

Bridport Food Matters: the virtual food resource with plans for a physical hub

As we look forward to the Bridport Food Festival this month, we take a look at one of the organisations working to secure food security for the town now and for years to come...

Bridport Food Matters (BFM) will have a yurt in the middle of this year's Bridport Food Festival, creating a perfect visual metaphor for the organisation's place in the community: in terms of local food provision, it's at the centre.

Our local food scene is busy, buzzy and exciting. Bridport was one of the first towns to have a food security plan, and so many committed people are working in different ways here to produce and provide high quality, sustainable local food. It can seem overwhelming: there's just so much going on. Well, BFM is what ties them all together.

Founded in 2019, BFM is a community hub promoting access to nutritious food for all, for ever. At the moment this 'hub' is virtual, with a website connecting people and organisations, and an email newsletter that goes out to about 400 subscribers with updates about community initiatives.

BFM's priority is building a sustainable local food system, with shorter food miles and stronger links between local producers and

consumers. "We're too dependent on imports," says trustee Candida Dunford Wood. "This is obviously a disaster for the environment, while climate instability – such as more and more extreme temperatures – is having a huge impact on the price of things. The price of basics is skyrocketing.

"We're living through a time of great crises – climate change, wars, the economic and financial situation – and food is part of both the problem and the solution. There's more and more need for connectivity, for us to work together and build a sense of mutual support. We've been working with the town council to determine how much more supply we'd need to be truly resilient in the face of climate shocks and wars. Food is at the heart of every community."

BFM gives visibility to the town's various food-related initiatives. "We're always looking for links, ways to build and strengthen community resilience," says Candida. "This helps to foster partnerships between different groups and encourages volunteers to get involved, too."

Bringing the virtual to life

Now, however, BFM is expanding its focus to include a physical hub, too: a community space built around food. Ideally somewhere central, the building would include a shop for locally produced, healthy food; a community cafe with space for events, workshops and activities; an outside space to grow food for the cafe and shop; and an information point with useful resources, advice and support. Classes and demonstrations at the food hub could include sessions on cooking on a budget, perhaps



without an oven. Other ideas include an online shop for local products, with a pick-up point at the food hub.

"We have lots of support for the idea – now we need to find a venue and raise the money," says Candida. "It's about food security for everyone, and it'll be for all ages and all sections of the community. There are so many people in our community who have the skills to make this happen. We want to build more partnerships and join forces."

The Food Festival's 20th year

So what will BFM bring to the Bridport Food Festival in this, its 20th year? Anyone visiting their yurt will find a celebration of the local projects that are promoting access to nutritious food for everyone. This year BFM will be particularly promoting younger people addressing food security and climate adaptation, including Ele Saltmarsh from Fivepenny Farm, who will be telling stories and bringing the issue to life in a really engaging way. Also in the yurt will be team members from Winnow Farm Seeds – experienced agroecological producers who are expanding their focus to include skill sharing – and Chloe Broadfield who works at Tamarisk Farm in West Bexington and runs courses under The Agroecological Way.

"It's definitely a celebration," says Candida, "and we'll be looking forward to the next 20 years.

Three thousand people come to the festival – obviously they don't all come into our tent, but a good number do, and we're looking forward to lively discussions with visitors and the chance to spread the word about local initiatives.

"We want people to get involved, and we'll be asking them what they want from a community food hub – there will even be a 'design your own hub' activity."

Elsewhere at the festival there will be cookery demonstrations from local chefs including Andy Tyrrell from Soulshine, Olya from Zhiva Authentica, Valentine Warner and Sanjay Choudhury. Foodie kids

will love the Young Cooks Kitchen, where they will be able to create food from around the world that's designed for sharing. Debbie Smith from Watercleaves Nursery will set up a kitchen garden play area with activities for younger children, and Jo Burlington will be running 'Oops Wow Messy Art' drop-in workshops on themes of growing and sharing food. And of course there will be loads of stalls from local growers and producers – plus the Beer Festival, too, on the previous evening as well as the day itself.

The festival is organised by the Bridport Local Food Group (BLFG), an organisation with close

links with BFM (representatives from BFM are involved in festival planning meetings). The festival is BLFG's main focus, although it also runs some educational initiatives.

"Bridport Food Festival is a fantastic celebration of local food," says Candida. "All the organisers are volunteers – people who love the town, love the community, love food and know how important it is in bringing everyone together. It's a wonderful opportunity to showcase what people are doing locally."

Bridport Food Festival is on Saturday 15 June from 9.30am to 5pm at Asker Meadows. Tickets are £3.50 in advance from the Tourist Information Centre or £5 on the gate. No charge for young people under 18. Bridport Beer Festival, run by Bridport Round Table, is on Friday 14 June from 6pm until late and on Saturday 15 June from 11am until late.



Pictured: Bridport Food Matters will have a central presence at the Bridport Food Festival this month



SAM BROUGHTON

BUILDING SERVICES

07789 748 649

BUILD **RENOVATE**

DECORATE **LANDSCAPE**

broughton.sam@gmail.com

Music at St Swithun's

Volunteers wanted! St Swithun's Allington has two fine musical instruments: a Conacher organ and an Estonia grand piano. The church needs one or two people to help with promoting the use of the instruments and to liaise with possible players.

No musical experience or skill is required, just enthusiasm! You'll join a friendly band of volunteers (church membership is not mandatory) and there will be full training and lots of support.

You will need to be able to communicate by email.

To discuss this (no commitment) contact
Mandi Sturrock: 07887 483228 / msturrock@pancathay.com.

