

Positive Promotion of Farming

Crave Riverina Food Festival for Coly

A call goes out to locals interested in being a part of the Riverina version of the renown Sydney CRAVE Food Festival each October. Last year a Riverina team of chefs won the 100 Mile Food Challenge where a whole gourmet meal was produced for a long lunch using produce from within a 100 mile radius.

Linda Tillman, EO of Riverina Regional Tourism, is promoting the opportunity for all shires of the Riverina to be involved to showcase the Riverina as the FOOD BOWL of Australia as our point of difference in our own CRAVE Food Festival running at the same time as the Sydney festival. The uptake of communities has been amazing with many interesting events planned across the Riverina for October including celebrity chefs, cooking classes, festivals etc.

Coleambally has been locked into the draft CRAVE program for October this year with a local food producer launching Farm2Food Sustainable Farm Tours for each Friday morning of October. This will be a unique part of the Riverina program as it's the only food production tour as many of the other events focus on cooking and food—the other end of the food chain.

Irrigation farmers have had to deal with a lot of negative issues recently so this is a fantastic opportunity to pass on our positive message of sustainable food production. As farmers we need to promote ourselves positively to the Australian public as efficient water users: producing high quality food. These types of events are a chance to showcase our food producing businesses to our city cousins and provided them with a connection back to the land and farmers. This helps the public to understand why we need water to grow high quality food to feed Australians and beyond.

A FOOD CAN REGATTA similar to the successful Alice Springs Todd River Regatta and Darwin Beer Can Regatta is an idea that could be an opening event for Riverina Crave Food Festival. It has been suggested to hold this event in the dry lake bed of the proposed Coly Lake or down the main street of Coly. The

boats built from food cans or food packaging from local or Australian food, and irrigation equipment could be carried and run as a race around the perimeter of the proposed lake or in town.

The Food Can Regatta could be a part of a food expo to promote all the food and food products produced locally. Obviously October is only 2 months away which leaves a short time frame for organizing such a BIG EVENT. However a small scale event could run this year, as a trial, with the opportunity to do it bigger and better next year.

Long lunches are happening all over the Riverina. If any business or community organisation would like to organise, cater and host a long lunch at Coleambally and or Darlington Point using local produce, it would be a great addition to provide visitors with a taste of our high quality food. Some young locals recently performing in the Coleambally Arts Council Music and Dance Recital have expressed an interest in providing entertainment and atmosphere to such an event.

Fusion Riverina are organizing a street festival on Saturday 6th October which was a great success last year. The idea of combining the Food Can Regatta with this festival could be explored with the organizers.

Accommodation in a small town is always an issue when discussing tourism or potential visitors to the town. Once the local motel and caravan park are booked out, farm stays may be an option and opportunity for visitors to meet farmers and farming families. If you would like to open your home for potential visitors to book and stay during the festival or a night, please register your interest.

If you have ideas for events, or would like to showcase your food business or coordinate any of these events, please contact Julie Bellato on 69544582 or jbello@bigpond.net.au or Austin Evans on 0427 277 906. Also, please come along to a meeting to discuss ideas on Thursday 2nd August at the Coleambally Community Club at 7pm.

Calling For:

Expressions of Interest in being involved in a local Food Festival for October.

- > Meeting on Thursday 2nd August at the Coleambally Community Club
- > Come along and throw your ideas in for a food expo, farm stays, long lunch, farm tour, local commodities food information, marketing ideas or Food Can Regatta for October this year or maybe for the future.
- > We want chefs, restaurants, community groups, people passionate about promoting food production, Rice Growers, commodity value added businesses, Chamber of Commerce and interested community members.