

Abbeyfest: Developing the local Community and Promoting Sustainability



The “Abbeyfest” Festival is a community music and arts festival based in the heritage town of Abbeyleix. The aim is to promote and celebrate the town of Abbeyleix, its businesses, heritage, culture and artists. A key focus of the festival is also to promote a more resilient and sustainable local economy with particular emphasis on local producers and businesses.

ABBEYFEST

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APPENDIX I: Sustainable Food Initiative

Abbeyfest is a community music and arts festival based in the heritage town of Abbeyleix, County Laois, Ireland. The aim is to promote and celebrate the town of Abbeyleix, its businesses, heritage, culture and artists. This year the Abbeyfest also supported the objective of building a more resilient and sustainable local food economy. In particular, we aimed to encourage the development of home cooking and baking within the community and also showcase local producers and businesses. This was done through a family fun day at the town's Heritage House that included a market for local food producers, cookery demonstrations and baking competition.

Farmer's / Local producers Markets

A key feature of this year's festival was the celebration and promotion of our local food producers. We hosted two Farmer's Markets on the Saturday 4th at Market Square and on Sunday 5th at Heritage House.

12 local producers participated including Abbey Cheese , Thompson Vegetables, Rossmore Ice Cream , Feile Foods, Portlaoise Country Market and Tanguy de Toulgoet. All stalls were busy with great business being done and the event can only have helped to raise the profile of these businesses in the local area.

Cookery Demonstrations

Pat Carey Executive Chef with Bank of Ireland and a resident of Raheen, gave a series of Cookery Demonstrations showing that with a little time and understanding, good food can be produced on a very low budget.

Dinner for 4 for less than €20 - Lunch for 4 for less than €10 - Make you own Pasta
Make your own sausages - The "Wonder Bag"

The demonstrations were very well attended and feedback was very positive. The Wonder Bag demo in particular caught the imagination of all with an Irish Stew being cooked to perfection after just 20 minutes of being cooked over direct heat before being transferred to the Wonder Bag where it was slow cooked until ready. The Wonder Bag project is of particular interest with the Abbeyleix Women's Group producing the bags and the benefits from the sale of the bags benefiting poor communities in South Africa from where the idea was generated. Credit to Chris Uys and Mary White for this project. A total of 20 bags made for the event were all sold on the day.

Home Baking and Cookery Competition

A Home Baking Competition was also held on the day. This was reviving an almost forgotten tradition in Abbeyleix with some great stories and reminiscences being shared by some of the older attendees on the day. A total of 68 entries were received. We were particularly pleased with the children's categories with 18 entries in 5 categories incl Soda bread , Cup cakes & Buns, Biscuits , Brownies and Fruit scones. Adult categories were also very popular with Chocolate Cake , Apple Pie , White Yeast Bread , Jams and chutneys being particularly popular. First , Second and Third prizes were awarded with an awards ceremony being well attended with great pride being demonstrated by young and old prize winners alike.



Abbeyfest 2011
Home Baking and Cookery Competitions
Heritage House Abbeyleix
Sunday 5th June 2011



Entry Form :

Name / Address

Class no	Open to	Class	Entry
1	Children	Loaf Brown Soda Bread (1lb Flour)	
2	Children	Loaf of White Soda Bread (1lb Flour)	
3	Children	Cup Cakes / Buns (Half Dozen)	
4	Children	Biscuits / Cookies (Half Dozen)	
5	Children	Brownies (Half Dozen)	
6	Children	Scones Fruit (Half Dozen)	
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7	All	Loaf Brown Soda Bread (1lb Flour)	
8	All	Loaf of White Soda Bread (1lb Flour)	
9	All	Loaf Multiseed Wholemeal bread	
10	All	White Yeast bread	
11	All	Brown Yeast Bread	
12	All	Novelty Cake suitable for Children's party	
13	All	Swissroll – jam filled	
14	All	Sponge Cake (Made with Butter)	
15	All	Teabrack	
16	All	Cheesecake	
17	All	Chocolate Cake - Iced	
18	All	Apple Tart – Shortcake Pastry	
19	All	Cake with Unusual Ingredients	
20	All	Oatmeal biscuits	
21	All	Pot Jam (340g)	
22	All	Pot chutney (340g)	
23	All	Pot of Marmalade (340g)	

- ⤴ Entries on the day - submitted **before 11.00am Sun 5th June** at Heritage House
- ⤴ Entry fee : Children's categories FREE , Adult categories €1 per entry.
- ⤴ For each category : Three entries 1 prize only , 4 entries 2 prizes only , Five entries or more three prizes will be awarded
- ⤴ Prizes – Childrens First €5, Second €3, Third €2., Adults First €10 , Second €5, Third €3.
- ⤴ Viewing from 2.00pm on Sun 5th June.

