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Food Matters

THE FOOD EMBASSY INC



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Executive Summary:

The food system challenges we face are complex and multidimensional. Addressing them successfully will require collaborative efforts by many over a long time. The Food Embassy with support from the Adelaide and Mt Lofty NRM Board and Flinders University, piloted the Food Matters course to build an informed community that could contribute to a more sustainable food system. This aligns with the aims of the SA Urban Food Networkⁱ and the vision from Edible Adelaide 2016ⁱⁱ.

Based on the well-established framework for the future food systemⁱⁱⁱ Food Matters was adapted from a Flinders University online platform to increase food system literacy and engage communities in action^{iv}. Incorporating health, sustainability and social considerations

the program objectives are:

1. To increase participants knowledge of a local, sustainable food system considering, social, economic and environmental factors.
2. To promote participation in the establishment of a local, sustainable food system.
3. To encourage personal and community action using a food democracy framework.

Specific topics included: alternative vs industrial food systems; diets for sustainable eating; regenerative food production; land use for people, production and biodiversity; and food access and social justice. Feedback from participants indicated the sessions were inclusive and motivating (63%), the information sharing was valuable (63%) and linked directly to actions they could take.

At the end of the course all participants reported positive knowledge shifts across most of the food system issues covered. Notably with increasing knowledge shifts on the industrialised and alternative food systems with 74% having limited knowledge to 100 % having good knowledge at the end of the course. Knowledge also increased across the following areas:

- 84 % having limited knowledge to 100 % having good knowledge on water resources impact on the food system;
- 68% having limited knowledge to 100 % having good knowledge on biodiversity impact on the food system .

The program increased individual confidence to improve the local food system with 50 % disagreeing with having confidence before the course to 95 % agreeing to strongly agreeing after the course. Other key attitudinal shifts were concern that farmers should be paid a living wage; biodiversity be protected; and farm land preserved and regenerated.

Behaviour changes were evident throughout the program. The actions participants were most proud of included their ability to source more local food, cooking more of their meals from scratch, growing their own food, and confidence in asking question of suppliers.

In addition to personal actions, participants developed group actions. These included creating a local food map; initiating food swaps; sourcing and preserving seasonal produce; becoming Magic Harvest Hub coordinators or participants and becoming members of existing regional advocacy groups.

The future recommendations for Food Matters are:

- To consolidate the current training program, including resources and in particular “the lets’ talk about food” resource.
- To explore the second action phase of the model and how this can be more sustainable.

- To explore extending the model to other target groups, i.e. workplaces and schools .
- Run a further 4 Food Matters programs in the next 6 months.
- Establish a communication strategy that supports Food matters participants to stay connected and linked into relevant actions and events.

Background:

The food system challenges we face are complex and multidimensional. Addressing them successfully will require collaborative efforts by many over a long time. What is required is a coherent and collaborative approach by multiple actors aligning their diverse skills, experience and actions around a shared agenda for change. This is known as collective impact^{iv}.

Food Matters is a community-based program on food systems adapted from the Flinders University, two-week online course, Food System Matters (FSM)^{iv,v}. The FSM course examined the food system through three lenses: environmental sustainability; fairness and equity; health and nutrition. Forty-seven participants completed the FSM course and a quantitative evaluation showed knowledge and attitude to improve significantly.^{iv}

The Food Embassy was given the intellectual property of the FSM course (with acknowledgement of its origins) and in partnership with Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resource Management Natural Resource Management (AMLR NRM) board, piloted Food Matters, a face to face food system literacy course. This course built on the existing sustainable living community engagement work of AMLR NRM board, through the Living Smart Program and the Adelaide Sustainability Centre (ASC) as well as the Onkaparinga City Council. It aligns with the aims of the SA Urban Food Network and the vision from Edible Adelaide 2016ⁱⁱ to build an informed community that could contribute to a more sustainable food system.

Program Overview:

Each session followed a similar format

1. Introduction / Recap from previous week
2. Presentation (lecture, guest speaker, film, questions & discussion)
3. Food Democracy^{vi} / Food Citizenship^{vii} discussion and action planning (see Food Democracy in Action hand out)

Whilst each program responded to the interest areas of the participants, they all reflected the well-established framework for the future food systemⁱⁱⁱ: health, sustainability and social considerations. Specific topics included: alternative vs industrial food systems; diets for sustainable eating; regenerative food production; land use for people, production and biodiversity; and food access and equity.

Guest speakers were key to the success of the program linking participants directly with producers, environmentally sustainable practices and personal experiences. During these sessions the guest speakers were Chris Duffy (Small World Bakery), Clem Newchurch (a local Kaurna man) and Tori Arbon (Magic Harvest).

