

International Real Vanilla Day 2021



October 16th-17th at Bickleigh Castle

Programme of events

littlePod[®]

Welcome to LittlePod's Weekend Staycation!

It's time to celebrate REAL vanilla...

International Real Vanilla Day: Events Programme

Saturday, October 16th

12.00: The walk around. Enjoy a historical tour and environmental walk around Bickleigh Castle and its beautiful grounds with John Vaughan and Liz Rodgers (meet in the Courtyard).

14.00: Create your colour palette. LittlePod friend and artist Sarah Gillard will host a workshop to help you develop your colour palette (Conservatory).

15.00: The Passion of Bees. Join us for fascinating talk from Imogen Hallam, a local beekeeper with more than 80 hives (Conservatory).

16.00: Gaelic songs in the Saxon chapel. Professor Patrick Devine-Wright from Exeter University will share his repertoire of Gaelic songs (Chapel).

17.00: Raise a toast to REAL vanilla. Join the LittlePod team and special guests for aperitifs to celebrate International Real Vanilla Day 2021 (Great Hall).

19.00: Manju's signature curry dinner. Enjoy an autumnal feast with LittlePod friend and TV chef Manju Mahli, featuring recipes from her latest cookbook (Dining Hall).

20.30: Blue Ventures – an update. Join us for a talk from Dr Vik Mohan, who will provide an important update on the situation in Madagascar, and the great work that Blue Ventures is doing there (Bar).

Sunday, October 17th

08.00: Fresh air and exercise. Join Paul – personal trainer and LittlePod social media manager – for a scenic run around the grounds. Everyone welcome (meet in the Courtyard).

10.30: The vanilla farmer's daughter. LittlePod's Voice of Africa, Irine Hendry, will join us live via video-link from Tanzania to introduce IRVD and tell us about her father's farm (Bar).

11.00: The LittlePod collaborative orchard. Join Dr Made Setiawan to learn all about the LittlePod orchard in Indonesia and hear all our latest news and updates (Bar).

12.00 Live demo from the Holistic Chef. LittlePod friend Jamie Raftery, aka the Holistic Chef, will join us via video-link from Thailand for a live plant-based cooking demonstration (Bar).

13.30 IRVD afternoon tea. Enjoy a sumptuous buffet, prepared by Bickleigh Castle chef Scott Farr. In the Snug, Manju will be signing books and answering your questions (Courtyard, weather-permitting).

15.00: Challenges in sustainability – recycling. Join us for an inspirational talk from Aisha Stenning, a former LittlePodder who is now responsible for global innovations in plastics at UNILEVER (Bar).

16.00 Closing thoughts and thanks. Tom Hales, our Operations Manager, will outline LittlePod's vision, our conservation aims and plans for the future (Bar).

The walk around...



Our Weekend Staycation will start in style, with a special Bickleigh Castle walk around. We are fortunate to be joined by Bickleigh's John Vaughan, who will lead us on an historical tour of the castle, including its beautiful Saxon Chapel, Armoury and Great Hall. John will be accompanied by Liz Rodgers – LittlePod's very own horticulturist (pictured) – who will help our guests to recognise the vast and varied flora and fauna as we tour the castle's scenic grounds.

Create your colour palette...



LittlePod friend Sarah Gillard was born into a family of artists in rural Kent. Sarah studied Art & Design at Banbury College, before graduating in Fashion Textiles at Middlesex University. This led to a commission for rugs at the Conran Shop in London, and Sarah has never looked back. Throughout her career, Sarah has been inspired by colour, and one look at her astonishingly-vibrant paintings is enough to see where her influence lies. Sarah's love of colour helped her to become a colourist at the acclaimed Liberty Design Studio in 1989 and it was during her time here that she discovered the wonders of gouache and first began to be inspired by the flowers in her mother's garden, a theme that would go on to shape her career as an artist. Sarah's first solo exhibition was at the Lyric Theatre in London in 1993.

Since then, Sarah's beautiful flower paintings have been exhibited at many galleries, both private and public, including the RWA in Bristol, the Bath Society of Artists and the Thelma Hubert Gallery here in Devon. From 2000, Sarah spent five years in the Netherlands, surrounded by tulips, an extraordinary inspiration for such a creative artist. Back in England, and more recently in 2016, Sarah was delighted to win first prize for one of her flower paintings at the Strand Gallery in London, an event sponsored by the Greenfingers Charity. Commissioned to capture the flowering vanilla planifolia at Kew Gardens in 2018, Sarah's artwork has pride of place at LittlePod HQ.