The Wonderbag was launched at the Abbeyfest. Not only were the bags displayed for sale, but was also demonstrated by an executive chef, Pat Carey. Pat made a typical Irish lamb stew.

A total of 14 Wonderbags were sold and all the proceeds will be donated to Natural Balance SA, who in turn will provide needy families in Southern Africa with Wonderbags to help alleviate fuel poverty.



NewspaperNotes: Notes on the Abbeyfest and Wonderbag as it appeared in the Leinster Express newspaper



NewspaperChef: Photograph in the Leinster Express newspaper (8 June 2011) of executive chef Pat Carey demonstrating how to cook an Irish stew in the Wonderbag



Mary_&_Wonderbag: Mary White, Chairperson of the Abbeyleix Womens Group, demonstrating the Wonderbag at the Abbeyfest. (Photo: Brian Maher)



NewspaperSmall: Full page of photographs about the Abbeyfest as appeared in the Leinster Express of 8 June 2011.

APPENDIX II: Development of Local Community

Abbeyfest was very much used as a platform to highlight and inform the community about all the positive community initiatives that are happening in and around the town.

TIDY TOWNS

The Local Tidy Towns Committee in preparation for the up to the Tidy Towns Judging season used the platform of Abbeyfest to showcase their work.

A demonstration area was set up in the library which highlighted projects undertaken to date. Copies of the recent 3 year management plan (funded by LPC) were made available to read as well as the proposed work plan for 2011.

ABBEYLEIX BOG

The Abbeyleix Bog Committee also set up a demonstration area in the library to showcase the recent work on the bog which included the erection of new Gateways and Information boards.

Details of the proposed new walk which will link up with the Lords Walk were also provided.

Dawn Chorus Walk on the Bog

A dawn chorus walk was held on the bog early on Saturday. 15 people attended the early morning walk

Saturday 4th June 5:00am: Fintan Bracken Dawn Chorus

Photography:

The bog in association with Abbeyfest committee undertook a photographic master class on the bog on Sunday morning. Nine local photographers attended this free workshop.

Sunday 5th of June 10:30am : Mark Sedgewick Macro Photography Workshop

The following series of free workshop were held over the weekend of Abbeyfest.



Tribal Drumming

Tom Quinn: Drumming Workshop

Sunday Heritage House. 1:00pm

Tom is an experienced drum facilitator and member of the hugely respected Tribal Spirit Drumming crew. He facilitated a 2 hour African drumming circle using djembe, the boogeraboo and djuns djuns as well as bells and shakers.

The group (23 in all) performed on Sunday to the Rose of Tralee party in the grounds of Heritage House



Music Workshop

Transmitter Music Workshop:

Saturday Preston House. 5:00pm

Transmitter hosted t a workshop for young guitar players focusing on improving technique using effects pedals and setting sounds on amplifiers. Nine musicians attended the workshop.



Willow Weaving

Willow Weaving Workshop:

Saturday Heritage House: 11:00-17:00pm

The focus of the free workshop was to create an effective willow screen that will act as both an aesthetic feature in Heritage House and as a decorative stage. Seven people attended the workshop in Heritage House.

APPENDIX III: Promotion of Crafts

Abbeyfest marked National Year of Craft with a number of craft based events and activities during the June bank holiday festivities.

The events that took place were as follows:

- A dedicated exhibition of Portlaoise based Goldsmith Helena Malone's work in the library
- A significant presence of Laois craft makers at both the farmers market on Saturday and the family fun day on Sunday
- Open craft workshops during the festival with craft students from Abbeyleix FEC
- A pop up shop at Moynan's throughout the weekend to sell both the craft and fine art work of the students of the FEC.

Craft and local craft makers definitely had a strong presence throughout the weekend and many craft makers took the opportunity to display and sell their wares. The craft workshops were also a great success, with many children taking part throughout the Saturday afternoon.

Moynans, which was set up a "POP-UP SHOP", was a hive of activity for the weekend with many festival goers passing through their doors to both admire and buy the quality produce on sale from the FEC students