

Orchard Acre Farm... the full story....

Go make yourself a cup of tea and then come back and read!!!!!!

Orchard Acre Farm is a small scale food business that celebrates, educates and nourishes people using its own food resources and tells its own food story called, "Plot to Plate."

Farm team; Teresa and Hugh are in a joyous position, where their respective farming backgrounds, Teresa's passion for food and their combined third level education in environmental science, have been successfully bonded in one farm project

Together they consistently demonstrate the capacity to grow food, serve food and educate people about food and how it can all be done in a responsible fashion. The techniques utilised on the farm can be applied by households and businesses regardless of their scale.

The pair has invested significantly in the creation of a small farm business which supports one full time and 1 part time job, as well as several casual posts, in an area still recognised by NI Statistics and Records Agency (NISRA) as being socially deprived.

The have invested in training for themselves and for those who work with them on the farm.

They have worked collaboratively within the tourism sector and used networks to further the role and status of sustainable tourism, working on steering groups for Destination Fermanagh, NITB, Greenbox, countless community organisations and environmental and social campaigns.

The farm has won several awards for their efforts and at the moment are "long listed" in the Responsible Tourism Awards for 2015

Along our business journey we have been awarded or held,

- Action Renewables solar hot water systems 2003
- Eco Label 2007-10
- Inspirational Business Award 2009 (New and Invest NI)
- Sustainable Buildings Award 2009 (RTPI and RSPB)
- Green Business Awards finalists in 2008 , 2011
- Green Business Award finalists (SME) 2012 (Business in the Community)

Why do we care about being Responsible Tourism providers?

For Orchard Acre Farm, **Responsible /sustainable Tourism** consolidates our approach to food, farming and tourism under one ethos.

Farm diversification enabled us to generate additional income for the family. We cautiously become involved in tourism. Becoming part of Responsible and eco-tourism has enabled us to uphold our beliefs in sustainability, whilst being able to offer our tourism services and without compromise.

Responsible tourism provides us with a set of values with which we can agree with and are happy to work towards. We can see that they are globally recognised by the industry and more importantly the values are recognised by our existing, potential and new customers who we aim to find in different sectors or countries.

We believe our business is stronger because of the way it is integrated socially, environmentally and economically with our local community. We feel the tangible work outputs from the farm are a model of how one can do business without damaging natural resources.

We believe that our way of working, the business we have created, the ecologically designed infrastructure we have built on the farm are all a lasting legacy for our family and the local community.

What makes up Orchard Acre Farm business?

Orchard Acre Farm has three strands to its business shown in order of their financial worth

1. **Experiential learning activities on food topic (Cooking and Growing) (60%)**
2. **Primary Food Production**
 - a. Primary Food Sales (5%)
 - b. Consumption on site by farm guests (20%)
3. **Added Value food product sales (15%)**

The farm runs training programmes and provides on farm experiences around the theme of “Plot to Plate” where visitors have opportunities to grow, harvest and eat food!

The farm produces and sells primary foods, including; pork, apples, plums, rhubarb, soft fruits, salads, vegetables, eggs and cut flowers.

The farm also adds value to its own produce, by selling a range of dried herbs, preserves, pickles and chutneys.

We have established our farm business around self-imposed strict environmental standards from the beginning, as both husband and wife team (Hugh and Teresa) are environmental science graduates.

The business has gone through its own *evolution*, from being small scale primary food producer, to producing added value products and latterly food related education and experiences. Diversification and making best use of the farms resources has enhanced its business growth.

A central feature of the farm is the Eco Barn, with its big country kitchen it places cooking and eating in the heart of the farm food story.

The barn enables the ;

- Creation of value added products from farm produce
- Catering for groups wishing to dine in the barn, with the actual cooking process being **totally visible to customers.**
- Deliver a programme of events on cooking and food related topics.
- Host external organisations to deliver food programmes, such as The Western Health Trust’s “Cook it” programme, targeting low income families.
- Due to its location within the kitchen garden, visitors often actually see harvesting of ingredients during their dining experience.
- Again due to the location of the barn visitors can see food growing at all stages. Thereby tangibility illustrating our “Plot to Plate “farm food story.

How does the local community benefit from our farm business?

We contribute to the local community in three ways

- **Economically**
- **Socially**
- **Environmentally**

Our last big capital investment with a total value of just under £200,000 brought significant investment into our local community.

This was and continues to be a deliberate Orchard Acre Farm strategy, where we purchase goods and services locally, understanding clearly that the economic, social and environmental impacts of this decision are positively significant.

We contributed £190,000 directly into the local economy. Building materials, labour, professional fees, raw materials, windows, doors, equipment all came from within a 20 mile radius. **The builder and architect had to agree to this as part of the legal and binding tender contracts.**

We spent a total of £10,000 outside of the local area. (1x Stove from Germany £ 3500, 2x solar panels from Hungary £ 3,600, zinc roofing from England £ 2,700 and kitchen ware from Ikea in Belfast £147.02).