The final week included a specific session on group planning. Small groups were formed to look at 3-4 projects based on a range of topics identified during the previous three weeks.

Program Objectives

1. To increase participants knowledge of a local, sustainable food system considering, social, economic and environmental factors.
2. To promote participation in the establishment of a local, sustainable food system.
3. To encourage participants to take personal and community actions based on a food democracy framework.dife

Figure 1: Geographical reach of food Matters promotion



FOOD MATTERS PROCESS EVALUATION

Target Audience

The target audience for the pilot was the general public in Adelaide.

Given the existing relationships between the Food Embassy and Onkaparinga Council, and the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM board with the Adelaide Sustainability Centre (ASC) it was decided to trial the programs through these two organisations who were able to provide venue and additional promotion through their existing networks.

Attendance

An initial 2-hour taster session of Food matters program was run at Woodcroft Community Centre in April to trial the format and resources. Sixteen people attended that session.

The 2x 4-week pilot courses were held in Aldinga and in Adelaide. A total of 31 people booked to attend the two courses, 25 people commenced the courses and 23 people completed the courses, mostly women (80%) and mostly over 45 years (70%). Three people who booked in but did not attend were able to be

contacted. They reported that life circumstances had made it impossible for them to attend the session but would like to know when another course is running.

As shown in the map (Figure 1) people booked in from across Adelaide and the surrounding areas. Whilst the numbers are small the Adelaide group included more people with a university qualification and Aldinga had a greater number of participants not currently in the paid workforce. Further demographics are detailed in the Appendix.

	Facebook	Web search	Word of mouth	Living Smart Course	Council Newsletter
Aldinga	4	1	4	3	2
Adelaide	8	4	3	1	0
Combined	41%	17%	24%	14%	7%

Table 1 How people heard about course
Eventbrite was the platform used for selling tickets. Specific promotion was sent via existing networks of the partners and

included people who had participated in Living Smart programs, Urban Food Network, Adelaide Sustainability Centre and Onkaparinga City Council.

Course Feedback

All attendees (100%) reported joining the course for personal reasons, with 47% (9) also wanting to improve skills, 42% (8) to meet people and 11% (2) increase knowledge. When asked if they would recommend the course to others 95% (18) said they would and 1 person (5%) did not answer. Participants reported finding the course useful to very useful 89% (17) and were very satisfied with the course 95% (18). When asked what they liked most about the course participants mentioned the inclusive and motivating environment within the sessions (63%) the quality of the facilitators and guest speaker (63%), information sharing (63%) and the resources/emails provided (32%).

'There is so much out there already that I can go and be involved with, so [most beneficial is] information and linking with community'

As this was a pilot course, we sought specific feedback on improvements that could be made. There was interest in getting the presentation notes used within the course and to increase the goal setting components within each week. Promotion via Instagram was recommended to reach a younger audience. The only content specific request was to provide a critique on existing recommended diets (ie Mediterranean Diet, Vegan / vegetarian diet, Australian Guide to Healthy Eating) within the context of a sustainable diet for those living in Adelaide.

Food Matters Impact Evaluation

A two page retrospective questionnaire was given to participants at the end of the program asking them to reflect on knowledge and attitudinal changes. Twenty participants out of 23 completed the evaluation.

Knowledge

Knowledge shifts were positive across almost all areas. Notably knowledge about the differences between industrialised and alternative food systems shifted from 74% (n=14) having limited knowledge to 100% (n=19) participants having good knowledge at the end of the course.

Other areas of shift in knowledge were seen in the following areas



- water resources impact on the food system shifted from 84% having limited knowledge to 100 % having good knowledge at the end of the course
- biodiversity impact on the food system shifted from 68 % having limited knowledge to 100 % having good knowledge
- greenhouse gas emissions shifted from 47 % having limited knowledge to 84% having good knowledge .

This program was specifically aiming to assist people to increase food citizenship and take actions at an individual, community or regional level. See Appendices for a copy of the Food Democracy Action Handout. For this to be achieved it was important the participant understood these different types of actions. At the start of the course only 26% had a good knowledge of individual actions they could take and 21% a good knowledge of community or regional level actions. At completion of the course 95% of participants had good /very good knowledge across all three levels of food democracy actions.

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Attitudes

Participants felt more confident to improve their local food system with a shift from 21% (n=4) to 95% (n=18) participants having the confidence to improve local food system on completion of the course.

