

NOVEMBER 2025

CAN TEEN

A NEW SOCIAL EATING
MOVEMENT FOR FROME
(+ BEYOND)?

ZINE #1

ARTWORK BY CHERRY TRULUCK. WORDS BY HUGH THOMAS

CANTEEN BEGINNINGS

Formed with support from Edventure, Future Shed and Frome Town Council, Frome Food Network is a collective of local residents helping to bring about a more vibrant, connected, and sustainable food economy in Frome.

In 2024, the network began to explore the possibility of a 'communal dining project' with advice and guidance from local stakeholders such as Fair Frome and Frome Field2Fork. In autumn that year, the project came to fruition in residency with Future Shed, with the aim of – by the end of the funding period in March 2026 – producing a framework from which the Canteen concept could run as a more permanent venture.



"In the snow in 2022, a small group from Frome went to visit The Long Table in Stroud. We had lunch at the pay-what-you-want community restaurant and it was delicious. I sat next to strangers and talked – they needed that lunch.

Afterwards, I couldn't stop thinking about it. Every town should have one of these, because it made absolute sense that everyone could eat good tasty food together no matter what they could afford.

We know local food and people eating together is so important, yet here in the UK, we seem to have lost touch with that.

Why?" Sue Palmer, artist, producer and Future Shed Lead, Edventure

"Canteen is an opportunity to offer people a connection to land and each other by grounding nourishment in place and shared experience. Gathering around seasonal, local food encourages care, conversation, and a deeper sense of belonging to the places we share." Cherry Truluck, artist + researcher, Canteen core team

"There is plenty of evidence to show eating with others reduces feelings of isolation and leads to greater wellbeing and happiness and for me this is at the heart of Canteen. We wanted to show that locally produced delicious food doesn't need an inflated price tag and everyone deserves to have access to it, no matter how much they have in their pocket."

Lyndsey Mayhew, Canteen core team

"In part, Canteen is a culmination of various Frome Food Network forums, where we explored ways to shorten the literal and figurative distance between local people and local food. Also, it being pay-what-you-can, removing most of that transactional element of a restaurant produces a kind of beautiful, shared dynamic where the lines blur and expectations lessen between guest and staff – 'community' is used with abandon these days, but Canteen genuinely has that feel." Hugh Thomas, food writer, FFN founder + Canteen core team

CANTEEN STATS TO DATE

6
pop-ups

898

meals served

33

Meals partly subsidised by the community

25

Meals fully paid for by the community

£10.76

Average cost price of a two-course meal at Canteen (including event staff, overheads, and ingredients)



85%
of food prepared from ingredients sourced from local and nature-friendly sources



80

Cartons of surplus food donated to Frome's Community Fridge

22

People arrived at Canteen #1 on their own

540

Litres of food waste collected and composted by Loop



A NEW MOVEMENT IN SOCIAL EATING

The rest of the continent, not to mention other parts of the world, have firmly embraced communal eating. In Denmark, there's Absalon, where you rub shoulders with friends and neighbours while tucking into braised chicken and creamed potatoes for £6.75; in France, state-subsidised university canteens, where anyone can eat, serve a full lunch for sometimes as little as one Euro.

Why do these things still seem ill-advised, however idyllic, in Britain? Maybe we think what we cook and eat to be no one's business other than our own. Breaking bread, intentionally sharing dinner, around the same table as others? Only the middle classes do that. Or *Oliver Twist*.

Absalon



IN SOCIAL EATING

Frome Urban District Council
NOTICES
—
The UNION JACK RESTAURANT
is
Open to the Public
During the following Times :—
Between 10.30 a.m. and 11.30 a.m.
" 12 noon and 2 p.m.
" 3.30 p.m. and 5 p.m.
TARIFF
COFFEE... .. 3d. per cup.
TEA 2d. "
SNACKS, CAKES, etc. ... 2d. to 3d. each.
SANDWICHES ... from 3d. each.
BREAD AND BUTTER ... 2d. per slice.
SOUP 3d.
MEAT AND 2 VEGETABLES, 1/-
'SWEET (hot) 3d. and 4d.
(cold) 3d. to 6d.
SALAD 6d.
CHEESE AND BISCUITS 3d.
The Tariff and the opening hours are provisional and notice will be given of any revision.

