

Food Projects + Culture:

Sourcing affordable ingredients tailored to local cultures

Resource pack

This is still a work in progress and the IFP will continue to research organisations and ideas to add to this pack. We plan to add this to our website too. If you have any suggestions, they are very welcome. Please email candice@manorgardenscentre.org or text 07543 491 311

Guest speakers:

- Ali Kakande founder of Carib Eats. Hackney-based organisation cooking delicious Caribbean food. They offer much more than a meal – it's a chance to stop, connect and chat <https://www.caribeats.org/>
- Grey Gordon from Good Food Box, part of Granville Community Kitchen. A Kilburn-based community food project. Their veg box is run on a sliding-scale pricing model and customers can choose cultural add-ons of African & Caribbean or North European vegetables <https://granvillecommunitykitchen.org.uk/good-food-box/>
- Sheri Lawal from Choices CiC, Islington-based community organisation. Part of their work is running an Afro-Caribbean cooperative twice a month. In March 2024, they have also been providing hot meals using Afro-Caribbean recipes and setting up a Black Urban Gardeners programme for Islington community members <https://www.choiceslondoncic.com/>

Learnings from the guest speakers:

Carib Eats

Ali Kakande shared with us the story of founding Carib Eats during lockdown. For the first few years, Carib Eats delivered Caribbean meals across Hackney, but it's always been about more than just the meals. For Ali, food is a chance to connect and come together. For the past year or so, she's been running canteens - regular in-person meals – which are all about bringing people together through food. She has now just been able to get a permanent base to run the canteens in Dalston community centre.

Where they source ingredients:

Mostly from Ridley Road market. In the early days, one of the chefs had good connections at the market and could get deals. One challenge with the canteens has been not having a permanent base. It's hard to build relationships with suppliers and you can only pick up so much as you don't have storage or your own fridge.

When making the meals, the team has to choose when to cook the specialised Caribbean vegetables (hard food: yam, dumplings, plantain) and when to create recipes using other vegetables but seasoned in a Jamaican style. This is because of the cost of imported produce.

Carib Eats have found that using other surplus donations through bigger organisations, e.g. The Felix Project, hasn't worked well for their needs as a project as they need to know what they are getting. Having more control over this means it's easier to plan the meals.

The team have been buying ingredients at the start of the day, but now that they have their own base they will be able to create relationships with suppliers and will have more flexibility for things like collecting surplus from the market as they will be able to store it.

Want to be involved?

Carib Eats is open for volunteers for their canteen sessions. Ali is also keen to connect with organisations in Islington. Find out more: <https://www.caribeats.org/>



Granville Community Kitchen + the Good Food Box

“Good Food Box is a veg box scheme for the community based in South Kilburn under Granville Community Kitchen. Our fruit and veg largely comes from small scale, regenerative/organic farms around the country through the non-profit wholesaler Better Food Shed, and some comes from our own local growing sites. At present, the African and Caribbean additions come from local shops and aren't organic as in this case the priority is having these heritage options, but we're working on sourcing these in different ways.

We believe that a veg box scheme should be for everyone - not just those who can afford it. It's a tiered payment system, so people pay based on what they can afford. We also accept cash as well as direct debit. We have a culturally appropriate offer as a key value for us is that people have access to food they want to cook and eat. At the moment, this is North European and African and Caribbean but we hope to expand based on the needs of the community, for example to a North African offer and South Asian. We pack around 50 veg bags each week, about 20% of these are African Caribbean at present, 80% North European.

Each veg bag has a set number of items, with 2 differing items based on the cultural options. For example, a small bag will contain something like courgette, onions, carrots and cabbage with mushrooms and fennel as the North European additions, and plantain and okra as the African and Caribbean additions.

We are community centred, so our role is to listen and respond to the needs of the local community as much as possible, rather than making assumptions about the food people want or need. People collect in person, we have free meals for the community and attend events where we talk to people, so we can understand what is missing from our veg box offer.

Rather than framing this as a veg box scheme for "certain minority groups", which can further other and reinforce the structural oppression we're working against, at GCK we're trying to change narratives like these and emphasise that everyone has a right to food, and food that they want to eat. So not just food that's supermarket waste (eg surplus), or food that those in positions of power and privilege decide people should eat.

