

Solway Food & Drink Festival 2006

Report & photos by: Nic Ashby

We are all used to hearing messages of the importance of eating healthy food and to buy local produce to reduce food miles but the Solway Plain has up till now, not had an event to support these causes.

On Sunday 6th August the first Solway Food and Drink Festival was a great success and was enjoyed by locals and visitors alike. The event took place at the Solway Coast Discovery Centre in Silloth, it successfully highlighted the wealth of locally produced food available on the Solway Plain.

The event included two demonstrations by local chef Annette Gibbons who used ingredients sold by the producers who attended the festival. Her demonstrations were popular and we learnt how to make Moroccan Tabouleh with bulgar wheat and local vegetables, Mawbray potato confis and Solway shrimp salad with red beetroot leaves. Annette commented 'It is vital that events like these enable local people to find out that a high standard of local produce is available close to home instead of relying on supermarkets who mass produce food that does not support its producers.'

The Solway Sandwich Competition was judged by local cookery specialist and Allerdale Councillor, John Crouch. The criteria were the sandwich had to include at least one element of locally produced food and it should be reasonably healthy. The winning sandwich was made by the Silloth Rainbow Guide Unit who worked

together to design a sandwich worthy of their name, they called it 'Eat the Rainbow'. They tried to put in an ingredient for every colour of the rainbow which impressed the judge, they included red cabbage, grated locally grown carrot, boiled egg, cucumber, blue cheese and red onion. John Crouch, cookery specialist and local food activist said it was a difficult decision as the standard of entries was very high. The Rainbow's entry won as it was eater

friendly, it included fresh local vegetables, particularly carrots which was an unusual sandwich ingredient, it had no dressing which was a healthy option and the blue cheese had a complementary flavour'.

John was excited to find out after he chose the winner that the sandwich was designed by a group of children and encouraged at their interest in the competition and said, 'It is all about encouraging young people to think about the food they eat

and encourage them to eat not just healthy, but local food as well.' The prize was a hamper of locally produced food which will be raffled off by the group leader later in the year to raise money for the Rainbow Unit, a big 'Thank you' to all the producers who kindly donated to the prize.

Despite the damp conditions which were not ideal, Fiona Parker and her helpers continued to demonstrate throughout the day their skills of

sugarcraft and pastelage, it seems it is possible to create anything to go on a cake. Fiona and helpers enjoyed sharing their ideas and skills with many people who visited. Throughout the two days of the festival, eateries throughout the Solway Plain were involved in the festival by offering 'Solway Specials' containing local produce, again this was to encourage local businesses to consider buying food from local suppliers. Thanks to all

who took part. Thanks must also go to the producers who attended: Wild and Fruitful jams and chutneys, Rays Shrimps, Distington Walled Garden, Spotted Meats, Carrs Flour, Cock Robin Cider, Allerby Community Garden, Cream of Cumbria, Plasketlands potatoes, Pauline Stagg preserves, Betty Dixon cakes and bakes, Fair Trade, Eva's Organics and Café 14-16's breadmaking demonstrations.



John Crouch and Sandwich Winner Lucy Winter from Silloth Rainbow Guides



Graham Wilkinson choosing which butter to buy from Cream of Cumbria's Sue Forrester

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