Frome Museum Archive

But it wasn't always thus. Some 80 years ago, a restaurant named the Union Jack appeared on Cork Street in Frome. It was one of thousands of state-supported 'British Restaurants' popping up around the country at the time (double the number of McDonald's there are today), with the purpose of providing

wholesome and delicious food and comfort from the general economic hardships and mental turmoil of World War Two's Home Front. British Restaurants were instantly well-received, and not just among the stricken – where else could you get a roast dinner, gooseberry tart with custard, and a cup of tea among friends, family, and neighbours, for £1.19?

A bakerlite token from Frome's British Restaurant circa 1943
donated by Emily Denham



"My father ate at the Union Jack when he was stationed in Frome from September 1943 to July 1944. He was a sergeant in the 39th Financial Disbursement Company. His unit lived and worked in a three storey building next to the Union Jack and ate all their meals there. It was run by a Mrs. Cook and though my father's American stomach never fully adjusted to English cuisine, he was complimentary of her cooking."

Steve McQuarrie

After the war, British Restaurants were still popular, though were forced to run their course as they out-competed 'normal' restaurants. These days, we're remembering how much a morale-booster and life saver they were, as a groundswell of modern iterations – such as The Long Table in Stroud, Public Diners in Scotland, and MAZI Kitchen in Bristol – are popping up around the country. Canteen is Frome's offering, as part of what we hope coalesces into a nationwide 'canteen culture' of local communities eating wholesome, locally-sourced food in the name of sustenance, socialising, and sustainability.

FROM THE FROME COMMUNITY

A few years back, Green & Healthy Frome – the partnership between Edventure Frome, Frome Medical Practice, and Frome Town Council – won a National Lottery Climate Action Fund (CAF) grant. Its focus: to find the joins between climate, health, and the cost of living.

Edventure's Future Shed was formed, building and hosting action-led community groups around the essentials that link us, such as food, seeds, clothing, play, and water. Gathering locally around our interests, our skills, and what needs doing, we can effect positive change while bringing the wider context of the climate and ecological crisis – social justice, equity, system change – into these projects.

Future Shed developed a 'residency' structure enabling groups or networks to create public activities. Each group would receive £5,000 support from Future Shed via the CAF, and connections to the partnership. Frome Food Network evolved Canteen through such a residency.

Collaboration is central to this community-led action – Future Shed's approach builds out from Sue's experience as an artist and maker of social collaborative projects, while the partnership has enabled the integration of areas of knowledge and connection. Canteen in the Park for example

FOR THE FROME COMMUNITY

– which fed 222 people and included a potato salad grown by 100 Frome residents – was a collaboration between Victoria Park Cafe, Frome Seed Library, the Community Fridge, and the Green and Healthy Frome partners. It wouldn't have succeeded as well as it had done without that collaboration.

Canteen not only brings people together to eat together side-by-side, it amplifies the conversations about our food systems, the challenges we face, and the local food economy. Canteen has proved to be one of the most effective and positive joins between climate, health and the cost of living. And it's brought a lot of joy.

by Sue Palmer

"Frome Medical Practice's mission is to foster a community where people feel they belong and can thrive together in better health. We joined forces with Frome Food Network to connect people with real food and real support. Good health is the foundation to everything functioning in our community, and Canteen brings the healing power of food to life." Dr. Helen Kingston,
Frome Medical Practice GP

**FOOD CONNECTS
US ALL**
*transcending borders
and cultures, reminding
us of our*
SHARED HUMANITY

think globally
ACT LOCALLY

Eating is an
**AGRI-CULTURAL
ACT**



from
FARM
to
TABLE





THE PEOPLE BEHIND CANTEEN

A Canteen core organising team of Hugh, Cherry, and Lyndsey – helped along by Sue from Future Shed – emerged in early 2024, gathering further support from chefs, kitchen porters and front of house staff from Frome and surrounds. At each pop-up, everyone is paid – unless they choose to volunteer.

Having so many talented cooks and willing staff for each pop-up has been one of Canteen's biggest strengths.

LYNDSEY Front-of-house organising, marketing, host, set-up, and banner ironing!

HUGH Ingredient sourcing, menu, and kitchen team co-ordination and master washer-upper.

