**District Dispatch**

We are extremely lucky to have an abundance of fantastic food producers here in the Chichester District. From the Downs to the sea, we have a variety of what are classed as ‘primary food producers’ who are involved in a wide range of food production, from growing and harvesting crops, to rearing livestock, and as well as producing milk and eggs.

We then have amazing bakers who make mouthwatering bread, cakes, pies and quiches to award winning vineyards and small batch brewers. You could literally fill your kitchen cupboards with the delicious array of food that is made right here on our doorstep - you really don’t have to travel far in this area to find high-quality produce.

While horticulture and tourism are the biggest economic sectors within our district, food and drink businesses also represent a major slice of our economy, with just under 1,500 businesses of this type registered in the district. We have also seen an increase in the number of small, local food producers which is fantastic news. The people behind these products are often individuals or families who want to make a difference to their communities, and who are passionate about making high-quality, sustainable food. They contribute so much to our district, and we have an abundance of inspiring success stories.

For example, there is a family-run soft fruit grower in Sidlesham that sells raspberries, strawberries and other local produce from an innovative vending machine on its farm. While in the north of the district there is a small company known for its mouthwatering scotch eggs, made using local eggs and breadcrumbs from a bakery down the road.

As part of our council’s commitment to supporting these local, independent businesses we have put money towards a new campaign called ‘Sussex Six’ which aims to increase the amount of local produce featured on menus and shop shelves in the district.

The idea is to encourage eateries, shops and other food businesses in the district to stock at least six locally produced products or use at least six locally produced ingredients in their menus over the coming year. Businesses that take the ‘Sussex Six’ pledge are then encouraged to highlight this to their customers in a variety of ways including on their social media channels, in their menus and by including special labelling on their shop shelves.

The ultimate aim of the campaign is to help build a robust circular economy where producers, hospitality and retail help strengthen our local community by using each other’s products. You may not be aware but for every £1 spent in a local business, around 63 pence stays within the local area. So, by signing up to the ‘Sussex Six’ campaign, it will help to keep money within the local area, support our economy and help keep local people in local jobs. It also benefits the environment, reduces food miles and keeps us connected to our local farms and producers.

Just recently more than 70 local food and drink producers, hospitality and retail businesses came together to launch the campaign, which is led by the Natural Partnerships CIC (Community Interest Company).

As part of the campaign there is also a dedicated food and drink directory where people will be able to find all the different food and drink producers in our district and the places that serve and sell it.

At the moment, businesses can have their details listed for free, so I would really encourage all our local producers to make sure they get listed as soon as possible. I’d also like to encourage as many of you as possible to find out more, and maybe make a pledge of your own to buy or try some of the products that are listed. You can access the directory by going to: [**www.sussexfoodanddrink.org**](http://www.sussexfoodanddrink.org)

Best Wishes

Councillor Harsha Desai

Cabinet Member for Growth and Place at Chichester District Council

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