

# GOOD FOOD NEWS



## Issue 5 - March 2022

### Good Food News – the latest from Leicestershire and beyond

Welcome to Good Food News, where we aim to improve and applaud the great work being done in sustainable food and farming in the county.

News to share? Email [goodfood@leics.gov.uk](mailto:goodfood@leics.gov.uk)

---

### Register for the Leicestershire Food Summit



Leicestershire is rightly proud and famous for the food it produces.

But could we, as a county, be doing things better?

On Wednesday 6 April the Leicestershire Food Summit will be taking place at Stanford Hall, near Lutterworth.

Organised by Leicestershire Sustainable Food Partnership, the event will see delegates working across the county food system look at ways to localise the food supply chain, support nature-friendly farming, reduce food waste and make sure lower income families have access to good healthy food.

Gavin Fletcher, organiser of Leicestershire Food Summit, said: "We have so many fantastic partners doing amazing things with food – the food summit is about collaborating towards a more sustainable future food system for the county."

The all-day event will feature workshops and keynote speaker Joe Stanley. Joe is an Ashby farmer and the incoming NFU Chair for Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland. He's also the author of *Farm To Fork: the challenge of sustainable farming in 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain*.

If you are interested in attending Leicestershire Food Summit, please contact Gavin Fletcher at [gavin.fletcher@leics.gov.uk](mailto:gavin.fletcher@leics.gov.uk).

Leicestershire Sustainable Food Partnership is supported by Leicestershire County Council.

---

## Sign up to Watch Your Waste today



Did you know that food waste feeds climate change?

A third of greenhouse gas emissions are created by the food system and people in Leicestershire could save around £700 a year if they stopped throwing their food in the bin.

"Reducing your household food waste is one of the most powerful things you can do in the face of climate change," says Matt Copley, Senior Environment and Waste Management Technician.

Earlier this month, Matt and the county council launched its Watch Your Waste (WYW) programme, to encourage residents to sign up and improve their waste prevention skills.

With food price increases and energy costs soaring, now is the time to take charge of your food budget, says Matt.

Watch Your Waste challenges entrants to a new task each week through the [Less Waste website](#), and they have the chance to win prizes, such as veg box subscriptions, vouchers and bokashi bins. WYW has 18 competencies to reduce waste - including meal planning, portioning and knowing the difference between best before and use by.

"We're also trying to encourage more sharing of surplus food, through apps like Olio and also community fridges, designed for communities to share: it's a model supported by residents for residents."

People answering the waste prevention message reduce their waste by a third on average and achieve a 10 per cent reduction in their shopping bills.

[Join Watch Your Waste](#) to learn how to reduce food waste in your home.

## In conversation with oat milk farmer, Miles Marlow-Thomas



Based at Rectory Farm, on the Leicestershire Northamptonshire border in Marston Trussell, Miles heads Wild and Furrow (W&F) with his sister Hannah and brother Angus.

Miles grew up on the farm, and left to work as a coffee and cocoa broker in London. While working, he noticed that milk alternatives were becoming popular in coffee shops.

A year ago, after moving back to the farm during lockdown, he quit his job and started Wild and Furrow. The business began in December.

"I started looking into it and saw it was a trend thing with coffee. I thought it was a fad and there were so many milk alternatives. Oat milk is the best alternative, best performing. And I thought, 'actually, we grow oats in the UK,' and pretty much all of them [supermarket oat milks] were from Sweden, or Alpro. They also import the oat 'syrup' from Europe and put it together in the UK. To me that was a bit of a red flag.

"I thought, right, let's have a go. Lockdown gave it the push."

What followed was heavy investigation. "Nobody really knew how to make it," says Miles, "so I started learning about it and found out more. Oats can be quite tricky to stabilise."

Currently the W&F oats come from another UK company.

"Eventually I want to have enough myself," says Miles. "I've got my local farmers, a lot of them have asked me: do you want me to grow oats?"

The plan is to eventually grow enough oats at Rectory Farm for the business. And while they currently buy-in cold-pressed English rapeseed oil, they're looking at linking a county supply or perhaps coldpressing the seed themselves.

