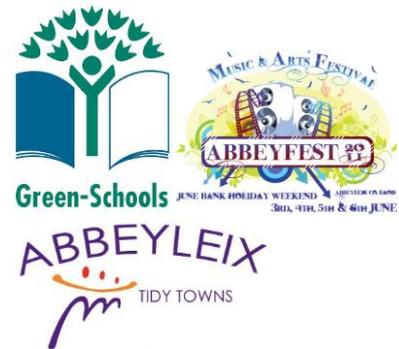


Abbeyleix Wonderbag Project



Abbeyleix Womens
Development Group,
Abbeyleix Tidy Towns,
Shanahoe Green Schools,
Abbeyfest

Abbeyleix Community coming together to promote sustainability
and to support African Communities



What is a Wonderbag?

It really is very simple. The Wonderbag is a heat-retention cooking bag.

A Wonderbag is an insulated bag in which people can cook anything from meaty stews or vegetable curries to simple rice and soups. You heat up your pot of food on the stove, kick-starting the cooking process, and then place it in the Wonderbag.

Wonderbag's clever insulating properties allow food that has been brought to the boil to finish cooking while in the bag without the use of additional energy. So, families can cook appetising hot meals, while saving energy - and money. It also means less time tending cooking food – time that can be better spent looking after children, earning an income or doing essential chores.

150,000 Wonderbags are already being used in homes across South Africa. Based on actual orders, that figure will rise to at least 5 million over 5 years.

Wonderbag has many benefits...

- *It reduces a family's fuel usage by 30% - saving money and easing poverty*
- *It reduces CO₂ emissions*
- *It reduces toxic fumes which means less respiratory problems and other diseases, particularly in children*
- *It reduces accidents in the kitchen, because stoves are used less*
- *It reduces time spent cooking, giving more time for child-care and other activities*
- *It saves precious water. When the pot is insulated in a Wonderbag at a fairly constant temperature, less evaporation occurs, so less water is needed*
- *It saves food. 20% of all staple food in Africa is burned, due to pots being placed on open fires and unregulated stove tops. With the Wonderbag no burning happens*

Shanahoe National School

Green-Schools (Eco-Schools) is an initiative of, and co-ordinated on an international level by, FEE (Foundation for Environmental Education). Currently, the Programme is being implemented by 46 delegations in 43 countries around the world, involving 27000 schools, 6 million students, 400000 teachers and 4000 local authorities. (<http://www.eco-schools.org/>)

Shanahoe National School is a three-teacher rural primary school, situated 100 km South West of the Irish capital Dublin. The school signed up for the Green-Schools programme a couple of years ago and obtained their first green flag last year for litter and waste management. This year they are working on their second flag on energy conservation. Schools discover, amongst others, the difference between renewable and non-renewable energy, how much energy they consume and what activities they can undertake to reduce their energy consumption.

The school invited me to demonstrate the Wonderbag, which took place on Wednesday, 25 May 2011. A vegetable soup was prepared in the classroom of the senior pupils, boiled on an induction stove for 5 minutes and placed in a Wonderbag for 2 hours. Tubs of ice cream were also placed in a small Wonderbag also to be inspected a couple of hours later. The Wonderbags with content were then taken to all the other classrooms and the concept of the bag was explained to all. By midday all had a sample of the soup and the ice cream.

The Wonderbag was ideal to practically illustrate energy conservation as well as the concept of insulation.

Photographs/images:



SchoolDemoJun: Some of the senior infants of the Shanahoe National School with teachers Tracey Lawlor and Mirian Brickley. (Photo: Chris Uys)



SchoolDemoJun2: Some of the junior infants of the Shanahoe National School (Photo: Chris Uys)

Abbeyleix Womens Development Group

Formed in 1999, Abbeyleix Women's Development Group is a socially inclusive group promoting the benefits of women becoming pro-active in their community. Among the aims of the group are the encouragement of early school leavers back to education and the provision of affordable childcare.

The Women's Development Group was one of the first groups to receive funding under the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform Childcare programme (2000-2006), allowing the group to establish a non-profit community crèche.

The group published a book in 2008 entitled "Abbeyleix Our Town Our Lives" with reflections from various townspeople over the years.

