




much of our food ends up here

county's waste burden and to assist residents in lessening their waste, Surrey County Council established Love Food Surrey. The website not only gives tips on how to use leftover food, but also how to be more aware and mindful when grocery shopping. Recipes include breakfast, lunch, dinner and dessert and range from overripe banana smoothies to caccia using leftover ham and cheese. Portion control tips are also listed to help families stop making too much at tea time. Love Food Surrey pushes residents to "cut what you can", but for waste that cannot be eliminated, food caddies are available for roadside pickup. Food waste disposed of in the caddies will be treated in an environmentally friendly manner and converted to use as fertiliser on farms, thus lessening the overall strains of production as well. During a time of worldwide discussions on food production, energy, and water use, it is important for all communities to raise these issues not only within councils, but within individual homes. Surrey County Council's schemes allow residents to question their own consumption and to be more aware of their impact on both county and country. 

For more information on the Love Food Surrey campaign, visit www.lovefoodsurrey.com

bin there, done that

Waste not want not? DANNI WARD takes a second look at freeganism



At university my boyfriend declared he was going to become a freegan and live in a squat. I promptly dumped him (don't worry, we'd only been dating for a month and were utterly incompatible). The idea that he wanted to scavenge food from bins and trespass on other people's property was disgusting to me. Not just the downright filthy rifling through rubbish, but his lack of contribution to society. And that was that as far as my opinion on the matter was concerned. That is until Mouth asked me to find out more about freeganism and the food waste crisis.

Freeganism as I had understood it was the practice of not paying for the food or products you consume. Not so much shoplifting as reclaiming items going to waste. A quick Google image search showed grubby-looking people knee-deep in bin bags and surrounded by mountains of discarded bread and soft fruit.

However, as my research developed I began to understand the ideology behind bin-raiding. Freeganism is often a part of much wider anti-consumerist and/or environmental beliefs. By reclaiming food discarded by cafés and supermarkets, whether due to encroaching sell-by-dates or damaged packaging, freegans are saving perfectly edible food from adding to landfill waste. With 18-20 million tonnes of food going to waste every year in the UK (according to Waste and Resources Action Pro-

gramme) while many people go hungry, I was starting to see the logic.

Good for them, I thought, having principles and acting on it; it was a lot more than I'd consider doing for a cause. It was all well and good them bin-



"The food we ate was almost always great quality, better than I'd been able to afford when I was buying it"



diving for their beliefs, but my clean-freak self couldn't consider getting my hands dirty in someone else's rubbish just for a bite to eat. I'd need to hear more from someone who'd done it.

After being made redundant, journalist Katharine Hibbert gave up her rented flat and all her belongings and decided to live entirely free for a year. She moved into a squat and started 'skipping' (as she and others prefer to call freeganism) for dinner. While not without struggles, her story shocked me as to the ease, and at times luxury, of her new lifestyle. Behind high street cafes and upmarket supermarkets she would find bin bags brimming with packaged and in-date sandwiches, ready meals, and all manner of items

you'd normally find in their fridges. For the most part it wasn't rubbish she was going through; it was the same food you'd find on the shelf a few metres away, simply stored outside in a black bag instead.

"The food we ate was almost always great quality," says Hibbert. "It was better than I'd been able to afford when I was buying it." Roast duck, chocolate cake, as much fresh fruit as she could carry; I was starting to get jealous.

But before I go telling you all jump in the bins behind your local supermarket, I should point out the legal dangers of the practice. Hibbert explains: "It is legally a grey area. The rubbish still belongs either to the shop that owns it or the company that's due to collect it, so you are, in fact, stealing it by helping yourself." Although many shop owners turn a blind-eye, in 2011 Sacha Hall from Essex was arrested for 'theft by finding' after reclaiming food thrown out by Tesco following a power-cut. It is an offence which carries a maximum seven-year prison sentence.

While I probably won't be going through the bins myself any time soon (blame my obsessive cleanliness), I certainly wouldn't be opposed to eating food reclaimed from bins if presented the opportunity. While rescuing sandwiches and ready meals may only go a small way in solving the food waste crisis, at least that ex-boyfriend is no longer the dirty freeloader I had once believed him to be. 