

Impressive results for university catering



Locally sourced food at the 2013 EAUC Annual Conference

With the focus on recognition of quality within catering in educational institutions on the rise in the last few years, Suzi Gammon, Catering Mark Coordinator at the Soil Association, shares her perspective on how working with the EAUC has furthered this agenda

In recent years, recognition for the quality of university catering has been on the rise. Caterers in the sector work within what are often comprehensive sustainability policies, as food is responsible for up to 30 per cent of our carbon footprint. The good news is that there are now also many ways that achievement in this area is being rewarded.

As a Catering Mark Coordinator, I travel the country meeting caterers from all walks of life, and if any sector is committed to buying, cooking

and serving sustainable food, it's the university sector. Universities and colleges are leaders in the field of sustainable practice and, over the past few years, we have seen that food is increasingly being included in policies to help institutions be as resource-friendly as possible. In working closely with organisations such as the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC), we have been able to engage with more universities and colleges, and work with them to increase the importance of food as a sustainability issue.

As a general rule, sustainability isn't always at the top of the list for caterers. But over the years working with the EAUC has connected us with people within the tertiary education sector who can see the relationship between food and the environment, and are able to affect change within their own organisations.

The Catering Mark gives caterers a way of benchmarking themselves against other universities which can encourage motivation to improve and maintain high standards. By achieving a Catering Mark award, institutions can also score points in the Green League, which is testament to the widely agreed environmental impact our food choices have. It also makes good business sense. Where lots of caterers are competing with the high street, by making your catering stand out with the quality and messaging about the provenance of your ingredients, you can win a loyal customer base. Caterers are in a position to make changes to their menus, such as only using UK Farm Assured meat, which the high street isn't doing. You can focus

Key facts

84% increase in universities with sustainable food policies since 2010

18 fold increase in universities working towards Food for Life Catering Mark accreditation since its introduction to the Green League in 2010

105% more institutions providing space for student or staff-led sustainable food projects (e.g. allotments) since 2010

Over 28 new student-led Food Co-ops providing access to sustainable food at affordable prices on campus

EAUC



The EAUC has integrated the award across many of their

activities to ensure their event delegates receive quality and their wider Membership are engaged with the scheme to encourage wider awareness:

❖ **Gold accredited food at the EAUC Annual Conference 2013**

❖ **Gold accredited food at the prestigious Green Gown Awards Ceremony 2012 and our 2013 Ceremony in November will be Gold too!**

❖ **Silver accredited food at the EAUC Annual Conference 2012 with our Gala Dinner accredited with Gold**



on using local produce (national high street chains don't do this), to make your in-house catering a more attractive offer. Using some local produce and Farm Assured meat are two of the

standards set out by the Catering Mark, and it's actions such as these which the caterers we have awarded have proven make a real difference to their sales.

In the UK, 30 universities currently have a Catering Mark and the number is quickly rising with almost half as many in the application stage of the award. ☑

To find out more about the Catering Mark and how to achieve it contact Suzi Gammon, Catering Mark Coordinator: sgammon@soilassociation.org. Find out more about the EAUC at www.eauc.org.uk.