

THE REAL FOOD CAMPAIGN

MY FOOD • MY HEALTH • OUR FUTURE



For a healthy, sustainable and affordable British diet



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GP; Vice chair BHMA and founder of The Real Food Campaign

While practicing as a GP my passion in nutrition was rekindled a few years ago by coming into contact with a growing number of medical practitioners using low carb diets to reverse diabetes and metabolic syndrome. This led me to further study and a better understanding of the complexity of the relationship between food and health. Through conversations with patients, colleagues and potential collaborators the necessity of focusing on 'real food' crystallised and the idea for a campaign took shape.

My definition: real food is food that promotes health, both personal and planetary. It is nutrient dense, safe, whole food, which has been raised or grown in ways that regenerate our soils, and restores natural biodiversity.

The birth of the Real Food Campaign

The first spark came from Professor David Peters after reading about the collaboration in the US of the Rodale Institute and the Plantrician Project. He wanted to 'fire up a coalition of parties to promote the life-giving and overlapping areas of sustainable agriculture, lifestyle and diet. And, in addition, to tell a story about the healing power of relationship, with the soil, with one another and with the larger community'.

This vision inspired me to plan a small gathering as the first step in a collaborative venture. The Real Food Gathering took place on a very windy weekend at the end of April 2019 and, despite the weather and some technical difficulties, was a huge success. We had 18 speakers and about 30 other participants with different areas of interest and expertise. Together we started a conversation and forged relationships, which are becoming the foundation and inspiration for future campaigning. Read more about the gathering in this blog by one of our collaborators: www.anhinternational.org/news/from-unreal-to-real-food.

In the process of planning the gathering, through the many conversations I had and my ongoing exploration of

the field of food, farming and health, the inspiration for a campaign slowly developed and a twitter page/feed was started @Food_campaignUK.

I see the need for educating both the general public and the medical profession about the importance of real food. From my discussions with patients and other doctors it is clear there is a great deal of confusion about what constitutes a healthy diet; there is also a lot of differing opinion and debate about diet which is likely to be ongoing. However focusing on real food could be an area of agreement and seems intuitively sensible. While the main focus for the Real Food Campaign will be on health we are also concerned about the environment. Happily, on the whole, food which is grown in ways which support nature tend also to be the healthiest.

Over the next few months we plan to have more discussions with organisations sharing a similar ethos and aim to collaborate on various agendas including:

- getting real food principles into medical education and public health guidelines
- improving access to real food in local communities and institutions.

There will also be a website which aims to give trustworthy and practical information to the general public and the medical profession which will be supportive of anyone with an interest in producing and sourcing real food. We hope to have blogs and other resources and be a hub for showcasing examples of inspiring local and community projects.

We need to start fundraising to support our aims so please donate via our website (which currently redirects to the BHMA site) realfoodcampaign.org.uk. Over time, with the help of local real food ambassadors (sign up online), we hope to build local networks that bring together local producers of real food with consumers, patients and healthcare providers for sustainable community health.