

HOW SLOW can you go?

The slow food movement is an antidote to fast-food and, despite its name, the philosophy has quickly spread across our fertile fields. **Joanne Conway** explores some key principles on a slow food journey

Here's our round up of some of the fabulous festivals and events taking place all over the country as part of The Gathering. Many more ideas can be found online at www.discoverireland.com or www.thegathering.ie.

Bloom Phoenix Park, 30 May – 3 June

Taste of Dublin 13 – 16 June

Westport Festival of Music & Food 29 – 30 June

Irish Seaweed Kitchen and Coopershill House Seaweed Days Sligo 25 – 26 July

Waterford Harvest Festival 9 – 15 September

A Taste of West Cork Skibbereen 10 – 16 September

GIY Gathering Waterford 13 – 15 September

Slow Food Apple & Craft Cider Festival Tipperary 21-22 September

Galway International Oyster & Seafood Festival 26 – 29 September

Savour Kilkenny Food Festival 23 – 28 October

THE FOODIE GATHERING

Cooking with the seasons and using the best of what's available locally is a really good place to start your slow food journey. The seasons will keep your menu endlessly inspired and the household budget in check, while sourcing locally will keep your palate and your health in tip-top shape. But slow food isn't just for the home and the 'gathering' of friends and family can be a great excuse to explore. Take your time going to and fro, each part of our country has its own fascinating story, rich with culture and tradition, waiting to be celebrated. What follows is a round-up of resources available to us countrywide from people who work tirelessly to preserve our culinary traditions and facilitate a deeper connection with our food, our land and our heritage. Make sure you include these in your 'gathering' or holiday plans.

SLOW DOWN

Slow Food Ireland follows the international movement's philosophy that all food should be good, clean and fair. It aims to reconnect people with the origins and source of their food and encourages a return to traditional culinary methods. The movement is made up of small local groups or Convivia. Each group reflects its own locale with excellent knowledge of the best available produce as well as local and regional events, many based around the pure enjoyment of food. Join Slow Food by getting in touch with your local Convivium from the listings on www.slowfoodireland.com.

GROW YOUR OWN

No matter what size of a space you are dealing with, there's room to grow. From a few pots on a balcony to a couple of raised beds or even a polytunnel, a healthy, vibrant and delicious bounty awaits you.

GIY (Grow it Yourself) is a fast growing support network, bringing people together in community groups and online to inspire and support each other to grow food. There are over 40,000 GIYers currently involved in the movement. All the info you need to sign up and get growing is available at www.giyireland.com.



BEFRIEND YOUR TRUSTY BUTCHER

Nothing tastes as good as well-raised, expertly butchered meat and a sign of true quality comes from the Associated Craft Butchers of Ireland (ACBI) certification mark. The ACBI can reassure customers, not just on the origin of what they sell, but also on how it has been raised and prepared before it's brought to the shelves. They encourage customers to get to know their local craft butcher and avail of their expert knowledge and recommendations. There are currently over 400 members in Ireland and you can find your local craft butcher online at www.craftbutchers.ie.



GO ORGANIC

The Irish Organic Farmers and Growers Association (IOFGA) certify producers and sellers of organic products in Ireland. Annual monitoring by the organisation ensures that each product that bears the logo is well deserving. To find your local organic producer, check the directory at www.iofga.org. There are also farmers' markets in almost every town in Ireland with up to date listings available at www.bordbia.ie. Other fantastic resources include the Organic Centre in County Leitrim, which hold regular courses in organic gardening as well as retail outlets like the Organic Supermarket and organic vegetable box scheme suppliers nationwide.



GET REALLY CHEESY

How aware are you of the stunning array of artisan cheeses being produced on our island? CAIS, The Association of Irish Farmhouse Cheesemakers, represent the very best producers; those who commit to full traceability and combine creativity and innovation with respect for traditional craft. There are an impressive range of raw, pasteurised, cow's, sheep's, goat's and even buffalo cheeses. Some producers use the milk of their own herd for their