The goal for us is to have a piece of land where we can run a farm and grow produce using polytunnels. Access to land is difficult. Other barriers include cost, the African and Caribbean additions from local shops are costly.”

- Grey Gordon at the Good Food Box project

Notes from the workshop Q + A

Question: how does the tiered payment system work and how is it set up to make people comfortable choosing the right affordable price?

Answer: There 3 tiers to the payment system and it's completely self-selecting. Good Food Box don't ask for any proof or ask any questions. They also have quite personal connections with the people who place orders, so this helps. Good Food Box doesn't frame it as 'these are the prices for people with low incomes' but just 'these are the prices' and then people choose which one is best for them.

Question: Do you offer any free veg boxes?

Answer: the veg boxes aren't free. They do offer work exchange as an option, if someone is happy to volunteer some time and then get a free veg box. Granville Community Kitchen do run a weekly hot meal, which is all free

ABOUT KITCHEN GARDEN **GOOD FOOD BOX**



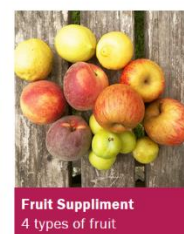
Small Bag
6 types of veg



Standard Bag
9 types of veg



Family Bag
11 types of veg



Fruit Supplement
4 types of fruit

Pick a food from your culture option (or choose our new one size leafy bag):



African & Caribbean



North European



Leafy Bag

More options to come...if you have a food from your culture you'd like to see, we'd love to hear from you.

Choices CiC

Choices CiC run an Afro-Caribbean co-operative once a month here in Islington. People come along, and pay a membership fee of £5 in return for £20 - £25 worth of Afro-Caribbean foods, with alternative options available for people on low or no income. Throughout March 2024, Choices have also been cooking up hot meals using Afro-Caribbean recipes.

Sheri Lawal, founder of Choices CiC, sources the food from a variety of suppliers- dedicating a lot of time to seeking out deals. However, in the last year the cost of living has made the price of imported goods rise even more, meaning it takes more and more time (and travelling across London) to find affordable prices.

As a way around this in an exciting new project, Sheri is setting up a gardening group to begin testing out and experimenting with growing Afro-Caribbean crops here in Islington. They are still looking for volunteers to get involved for the first growing season. If you would like to learn how to grow Afro-Caribbean food, you are interested in being part of a local gardening community, or you would like to know more – get in touch:



hello@islingtonfoodpartnership.org.uk or text 07543 491 311

Pricing models

With rising food prices across most products, imported goods have become more and more expensive to source. Below are some examples of sliding-scale, solidarity-based pricing models that may bring more financial support to a community project, while still ensuring it is affordable:

The Bag	What You Get	Good Food Solidarity Price		Good Food Go Price		Good Food Start Price	
Small Veg Bag	6 Portions of varied veg	£54 per month*	£12.50 weekly	£28 per month*	£6.50 weekly	£16.90 per month*	£3.90 weekly
Standard Veg Bag	9 Portions of varied veg	£82 per month*	£19 weekly	£43 per month*	£10 weekly	£32 per month*	£7.30 weekly
Family Veg Bag	10 Portions of veg, larger quantities	£104 per month*	£24 weekly	£61 per month*	£14 weekly	£46 per month*	£10.60 weekly
The Leafy Bag (one size)	3-4 portions of varied greens only	£43 per month*	£10 weekly	£n/a - available at one price only	£n/a - available at one price only	£n/a - available at one price only	£n/a - available at one price only
Fruit Supplement	4 portions of varied fruit	£39 per month*	£9 weekly	£22 per month*	£5 weekly	£10.90 per month*	£2.50 weekly

*our monthly prices are worked out as the average per month across the entire year, as some months have 4 weeks and others have 5.