The passion of bees...



Imogen Hallam has done many things in her colourful life. She has ridden and driven horses, sailed boats, and taught and made art for a living. These days, Imogen is a bee farmer. "A bit mad," she says. "But I thought I'd give it a try!" Imogen has been keeping bees for 17 years now, and is still fascinated. Imogen bred bees and collected swarms to bring her stocks up to around 80 hives. It is, she says, hard work, but the end results are magic golden honey, being in nature, in wonderful apiaries, surrounded by bees and flowers.

Gaelic songs in the Saxon chapel...



Patrick Devine-Wright is a Professor in Geography at the University of Exeter, conducting research on sustainable energy and climate change. He is an IPCC lead author, one of the world's most-cited social scientists and Chair of the Devon Net Zero Task Force. Originally from Dublin, he learnt the Irish (Gaelic) language from his mother Deirdre, a fluent speaker from Galway in the west of Ireland. Patrick inherited a love of singing from his father Pat, one of a family of singers from Glasgow. Growing up in Dublin, he began piano lessons at the age of 5, before studying trumpet at the Dublin College of Music. Patrick began singing as a student at Trinity College Dublin and has sung with various choirs, including the Trinity College Singers, Anúna, the Cambridge Taverner Choir and Bel Canto. Patrick has won several prizes for the solo singing of Gaelic songs, including the All-Britain Feis Ceoil. Patrick was an understudy in the Riverdance show during its first West End run in the Hammersmith Apollo, and his influences include Iarla Ó'Lionaird, Séamus Begley and Martin Hayes.

Manju's signature curry dinner...



Manju Malhi is a TV chef and author, whose books include the influential *Brit Spice* and *Everyday Healthy Indian Cookery*. Her simple and straightforward approach to healthy scratch cooking has won her many fans globally, in the media (BBC, ITV, Sony, Sky and NDTV) and through 10,000 followers on social media.

For more than five years, Manju has been working in the charity sector with Open Age and Heston West Big Local, bringing communities together through interactive engagement and her hands-on programmes of cooking from scratch. During the pandemic, Manju has been helping the elderly combat loneliness and isolation with Zoom-enabled healthy cookery courses, whilst building a community spirit during lockdown and beyond. In 2020, Manju was awarded the British Empire Medal in recognition of her endeavours.

Dr Vik Mohan and Blue Ventures...



Dr Vik Mohan is an Exeter-based GP, Director of Community Health at Blue Ventures Conservation, and architect of Blue Ventures' award-winning integrated health and conservation programme.

Whilst working with communities in Madagascar on Blue Ventures' community-based marine conservation programme, Vik's interest in community health led him to uncover a huge unmet need for health care. Responding to this need, Vik led the development of Blue Ventures' community health programme and oversaw its integration into the portfolio of Blue Ventures' activities.

Having spent more than a decade supporting the implementation and growth of this programme, Vik has witnessed first-hand the multiple benefits of working in this integrated and holistic way. This has inspired him to try to ensure that as many people as possible benefit from this 'whole-system approach to conservation and sustainable development. Vik's work with Blue Ventures now focuses on supporting others to adopt this approach, both in Madagascar and beyond.

Fresh air and exercise...



Paul Gilder is LittlePod's long-serving social media manager, a position he has held since first joining the company in 2015. Having spent more than a decade writing for daily regional newspapers, Paul's journalistic experience and eye for an angle has served us well over the years as he has helped us to tell the story of LittlePod and our Campaign for Real Vanilla. In recent times, Paul has developed a thriving community of LittlePodders on Instagram. It was here that, 12 months ago, he spearheaded the first ever International Real Vanilla Day, giving real vanilla a voice that was heard all over the world.

In addition to his duties here at LittlePod HQ, Paul is an accomplished runner – covering all race distances from 5K to ultra-marathon – and the weekend before IRVD, is due to face his latest challenge as once again he tackles the Manchester Marathon. Paul is also a fully-qualified personal trainer and fitness coach, running his own PT business as and when his schedule allows. Paul is looking forward to taking those guests who are interested for a guided run around the grounds at Bickleigh Castle on October 17th, with fresh air and exercise just the thing to kickstart International Real Vanilla Day 2021.

