

Susan Parsons



John Sullivan and I met on the ferry jetty in Acton at sunset. We had both been on one of Canberra's most inspired outings, a 90-minute cruise on Lake Burley Griffin. More than 50 of us had chugged around drinking fresh lemonade and Drift sauvignon blanc, eating chicken kebabs, dips and vegetarian rolls, admiring the clouds, stepping ashore on Springbank Island and listening to classical guitar played by Callum Henshaw, of the Australian National University.

The event was organised by Kirsty Guster founder of Acton Walkways, a program that was established in 2009 in order to promote awareness, community spirit and public engagement in Acton.

Sullivan was there as manager of sustainability at the ANU. Each year, he is one of a number of specialists in fields as diverse as architecture, geology, music, science, gardens and landscapes who lead walking tours around sites on the Acton Peninsula (actonwalkways.com.au).

Sullivan says since 2010, Bruce Hall residents have looked at the feasibility of introducing more local and seasonal produce on to the hall of residence's dining hall menu. This has led to changes in ordering and suppliers and some revisions to the menu.

Executive chef at Bruce and Ursula halls David Wannell helped drive the change.

Students are encouraged to eat organic fruit and vegetables and to recycle food scraps for the HotRot facility on campus. They looked at the per-kilo cost of an orange from the US compared with the cost of Australian-grown oranges, the distance travelled and litres of fossil fuel used in the transport of the oranges, as well as the carbon emissions.



ANU Green sustainability officer Jennifer McMillin at the Canberra Environment Centre in Acton. Photos: Graham Tidy



Organic uni garden a class of its own

Wannell says the Bruce Hall garden project yields a basket of fresh garden vegetables every week during the ANU teaching year. The students prepare the beds in late February, harvesting in autumn and into winter.

ANU Green sustainability officer Jennifer McMillin says food waste from Bruce Hall is collected and transported to a HotRot composting vessel on-site at the ANU. Developed in New Zealand, the organic recycling project was introduced to the ANU in 2007. The machine turns waste into compost in the space of three weeks.

Six years ago, McMillin led

the development of an organic garden for staff and students at the Canberra Environment Centre in Acton. Established beds this summer are filled with tomatoes, eggplant, tomatillos, lettuce, herbs and fruit trees.

One bed uses the "milpa" system of crop rotation, a traditional Mexican technique. The bed was developed by Australian Polly Grace and Josue Gomez from Mexico, who regularly garden at Acton. It is planted with the Mayan trio of corn, purple beans and pumpkin. A thick border of comfrey, in flower, grows beside the environment centre, its leaves the

perfect addition to activate a compost heap.

This month, February, students from the Dirty Beanstalk gardening crew at the uni, led by Karina Bontes Forward and Brendan Moloney, laid down cardboard so elm suckers pulled out during January don't come back, then they shovelled HotRot organic humus on top.

This preparation is for a planned new bed of edible Australian native plants, including bush tomatoes, lemon myrtle, mountain pepper, war-rigal greens and finger limes.

>> Susan Parsons is a Canberra writer.

No TV for Delia

Delia Smith says she's finished with television, fed up of having to "entertain" rather than teach people how to cook.

Her announcement, at the age of 71, marks the end of a television career spanning more than 40 years and introducing at least two generations to cooking. Smith says she wants to teach people to cook via online tutorials.

"This is the future for me and the population. It's miles ahead. If you do a TV programme now, it's got to entertain," she says. "You have someone telling me I haven't got time to show this, or I haven't got time to show that."

Asked if she would reconsider if a television company offered the right money or the right format she says: "No. As soon as my Waitrose contract ended, the BBC called me up and said 'What can we do?' And I said 'No, thank you'."

In January, Smith, who had been the face of Waitrose along with Heston Blumenthal, was dropped "by mutual agreement" from the adverts. Both sides insist the decision was amicable.

The chef, who has sold 21 million books throughout her career, said that she would launch the Delia Online Cookery School in February.

Her retirement will come as a blow to the supermarket industry, which said it still enjoyed a sales boost with the "Delia Effect" – a term that entered the Collins English Dictionary in 2001 – when she recommended an ingredient or product on television.

Smith left school at 16 with no qualifications and was briefly a trainee hairdresser before she started to cook. She presented her first series, *Family Fare*, in 1973. The first recipe she demonstrated on screen was Alpine eggs, a baked dish of eggs, butter and chives topped with grated cheese.

>> Harry Wallop, The Daily Telegraph