Not surprisingly as the course is aimed at people interested in the food system, the majority of participants already felt that a sustainable diet will have a positive impact on the environment (74% n=14), that paying farmers an adequate wage is important (85% n=16), and that farmland and land for biodiversity should be preserved (74% n=14). Participants indicated that they would feel good about growing some of own food (85% n=16) and wanted supermarkets to stock more local produce (n=16). All participants (n=19) agreed with these statements on completion of the course.

A key result is the shift from 21% (n=4) to 95% (n=18) participants having the confidence to improve local food system on completion of the course.

There was some shift in feeling informed as a consumer through information on labels, from 42% (n=8) to 79% (n=15) and in concern that the food they buy is ethically grown from 63% (n=12) to 89% (n= 17). The majority understood the health implications of their food choices 95% (n=18) and this did not change.

Behavioural change

Participants were invited to identify the actions that they were proudest of during the course. Each person could identify more than one behaviour change, see table below.

Behaviour Change Action Area	# Participants
Growing some of their own food	5
Acquiring food (purchasing behaviour, swapping)	17
Preparing/ Eating food more sustainably	11
Learning more / connecting with other	4

Table 2 : Behaviour change action areas

Participants were also interested in identifying things that they would like to do differently with regards to sustainable eating. These were collated into similar action areas, see table 3 below.

What would like to do differently	# Participants
Growing more food / native plants	7
Acquiring food more sustainably	11
Changing personal eating patterns	3

Table 3 Themes for future actions

Program Outcomes:

Council / Adelaide Sustainability Centre (ASC)

The manager of ASC coordinator both noted that it is not we get to talk directly with producers and indigenous caretakers in this type of environment. The chance to have a conversation, ask our questions and discuss food issues in an open and respectful environment was really helpful.

City of Onkaparinga Healthy Lifestyle Officer – Food, stated “*I learnt a lot myself about the different aspects of our food system which I will now be able bring into my role.*”

By joining with the program, the participants were able to link with relevant activities in the council area immediately. The Healthy Lifestyle Officer noted that whilst “*this may seem like small numbers ... these connections are so valuable, and these participants will continue on making a difference and taking action in their community.*”

“The Food Matters course was a great opportunity to increase awareness of localised food economies. The participants were keen to increase their knowledge of how a more considered approach to sourcing food could provide environmental, nutritional and economic benefits in local communities.”

Local producer (guest speakers)

Outcomes:

Participants identified that they have started accessing local producers. Seven are now ordering from Small World Bakery; five requested specific links to order from Village Greens delivery and two are using existing food swaps.

It is valuable to note that participants have specifically identified reviewing their purchasing practices and seeking more direct connection with suppliers.

The value to local producers is noted in this quote from The Small World Bakery “The Food Matters course was a great opportunity to increase awareness of localised food economies. The participants were keen to increase their knowledge of how a more considered approach to sourcing food could provide environmental, nutritional and economic benefits in local communities.”

The Food Embassy has continued to uncover local producers and their practices through sharing information with participants and as we follow up on individuals’ questions.

Participant project outcomes:

1. A small group (3-5 people attending) have started to source and preserve seasonal produce. To date they have held 3 events (Orange marmalade day, mushroom foraging, Lemon Preserving) and started an email group.



Mushroom foraging in Kuitpo

2. Food swap options increased including attending existing food swaps, using facebook to find people interested in swapping food, food swaps were organised in workplaces and there was increased food swapping with friends.
3. Two participants became Magic Harvest Hub Co-ordinators, utilising the verge at their home in Willunga, with three other members registering to be members of their local Hub. (Note Magic Harvest is a model for sharing food and gardening skills within local community hubs).
4. Two participants are planning to launch the first Community Food Produce Swap at Aldinga Library and link it with the planned Sustainable Spring Event.
5. Three participants have joined the Onkaparinga Food Security Collaborative advocacy group.

Qualitative, informal feedback from participants

- “it is the first time I have swapped with strangers or gone to a produce swap, I am now trying to get all my plant based food from food swaps”
- “I feel quite isolated, I don’t feel as lonely as I now feel there are people out there who think like me; you’ve made me realise what is out there that I feel excited.”
- “I liked how there was a call to action straight away”
- “The most beneficial part is the information and linking with community”

Other outcomes:

Deborah Bogle, journalist from the Advertiser attended the final session of Food matters in the city and mentioned the course in her weekly weekend column.

Learnings

The pilot model had an additional follow up session with participants one month prior to completion of the course. Neither of these sessions at the Aldinga or Adelaide site were well attended.

Participants reported being interested but other priorities or events or sickness had not enabled them to attend. Key to this training program is a call to food democracy action and a way to support and enable participants to continue their actions is important and needs to be explored. It was noted that more resourced and supported participants were able to maintain their actions were as others have not been able to follow through on their interest areas as additional support has been lacking.