The vanilla farmer's daughter...



Irine Hendry, LittlePod's Voice of Africa, is relishing the opportunity to introduce International Real Vanilla Day, via live video-link from Tanzania, on October 17th. The LittlePod team first met Irine during our trip to the Vanilla 2019 Symposium in Moshi. We have kept in close contact ever since. Irine, a vanilla farmer's daughter from a rural community, has seen first-hand the power of vanilla, not just for the people of Tanzania, but also in the remarkable ways in which it can enhance the flavour of our food. Irine will join us to share all the latest news and updates from her family's farm in Africa and is looking forward to celebrating real vanilla with the LittlePod team and all our guests. Vanilla-aside, Irine has been hard at work studying for her public accountancy exams and is hoping, one day, to join the team at LittlePod HQ.

Made and the LittlePod collaborative orchard...



Dr Made Setiawan was born in Bali. He trained in Medical Anthropology and Public Health at Amsterdam University and the University of Illinois in Chicago. For more than 15 years, Made was involved in HIV/AIDS research and preventive intervention in Indonesia. Between 2015 and 2017, Made was a consultant for the Katingan Project, the world's largest REDD+, located in central Kalimantan. He worked with local staff and communities to teach and apply agroforestry and agroecology to end the commonly-applied slash and burn technique to create new areas for agriculture.

In 2016, Made assisted LittlePod, who provided 3,000 vanilla seedlings to start a community orchard in Wanagiri and revive vanilla cultivation and trade. The community orchard was managed by Made Suartika (aka Made 2). The initiative has involved more than 25 farmers, with approximately 15,000 mature vanilla vines. The community orchard has produced 2 harvests since 2019, with the crop exclusively purchased by LittlePod.

These single sourced estate pods are used to create the LittlePod ice cream available in the new ice cream parlour at Darts farm . Thank you to Louise for supplying the ice cream for the menu on Saturday. We are thrilled to launch the ice cream this weekend and can't wait to hear what you all think about it.

Plant-based cooking with the Holistic Chef...



Jamie Raftery has trained under some of the world's most iconic chefs throughout his culinary career. Jamie worked his way up, starting as a 15-year-old pot washer and cooking at 3 Michelin-star elite restaurants, while being mentored by chefs such as Michael Caines, Gordon Ramsay, Thomas Keller, Corey Lee and Rasmus Kofoed. Jamie trained on every kitchen section while working his way up to become Executive Chef of Relais Chateaux properties. He has worked in all F&B concepts – from festival street food to multi Michelin stars.

In 2015, Jamie moved on from the Michelin-star fine dining realm and founded the Holistic Chef, setting off on a new trajectory of celebrating and highlighting wholefood plant-based ingredients. Nutrition, sustainability and education came to the forefront of all his culinary developments. Over the last six years as the Holistic Chef, Jamie has consulted on holistic and health-centred menus in China, Thailand, the US and all over Europe. In the UK, he worked as a private chef for two years, cooking health-focused cuisine for celebrity clients.

Currently, Jamie is stationed in Phuket, having served the last three years as Director of Culinary Development at Thanyapura Sports and Health Resort and UWC International School. Long known to us here at LittlePod, it is from Thailand that Jamie will join us live via video-link this International Real Vanilla Day.

Due to the current economic and travel restrictions, Jamie has launched a project that he has wanted to do for years – an online recipe blog 'Holistic Chef Academy' and Virtual Cooking School to share delicious, healthy, cost-effective and sustainable recipes to inspire people to cook more at home and take steps to improve their health and immunity.

Challenges in sustainability – recycling...



Once an important member of the team here at LittlePod HQ, Aisha Stenning is these days Global Sustainable Innovation Manager at UNILEVER, where she leads plastic packaging reporting and insights. Passionate about transitioning to a circular economy, Aisha can boast ten years' experience in driving sustainability policy and reporting in FMCG, the UK Government and NGOs. Despite all that she has achieved, Aisha is proud to say that her career began with the launch of LittlePod – the very definition of small but mighty!

littlePod®

**#LittlePod #CampaignForRealVanilla #InternationalRealVanillaDay
#InternationalRealVanillaDay2021 #IRVD #IRVD21**