

LIMBOROUGH COMMUNITY FOOD HUB

2021 - 2025



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INTRODUCTION

The Limborough Food Hub was established in 2021 as part of Just FACT (Just Food and Climate Transition), a pioneering five-year programme in Tower Hamlets aimed at tackling food insecurity and climate change through community-led action. Situated in Mile End, Limborough quickly became a beacon of sustainability and social connection. This transformation was made possible through the generous support of Poplar HARCA, who provided the space for Wen to create a hub that empowers local residents to take meaningful climate action through food.

From the outset, Limborough was designed as more than a physical space, it is a living, breathing example of climate justice in practice.

THE HUB INTEGRATES MULTIPLE ELEMENTS TO CREATE A HOLISTIC FOOD ECOSYSTEM:

- A community garden with 18 raised beds and a greenhouse for growing culturally significant crops.
- A Chelsea flower garden and wildlife area to promote biodiversity and wellbeing.
- A community training kitchen, intentionally meat-free to encourage low-carbon diets and accommodate diverse dietary needs.
- A food pantry, offering affordable groceries to residents facing economic hardship.
- A workshop and meeting space, hosting everything from composting and seed-saving sessions to cultural cooking classes and advocacy training.

Together, these spaces have become a vital community resource for many, providing not only food and skills but also dignity, belonging, and hope. Limborough is where climate action meets everyday life, creating opportunities for people to grow, cook, eat, and learn together.



WHAT WE DID - GROWING

The garden space incorporates a community garden, greenhouse, Chelsea flower garden and it continues to bring people lots of joy; visitors always enjoy being able to access green space and do gardening, surprised by the vast space tucked between the buildings

A RANGE OF GARDENING ACTIVITIES

- Regular food growing/gardening workshops with Limborough gardeners
- An attendee at a compost workshop in 2022 said, "I have learnt the advantages of compiling your own compost. We can reduce our waste from the landfills, we can then create compost that we can use to then produce vegetables and fruits"
- We ran a successful gardening workshop series in partnership with MAD LEAP across spring and summer 2023 and have hosted other workshops and training in the space

Wen and Poplar HARCA run a weekly gardener meeting over coffee which is well attended by the gardeners. This gives them an opportunity to highlight any concerns and needs they may have. We arrange garden tidies and communal gardening with music, dance and refreshments and it's always a fun way of interacting with one another.



"Connecting with nature takes me back to my roots in Bangladesh. Growing, picking and watering; it's all a big part of our heritage."

WHAT WE DID - COOKING

Maintaining the kitchen as a meat-free cooking space has meant people have had to rethink meals without meat, leading to less meat consumption. Vegan and vegetarian chefs have been able to use the kitchen safe in the knowledge their ethos is upheld.

COOK UP WITH QSA

Sharing the kitchen space for QSA Cook Up sessions means we give space to asylum seekers, refugees and homeless people to be able to cook healthy vegetarian meals in a homely space with dignity and fuel poverty is not an issue whilst using the kitchen.



VEGAN COOKING

We also have cooking sessions on a Wednesdays with Limborough Women gardeners. The women will decide what they would like to cook at each session, Wen has provided ingredients and the women have also brought vegetable from home. The sessions are well attended, and the kitchen is filled with laughter and music. We then have a shared lunch at Limborough to end the day.



“People [attending Cook Up sessions] who are vegetarian or vegan have really appreciated being able to cook in a meat free kitchen.”

IMPACT

Joy and friendship are at the heart of Limborough Community Food Hub. We love to come together and share food and have made Limborough a space for the community to feel at home in. We have been running workshops and working with the local community for a number of years here so it's been great to have a focus on food and be given the space by Poplar HARCA to inhabit for the course of the Just FACT project.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

The impact of having a hub led by black and brown people from the community, all living in the borough, speaks volumes and represents the community we are there to support making it a safer space to be in for people who may usually feel marginalised and underrepresented.

One of the Cook Up participants said, "I am truly grateful to the organisation for giving us the support and ease of cooking dishes from different countries, getting to know different cuisines and living together and sharing with each other as human beings, learning new languages and learning a little more about cooking".



INCREASED WELLBEING

For the residents, having a garden on your doorstep has huge potential for accessing and nurturing nature - taking accountability for the environment is not a choice if you live in a beautiful environment.

