

Paul puts on third festival for foodies

Helen Peacocke finds out why The Late Chef is so passionate about local produce

Last year the Wallingford Food Festival was awarded a Highly Commended award from Tourism South East – this year organiser Paul Bellchambers is aiming for an even higher accolade.

The festival, which is now in its third year, takes place on the Bridge Villas Campsite, Crowmarsh Gifford, near Wallingford, on Saturday and Sunday.

It's a celebration of quality produce and will once again be promoting a fabulous range of Oxfordshire food producers, including farmers and chefs.

Paul is confident there will be more than 40 producers attending this year and the Cat's Chorus, a local choir and Occasional Orchestra will be providing musical entertainment too.

Paul, is known as The Late Chef, a name that developed when he swapped a career in IT for a commercial kitchen after taking City & Guild examinations in professional cookery.

He now broadcasts regularly on BBC Radio Oxford, often cooking in the studio while on air. You will also find him at various farmers' markets, including East Oxford and Wolvercote where he sells delicious little home-cooked morsels. Paul also caters for businesses and private clients as well as cooking at the Oxford University Boat Club for special events.

He admits since taking up cooking he is totally focused on all things local.

"I try to encourage people to buy local, cook local and eat local, which is why I decided to organise a Food Festival for South Oxfordshire," he said.

That first festival took place in 2011 and took Paul just ten weeks to go from idea to event. The result that year was 1,500 visitors who enjoyed the chance to talk to more than 20 food producers and taste their goods. First sponsors, who included Rowse Honey, SODC, Higgs Group, Grundon and the SPC Group have been joined by Aspire Oxford, Appletree and UE Coffee Roasters who will be roasting 20 different coffees for visitors to taste.

Local businesses play an important part by supplying printing, helping with waste management and with many other key elements which means the festival is financially sustainable – all funds raised pay for services needed. Any money remaining can then go towards funding next year's festival.

Demonstrations in the Cookery Marquee will be hosted by broadcaster Jo Thoenes.

The chefs who will be demonstrating their skills include Matthew Cockman, the chef patron of The Partridge, Wallingford; Mariella Bliss, chef patron of Blissful Italian food, Wallingford and Gary Jones, the executive head chef at Le Manoir aux Quat Saisons. Chris Gates of the Shredded Meat Company will also be taking part.

Beverley Glock, of Splat Cooking School, will be demonstrating in hope she can encourage both adults and children to become as passionate about cooking as she is. And Paul is excited to have TV personality Alan Coxon – known as The Food Archaeologist – cooking for festival visitors.



Paul Bellchambers
The Late Chef

Organiser: Paul Bellchambers