

CLIMATE ACTION FIFE FOOD WASTE HEROES: BAERN

Café, bakery and suppers.
St Monans, East Neuk of Fife.

<https://www.bowhousefife.com/producer/baern/>

CHALLENGE

Cutting out food waste is something that Giacomo and Hazel at Baern café are constantly thinking about. This has resulted in them having very little food waste, with their small domestic caddy being less than half-full daily.

With such little food waste, Climate Action Fife is learning a lot from Baern and we want to highlight their fantastic practices. We hope to assist Baern with funding for sustainability initiatives in the future and we are keeping an eye open for opportunities.

SOLUTION

Giacomo is clear that tackling and reducing food waste is a challenge and that along the way there will be both failures and successes.

HOW BAERN WORKS TO CUT FOOD WASTE

Through the process of trial and error, which can be initially time-consuming, it eventually becomes easier and forms a habit that no longer requires much thinking. Using all of the food at Baern has simply become part of their business. Here are some of their creative processes to reduce waste.

1. Fruit and Veg

Baern no longer peels carrots, even for their puree. They also use the stones of fruits to flavour their many bottles of vinegar and use up their herbs in green oils.

2. Citrus

As citrus does not compost well the whole fruit is used, with the zest and juice incorporated into their many oils and vinegars. They also dehydrate skins and peels regularly and then blitz them into fantastic powders to add taste and texture to their cooking.

3. Coffee

As a café Baern goes through a lot of coffee, which creates many used granules, currently these end up in the compost. However, Giacomo is always on the lookout for alternatives, and has recently found a company that can turn them into sunglasses!

4. Bread

Any leftovers here, which does not happen often, are turned into breadcrumbs or croutons.

5. Stock

Since opening, keeping on top of stock has been a learning curve and not one that they have always got right. This is of course part of opening a new business. They have now figured out a system that works both for them and the planet. They consistently sell out of what they make and would much rather this than make too much. Ninety percent of what they make is fresh on the day, and they would rather make 12 loaves than 90. Their regular customers are aware of their system and know that if one thing sells out there will be a delicious alternative available. Creativity is in abundance at Baern with most of what they make incorporated into another dish. For example, extra brioche buns are made and used in bread and butter pudding for diners to enjoy.



Baern's owners, Hazel Powell and Giacomo Pesce

6. Freezing

Whilst Giacomo knows that for some freezing foods has negative connotations, instead BAERN sees it as another part of their larder. Freezing butter and oils whilst reducing food waste also allows them to enjoy the delights of their harvest when the less bounteous hunger gap arrives.

PARTNERSHIPS

As the saying goes, "One person's waste is another's treasure." Collaboration is key to reducing food waste. Baern works with other businesses in the Bowhouse complex to lower their food waste and carbon.

East Neuk Market Garden

Any peels and coffee grounds go into the compost for the delicious fruit and vegetables grown by Baern's neighbours East Neuk Market Garden. Giacomo and Hazel are also happy to take on whatever weird and wonderful unpredictable glut comes their way via the garden. A good example of this was the summer of 2023 when the garden unexpectedly had 10kg of rocket in their fields all at once. Baern turned it into rocket hot sauce, therefore not one bit went to waste. Giacomo is looking forward to their last bottle of hot sauce to get him through the upcoming hunger gap.

Futtle Brewery

This is where a lot of experimentation has taken place. Futtle uses organic and heritage grains for brewing and Baern has created many wonderful ways to use this spent grain. They have created a popular granola and in the past have incorporated this into some of their bread. However, the average amount at one time of spent grains is 10 kilos at a time. This requires a lot of dehydration and without a larger dehydrator it is not efficient. As a result, they would like to get an industrial-sized dehydrator to fully utilise the spent grain from the brewing process. We are looking into whether grants are available to assist with this carbon-reducing initiative.

Butchery at Bowhouse

Hazel and Giacomo learnt quickly what it is they do in the butchery and they in turn know exactly what they need and can do. They take whole carcasses, using every part; the bones for stock, and all the meat is used in their dishes. Fat is something that Giacomo in particular loves, and he is continually inventing new ways of using animal fat. His most recent discovery has been as an alternative to butter and other dairy in baking, and he believes it is just as good.

Customers

Baern encourages their customers to take away leftover food in compostable packaging and they are always conscious of portion sizes.



Sweetcorn and radicchio soup. Image Hazel Powell

About Climate Action Fife

Climate Action Fife is a Fife-wide partnership project, bringing together individuals, communities, local government and businesses to tackle the climate emergency and make Fife a greener and fairer place to live.

It is funded by The National Lottery Community Fund's Climate Action Fund, which enables people and communities to take the lead in tackling the climate emergency.