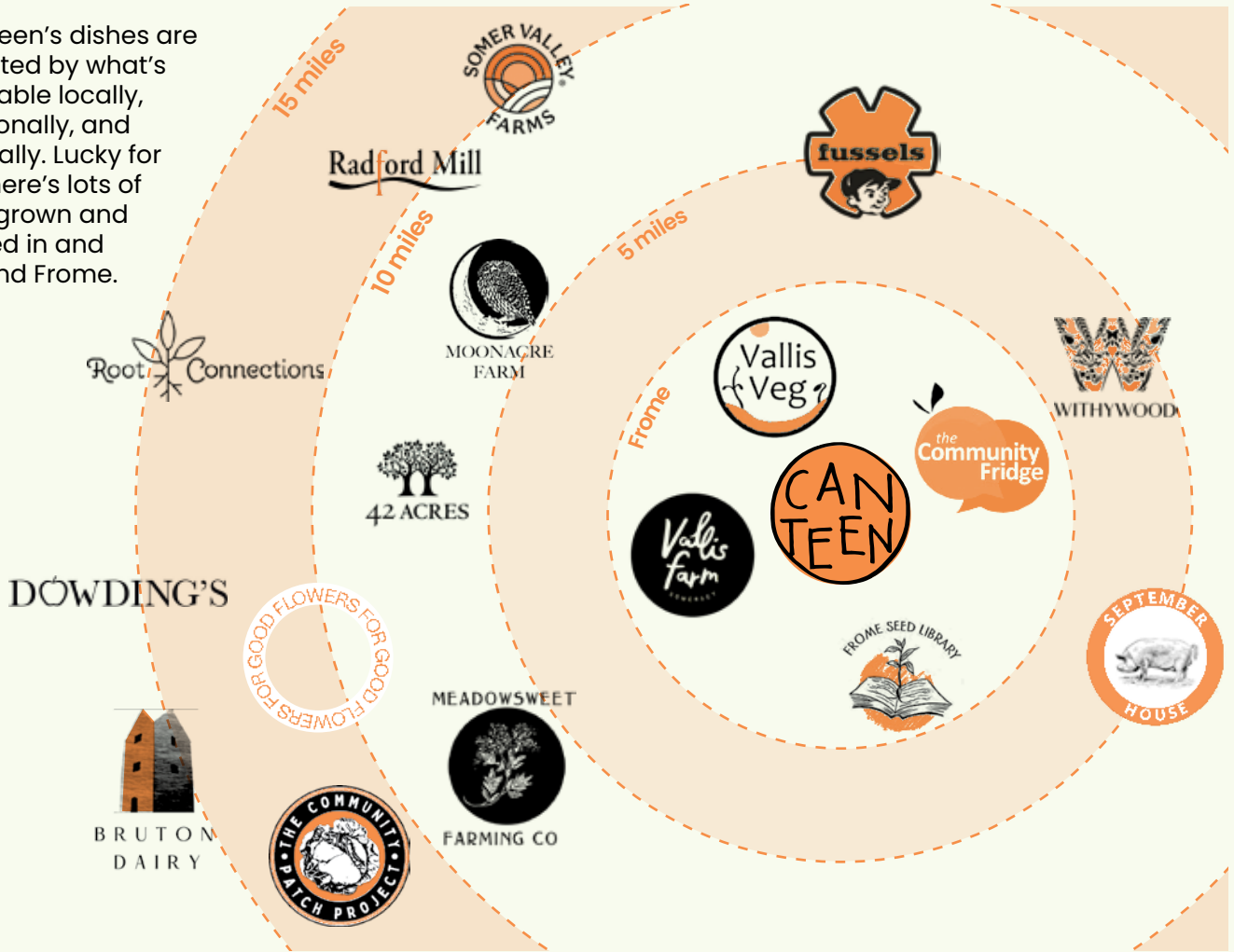
CHERRY Visual design and artwork – from the banners + placemats to the posters + this zine.

SUE Project guidance, budgeting, event + communication support and morale boosting.

VENUES Having sized up various public halls and kitchens in Frome, Trinity Hall in Frome met enough of the criteria to be the main location for Canteen as a pop-up venue. Canteen #6 in August 2025 took place outdoors in Victoria Park. Where will we go next?

CANTEEN'S SUPPLIER NETWORK

Canteen's dishes are dictated by what's available locally, seasonally, and ethically. Lucky for us, there's lots of that grown and reared in and around Frome.