The group meets once a week on a Thursday evening to knit, crochet, stitch, cut, paste and much more. All items made go towards some charitable cause. Under the leadership of Mary White, the group kindly agree to get involved in the Wonderbag project.

Over the last 8 weeks they made just short of 20 bags from donated curtain material. The polystyrene beads were recovered during house insulation works and kindly made available by a local insulation contractor.

Photographs/images:



AWDGroup: Some members of the Abbeyleix Womens Group working on the Wonderbags (Photo: Chris Uys)



AWDGroup2: Members of the Womens Group joined by Chris Uys (Photo: Gary O'Keeffe)



AWDGroup3: Members of the Womens Group joined by Chris Uys (Photo: Gary O'Keeffe)



Irishbags: A sample of the bags from donated curtain material made by the Womens Group. (Photo: Chris Uys)

Abbeyfest 2011

Abbeyfest is a community music and arts festival based in the heritage town of Abbeyleix, County Laois, Ireland (www.abbeyleix.ie). 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. 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. (www.abbeyfest.com)

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.

Natural Balance SA and The Wonderbag™

Natural Balance SA was founded in 2005 by Sarah Collins. As one of South Africa's first social enterprises, its purpose was to bring about sustainable social change through projects that conserve the environment while alleviating poverty.

Over the years, the company initiated various projects, most notably the Take Back the Future programme. The Wonderbag™ was born in April 2008 and is currently the sole focus of Natural Balance SA.

The Wonderbag™ heat-retention cooker is South Africa's first programmatic (PoA) CDM project being registered by the UNFCCC, and one of the first in Africa. Once UNFCCC registration has been concluded, Natural Balance will trade in certified emissions reductions. The resultant revenue will ensure the project's commercial sustainability by subsidising the price at which the bags are sold. It will also be used to support communities of Wonderbag users to achieve "green" lifestyles.

www.naturalbalancesa.com

All Wonderbags™ made and sold by the Abbeyleix Womens Development Group were made by the members of the group with the kind permission from Natural Balance SA.

Materials used were all recycled curtain material and the polystyrene beads were donated by local insulation business in Portlaoise. All proceeds of bags sold will be donated to Natural Balance SA to provide similar products to families in need in Southern Africa.

All information, images and recipes used have been reproduced with the permission from Natural Balance SA.



Small Wonderbag™

Big enough to hold a pot with a 1.5 litre capacity. Ideal for a meal for one or to bring your lunch box to work.

Standard Wonderbag™

Ideal for pots ranging in size from 3-12 litres, and is perfect for most domestic kitchens.

Catering Wonderbag™

Holds a pot of up to 25 litres and are ideal for special event catering, or for care-giving organisations such as old age homes, children's homes and feeding schemes.

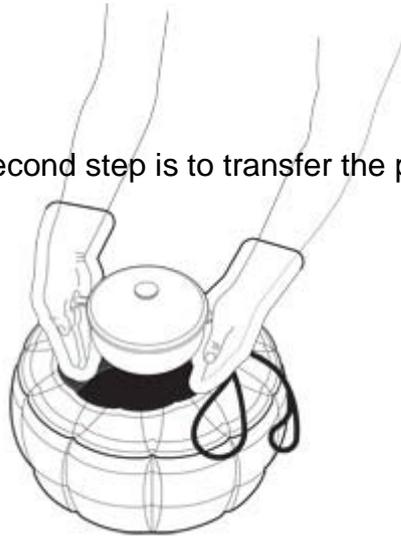
How to use the Wonderbag™

Cooking food in the Wonderbag™ is a four-step process.

1. First, the food is brought to the boil on a conventional stove or cooking fire and allowed to cook for a few minutes. Initial boiling time depends on the ingredients. A pot of rice, for instance, only requires 5 minutes, while a meat stew will have to boil for about 30 minutes.



2. The second step is to transfer the pot into the Wonderbag™



3. Close the lid of Wonderbag™ tightly. The insulated Wonderbag™ ensures that the temperature of the food is maintained to continue and complete the cooking process.



4. Leave the food to cook until you are ready to have your meal.



wonderbag