



Finalist's case study

South Devon College Food & Drink Samphire-What a Pickle

About the project

Summary

Samphire (or Sea Asparagus) is a commodity that is difficult/expensive to obtain. We have taken on the challenging task of growing this ourselves.

The results

The problem

In the South West there is an abundance of fresh fish and Samphire (or Sea Asparagus) which makes for the ultimate compliment to any fish dish. After identifying that Samphire was a difficult and expensive commodity to source, the team decided to take on the challenge of growing it themselves in order to produce a dynamic pickle recipe.

The approach

The students at South Devon College worked in collaboration on the project. Carpentry students built the plant beds, Horticulture students were responsible for sowing, growing and nurturing the Samphire and Business students have been tasked with re-introducing the product to the local market. The Catering students worked hard on creating the pickle recipe.

Our goals

We are aiming to re-introduce a product that was previously used in abundance locally & make both our learners and diners in the region aware of it. Local businesses can benefit from it by using this product to complement their fresh fish. Learners from a wide range of areas can benefit by understanding the concept of taking a raw material at source (from the farm) and all the steps required to get it to the fork (or pickle).

Obstacles and solutions

Obstacle	Solution
Samphire is difficult to grow	We have now focused on dune culture – this is growing in a tunnel combined with drip irrigation, a development following research rather than "flooding the plain" as we have done previously. Sand drainage has also been introduced to replicate the successful environment for growing in the Middle East.



Profile

- Further & Higher Education
- 6,000 FTE students
- 900 staff
- Urban

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Performance and results

We have created a dynamic pickle recipe that is the ultimate compliment to any fish dish. We are using this at our college training restaurant and also distribute to local restaurants raising the profile and bringing this accompaniment back to the plate, and reunited with fish!

The future

Lessons learned

1. Recognition of the importance of cross college communication/join up.
2. Understanding of market demand for produce in our region.
3. Returning back to basics, sometimes the simplest idea is the most effective.

Sharing your project

We have engaged with local businesses that are linked both directly and indirectly to this project (examples being food businesses/manufacturers and restaurants). This is achieved by apprenticeships, business forums and working in partnership schemes.

We have also received feedback from public demonstrations/tastings with our catering van on the road at pop up locations, events and local food festivals.

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

This recognises the aspiration and innovation of our students and staff and really shows how the college plays a part in developing new opportunities to support our students with real life experiences responding to a real demand.

Further information

Going forward with climate change and rising water levels we are looking at how to work with the sea, this is a key message going forward for all we think that it should be encouraged globally. We have this in mind for all future projects that we are undertaking and these form part of our sustainability agenda, particularly given our coastal location.