Consider paying the Solidarity price if most of the following apply to you:

- + I am able to meet all of my basic needs*.
- + I may have some debt but it doesn't prohibit attainment of basic needs.
- + I am employed or don't work through choice.
- + I have access to financial savings or stand to inherit wealth.
- + I have some expendable income**.
- + I have a relatively high degree of earning power due to my education level (or other privileges you may have associated with white normativity, gender, citizenship status, class background, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical ability, and other areas of discrimination and all their intersections).

Consider paying the Good Food START price if a number of the following statements ring true for you:

- + I frequently stress about meeting basic needs* and don't always achieve them.
- + I have debt and it sometimes prohibits me from meeting my basic needs.
- + I rent lower-end properties or have unstable housing.
- + I am unemployed or underemployed.
- + I qualify for government assistance, e.g. benefits, local welfare schemes.
- + I access voluntary assistance.
- + I have no access to savings.
- + I have no or very limited expendable income*.
- + I have no recourse to public funds
- + I am impacted by state violence (e.g. refugees, asylum seekers and those impacted by the criminal (in)justice system)

Consider paying the Good Food GO price if a number of the above statements ring true for you but you feel able to pay a little bit more.

*BASIC NEEDS include food, housing, clothing and transportation.

**EXPENDABLE INCOME might mean you are able to buy coffee or tea at a shop, go to the cinema or a concert, buy new clothes, books and similar items each month.

You won't be asked for any proof / ID, we just ask that you are honest.

OrganicLea pricing guideline

From their website: <https://www.organiclea.org.uk/>

Solidarity Scheme

We run a 'solidarity pricing model' for the box scheme, where those who can are encouraged to pay a little more for their bags, and those who need it are encouraged to take a discount. The scheme is completely optional, and you can opt in and out of it. The idea is that by paying on a sliding scale, we hope to foster more equity and diversity in our food system. Sounds good (we think, anyway). You can choose to pay an additional £1, £2, £3, £4, £5 or £10 per week. This money will then be used to cross subsidise the bags of those who have requested a discount.

There's no means testing for the discount - it's available if you feel you need it. The standard discount we offer is 20%, but if you feel you need more than this then let us know. The discounts we offer are paid for from the extra solidarity payments we receive, so there might be a waiting list for the discount depending on how much we have coming in and how many discount requests we receive.

To add a solidarity payment, select the amount you'd like to pay from the solidarity payment options when you're signing up. For a discount, just drop us a line to: box@organiclea.org.uk

We suggest you consider paying the solidarity rate if you agree with one or more of the below:

- I feel I am able to and would like to stand in solidarity with others
- I am able to meet all of my basic needs
- I have some disposable income
- Have access to savings and/or inherited money
- Your rent/mortgage is less than 30% of your monthly income
- Not working as a choice (e.g. taking time out to consider a career change)
- Have a relatively high degree of earning power due to level of education e.g. educated to degree level

We suggest you consider paying the discounted rate if you agree with one or more of the below:

- You frequently stress about meeting basic needs and don't always achieve them
- You have no or very limited expendable income
- You do unpaid care work
- You do not qualify for state funds solely due to your immigration status
- Support children or other dependents on one income
- Have to work part time/are on low income i.e. working less than 16 hours a week

How to find out what people want

For organisations working within Islington, the needs, preferences and tastes of the local community will be diverse. Here are some ideas on ways local organisations can find out what people actually need and want, particularly in reflecting their culture:

Survey – Manor Gardens

Manor Gardens Welfare Trust runs a community food co-op. Members pay a donation of £3 (if they can afford it) to take home bags of food that would cost around £20-£30 in the supermarket. Members fill their own bags with food, choosing which items they want to take.

Manor Gardens receive some surplus food donated through Felix Project, but they also use members' money to purchase food items in bulk. This is a recent survey used in the co-op to quickly gather information on what people wanted. Members placed colour-coded stickers next to items.

Food co-op member, we want to hear from you



We use your food co-op donations to buy some items in bulk, saving money. We want to know which items you want the most. Below is a list of things we could try to buy. Here's how to tell us what you like:

- 1) Look at the list below
- 2) Place stickers next to any items you like. Red stickers are for your favourites - things you really want. Yellow stickers are for things you would quite like, but are maybe less of a priority
- 3) You can put stickers next to as many items as you like. If you don't like something or don't want it, leave it blank

Please note: We can only buy some of these things each week (2 or 3 different types of item). We will change what we buy each time to keep it varied week to week.

