

Free food and sunshine - what a wonderful day to visit the park

2013-06-03

Ben Ireland

THERE'S no such thing as a free lunch - or is there? More than 1,000 people turned out at Bestwood Country Park yesterday to help themselves to curry, pasta and chocolate cake in an event designed to raise awareness of food waste.

The Big Lunch, run by Veolia Environmental Services, Gedling Community and Voluntary Services and Notts County Council, provided 1,000 meals that cost a total of £680 - the cost of food an average family wastes in a year.

The food came from food banks and supermarkets' surplus stock.

There was music from Bestwood Welfare Black Diamonds Band, tricks from magician Peter Presto and free tours of the Winding Engine House at the park.

And the food went down a treat. Demonstration chef Clover Hutson, 34, was in charge. She hails from Harrogate and has attended a number of similar events with non-profit organisation Love Food Hate Waste.

"It's been a great turnout today," she said. "As soon as you start handing out free food it gets busy, and the weather was great as well."

Clover added that although there were some staple dishes you could make with your leftovers, you might have to get creative with scraps.

"You just have to think outside the box. One of my favourites is cupboard flat bread, which is so easy and can be topped with practically anything," she said.

Clover wants to make people more confident in their cooking as a fun way of saving those extra pennies.

"At the end of the day it's your money you are throwing in a bin as well. Everyone needs that extra bit of cash, especially at the moment, and all it takes is a bit of planning."

Flyers were sent to thousands of houses around Bestwood Country Park, and local residents were out in force.

Peter Davis, 51, of Park Road, said: "It's been a great day which we heard about from a piece of paper that came through the door."

Mr Davis and wife Sonia, 45, said they weren't too bad for throwing away food, but were surprised when they heard some of the figures.

For instance: You could fill Wembley stadium seven times with the food wasted in the UK each year.

"It really is quite startling," added Peter. "It's hard to believe." Kevin Parker, regional communications manager for Veolia, said the main aim was simply to provide a fun day "First of all we just want to give people a good day out, so we've been lucky with the weather. It's a great way to bring the community together; you can see some people here are meeting others for the first time. The free food is the hook, but when they are here they can learn about what we are doing."

And Sue McDonald, community liaison officer for the County Parks Service, said: "The people really seem to be enjoying themselves and it's certainly going to help raise the profile of the park."

"This is the biggest event we've ever had here."

Leftover lunch chef Clover Hutson says you can make pretty much anything from leftovers and, with her team, she fed more than 1,000 with: | Mixed vegetable rostis. | vegetable pasta, with tomato and peppers. |vegetarian curry with chick peas | Tomato and basil soup. | Hot chocolate fridge cake.

www.nottinghampost.com

Copyright 2013 Nottingham Evening Post All Rights Reserved