

Food Punks

Location: Scottish Borders

Age: Between 10 and 25 years old

www.foodpunks.co.uk

 @punks_food

Main Challenges



Work, learning and social opportunities



Social Isolation



Background

Food Punks is an innovative social enterprise in the Scottish Borders empowering young people through food.

Food Punks is one of Tweeddale Youth Action's (TYA) income generating social enterprises that started as an initiative to teach simple cookery skills that would help young people learn how to cook local fresh food from scratch and lead to lower carbon lifestyles.

Pioneered by TYA Project Manager and Food Punk's Head Chef, Dave Hodson, the programme started from humble beginnings but soon evolved into a full-blown catering business servicing the south of Scotland.

After a career working in restaurants in England, Ireland, France and Scotland, Dave retrained in community work and started as a Youth Worker with Tweeddale Youth Action, but it wasn't long before Dave started utilising his skills in the kitchen to positively impact the lives of young people in the Borders.

"During my catering career running kitchens it taught me responsibility, discipline and it was an education in itself. Throughout my time as a chef, I was interested in recruiting young people who perhaps had interesting lives and I really loved that.

"Not long after I started with TYA, I started doing some cooking session with the kids which is a great way to break down barriers – everyone loves to eat! – and it's about change, development and growth.

"I ended up starting my own outside catering business and I included a couple of the young people from the project in this and we did a couple of high-profile events in Glasgow. It wasn't exactly youth club but it wasn't exactly non-youth club either."

Food Punks grew out of a strong relationship with the organisation PeeblesCAN and received funding from the Climate Challenge Fund.

"The name food punks came from our young people and this all started with a Climate Challenge Fund award that we received to put a kitchen in as all of our cooking at that point at the youth club was from truly humble beginnings. We didn't even have a proper kitchen or even a sink – we previously boiled a kettle to get hot water to do the dishes."

"Through the medium of the kitchen, some coin in the pocket, hard graft, a bit of fun, in a pretty high-pressure atmosphere - it's essentially an exceptionally good way of reaching young people perhaps on the fringes."

- Dave Hodson

Check out the Rural Youth Project website for more cases studies:

www.ruralityouthproject.com



Image: Food Punks

“It’s been fantastic and the energy is really high. We’re bringing people together and it’s something we’re going to continue post-lockdown – it’s a great way of reaching the young ones who don’t usually come into our space.”

- Dave Hodson

Background

It wasn’t long before the community noticed the project and Food Punks were approached by local organisations.

“Our aim was cookery lessons with young people, focussed on reducing food waste, and during this we were approached by the joint churches of Peebles who said ‘we’re having a bit of a BBQ – do you guys want to cater?’. ‘A bit of a BBQ’ actually turned out to be 1000 people! We managed and it ended up being a fantastic experience and it can’t have been that bad as we were invited back to do one the next year! But we we’re much more experienced and ambitious with the menu.”

Now funded by Scottish Borders LEADER and the Robertson Trust, all profit generated goes back into youth work and services for young people. Food Punks is a great example empowering young people and challenging the sometimes negative stereotypes they receive.

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During the coronavirus pandemic, Food Punks have had to adapt their offering to support rural young people in the Scottish Borders.

“Food remains a very strong theme, but pretty much all of our catering bookings have had to be postponed, so we’ve moved to an online model. Every Friday afternoon at 2:00pm we do baking and cooking on Zoom.

“We started off with about 10 to 12 young ones joining, but now we’re in the mid 30’s. We weigh and bag up ingredients, distribute them out to the youth with a recipe and any kind of equipment and kit that they might need and then they join us on the call. It’s been fantastic and the energy is really high. We’re bringing people together and it’s something we’re going to continue post-lockdown – it’s a great way of reaching the young ones who don’t usually come into our space.

“Big thanks must go to the Food Punks brigade who work so hard and who have been so committed to growing the project and moving it forward - it really wouldn’t happen without the young people involved.”

Solutions

1. Broaden employability skills, ability to work in a team, and confidence within fast-paced and high pressure environment.
2. Create a community of engaged young people through the medium of food and the reward of positive feedback.
3. Foster environment of learning and educate about reducing food waste through online and face-to-face cooking events

We’re social!

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