Currently, the oat waste is used for animal feed, although a large Leicestershire bakery which was impressed with the oat milk, is currently testing their suitability in a sourdough bread recipe. The glass bottles are also easily recyclable.

Wild and Furrow's oat milk is creamy, with more than double the protein of standard oat milk and it comes fresh from the farm.

In the blind taste trials of Wild and Furrow's glass bottled oat milk, more than 99 per cent of testers preferred it to other well-known brands.

"Actually, with the tasting, I think everyone preferred ours," smiles Miles Marlow-Thomas, "maybe put 99 per cent, just in case."

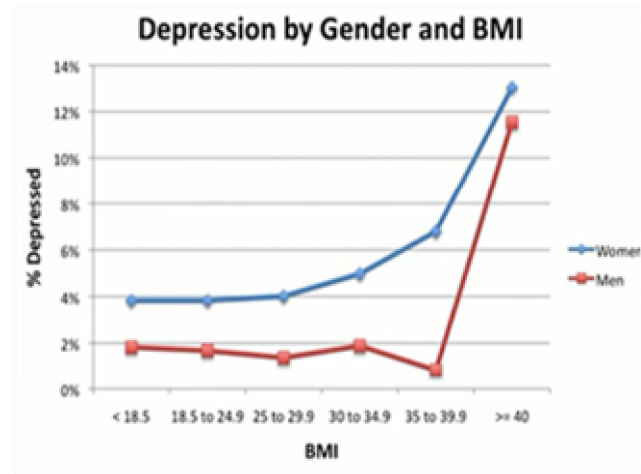
The fresh pasteurised oat milk retails at £2.50 for 750ml.

For more information, visit the [Wild and Furrow website](#).

---

## Hack your mood with food

### Diet and mental health are linked



Pratt and Brody, 2014

Ted Dinan is Professor of Psychiatry at University College Cork, and an expert on the [gut-brain axis](#). In a recent New Scientist seminar he was asked: What is the one thing we can do for our mental health? "Eat vegetables and fruit," he replied.

Whole foods, such as fruit, nuts, grains, meat, fish and vegetables, are full of vitamins and fibre and they are responsible for the feeling of fullness. They also keep the trillions of microbes in our gut happy. The more colourful the nutrients, the more diverse the microbes – and it is that microbe diversity, say scientists, which underscores good mental and physical health.

Studies from [Pratt and Brody](#), [Oddy et.al](#) and [Kohlboeck et.al](#) show that children and adults consuming low nutrient high calorie diets (ones that contain high sugar and fat and are low in fibre) have greater rates of aggression, anxiety, ill-health and depression.

---

## Do one easy thing, buy seasonal British food

Eating fresh food grown in the UK brings big benefits. If it's grown in Leicestershire, even better. You don't need the National Farmers' Union to tell you, the fresher the food the more nutrients it contains. Buying British food will also support our growers, the economy and local and national food security. Eating seasonally also ensures your body has diverse and changing nutrients.

What's in season? [Find the seasonal food of the week](#).

One way of getting the freshest seasonal food is by visiting one of Leicestershire's many [fabulous farm shops](#).

P.S. Know of any good Leicestershire farm shops not on the list? Email [goodfood@leics.gov.uk](mailto:goodfood@leics.gov.uk)

---

## Enrol in a zero waste cookery class

The difference between good and great is often knowledge, which is one of several reasons why Sam Surman is perfectly placed to teach the county's [free healthy eating - zero waste cookery courses](#). "My background is cheffing," she says, "I've got quite a lot of experience in the kitchen – and my day job is food and technology technician in a school."

The 10-week course is beginner friendly, but it's also good for people who are looking to learn something new, such as portioning a chicken, expertly chopping an onion or turning veg peelings into soup or stock.

There are five initial key behaviours covered during the course: it pays to plan, know your dates, savvy storage, perfect portions, and lovely leftovers.

Once those have been covered Sam covers smart shopping, bulk cooking, home composting and recycling.

"It's not just about saving waste, it's saving time and money, too. My shopping is better as a result – I didn't always have a plan with cooking. I now do use one, so I know what I'm cooking each night and I know what I'm ordering. That's all part of it, and it all saves time too.

"I've developed the course and devised the recipes, and it may sound niche, but every time I've done it it's been fully booked."

There are eight set recipes, among them how to make your own passata and your own pizza dough. "The sauce - it's not a jarred one, full of salt. These recipes aren't difficult, people will be able to manage even if they no experience."

Sam is keen to share her knowledge with others who would like to learn online, or who can't physically get to the centre.

In the meantime, you can try Sam's [bottom of the fridge soup recipe](#).

You can also sign up for the free [healthy cooking course on the Leicestershire Adult Learning service website](#).

### **Something to consider...**

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations said:

'Sustainable Diets are those diets with low environmental impacts which contribute to food and nutrition security and to healthy life for present and future generations. Sustainable diets are protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair and affordable; nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy while optimizing natural and human resources.'

---

## Regenerative farming at Brooksby



We're living in interesting times. Biodiversity is diminishing, fertile soil is in decline and our growing population needs feeding.

In the south-west of Melton, in a field soon to be clotted with cattle, swaying plants and buzzing insects, they may have found the answer to these pressing issues.

The 850-acre Brooksby campus is one of a handful of places in the British Isles teaching sustainable land management and regenerative agriculture, and their fieldwork is speaking for itself.

"The regenerative agriculture field is now the highest performing grazing field we've got," says Alex Gray, "there's a huge number of insects because of the diversity of the plants we've put in."

Alex is the Brooksby Campus's Countryside and Environmental Management lecturer. Their much anticipated nature-friendly course, launching in September, is a two-year Foundation Diploma in Applied Environmental Management. In its third year it becomes a BSc in Countryside Management, Horticulture or Agriculture.

"The problem with regenerative agriculture is it's so new there are very few people who can tell you how to do it," explains Alex. "A lot of the stuff that exists is American or South African, and then we try to translate it into a British context."

And what is *it*? It's farming that sets out to build healthy soil and work with nature.

"Once I've explained the theory, people say: Why aren't we doing this now? Why isn't this widescale policy? It just doesn't make any sense that we're not doing it."

Instead of expensive and damaging fertilisers and pesticides, they use herbal leys – legumes, grasses and herbs – to enrich the soil and attract a wide range of microbes and insect life. Trees are planted to stabilise the land, clean the air and water, aid water retention, grow fruit, wood and nuts, and act as shelter to grazing animals.

At Brooksby they have 20 acres of herbal leys, and their system integrates mob grazing with three rows of agro-forestry. The leys were sown in the autumn of 2019.

"It is planned for this to be allowed to grow much higher than normal before grazing commences to allow for deep root growth to maintain dense vegetative cover over the soil."

There are 10 different tree species in the agro-forestry section, but as you can imagine, trees grow at a much slower pace next to plants. Fruit bushes have now been added to the trees' understorey. The herbal leys have been grazed with sheep, but from April there'll be shorthorn cattle, moved in daily rotation with electric fencing. Incidentally, on top of those fence posts are little 'homes' to encourage solitary bees.

"We're trying to create habitat for more pollinators within the system," says Alex.

Trees, he adds, bring their own proliferation of moles, who are 'ecologically managed' by the new addition of boxes for owls and kestrels.

Students from farming backgrounds may initially be sceptical, says Alex, then they look at the fertilisers and the fuels and the huge economic input in modern farming, "and then generally people are very welcoming of farming with nature's own systems.

"The intention is students will be involved in trying new ideas and new approaches."

At the northern end of the field, there are two acres of silvopasture (in red) containing 'cricket bat' willows, which are undergrazed with sheep. An additional four acres of willow have been planted elsewhere on the farm to focus on areas that seasonally flood.

Alex is keen to spread the word about regenerative agriculture and in April will be welcoming the Wildlife Trust and local conservationists.

"It's all about sharing best practise," he adds, "and I'm happy to speak to anyone about regenerative agriculture."

We'll be bringing you updates from Brooksby in the summer. In the meantime, find out more about regenerative farming on the [SMB College Group website](#).

---

## **Walkers Crisps and their sustainable food model**

Walkers is a large and well-loved Leicestershire food manufacturer, producing 11 million packets of crisps daily.

While most people know about the firm's commitment to make its crisp packaging recyclable, compostable or biodegradable by 2025, few are aware of its enhanced food sustainability measures.

