



Working with local business

We are all connected in the patch we call home. The Incredible Edible values and the the Three Plates is to remind us that we all need to work together if our communities and our societies are to flourish.

From the very simple things of getting local business to sponsor one of your growing spaces – it is great advertising for them – to creating an edible trail around your town or area, this section is about much more than asking for money. Learning how to engage with business – from them supporting your work to helping them redefine their Corporate Social Responsibility strategy and activity – working together with business is good for

all of us. They are ordinary people just like the rest of us and as organisations embedded in local communities and employing local people they want to get involved in what is going on; they often need someone to build a bridge so that they can do this. At Incredible Edible we are great listeners and bridge builders.

This section looks at a range of options for engaging with business so that, together with the other organisations in our communities, we can work together to build confident and connected communities. That's what kindness is about – if you eat, you're in.

If you would like to read this whole Toolshed section in PDF format, or print it off to share with others, click on the 'download section' link on the right.

Resources

Getting started



The importance of buying local food
Some useful information about why buy and using local food is so essential
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Putting the business plate into action
Simple and practical ideas for spinning that business plate
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How to engage with local businesses
I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine - reciprocity is the name of the game
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Digging deeper



How businesses can get involved with local food
Present these ideas to your local businesses to help them support local food
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The importance of buying local food

Buying local is really, really important for a local area, impacting massively on the local economy and jobs, and subsequently on people's mental and physical health and as far as improving life expectancy.

For further information on the benefits of buying local (and seasonal!) see

https://www.sustainweb.org/sustainablefood/eat_the_seasons/.

Buying local

keeps more money in the local area and money is worth so much more (for more information see

<http://www.nourishscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Local-Food-Economy-Report.pdf>)

it is better for the environment as it has travelled less distance (for more information see

<https://www.foodethicscouncil.org/uploads/publications/fooddistribution.pdf>)

supports local businesses and helps to secure and generate employment

and usually it has more nutrients as it is fresher so is better for you. If more people ask for local food and where the ingredients are from when they buy in shops, cafes and restaurants, the more the proprietors will listen and start to use local food. We should be proud of our local food!

In light of the many recent scandals and investigations into what is in our food and where it comes from, as well as people getting fed up of multi-national corporations dictating what we should eat and what we should pay for it, there is now real interest in food provenance – where food is from. As a result, local food is also becoming quite fashionable and people are drawn to farmers' markets and produce made by small independent 'cottage industry' businesses. Therefore, ride on that wave and take advantage of the interest and publicity to generate more interest locally about food that is local to you. If you'd like to read more about the link between local and global food production see this report

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/our-food-future-full-report.pdf>.

What is local food?

Does this seem a silly question to ask? Well no not really. We feel it is always a good start to define what local food is to you, as it

means different things to different people. We define local food as food and drink that is, or has been, made from ingredients that have been grown or reared from a clearly defined area from your location. A 30 miles radius is a common distance, but this sometimes has to be different depending on location and the amount available land to grow/ rear animals eg coastal towns or large conurbations.

It is also really important to be clear that local food is food that is grown or reared, not just 'sourced'. You can source food from other businesses that are within your local food area, but the big question is, where did they get it from? And some also think that buying local is buying from your local supermarket chain!

We have been focussing on food, but this can and should also apply to drink. However, it isn't always as easy as food. Let's take real ale as an example. There aren't many ingredients in real ale, and one of the main ones are hops, which aren't widely grown in the UK. So where you can it is worth using things like Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA)'s locALE criteria as a guide – see <http://www.camra.org.uk/locale>

Local food criteria

Have a search around to see if you can find if there is a local food network or food partnership in your area and whether or not they have a local food criteria. If not, you might want to make a start and create your own, then other groups or initiatives in your area might want to use the same set of criteria. There are lots of criteria out there that can be used as a starting point, so have a read through a few of them, take the bits that are most important to you and create your own. Here is an example of local food criteria from Middlesbrough

<https://www.mencity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/documents/Growing%20Middlesbrough%20-%20Criteria%20A4.pdf>.