Rice (long grain)	Chickpeas (tins)
Rice (basmati)	Kidney beans (tins)
Lamb stock cubes (halal)	Eggs
Red lentils	Flour (wheat)
Chopped tomatoes (tins)	Flour (rice)
Olive Oil (blend)	Black eyed beans (tins)
Pasta	Butter beans (tins)
Vegetable Oil	Toilet Roll
Yellow split peas (Chana Dal)	Washing powder

= Favourites "I really want this" ❤️

= "I like this" 👍

“The survey has helped give a quick snapshot of items that are most wanted, and so worth getting in bigger quantities. Next time we do it though, which will be very soon, we’re planning to include pictures so that it’s easier to understand for the members who don’t speak English. We are also planning to include more empty spaces for people to add their own suggestions. The list was created from things we knew we could buy in bulk for much cheaper than in the supermarket. We use a local cash and carry called MAH(S) but hope to branch out to other places too”

- Candice George, MGWT staff

Community Navigators

Manor Gardens Welfare Trust and Help on Your Doorstep are starting a project to train community members who speak local languages in Interpretation. These Community Navigators will then be based in local food-hubs, offering signposting to other services in community languages. The Islington Food Partnership will work with this project, speaking to the Community Navigators about ways they can ask people about their experiences in finding food that reflects their culture and which ingredients or items they would like to see in community food projects

Cooking

Tati canteen (from the Oitij-jo Collective), Tower Hamlets

TATI aims to build a ground-breaking women and young people-led arts and crafts hub and cooking project serving authentic Bangla home-style dishes in London’s fast-changing east London

<https://www.artsadmin.co.uk/a-talk-with-maher-anjun/> <https://londonist.com/london/features/bangla-women-brick-lane-tati-café>

Seeds and growing

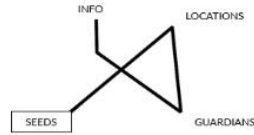
Another way to make produce more affordable is to grow it. Islington is limited on green space, but there are disused areas and the IFP could work towards helping open up to communities. Growing also brings added, deeply important benefits in terms of community wellbeing and passing on intergenerational knowledge. Here are some examples of existing projects that highlight the meaningful practice of growing and creating seeds

Coriander club, Tower Hamlets

A community growing project supporting people, predominantly women, from the local Bangladeshi community. To garden and grow your own vegetables is an important part of Bengali culture and the Farm provides a space to cultivate traditional produce as a community.

<https://www.trustdevcom.org.uk/news/coriander-club-visit-for-the-moulsecoomb-bangladeshi-women/>
<https://spitalfieldslife.com/2010/04/16/the-coriander-club-lutfun-hussain/>

<https://www.connectedseeds.org/guardians/lutfun>



Kodu



Guardians [Lutfun Hussain](#) at Spitalfields City Farm

Bottle gourd, kodu, or dudi are eaten widely within the Asian community. They have been cultivated for around 8,000 years. Regular consumption has medical effects including lowering blood sugar, cholesterol levels and blood pressure. Sow seeds in twos in 9 cm pots at 18-22°C. Germination is within three weeks. Choose relatively infertile soils with full sun and regular water supply. Kodu is a very vigorous climber and needs substantial support: it will overwhelm bean-poles but can be grown over a sturdy shed. Beautiful large white blossoms appear from July onwards. Male flowers have longer stalks and open first. Female flowers have a baby fruit just behind the petals.



Black Rootz (Ubele Initiative)

Black Rootz is the first multigenerational Black-led growing project in the UK, where the older generation share their expertise on growing whilst also supporting youth engagement in their surrounding natural environment. The project is based at the Wolves Lane Centre in Haringey.

They are able to provide paid consultation on setting up growing projects, including advice on testing the ground for heavy metals and training in techniques for growing Afro-Caribbean crops in the UK. They can also provide seeds.