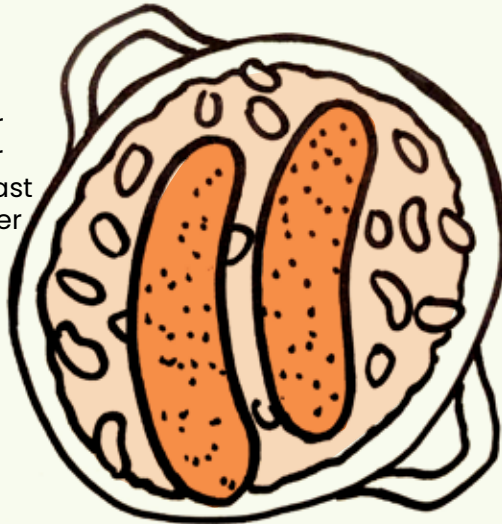
ROASTED QUINOA SAUSAGES

by Tom Wilford, served at Canteen #4

INGREDIENTS

300g Hodmedod's red and white quinoa
2-3 tbsp gram flour
1 tbsp wholegrain mustard
75g sun dried tomatoes
2 tsp fennel seeds
2 tsp black onion seeds
1 tbsp capers
1 tbsp tamari or soy sauce
1 tbsp cider vinegar
½ tsp garlic powder
½ tsp onion powder
2 tbsp nutritional yeast
Salt and black pepper
Handful of chopped fresh herbs

Makes 8 large sausages!



At Canteen, these sausages were served with a delicious bean cassoulet, mashed potato and salsa verde

METHOD

Cook the quinoa according to packet instructions. Drain and set aside to cool slightly.

Heat your oven to 150 °C

Meanwhile toast the seeds and grind.

Rehydrate the tomatoes, reserving the soaking liquid.

Chop the tomatoes and capers finely and add to the quinoa with the mustard, tamari, vinegar, toasted seeds and other dried spices.

Mix well, adding a splash of the tomato soaking liquid and then season with the salt and pepper to taste.

Add the gram flour one tablespoon at a time, mixing well. You are looking for a sticky consistency that holds together but isn't too cakey.

Split the sausage mix into 8 equal portions and use your hands to form them into sausages. Place them into a parchment lined oven dish with a few tablespoons of water and 1tbsp of white wine vinegar.

Cover and roast for 20 minutes – so the sausages steam slightly. Uncover and lightly oil the sausages. Increase the oven heat to 190°C and cook for a further 10 to 15 minutes for that golden crust.

On the face of it, Canteen is somewhere to come together and get fed – dishes we've served (hearty, wholesome and – most importantly – delicious) have included Somerset beef stew with celeriac mash and lemon-dressed kale; tacos with pico de gallo and refried beans; and pineapple upside-down cake.



Dinner, though, is only part of it. Like other community restaurants of past and current, Canteen is about fostering social inclusion (50% of UK adults report feeling lonely or isolated from society); helping people improve their diet while addressing public health concerns (the UK's addiction to unhealthy food costs £268bn a year); and supporting local producers strengthening food resilience and ecosystem regeneration (more than 85% of Canteen's ingredients are from local, nature-friendly sources).



Where the Second World War necessitated the formation of British Restaurants, Britain has now come a cropper of these different kinds of emergencies, often arising from an overarching system of extraction – whether time, money, or resources – with communities usually left with the bad end of the deal. Canteen, we think, can help address these modern problems, not as private enterprise but as a not-for-profit public service, within the same bracket as the NHS, buses, and libraries. As the team at Landed Community Kitchen put it, public restaurants should be “controlled by communities directly, bypassing the problems emerging from fragile and unsustainable capitalist practices.”

Turns out it's not just us in Frome with this idea. Currently, a pilot project funded by UK Research and Innovation named DISHED – with research fronted by former Frome resident Elise Wach – is setting up public restaurants in Nottingham and Dundee to test whether access to high-quality cooked food can help improve communities' health and wellbeing.

Much like these projects, Canteen is currently a temporary endeavor. But with a shared lesson or two and the right support behind it, we'd love to see it become a permanent fixture for Frome.

