

Touch it! Smell it! Taste it! Eat it!

A hands-on educational experience kids love

Only 70 to 80 years ago the basic needs of a household would be bought from your general grocery store. The flour, sugar, butter etc. would not contain artificial additives and preservatives; in fact, there wasn't even a choice of brands which made it very simple! Fresh produce was mostly homegrown but when bought from the local green grocer, could only be organic as chemicals and additives had not reached the food chain at this point in time.

Compare a normal week's shopping for the average family in 2008 and it is incredible that in this relatively short timeframe, people of every age are struggling with the concept of basic healthy eating.

Imagine picking a basketful of beans, tomatoes and spinach from your vegetable garden for tonight's meal, or, the whole family sitting down for a breakfast of home baked bread and eggs from your own chooks. These are fairy tale stories to many; however were the norm in the 20s and 30s.

The food principles of this era are exactly what the Peaceful Gardens Cooking school aspires to; ie re-connecting children and their families with the correct value of food – if only briefly – to receive a taste of truly healthy eating.

Groups of children that are brought straight from the school yard little suspect the education and experience they will receive from this 60 acre farm and "farmhouse kitchen".

Tina Collins, of the Peaceful Gardens Cooking School says that schools send groups from Grade 3 up to Year 12. "We adjust our classes to each particular age group so that they can gain an understanding of food at their own level and at the end of the day they have a choice around eating and the value of nutrition in food.

"The education is based on experience – picking up, smelling and feeling the produce, seeing the difference, tasting the difference".

Raw sticks of vegetables, not a usual pick with children, are popular in fresh farm dips. Then there is the enticing smell and taste of home made bread baked fresh that morning.

"The children taste the difference in flavour and all the while we teach them about choices – produce found in places other than the supermarket, understanding food labels, the problem with many additives in foods.

"It's like the day awakens something in the children –as if it's something they wanted to hear. They gain so much from tasting the food as we teach them.

"The colour and flavour of two-minute noodles are so obviously artificial next to our home-made fresh noodles cooked in chicken stock. The children gorge themselves. They can't get enough!"

But Tina explains that they don't confront the children by suggesting that what they eat at home has to be changed to organic.

"We are mindful of the children's parents' choices. We simply want to make children aware that there is a choice in eating and bring an understanding about what is healthy.

Just as much fun is a tour of Peaceful Gardens farm. Small children are over the moon about meeting the pet pig, as well as heritage breeds of chickens, cattle and sheep. Older children enjoy an explanation about the raising of animals with their best welfare in mind, and the process which sees them on the journey to our dinner plates.

"We show them the basic principles of growing quality produce and composting, then after an hour of eager meeting of animals, seeing, doing and learning, the children are taken back to the farmhouse for a traditional afternoon tea. For instance, cordial made with fresh fruit from the farm and drop scones with real strawberry jam.

"The children take home recipes from the food they have tasted during the day, and they are encouraged to cook them for their families!" says Tina.

"It's like the day awakens something in the children –as if it's something they wanted to hear. They gain so much from tasting the food as we teach them.

"We often provide an hour long presentation to mothers and we have found, at the end, they don't want to leave! We are surprised by what little is known about healthy eating. There is a lot of educating to do."

There are schools that send their pupils to the Peaceful Gardens farm every year and in addition, Jamie Oliver's own Melbourne Restaurant 15 sends their new graduates for a



whole food experience from farm to plate. Now Peaceful Gardens is beginning to receive requests to speak with particular adult groups to help with ideas for healthier eating.

"Our latest teaching venture is the expansion into Prahran Market, Vic and Albury, NSW where we have a sister company The Organic Fix. It's an organic retail shop where we sell our own TasteBuds label products, and we use the fresh produce from the shop for our cooking demonstrations in the shops. People are hungry for it."

Peaceful Gardens also runs cooking classes for younger children where they are taught to be able to go home and cook for



their families. "Children are never too young to learn. Recently we had feedback that a little boy of eight years, after attending the school, is cooking his family dinner every Saturday night."

At the time of interviewing Tina was lambing and, between checking on her new lambs, was making Seville Orange Marmalade with oranges picked fresh from their 500 tree orchard. "Seville is the traditional variety of orange that was used to make marmalade in England," she says. "It has a lovely flavour. People order it from us from interstate - it's hard to find anywhere these days."



Peaceful Gardens Open Day 1st November 2008

Peaceful Gardens Organic Farm

Take a walk through timeless beauty. Bring a picnic and fall in love for one day only

Saturday 1st NOVEMBER 10am - 4pm. Tours 11.30 and 3pm

740 Meenyan Nerrena Rd, Nerrena, South Gippsland Vic 3953

Farm Cost: \$5.00 per car (Mel Ref: 512:V10.5 or Vic Roads 103:A2)

Peaceful Gardens Organic Cooking School & Farmhouse Kitchen

Cooking Demonstrations: 11am & 2.30pm - Gold coin donation will plant a tree.

Lunch: 30's Style menu serving delicious organic meals and refreshments

1 Koala Drive Koonwarra 3954 (Sth Gipps Highway) **Mel Ref:** 512 V11 Vic Roads 102 J2

Phone Tina: 03 5664 2480, **Mobile:** 041711 6851. For further details visit:

WEB: www.peacefulgardens.com.au **EMAIL:** organiccooking@dcsi.net.au