way down a winding track to collect some tender cuts or clodded round a ruddy vineyard after tasting its sparkling light wine, we were making connections. Connections to the land we'd chosen and to the people who work it. Thankfully, and for the moment at least, the two are inseparable. We are continually inspired by brave people doing something different with food: diversifying their family's farming, renovating an old wreck of a building to house a restaurant, reviving our ancient traditional foods and grafting in all weathers to bring their dream to fruition. Thanks to them, food can be restorative, regenerative. They keep our communities strong and resilient. If we remain mindful of where our food comes from, we can awaken a whole new awareness of how we fit into this landscape too. That's why we celebrate Local Food Heroes at our festivals and help visitors to buy from them all year round.

Our dietary choices are informed by love and by joy, not by fear or conformity. We respect that the decision of what to put in our mouths is one of our most personal decisions and that each one of us makes different choices. It is one of the few areas of our lives that nearly all of us can have total control over. We want to enable more people to think about their choices and make the right decision for them, to eat healthily and live happily as a result.

We think it is right to spend our time promoting and prioritising small scale primary producers with high welfare standards, both of their livestock and of the land. We celebrate organic growers and think animals should be free to forage for what's best for them, not just what fattens them cheaply. We know that fat and protein and carbohydrate and fibre all are essential for our health, but not always in the combinations offered to us. Often the best bits are stripped away from our foods by manufacturers, playing on a lazy idea of 'refinement' that doesn't suit our contemporary lives. Sugar and flour and rice and corn are processed beyond recognition, to provide us with the whitest, the brightest, plump, pert and pimped-up cheap food in tacky plastic packaging, all of which leaves us with the problem of processing the waste.



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When produce is made by hand it can be a demonstration of somebody's thoughtfulness, the skills they have learned or their knowledge of the ingredients. These are things worth valuing. You'll rarely find them in a shelf of 'value-range' packets. But truly good food is not always more expensive.

Foods must suit our bodies and our minds and our pockets: Some special diets are chosen because of ethical values, some because of biological make-up. It's an individual choice. So our events make individual dietary and lifestyle choices more easy, even if they differ from the choices the organisers have made. Our festivals cater for lives that are vegan, paleo, dairy-free, keto, coeliac, foodie, fast, slow, nurturing, recovering, ascetic, globe-trotting, traditional, experimental, frugal, fungal, wild, or simply curious. All are welcome. And we insist that all producers trading at eat:Festivals bear in mind our budgets. There'll always be something on a menu for under £5. Buying the best should not have to mean blowing the budget.

Food is also fuel. One of the best things about good food is what you can do once you've eaten it! So our festivals also involve some experts in exercise, in the great outdoors and in being active in our communities. Most of us want to be more active in one way or another, whether that's pushing our bodies to see where they'll take us or using our skills and energies to help other people. We hope festival visitors will be inspired by the people we invite them to meet. And there should be plenty of food for thought to take home, regardless of whatever else you've got to go in the fridge.

The last few generations have been moving towards the town. Any town. The landmarks that there used to be are now replaced with roundabouts, marked with their commercial raison d'être: Edithmead is now The Tesco Roundabout, Starch Green the Asda Roundabout, Rose Farm the name of the new estate pub. Dormitory estates for an urbanised workforce. But not everyone who lives on one wants to be a sleeping member of their local community. We hear often that there is less time and fewer places to get together. So that's why we create festivals. For one fabulous day anyone can hang out enjoying something we all share - food and drink.