



environment

what a world of waste!

How can it be that some people in the world are starving and others are wasting food? Supermarkets reject 'imperfect' produce and individuals often over-purchase. Luke Bell tips everything out of the bin and looks at how initiative, *A Taste of Freedom*, is addressing the issue.

8.3 million tonnes of food is thrown away by UK households each year and 1.6 million tonnes is chucked by UK supermarkets. What a shocking statistic! A Taste of Freedom is a new initiative seeking to recycle that waste.

The environmental implications of food waste are extremely serious. The amount of energy, water and packaging used in food production, transportation and storage is massive. Plus, as wasted food rots away in our landfill sites, it releases methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. It is estimated that cutting out food wastage will be equivalent to taking a quarter of cars off the road in terms of reducing environmental damage, not to mention the amount of money individual families could save! An average UK family of four wastes around £15.70 every month in perfectly edible food.

Tristram Stuart is a campaigner against food waste and author of the acclaimed book, *Waste: Uncovering the Global Food Scandal*. Back in December 2009, Tristram and his colleagues, together with partner organisations; FareShare, Save The Children, School Food Matters, This is Rubbish and ActionAid treated over 5000 people to a hot lunch made from fresh but cosmetically imperfect fruit and vegetables that would otherwise have been wasted. The event was called 'Feed the 5000' and it had a positive impact on the issue of food waste in the UK. Defra Minister, Hilary Benn MP, subsequently wrote to CEOs of all UK supermarkets urging them to comply with the event's request to donate food rather than destroy it, and a number of supermarkets have responded well to the request, even introducing their own waste-saving policies.

A Taste of Freedom is a new longer-term initiative, set up by the same team, making delicious frozen desserts from fruit that would otherwise have gone to waste. Fruit and vegetables account for the largest portion of wasted food in the UK and most of it is perfectly edible. The Freedom project will be delivering the

frozen desserts to the public, focusing on children specifically, aiming to raise awareness about the problem of food waste, the solutions available and the importance of a healthy balanced diet containing five portions of fresh fruit and vegetables a day.

The project was launched at the Real Food Festival at Earl's Court in May, working alongside the charity School Food Matters to provide entertainment and interactive food-related games as well as the frozen fruit desserts for the hundreds of school children who attended. A Taste of Freedom will continue to trade throughout 2010, generating the revenue to support their very own educational outreach programme. The project targets schools, particularly in low-income areas where nutritional deficiencies are at their worst. Each school will be offered a complete educational, interactive experience encompassing food waste, healthy eating and sustainability issues and tying in closely with the national curriculum.

Current statistics suggest that 80% of children fail to eat the recommended amount of fruit and vegetables with the average intake among 5-15 year olds being just over 3 portions a day as oppose to the recommended 5 portions. The 'Freedom' team believe they can help children to increase their intake of fruit and veg whilst, at the same time, learning about the problems of food waste and the ways that we can all begin to tackle the problem.

If you feel that the Taste of Freedom project would go down well at a school, venue, event or festival near you, get in touch with the team at www.atasteoffreedom.org.uk. To find out more about the project's mastermind, Tristram Stuart, head over to www.tristramstuart.co.uk. You can hear him discussing food waste issues with the likes of Andrew Marr and David Frost, view a timetable of related events for 2010, and keep up to date with food waste issues on the blog page. And, last but not least, eat what you buy and be part of the 'Freedom' solution!



eco-news by Luke Bell

Transition Network 2010 Conference

Hosted at the very impressive ex-agricultural college of Seale Hayne, just down the road from Totnes in Devon, this year's conference will feature a dazzling smorgasbord of open space and inspiring workshops. There will be skills and project sharing, networking, entertainment, food, fun, frivolity and some longer, more in-depth discussion sessions too. Registration for the conference opens on Friday June 11th at 19.30pm with an informal evening of socialising alongside the open bar. The conference programme begins on Saturday 12th June at 10am and runs through to Monday 14th, finishing up at 1pm with some lunch to follow. Visit www.transitionnetwork.org/conference-2010-uk to buy your tickets.

Permaculture in Palestine

Bustan Qaraaqa (the Tortoise Garden) is a community permaculture project, based in the West Bank town of Beit Sahour, close to the city of Bethlehem. The project is developing a grassroots environmental movement in the Palestinian Territories to address problems of food insecurity and environmental degradation. They are creating a permaculture farm that will serve as a model for others and will be used as a centre for demonstrations, helping local people to hone their own skills in sustainable living and food production. The team have just celebrated their second anniversary and intend to continue the successes they've achieved so far, against all the odds amid a turbulent background of military occupation. To see how you can get involved, go to www.bustanqaraaqa.org

First ever Liftshare Week (4-8 October)

How many empty seats are there in your car each day? Have you thought of sharing them? It saves you money (hundreds of pounds a year for many people!), you meet like-minded people, but above all – for every person who car-shares – another vehicle is taken off the road. Everyone's a winner and the popularity of car-sharing is growing fast. National Liftshare Day has always been a big event in the environmental calendar. But this year, for the first time, it is going to be Liftshare Week! Make sure you're part of it: register at www.liftshare.com (it's totally free), search for others making the same journey as you, and start making it together!

HOST WITH THE MOST?

by James Ede

Any statistic concerning the Internet is usually enough to make one's cranium ache! For example, a conservative estimate for the amount of emails sent throughout 2009 is 90 trillion, with 247 billion being sent everyday (I'm convinced half of those where sent by my Mum) and the number of websites in existence as of December 2009 determined by netcraft.com was in excess of 234 million.

All of those emails, websites and associated pages need to be stored and/or hosted somewhere and the energy efficiency and green status of the companies that store our information is increasingly falling into the public spotlight. If you take an average desktop PC, more than half of the power coming out of the wall is wasted as heat and never reaches the processor, memory, disks or other components. Servers (computers used for hosting) are slightly more efficient than desktop units but still waste 30-40% of the input power.

If you are looking for a hosting company to house your site, there are some really important issues to take into consideration. Hosting companies that market themselves as 'green' can be roughly divided into two camps, those that only utilise green & renewable energy and those who offset their vast power consumption by means of carbon offsetting. The former is the more sustainable option and represents truly green hosting; the model people should aim for. Unfortunately, the number of 'truly green' companies is a lot smaller than the number of companies using offsetting. Reasons vary from problems with exiting current electrical suppliers to the location of their computer storage centres.

Google officially announced last year that a typical search to its search engine only produced 0.2g of CO2. Other sources claimed this figure was significantly higher, at 7g of CO2. Google perhaps did not take into account the computers used in the entire journey of one search - the end-users computer, their internet service provider's technological hardware and all the servers the data might touch upon while travelling around the globe and back again. This is only the tip of the iceberg where green computing is concerned. Some argue that poisonous metals used in production and recycling of computer parts has a far greater impact upon our planet than any amount of power and heat wasted by hosting solutions. For greener options, see; AISO.net, greenwebhosting.co.uk, rackspace.co.uk

"True wisdom consists in not departing from nature and in molding our conduct according to her laws and model"

Seneca