The economy of local food

Remember, believe in the power of small actions – the more people who spend a bit more on local produce means so much to these small businesses. And if everybody just spent a bit each week, that will equate to millions of pounds in the local economy. For example, if all residents in Middlesbrough (about 135,000 people) each spent just £1 on local food each week, that would be over £7million to the local food economy each year. And if those local businesses used local suppliers, then that £7million could be worth 400% more. Pretty impressive isn't it?

Easier for everyone

Sometimes it isn't easy to buy local food, so the more we can do to make it more convenient, then it makes it much easier for everyone to do their bit.

For some ideas you could take to your local businesses to encourage them to be more Incredible, see our [How businesses can get involved with local food](#) in the Going deeper section

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Downloads

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Useful links

[Sustainable food - Eating the seasons](#)

[Local and global food production](#)

[CAMRA LocALE criteria](#)



Putting the business plate into action

What can an Incredible Edible group do relating to the business plate?

Just by growing food in public places, allowing people to see plants in the ground and harvesting the produce when it's ready, you're encouraging people to think about where their food comes from – and that isn't a vacuum packed plastic tub from the supermarket! There are other things you can do so people think about where their food comes from when they decide what they're next going to spend their well-earned money on.

1. Can you get people talking about local food? Can you start a campaign in your area using social media or word of mouth by getting people to 'Ask for local'? (see our [Online communications](#) section for advice on using social media and [Why buy local food](#) for information about what local food means.)
2. Can you sell or donate surplus fruit and vegetables into a local veg bag/ box scheme? Maybe you can come to an agreement

and they can publicise your growing group with every bag/ box that goes out – raising the profile of your group, attracting new members or potentially sponsorship from a local business.

3. Can a beehive or two be placed on your growing site, supporting a local honey business? If you don't know of a local beekeeper, then a good place to start is the Beekeepers Association <https://www.bbka.org.uk/>
4. Start a little business? If you grow some food and have surplus and/or make jams, preserves or pickles, maybe a local independent shop would like to sell them? Or maybe you could sell them/ ask for compulsory donations in businesses/ offices etc. If you want to do this and/ or are thinking about setting up your own food business find out more here: <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/registering-and-managing-a-food-business>. You will need to do the following: Undertake food hygiene training to get a Food Hygiene certificate
Register with Environment Health at your local council – they will then let you know everything that you need to do, and will undertake a food hygiene inspection

The importance of provenance

Rosalind's Larder – turning a hobby into a small business using local ingredients

In 2011, Rosalind and her husband started to grow fruit and vegetables from an allotment plot for their own use. After starting to generate surplus, Rosalind began making chutneys and jams, which she distributed initially to friends. In 2014, Rosalind decided that in readiness for retirement she wanted to make her cooking a more active part of her life and started a small business, selling at some local farmers' markets, craft fairs and into a couple of shops.

"What started as a little project to ensure we were not wasting the produce my husband and I grew on our allotment, has developed into a small local business. I really enjoy talking to people about the produce we grow, how it is used in the jams and chutneys I make and how preserving can be used to tackle issues of food waste."

A local branch of a large chain hotel and a local high end restaurant were attracted to Rosalind's Larder not only because of their high quality products, but also because of the story behind the business and how local it was to Middlesbrough.

"Being able to regularly sell my produce to these big establishments is extremely important to a small local business like mine as it means I can start to plan more for the future. If these contracts continue, I may need to bring in extra help to satisfy demand. But what this also means is that other local people I buy produce from are also benefitting."

Vaughn's Apple Juice

Vaughn has about six extremely productive apple trees in his garden.

He wanted to do more with the plentiful annual crop and to see if this crop could make a little bit of money. He gathered all the apples he could and paid a local community food processing organisation to press them into apple juice. Because this organisation also bottled and sealed them, he didn't need any food hygiene certificates/ rating etc himself, and he sold the bottles at local food markets. He really enjoyed this little explorative venture and so repeated it the year after, and is now contemplating starting up a very small micro brewery (including cider!) with a friend.

