



Copenhagen & Aarhus, Denmark

November 2016



Fáilte Ireland's Food Champions visited Denmark on a Food Tourism benchmarking trip in November 2016. The group made up of fifteen new emerging food champions and six existing food champions are part of the Food Tourism Network Development programme.

The network aims to support Fáilte Ireland's Food Tourism Vision that *'Ireland will be recognised by visitors for memorable food experiences which evoke a unique sense of place, culture and hospitality.'* Part of the remit of a Food Champion is working together with their local community in helping to build Ireland's food tourism reputation, sourcing and activating ideas to encourage visitors to stop more, spend more, and stay longer.

The Food Champions visited the cities of Copenhagen and Aarhus and experienced a bespoke itinerary that showcased food tourism experiences that supports Denmark high position on the international food tourism landscape.

Food Tourism Objectives

- 1 To provide the necessary thought leadership for food experience development in Ireland, acting as a catalyst for change and empowering others to achieve it.
- 2 To gather and disseminate market insights and best practices which will inform all food experience developments in Irish tourism.
- 3 To engage with national and local stakeholders to promote the concept of experience development, emphasise the role that food plays within it, and describe how the concept can be practically applied.
- 4 To work with Food Champions to continue raising awareness of the great Irish food experiences available and building our food reputation at home and abroad.
- 5 To future-proof the industry by continuously identifying existing and potential capability gaps and liaising with education providers on how to bridge them.

Food Tourism Development Network

Fáilte Ireland's Food Champions come from a wide variety of backgrounds; they all have different roles in the championing of Irish food and are united by their immense pride and their absolute conviction in Ireland's food tourism potential.

They want to shout from the rooftops that Ireland has a unique food experience; one that is honest and authentic, one that is as much about the people as it is about the product and the recipes. But they also want to educate, develop, connect the dots, to ensure that what we promise is what we deliver.

Each has intimate knowledge of their own area. They are an essential local connection to what is happening on the ground; they are mediators, disseminators, and communicators. Fáilte Ireland Food Champions are helping to tell Ireland's Food Story.

Key learnings in the words of the Food Champions

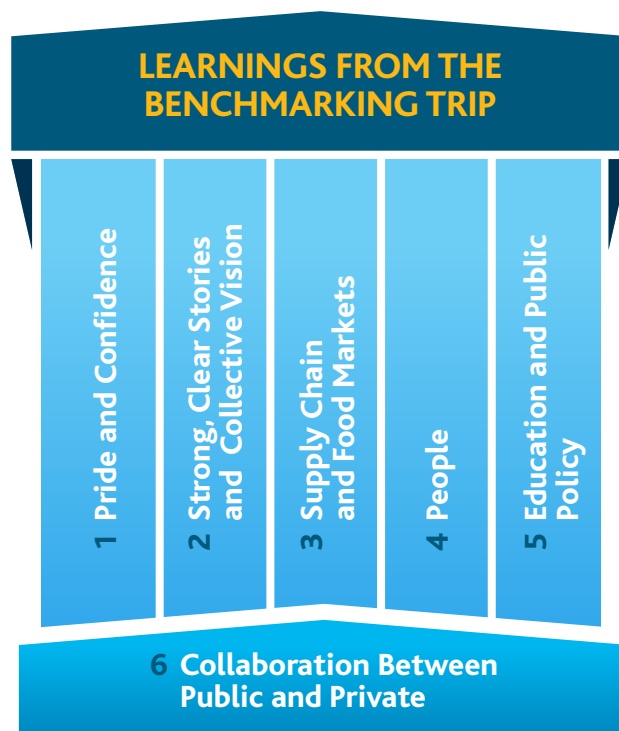
The participants were asked 'What are the top three learnings that you can apply to your business/region?' The responses were as follows:

- 1 Ireland has superior produce, stronger stories and better food experiences, but Denmark has an edge on Ireland in terms of pride, confidence and collaboration.
- 2 Ireland needs strong, clear stories and a collective vision.
- 3 Although Ireland has wonderful food stories, there may be confusion as we have, "way too many food messages in circulation".
- 4 The Irish food story needs a simple, short statement that everybody can buy in to.
- 5 Irish people (those working in food and others) need to be able to answer the 'What is Irish food?' question. The answer lies in our tradition in producing dairy, fish, beef, pork and whiskey.
- 6 Developing the supply chain for artisan producers is essential.

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Key learnings in the words of the Food Champions *continued...*

- 7 Despite being highly dependent on intensive farming and mass production, Denmark has been able to “back artisan producers and develop supply chains to support them”.
- 8 The idea of a food hub should be explored.
- 9 Ireland needs more street and food markets.
- 10 Successful markets do not ‘just happen’. These factors contribute to their success:
 - » High standards of presentation and branding.
 - » Learning from excellence in retail, and adapting and applying to food markets.
 - » Merchandising, layout, sales skills, lighting, displays – all have a big impact on effectiveness and sustainability.
 - » Management of visitor flow can encourage sales: eat as you go, takeaway and home consumption.
 - » Markets conceived as community spaces with communal tables.
- 11 Creating opportunities for tourists to engage with locals is important but we need to educate people on the Irish food story on its food heritage.
- 12 As well as the crisis with regards to recruiting chefs, there is also a crisis in attracting, recruiting and retaining front of house staff.
- 13 The Copenhagen House of Food initiative means that 90% of food sold in public kitchens (hospitals, schools etc) is now organic. Ireland can learn from this.
- 14 Food should form a greater part of Irish education policy so that children know where food comes from and learn to cook from a young age.
- 15 Better collaboration in Ireland can help build a stronger food culture and such collaboration is “not just within the food sector; it should also embrace the arts”.
- 16 We need to better leverage the links between Irish culture and Irish food.



2016 Food Champions who participated in Benchmarking Programme

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