



» Taste of National Driving Routes, Norway

2013 Food Tourism Network Development Programme

September 2013

Eight new food champions joined *Fáilte Ireland's Food Tourism Network Development programme in 2013*. They travelled to Norway on a benchmarking trip that brought them across some of the country's most beautiful and established driving routes.

Each of the new champions are located on the *Wild Atlantic Way* (WAW) and were chosen for their resounding passion and belief in Irish food as well as their commitment to actively influence the future of Irish cuisine and food tourism in their region.

When opened early next year, the WAW will be Ireland's first long-distance touring route, stretching along the coast from Donegal to West Cork.

This trip was a perfect learning journey for them to undertake, particularly as a new Taste of Norway is currently being developed along the driving routes there.

Food Tourism Objectives

- To build Ireland's food tourism reputation and encourage visitors to stop, spend and stay longer
- To develop networks & relationships within local business, organisations and regional stakeholders
- To enhance regional knowledge base & develop engaging food experiences
- To utilise food tourism as an economic development strategy

Food Champion Selection Criteria

- A demonstrable commitment to implement change
- A food tourism agenda
- A food business operation in business a min. of 2 years
- Capacity to lead and/or make decisions
- Membership of food/tourism organisation/s
- Accolades/awards received
- A proven track record of collaboration

Key learnings in the words of the Food Champions

The participants were asked 'What are the top three learnings that you can apply to your business/region?'
The responses were as follows:

- We need to encourage businesses to work with each other; cross promote products and create more cooperation locally and with other communities along the WAW. Use food tourism to link a wide diversity of food businesses and experiences.
- Be proud of our Irish food traditions and heritage. The Norwegians have a great 'pride of place' and they convey that, often very simply, but very well. We need to do the same.
- We should not look at food separately but create more associations between food and culture as a tourism product. The WAW is perfect for this.
- Continue to push for more and more use of Irish products, regional specialities and traditional dishes. The Norwegians were excellent at retaining traditional food production skills and the commercialisation of very unique foods e.g. semi -fermented trout, salted cod etc.
- Almost everywhere we went had a strong retail element – visitors will buy if you make it easy for them e.g. buy now and have it sent to their home.
- Add value to what you already have. Further attractions/add ons to your business can be easily done. Think customer needs vs. physical infrastructure.
- 'Fast Slow Food' – great concept. Beautifully prepared casual foods made with quality ingredients, reasonably priced.
- We tend to over complicate things here - keep it simple. Simplicity and quality is better than cheap and plenty.
- The importance of being visitor ready – communicate a clear message, good marketing practices, proper facilities, always have an area where you can offer hospitality and people can taste/engage with food/food story.
- Introduce the producer and the history of the business better. I've done it since and it's working very well.
- Clever and well thought out design and working with nature can provide an excellent customer experience.
- Sometimes what we in Ireland take for granted or disregard as pretentious and touristy, is exactly what an international visitor will find fascinating.

2013 Food Champions who participated in Benchmarking Programme

Name	Company	Location	Website	Email	Twitter
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To request a more detailed overview please email: foodtourism@failteireland.ie