



Sustainable Food Event Guidance

Much of our lives is dominated by food – whether we're at work, at home, socialising, celebrating, or at an event, often it will revolve around food somehow. Many people think about their food choices for reasons such as health, religious, cultural, and ethical reasons. Another aspect, rapidly growing in visibility, is the sustainability of the food we eat and its impacts on the environment.

Why should we eat sustainably?

In recent years it has become apparent that the food we eat can have wide reaching environmental impacts; from carbon emissions to water use to over-fishing. Considering the environment when we consume or dispose of food can make all the difference. For instance, did you know that food production and distribution accounts for nearly a third of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and nearly two-thirds of human water use?¹

Through the publication of the [Sustainable Food Policy](#), the University has set out its intention to minimise the environmental impact of the University's Catering Service, and to promote sustainable practices and consumption more widely.

Eating sustainably can include:

- reducing the consumption of ruminant meat (beef and lamb);
- eating more vegetarian and vegan foods;
- using accredited sustainable (e.g. Fairtrade) products where possible, and;
- reducing the amount of food that is wasted.

Eating more sustainably is not limited to the University Catering Service, read on for some sustainable food event ideas that you can run in your own department.

All events should consider the [University Food Safety Guidance](#) for charity events.

Sustainable Come Dine with Me

If Channel 4 has taught us anything, it is that people love a bit of competition, particularly in the arena of cooking. A 'Sustainable Come Dine with Me' can be carried out over a week in groups of five with each contestant taking a turn to prepare a sustainable lunch for the remaining four on their allotted day. Teams can just cook lunch or they can incorporate menus or a party piece; it really is up to them. We foresee a lot of friendly competition with this event and many opportunities to sit down and enjoy a tasty lunch with your colleagues.



Ready Steady Cook!

Staying on a TV theme, 'Ready, Steady, Cook!' was not just a crazy cooking show but it also showed some pretty fantastic ways that we could use those ingredients that might get forgotten. Challenge your colleagues to create a dish at home with three ingredients that they have already purchased but they are not really sure what to do with. If staff are in need of inspiration they can gather lots of tips from organisations such as [Love Food, Hate Waste](#). An office taste test of all the dishes produced will add some fun to the challenge.

¹ Tara Garnett 2014. What is a Sustainable Healthy Diet. Food Climate Research Network, April 2014.



Release your inner Delia

Have you ever felt that you could write a cookbook? Well now might be your chance. People are often intimidated when it comes to trying a new way of cooking but the E&E section plan to help by sharing your recipes for eating sustainably. We'd love for you and your colleagues to contribute, so if you have a great recipe that has a 'sustainable food' theme, why not send it to us at environment@admin.cam.ac.uk and we will share it around – perhaps we could even make a University of Cambridge Sustainable Food Cookbook!



Meat-free Monday

Going vegetarian for the day is not the chore it once was. Vegetarian options on menus have expanded greatly and the influx of Asian cuisine provides a real variety of foods without meat. Meat-free Monday is a campaign that was started in 2009 and aims to educate people about how easy it can be to make simple changes to reduce the environmental impact of your food. This is truly a global movement and it is a great excuse to try something different. For those of you with canteens it might be worth asking your caterer if they could go meat-free for one day. If a 'no meat' day is too much for some people, explore reducing the proportions of ruminant meat (i.e. beef and lamb) and replacing with the likes of pork and chicken. If you want to reduce meat for climate change reasons, this still makes a big difference since ruminant meat is at least 5 times more carbon intensive than other types of meat.

Purchasing power

One of the best ways we can have an impact at work is to change how we procure food for events, whether it be meetings, away days, conferences or training sessions. Including more vegetarian options and sourcing fruit and veg locally will reduce the footprint of your event and will also inform suppliers that sustainable food is important to the University. It might also have wider benefits for instance in helping you seek out suppliers who are more flexible, responsive and innovative in the food they provide. An example of purchasing [guidance created by CISL](#) is available on our website; similar guidance could be created for your department to reflect your needs. .



Themed bake sale

One option which has proved popular time and again is a bake sale. You could run a charity bake sale with the proceeds going to a sustainable food-related charity. The picture to the left shows a bee-themed bake sale run by the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology to raise money for the FOE bee-saving campaign!

Fairtrade Fortnight (annual event in late February)

Fairtrade makes a huge difference to food producers the world over, encouraging the development of small cooperatives and paying a higher price to growers. What you may not know, however, is that Fairtrade works with its suppliers to maintain and improve the environment where the food is grown. The University has been associated with this movement for many years and Fairtrade fortnight is an opportunity to showcase the difference that buying Fairtrade makes. [Film screenings](#) are always popular particularly when they are accompanied with a tasty cup of Fairtrade cocoa. Alternatively how about a Fairtrade blind taste test?



Community garden trip

Organising a visit to a garden or allotment is a great opportunity to get people talking about food production and the seasonality of British food. There may not be much to see in gardens at this time of year but I do think that it is a great time of promise; for reflection, planning and considering what will work best to protect our precious soil. A number of [colleges and departments](#) have been inspired to set up their own garden; this could be a long term project in your building.

Food bank drive

Many people in the UK do not have access to good quality food and food banks are doing their best to feed those in need. Collecting food from your colleagues and delivering it to your local food bank could make a big difference to families living in Cambridge. Find out more at [Cambridge City Food Bank](#) or at the [Trussell Trust](#).

And finally - shout it from the rooftops!

Have you switched to Fairtrade tea or coffee? Stocked the canteen with MSC certified fish? Well then - let the Department know! Departments can help create cultural change by letting staff, students and/or visitors know about the positive steps it is taking on a range of sustainable food issues. Particularly with food and drink, it's easy for people not to notice a change - the tea and coffee looks the same, the same egg sandwiches are delivered. Unless people are told, they won't necessarily realise that the drinks are Fairtrade accredited or that the eggs are free-range.

Let us know if you have any ideas – our contact details are below.