Our day to day management and operations continue in this way, with ingredients such as meat, dairy, fish and bread coming from **within a 20 mile radius or less.**

Meat suppliers	Maguire and Millar Meats	Irvinestown	2.5 miles
Dairy suppliers	Eugene Stronge	Ederney	3.4 miles
Bread suppliers	Gallaghers	Iaghy	9 miles
Fish suppliers	Molloys	Enniskillen	12 miles
Venison	John Wilson	killadeas	4 miles
Hardware	T Dickies	Irvinestown	2.5 miles
Honey	PJ Green senior		or other Fermanagh Bee Keepers Assoc

Dry Goods supplied by SUMA a workers co operative based in Halifax. (delivered to us centrally as part of a collaborative order involving for 4 other tourism providers)

Our part time staff member (Linda Lucy) is from the local village and we have provided her with access to training as an investment in her as a person. We operate a family friendly policy and Linda has flexible working hours to facilitate school times often bringing them here to the farm. Now as young teenagers they too get occasional work.

We hire tutors for specialised skills such as willow craft and jewellery making as from the locality.

We offer volunteering opportunities and work placements for the local schools as part of the agricultural courses.

We were recognised in June 2014 by Fermanagh District Council and Volunteer NOW (NI) for our contribution to community services through volunteering.

We offer free meeting space to two local groups who meet monthly.

We offer free meeting space to the local Fermanagh Tourism Network (Destination Fermanagh)

Environmentally we simply excel! Read on!

- We constructed an Eco BARN which in 2007 exceeded all buildings specifications for energy etc in NI and was Awarded Sustainable Building Award in 2009.
- Sewage from both the farm and barn goes through a "Balmoral" Klargestor system, the outflow, progresses through a linear reed bed, before entering the Coolness River. Northern Ireland Environment Agency perform random inspections, if unfavourable results were to be found we would be served a court notice. **This has NOT happened.** As a small business with less than 1.5 cubic meters of discharge we do not need to perform independent testing.
- Electric energy has been supplied to the farm since 2006 from Airtricity Renewables (SSE) wind source. Airtricity have been the supplier for the new barn from the beginning. A grade appliances and low energy appliances and lights are standard.
- Timber is locally sourced for both stoves in the barn and farm cottage; from our own land and nearby forests as part of a woodland management scheme.. The wood stoves heat water and the central heating. We use approximately 2 cubic tonnes per year.
- Rain water is harvested and treated. Our tank capacity is 9000 litres, enough to supply 4 weeks of water requirements for toilet, irrigation, washing machine and showers. There is a main top up if required (utilised once)

- We have 96% recycling including food waste. (crinkly plastics remain an un-recyclable)
- Our family volunteer with NI Bat Group and Butterfly and Moth Conservation group and are registered species data collectors for CeDAR Ulster Museum
- Food ingredients are supplied locally, some are organic, some are fair trade (teas
- Hardware and materials are sourced locally.
- We have planted 2 orchards, one being heritage varieties of apple purchased from Irish Seed Savers in 2002,
- We have planted ¾ km of native hedging, and 54 native trees.
- We have created a pond, wetland area and butterfly garden.

Our lovely hens!

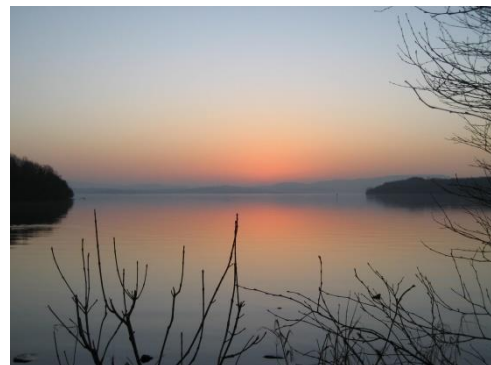
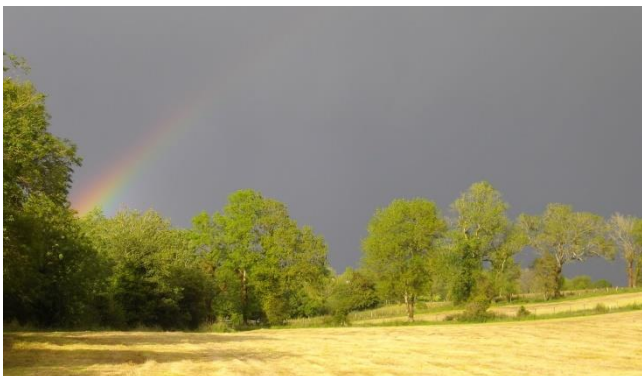


Edgars fled behind the farm house

Our lovely Eco Barn



the lake at castle archdale ...2 mins away



Our garden pond



cooking using farm ingredients



Teresa collecting ingredients