<https://www.ubele.org/our-work/black-rootz>

<https://www.capitalgrowth.org/black-rootz/>

Palestinian Seed Library

“Founded by Vivien Sansour, the Palestinian Heirloom seed library and its Traveling Kitchen project seek to preserve and promote heritage and threatened seed varieties, traditional Palestinian farming practices, and the cultural stories and identities associated with them. Based in the village of Battir, a UNESCO World Heritage site outside Bethlehem, the PHSL also serves as a space for collaborations with artists, poets, writers, journalists, and other members to showcase and promote their talents and work. Working closely with farmers, Sansour has identified key seed varieties and food crops that are threatened with extinction and would provide the best opportunities to inspire local farmers and community members to actively preserve their bioculture and recuperate their local landscape. The PHSL is part of the global conversation about biocultural heritage. Its Traveling Kitchen is a mobile venue for social engagement in different communities, promoting cultural preservation through food choices.

Part of the Fertile Crescent, Palestine has been considered one of the world’s centers of diversity, particularly for wheat and barley. This biodiversity, which has kept us alive for millennia, is being threatened by policies that target farmers and force them to give up their heirloom seeds and adopt new varieties. Heirlooms, which have been carefully selected by our ancestors throughout thousands of years of research and imagination, form one of the last strongholds of resistance to the privatization of our life source: the seed. These seeds carry the DNA of our survival against a violent background that is seen across the hills and valleys through settlement and chemical input expansions.

Heirloom seeds also tell us stories, connect us to our ancestral roots, remind us of meals our families once made at special times of the year. The Palestine Heirloom Seed Library (PHSL) is an attempt to recover these ancient seeds and their stories and put them back into people’s hands. The PHSL is an interactive art and agriculture project that aims to provide a conversation for people to exchange seeds and knowledge, and to tell the stories of food and agriculture that may have been buried away and waiting to sprout like a seed. It is also a place where visitors may feel inspired by the seed as a subversive rebel, of and for the people, traveling across borders and checkpoints to defy the violence of the landscape while reclaiming life and presence”

<https://viviensansour.com/Palestine-Heirloom>



Where to source wholesale goods

This section is the most work-in-progress. We know from speaking to member organisations that it is a big challenge at the moment: how can projects buying in bulk (e.g. food co-ops/pantries) source key cultural ingredients affordably? Here are some things the IFP plans to do in the next few months to work on this:

- Continue researching organisations who offer tailored cultural options, asking where they source food
- Researching wholesalers and markets in the local area and creating price lists

- Exploring options for collective purchasing, i.e. several food projects joining together to get cheaper bulk prices

Findings will be added to an updated version of this document and added to the website

Vibrant Foods

South Asian Wholesale ingredients. One of the largest South Asian food groups in Europe

<https://vibrantfoods.com/>

Sustainability + low carbon projects

Low carbon Chinatown digital cookbook: <https://lowcarbon.lingqi.com/digitalcookbook>

The Low Carbon Digital Cookbook is a digital companion piece to Low Carbon Chinatown, a project by designer and artist Ling Tan that combines food, data science and community participation to explore different ways that we can all help respond to the Climate Crisis.

Working with East and South East Asian (ESEA) communities around London, Low Carbon Chinatown engaged participants through fundamentally enjoyable activities: cooking and eating. Food, with its association to culture, is something we all have in common, breaking down barriers and bringing us all together. In the project, participants worked with notable ESEA chefs to create low carbon alternatives to typical Chinese dishes, exploring different ingredients, cooking techniques and food sources that, in combination, still retained a core essence of Chinese food culture. By presenting these dishes back to the wider public in a pop-up structure built using low carbon materials and processes, we showed how reimagining both food and design can contribute to a more sustainable future.



Low Carbon Sweet & Sour Pork

"I will do cauliflower instead as pork has such a high foot print and usually when I make this, no one misses the pork."

Servings | 多少份: 2-4 people

Taste | 味道: "It tastes exactly like the traditional dish! | 味道和传统菜一模一样!"

Recipe's Carbon Footprint Impact | 食谱的碳足迹影响

Carbon Footprint Per Serving Compared To Traditional Recipes

与传统食谱相比, 每份的碳足迹:

