

FOOD FOR THOUGHT #5

RAINBOW ROOM, CASTLE HILL PCYC,

Wednesday 3rd November 2010

Attendees: Diana Condylas, Kathy Jarrett, Jason Jarrett, Jennie Gibson, Jaymie Rains, Leon Van Wyk, Blake Hudson, Jan Green, Murray Whiley, Deidre Marchant, Laura Dunstan, Marilyn Grogan, Tomi Peso, John Boucher, Wolfgang Evers, Bronwyn Petrou, Tonielle Christensen.

We had yet another productive and inspiring gathering where thoughts, ideas and current knowledge on all manner of topics were discussed by all. Of course too there was food! And a fabulous spread it was. A huge thankyou to everyone that bought a plate - freshly baked olive bread, gluten-free fruit cake and Japanese chicken balls just to name a few. A reminder that we are hoping to put together our own recipe book sometime next year so keep those recipes coming – please email Kathy if you have any you would like to contribute.

We welcomed yet more newcomers to our gathering and are constantly heartened that word continues to spread around town and people are coming along to our gatherings to share, participate and be a part of something worthwhile. Thanks again must go to Dave Goode, manager of the PCYC, for allowing us to use the Rainbow Room for our gatherings (we will get better at leaving on time Dave!)

Diana, Kathy, Leon and a few others were freshly inspired after having attended the Dr David Suzuki lecture at JCU a few days earlier. Diana was also lucky enough to attend some amazing public lectures/seminars in Sydney recently that covered topics such as food politics, nano-technology, nutritionism, food security, water capture, genetic engineering, Oz harvest and Food First (USA). She has detailed notes that she's happy to forward through to anyone that is interested. Some food for thought that initiated our discussions included:

- Oz Harvest in Sydney collects 15 tonnes of food per week from supermarkets and restaurants that then gets re-distributed to those in need. Coles supermarkets however do not support this endeavour. Oz Harvest was responsible for having laws changed so that excess produce could be reused and not simply discarded and wasted.
- Australian farmers, in order to meet contract conditions with the major supermarkets, are constantly under pressure to pick their produce green and on average only get paid 5c for every \$1 we pay at the checkout for fresh produce. It was said that Aussie farmers walk away from the land and/or commit suicide at a ratio of 8 and 3 every week.
- Any orange purchased in a Woolworths supermarket is at least 12 months old, was picked green and gas ripened.
- Coles and Woolworths are the largest owners of poker machines and liquor outlets in Australia.

- Woolworths current marketing campaign advertising “Nth Qld grown” produce in our supermarkets does nothing to encourage the reduction in food miles. Staff have confirmed that all the Qld grown produce still travels down to their warehouse/s in Brisbane only to be trucked but up from whence it came – go figure?
- Food connect is a system operating in many areas of Australia where members buy a box of fruit and veg direct from the farmer who is paid 40c in the dollar. The produce is picked up by customers from a central location in order to reduce food miles.
- Townsville City Council has spent \$13,000 in feasibility studies for the proposed farmer’s market.
- 80% of the world’s food energy comes from only 12 industrial crops.
- Supporting Heirloom varieties of seeds/plants is a practical way to support diversity and traditional plant species.
- In 1992 Australian top soil had depleted by 55% of minerals. The minerals most lacking in Australian soils are Chromium, Zinc, Selenium and Magnesium. Discussion then centred on the fact that the amount of nutrients available to us in our fresh produce is reflected by where they are grown and the quality of soil they are grown in.

Laura from NQ Dry Tropics (a community not-for-profit org) attended our gathering and offered community partnerships/collaboration with groups/organisations such as ours with the aim of fostering volunteerism and achieving community involvement etc.

Jan Green has approached some of the local growers/producers etc in the attempt to publish a local listing of who grows, what, when that will then be available to restaurants and the public in order to share knowledge and get focussed on eating what’s in season in our region. Jan (as a freelance journalist) is also available to write up press releases and articles to support us in our aim of community knowledge and education. She said the Townsville Bulletin is happy to support us in this area. It was mentioned that anybody with any specialist skills, abilities, talents, experience to help us get awareness and education out to the community is always welcome. If you are willing to help out with our group in anyway be it keeping an excel spreadsheet up-to-date or making some phone calls then please don’t hesitate to put your hand up. The more people we have taking an active role the more our group truly becomes and represents our community.

Jan also mentioned that Rose Wright from Southern Cross University is a grants dynamo and a resource we may be able to use in the future. Jan offered information about a regional food forum that was to take place later this month at Walkamin. Apparently there was little or no response from Townsville businesses/farmers/organisations however Townsville Enterprise is said to be interested. Watch this space as we have some news on this at the next gathering.

Following our application for a grant, in collaboration with the PCYC for an edible garden surrounding the playground area, Dave reports that we may have to wait up to 3 months before we hear of an outcome. Fingers crossed we are successful.

Leon spoke of the possibility of creating edible gardens at JCU to feed struggling students. Members of the permaculture club explained how edible gardens use less water than lawn and

education/kitchen gardens at the uni may be able to be worked into the uni's, quite large, gardening budget with multiple positive outcomes. It was also suggested that home gardeners try New Guinea beans instead of zucchini in Townsville gardens for something different and possibly more successfully.

The Rising Sun Rotary club kindly offered to us the use of their PA system for our gatherings and offered a potential partnership with "The house with no steps" whose clients with disabilities may like to help out with volunteering/physical work etc when needed.

Jan's plan to run cooking classes from her well-equipped home in Hermit Park is still ongoing. She is currently working through public liability responsibilities so watch this space for updates. A date has been set for the inaugural Food for Thought Foodies Night which will take place on Friday 19th November at Jan's place. Please see Jan or Kathy for details.

Diana has been speaking with Mike from Majors Creek Produce (operates from the Sunday markets in Flinders St) and he is happy to grow what his customers want. He is wealth of knowledge and each week stocks a variety of different produce at his stall from his 20acre farm.

Talk also focussed on the need for our group to get knowledge out to the wider community. Movie nights (Food Inc this month being our first), letters to the editor containing facts and figures etc are just a few ways we can educate the public on issues we feel are important and lacking in mainstream media. The possibility of having a column in the Sun newspaper sponsored by businesses was also tabled. The Alligator Creek Times was also suggested as an avenue to investigate as was the idea of having time allocated during each gathering a "did you know" section where newly gathered facts, figures and knowledge can be raised and discussed by the group.

The Townsville Permaculture group explained the concept of Perma-Blitzes and their desire to get a few up and running in the local area. Basically they involve a group of Permaculture members going to someone's house to design and build an edible/sustainable garden. Materials are supplied by the homeowner and the group imparts knowledge and physical labour to bring the garden to fruition. More details can be found on the Permaculture website at www.permaculturetownsville.org

Kathy raised the idea that she would really love to see Food for Thought truly representational of our community so invited people to bring along their partners, spouses, kids, friends etc to our monthly gatherings. We are lucky to have the Rainbow Room for our use which is a kid-friendly space with toys and room to move so if you can't get a babysitter or the whole family is interested then bring them along and we can get everyone active in making local, fresh food a focal point for all. The food sharing we have at our gatherings is quite impressive so feel free to make it a dinner outing if you have to. We are usually finished by 8pm too so it's not a late night.

Once again our gathering was full of lively discussion that encompassed our mission to promote the education, production, access to and consumption of organic foods and a more ecologically sustainable lifestyle. Thank you for helping us to achieve this.

Our next meeting with again be at the Rainbow Room on Tuesday 7th December. See you then.

Please share this email to people that would be interested and encourage friends, family, schools, new Townsvillians (ie EVERYBODY) to **have a look at the Food for Thought portal, join the Facebook group and come to the next Food for Thought gathering**