RHUBARB FOOL +

by Lara Harris, served at Canteen #3

OAT BRITTLE

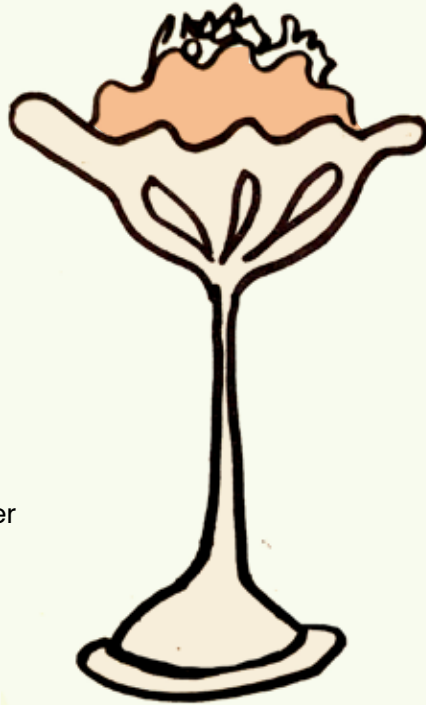
INGREDIENTS

Oat Brittle

200g rolled oats
50 g butter, melted
30g honey
100g brown sugar
¼ tsp baking powder
pinch sea salt

Rhubarb Fool

500 g rhubarb
1 orange, juice and zest
1 tsp vanilla bean paste
75g sugar or honey/
maple syrup to taste
1 inch piece of root ginger
finely grated
200ml double cream
200ml greek yoghurt



METHOD

Preheat an oven to 180°C

In a mixing bowl, combine the oat brittle ingredients and mix until the oats are coated in the other ingredients.

Spread onto a baking tray lined with baking paper. Place into the oven and cook for 20 minutes until the oats are golden brown and crispy. Break into smaller pieces once cooled.

Clean and chop the rhubarb into 2 inch pieces and place in an overproof dish with sugar/sweetener, grated

ginger, orange juice and zest and vanilla.

Bake for 30 minutes until tender.

Once cooked, leave to cool.

Whip the double cream until soft peaks are formed, then mix in the greek yoghurt.

Fold the cooled rhubarb into the yoghurt. Refrigerate until needed.

To serve, place a large scoop of the fool into a fresh serving bowl and top with a generous amount of the brittle.

Opening of British Restaurant

BY URBAN COUNCIL CHAIRMAN

PUBLIC INVITED TO MAKE SUGGESTIONS

FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICE

Frome's British Restaurant, "The Union Jack," was officially opened on Tuesday by the Chairman of the Urban Council (Mr. H. M. Scott).

The restaurant, situated on the G Street car park, in the centre of the town offers comfortable accommodation for some 220 people at a sitting. The building is light and airy, with the service on a cafeteria principle, and an excellent range of food is obtainable, from morning to cooked dinners. Mr. W. Dore is the catering manager.

There was a very representative attendance at Tuesday's opening, the afterwards being the luncheon given by the Chairman and Vice-chairman of the Council.

The Vice-chairman (Mr. F. ...) and after reading a ... now 80

Frome Times, 25th June 1943 (Frome Museum Archive)

CORE TEAM

Hugh Thomas
Lyndsey Mayhew
Cherry Truluck
Sue Palmer

COOKS

Catherine Maxwell
George Barson
Lara Harris
Keren Haydon
Tom Wilford
Julia Perrella
Georgie Everett
Cherry Truluck
Lucy Rollins

KITCHEN SUPPORT

Hugh Thomas
Louise Souter
Mark Davis
Sam Winstanley
Anne Elkins
Mary Longford

DESIGN/ARTWORK

Cherry Truluck
Tem Gunawardena

FOOD WASTE

Loop Frome

TABLE FLOWERS

Lex Tibbs
Flowers for Good

FRONT OF HOUSE

Caroline Wajsblum
Jess Gardiner
Ian Marshall
Gemma Annan
Wren Shackelford
Sarah Phillips
Luna Brudenell
Takoda Haskins
Becky Lovegrove
Joselin Kuruvila
Lyndsey Mayhew
Sue Palmer

THANKS TO

Tasha Stevens-Vallecillo
Kally Dunn
Alex Doe Films
Green & Healthy Frome: Edventure
Frome Medical Practice
Frome Town Council
National Lottery Climate Action Fund
Sam Evans + Cultivating Communities
Terri Pitts and the Community Fridge Frome
The Long Table in Stroud for sharing knowledge and experience
Frome Food Network for all the early discussions about why and how
Victoria Park Cafe
Trinity Hall Frome
Frome Museum
Jess Lawrence
Rhiannon
Peter Halpin

To stay up to date with the Canteen project and how it unfolds for the future, follow @canteen_frome on Instagram, or sign up to the newsletter at fromefoodnetwork.co.uk



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