Today, the potato peelings from the firm's Leicester plant – a by product of 300,000 tonnes of potatoes annually - are being added to an anaerobic digester to provide 75 per cent of the site's electricity.

Moreover, the fertiliser created by the digestion helps grow better potatoes, after successful 2020 seedbed trials. Once supplied at scale, the fertiliser is expected to reduce the firm's potato-based carbon emissions by 70 per cent. Which is quite an achievement for the world's largest crisp factory.

In addition to the fertiliser's low carbon status, its use will increase soil health, aiding natural carbon sequestration.

David Wilkinson, PepsiCo's senior director of European Agriculture, said: "The new initiative could set us on a path to becoming carbon-negative in our potato production over the next decade."

Walkers use 88 British potato farms, the closest suppliers are in Nottinghamshire, with farms spread as far north as the Scottish Highlands and as far south as Land's End.

---

## This Much I Know

*Sian Rigby, Food Poverty Officer, Leicestershire County Council*

"Poverty is far more complex than just a lack of money.

As a county council, we are aware of the 54 food banks operating in Leicestershire over the past year. My role is in identifying ways we can respond to food poverty in the long term.

There is poverty in the county, but it's hidden. Part of that is, in a small community, you're more well-known: it's embarrassing to admit you're struggling. Because county housing costs more, people think you couldn't live there unless you had money. Disability, bereavement, mental health, unemployment, addiction, being poor with finances, not having a support network, or one particular incident, they can all lead to crisis.

Loughborough, Hinckley and Coalville are in the 10 to 20 per cent most deprived towns in England. Most of our urban centres are in the 30 per cent most deprived.

The national Holiday Activities Food Programme is a really important first step in responding to issues of out of term food provision.

Families eligible for free school meals (Household income below £7,400 after tax) are at the extreme end of food poverty. My worry for Leicestershire is the cost of living is rising, and that's inevitably going to increase the number of children living in food poverty.

The average family income is £29,000. If you earned a quarter of that you would just about qualify for free school meals.

People think those who use food banks can't cook. Most can cook at least one decent meal (Roast dinner). It's just they can't afford the food to cook it. If you can't cook food that is low cost and healthy you have a problem.

How did I get into my job? I was at university during the 2010 riots, and the police station I went past in Nottingham was attacked. I'm a Christian, and we talk about serving communities. The rioters were my age and disaffected. What caused the riot? Where did that anger come from? It inspired me to help those on the margins of society. Four years ago, I joined Together Leicester, set up by the Diocese of Leicester and the Church Urban Fund, to transform social inequality: Food and food poverty came up a lot."

## Latest news...

---

### The Global Forum for Food and Agriculture

In the first move of its kind, agriculture ministers from 68 countries have voted to protect and use soils sustainably. The Global Forum for Food and Agriculture 2022, held in Berlin, saw government representatives approve efforts to stem international soil degradation caused by intensive farming.

Cem Özdemir, the German Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture, said: "Healthy soils are our allies in combating global hunger, the climate crisis and the extinction of species. However, they are under pressure: they are severely affected by land sealing and soil degradation. It is, moreover, essential that farmers worldwide have access to land and are able to manage soils over the long term. We need to act now – and we need to act in global solidarity."

Among the delegation was Dr Qu Dongyu, Director-General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation.

The ministers set ambitious targets to protect soils, mitigate climate change and increase efforts in climate adaptation, while supporting efforts to encourage resilient and sustainable food systems.





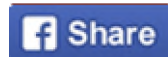
---

## Leicestershire Heritage Apple Project

Guardians of rare Leicestershire apple varieties, the Leicestershire Heritage Apple Project (LHAP) is on the look out for Leicestershire community orchards that need financial support.

Nigel Deacon and Mel Wilson from the LHAP will be able to help orchards seek match funding.

For more information, visit the [LHAP Facebook page](#) or email [info@heritageorchard.co.uk](mailto:info@heritageorchard.co.uk)



For more information visit [resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/good-food-leicestershire](http://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/good-food-leicestershire)  
or email [goodfood@leics.gov.uk](mailto:goodfood@leics.gov.uk)