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Useful links

[Beekeepers Association](#)

[Setting up a food business](#)



How to engage with local businesses

If you are successful in engaging businesses with your IE group and local food, it is really important that it is reciprocal – make sure that you also benefit from it.

1. Start a local food trail or map, encouraging people to visit growing sites in your area, but to also visit the independent shops or cafes that sell or use local food. Here are examples of Incredible Edible urban food growing trails from Bristol (<http://ediblebristol.org.uk/urban-food-growing-trail-a-bristol-2015-project/>) and Lambeth (<http://www.incredibleediblelambeth.org/map/>)
2. Does a local business have some land or raised beds that you can grow on/in? Contact them and ask them, stating the benefits that this will bring to them (profile in the community, profile via social media, better looking premises, reduced

ground maintenance costs)

3. Can you ask local businesses to sponsor a planter or growing space within their vicinity? Or will the business support their staff to look after a planter on their premises? This will be a great opportunity for businesses to get involved in something positive that is improving their area and that is in the public eye. They may need the expertise of a local IE group to help get them started. You could give this time for free in exchange for something else that is valuable to your group, or you could charge them for your time, bringing in resources to your group.
4. Can you support local food businesses by promoting their products using your communication channels? See our section on [Online communications](#) section for advice.

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How businesses can get involved with local food

Sometimes it can be hard to know how to start a conversation with a local business, so this section gives some great ideas you can present to businesses in your area to help them become incredible.

community by buying local food. And every business buys food and drink – it might just be the milk in the tea or coffee but this can be local and will put money into a local dairy rather than a supermarket. Other businesses that aren't in the food business (making or selling food and drink) still buy lots of food. These could include catering for events or meetings; contracts or agreements with sandwich trolleys etc for staff; or corporate entertaining/ dining.

Buying local food

Every business can do their bit for their local economy and

Local food can be seen as a more ethical choice than non local food, so why not also go that extra little bit and swap products that can't be bought locally for Fairtrade products?

Local businesses supporting each other

Rounton Coffee Roasters are a Speciality Coffee Roasters based in East Rounton, North Yorkshire.

They are suppliers of freshly roasted speciality coffee that is ethically sourced, where a fair and sustainable price has been paid for.

Since the coffee cannot be grown local to Middlesbrough, they apply their ethos to the other products that are sold in their coffee bar and cafe. By having a policy of sourcing as much local produce as possible and always from independent suppliers, they are putting more money back into the local economy, employing local people and supporting other independent traders like themselves. As Rounton Coffee grows they also want other smaller independent businesses to also benefit at the same time.

The local produce they use include eggs, organic milk, biscuits and fresh daily bread exchanged for coffee (instead of using money) from a restaurant two doors down the road!

Rounton Coffee have secured big contracts to supply Teesside University with coffee in their food outlets and Middlesbrough Council's Live Well Centre. Securing contracts such as this means that Rounton Coffee can grow and continue to follow their ethos and support the local economy.

Promote local food and local food initiatives

A lot of people are employed by businesses, and therefore if these businesses can put up a poster or circulate an email promoting buying local food or a local food initiative (market or food trail etc) to staff and clients, the reach would be tremendous.

And if this business buys local food or drink, get them to be proud of buying local and get them to tell everyone, via social media, newsletter etc. It will mean so much to independent businesses and they may pick up business through being recommended.

The business is then a part of that positive movement and may also benefit as people might choose them over another as they are doing their bit for the local economy and community.

Have an Incredible Edible group help to improve your site with some edible planting

Do you have some land (it doesn't have to be big), some flower beds that are only growing weeds or a raised bed or two that you can allow an Incredible Edible group to grow some fruit or veg in?

This is a great way to improve your profile in the community, with clients and on social media, get your premises looking better and potentially reduce your ground maintenance costs. You staff could get involved, and you could all benefit from having lovely fresh produce to pick and eat.

Sponsor a planter or growing space

Another way to improve your profile in the community and get some very cheap positive publicity is to sponsor a disused planter or growing space within your vicinity. It's a very quick and easy way to do some CSR. Similarly to the above, you could support your staff to get involved. With a bit of help, your local Incredible Edible group could take this little project on and get other businesses involved.

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