The key resource of the program “We need to talk about food” was adapted from the original resource developed by the Sustainable Table for the City of Melbourne. Participants, councils and Urban Food Network colleagues identified it was useful to share with others when discussing sustainable food options as it provided an overview of the range of issues and included considerations of social as well as environmental and economic factors relevant to sustainable eating.

Key to the success of the program was communication and building community connection. One of the key ways this was done was through a weekly email. This was time intensive but very valuable and well used by all.

Summary / Recommendations:

Food Matters is a community education and engagement program providing an overview of the existing industrial and emerging regenerative food systems. It considers a range of factors within local food systems such as economic development, environmental sustainability, equity, social justice, health and wellbeing. Utilising an action-based format the program enables participants to identify personal and collective actions at individual, community and regional levels that will contribute to a food system that aligns with their values.

This program contributes to a coherent and collaborative approach with multiple partners (Councils, NRM, Adelaide Sustainability Centre) aligning their diverse skills, experience and actions around a shared agenda for change^{iv}.

Program evaluation is showing positive shifts in knowledge of the food system, confidence to take action in the food systems and evidence of behaviour change at an individual and community level.

The key recommendations from this pilot report are :

1. Consolidate the existing training package and resources, including the *We Need To Talk About Food* resource with feedback from the group feedback and make this available online.
2. Explore delivering the training in various delivery modes to various target groups For example : one off introduction session to gauge interest, target training to schools, workplaces.
3. Establish a communication strategy that supports Food matters participants to stay connected and linked into relevant actions and events. This could be by linking in with

existing networks such as the SA Urban food network and sharing information through their newsletter. This continuing of the story, of actions and building a social movement focusing on a sustainable food future seems key.

4. Run a further 4 courses in the next 6 months with funding support from NRM and the course key partner ie local council or workplace.



Foraged mushroom pasta

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Appendices

Attendance:

	Booked in	Attended 1 st Session	Notes
Aldinga	16	14	2 people did not return after the First Session.
Adelaide	15	11	

Demographics of attendees:

	Aldinga	Adelaide	Combined %
Gender	9 Female 2 Male	7 Female 2 Male	80% Female 20% Male
Age Group	1 (25-34) 1 (35-44) 3 (45-54) 3 (55-64) 3 (65-74)	2 (25-34) 2 (35-44) 2 (45-54) 3 (55-64)	15% 15% 25% 30% 15%
Education	3 Uni Degree or Diploma 6 VET/ TAFE Diploma Cert 2 SACE Yr 11/12	7 Uni Degree 2 VET / TAFE Diploma	50% 40% 10%
Income	2 Full time employed 2 Part – time employed 1 no personal income 3 Govt Payment 3 Other	2 x full time 2 x part time 3x Casual / short term 1xSelf employed	20% full time employed 20% Part Time employed 15% Casual /short term 15% Govt Payment 5% no personal income 5% Self Employed 15% Other (not specified)
Employment category	2 Advance Clerical, sales or service 1 Elementary Clerical/ Sales or service 5 Other 3 retired	4x professional 1x social & behavioural Sciences 2x Elementary clerical, sales or service 1 Tradesperson or technical worker	20% Professional 10% Advanced clerical/ Sales 15% Elementary clerical /sales or service 5% Social / Behavioural Science 5%Trade or technical worker 15% Retired 25% Other (not specified)

Feedback:

Like most about the course:

- a) passionate / informative facilitator x 6
- b) Getting a whole system perspective x2
- c) Interactive information sharing / meeting people x12
- d) Guest Speakers were very informative x6
- e) Inclusive environment x2
- f) Motivating people to take actions x10
- g) Resources and emails x6
- h) Sharing food / seeds x1
- i) Supper x1

What was most beneficial (Adelaide)

- a) There is so much out there already that I can go and be involved with, so information and linking with community
- b) The links and connections of our existing food system and how you have stressed how unsustainable it is
- c) Networking – found out about other people/groups
- d) Connection to others, local food producers and resources such as ripenearme.com
- e) People
- j) Names of organisations and places

How can we improve:

- a) More goal setting x2
- b) Run for longer (eg 12 weeks)
- c) Option of course during the day time
- d) Maybe some notes via email that were used during the course
- e) Promote via Instagram
- f) Run 2/year
- g) Hands on / outdoor session (gardening)
- h) More nutrition knowledge – SA context of sustainable eating examine sustainable credentials of diets that are lauded as being the ‘worlds healthiest diets’
- i) Vegan / plant-based diets