"I get so much enjoyment and happiness from the garden. It refreshes my mental health... The parties are fun and I have lots friends that I have made from coming to the hub."

WHAT WE DID - EATING

Growing food and sharing produce means you are directly impacting how much people eat food bought from shops. Communities have been built and maintained; with groups using the kitchen to cater community events, local women regularly meeting for the coffee morning and people attending events at the hub. Cooking sessions will nearly always culminate in a shared meal!

CELEBRATIONS

We have regularly celebrated Eid, harvest festival and the end of the calendar year with residents, visitors and partner organisations. Everyone brings in dishes from sweet to savoury to share and there is always music, often followed by dancing and games.

COMMUNITY IFTAR GATHERING

In 2025, we hosted a big iftar gathering with Poplar HARCA, where we invited the local residents and partner organisations to come and join us in breaking our fast with bring a dish to share. It was a full house and we had arts and crafts, Henna tattoos, food and deserts guest speakers. Over 60 people attended.



PLANT-BASED WORKSHOPS

In 2022, we ran a series of vegan cooking workshops with Seeds of Wild. One of the dishes used amaranth, which grows rampantly in the garden. One of the attendees said, "[IT was my] first time eating something different (amaranth) - really enjoyed cooking the dish. Great team work; really enjoyed the session."

"Growing and harvesting my own vegetables and eating organic, fresh food is so enjoyable to me."

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LEARNINGS & INSIGHTS

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People have been reluctant to garden communally when it felt like an idea that was being imposed upon them; our community would have benefitted from much more information on benefits of communal gardening . The harvest we reaped this year was funded by the project, so hopefully people can see that sharing resources is more financially beneficial too. With such a wealth of growing knowledge within the community, the locally grown food most people consume is food they've grown themselves, other forms of locally grown food can still be prohibitively expensive

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CULTURE AND CLIMATE-FRIENDLY DIETS

Working in a predominately Bangladeshi community has highlighted that we are not always being culturally sensitive to the dietary norms of the community. People wanted to bring and share dishes at events which were made with meat and fish.

We decided to keep the kitchen as a meat-free space as it was much easier to maintain on a health and safety front, but people often enjoy the challenge and thinking creatively about protein alternatives.



BENEFITS OF COMMUNAL COOKING

We share many meals at Limbborough and use the kitchen to prepare food to feed large groups, as well as the kitchen being available as a resource for local meat-free catering groups. By cooking communally or in batches, fuel is saved and any left over food is often taken by attendees. The food left over from The Food Store pantry onsite is shared out or incorporated into meals, rather than going to waste.



RECIPE: CHAPLI KEBAB

This chapli kebab recipe was made for a series of vegan cooking workshops designed and delivered by Keke from Seeds of Wild in winter 2022 at Limborough Hub.

There were lots of open conversations around meat-free diets and cultural food. All attendees said that Keke's cooking sessions had inspired them to do something new, with one attendee saying, "I will teach this dish to my children, husband and friends."



INGREDIENTS

500g cooked brown lentils
1 red onion, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
1 chilli
1 tsp each dry spices: ground coriander, ground cumin, black pepper, fenugreek
3 tbsp fresh coriander
150g buckwheat flour plus extra for rolling
5 tbsp dark soy sauce
2 tbsp sundried tomato paste
sea salt to taste



METHOD

- Mash the lentils roughly in a bowl.
- Finely chop the onions, garlic, chilli and coriander and add to the lentils with the spices soy sauce, tomato and flour. Mix to a soft dough.
- Form into small patties.
- Heat some oil in a shallow frying pan and fry the patties till golden brown and crisp on each side.
- Serve with naan, raita, green salad and chilli sauce. Add the washed dill and peeled garlic cloves to the bottom of a clean jar, along with remaining spices.

Optional - serve with homemade raita

Ingredients

150g coconut cream/yoghurt
1 lemon juice
1 tsp dry spices
1/4 cucumber
2 tbsp fresh coriander, chopped

Place the coconut cream/yoghurt in a bowl with some lemon juice. Finely chop or coarsely grate the cucumber into it and season well with salt pepper and dry spices of your choice.

LIMBOROUGH COMMUNITY FOOD HUB



POWERED BY
Wen.

POPLAR **HARCA**

