



Greater Whitsunday Food Network Inc
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Foodies meet Farmers as local tourism grows!

The Greater Whitsunday Food Network has been working hard to create some amazing opportunities for the local food system and is excited to announce new projects for 2019.

The new projects, including four fully guided bus tours, will be officially launched at the Greater Whitsunday Farmers' Market this Wednesday (April 10) at 8am.

The bus tours give guests an inside look and experience of working the farm land, processing local produce into a viable product for the consumer and finally tasting the farm to plate experience with local produce lunch and tastings on offer.

Some tours offer spirit, cider and beer tastings whilst other tours will showcase the working farms in the clouds of Eungella or harvest their own "berry" good fruit to tantalise their taste buds.

"These bus tours give an opportunity for both locals and visitors to experience our region, our farmers and our food production outside of visiting them at the local farmers' markets," said Greater Whitsunday Farmers' Market marketing and events coordinator Christine Wilson.

"They will now get to meet the farmers on the farm and how the food gets from the farm to the consumer, or the plate," she said.

To support the growth of the "farmer meets foodie industry", the Greater Whitsunday Food Network" is calling for businesses, both local and nationally, to look at sponsorship opportunities to assist the not-for-profit organisation to meet the demands of one of the fastest growing industries in our nation, agritourism.

"Agritourism - is a word many will become extremely familiar with this year, especially in our region," said Greater Whitsunday Food Network committee member Glenys Mansfield.

“It has been a pleasure to put together several guided bus tours that will give visitors to our region an authentic farm to plate experience along with the enjoyment of visiting some key tourist destination across our diverse region,” she said.

The newly released farm tours are only the beginning of what is available in the Mackay region. The Network plans to extend tours in to other local areas and expand across the Isaac and Whitsunday region.

Expanding into other regions is one of the reason behind the Network offering two Farm to Plate Dining Experiences this year instead of the annual one held in June.

The Greater Whitsunday Food Network will announce at the media event this Wednesday both the locations, dates and when tickets go on sale for the Farm to Plate Dining Experiences to be held in 2019.

The Network will also offer a variety of “farmer meets foodie” experiences in 2019. On a weekly basis this happens at the Greater Whitsunday Farmers' Market, held every Wednesday 7am to 11am at the Bluewater Quay, and monthly at the River Street Twilight Market.

The Twilight event adds value to the foodie's experience by hosting several local food vans and food artists whose offerings are all based around the local produce that is in season. Both events are based in the Mackay City Centre and the Network is pleased to announce and welcome Mackay City Centre as official funding sponsors of the market events for 2019.

Mayor Greg Williamson said council had been a strong supporter of the Greater Whitsunday Farmers' Market since it was first established in Wood Street Park in June 2016 before moving to Bluewater Quay.

“Mackay City Centre is delighted to become a sponsor of the Greater Whitsunday Farmers' Market and River Street Twilight Market Entertainment Stage, and celebrate the network working towards some great new initiatives for 2019,” said Cr Williamson said.

“The ongoing development of the market ensures that the city continues to attract new niche businesses and creates opportunities for City Centre eateries to promote local produce as well as improves the offer available for the community and visitors to Mackay,” he said.

Greater Whitsunday Food Network President Deb McLucas has seen some strong support for the local food system with the introduction of several new committee members and the new activities for 2019.

"These developments are another indication of the support and interest from stakeholders in realising the vision of the Greater Whitsunday Food Network," Deb McLucas – President Greater Whitsunday Food Network.

"We are committed to creating a community that appreciates and is connected to its farmers and value adders and our upcoming tours, dining experiences and of course the regular Farmers' Market are providing a great opportunity for people to be a part of this movement." she said.

The Media Event will take place at the Greater Whitsunday Farmers' Market on a **Wednesday 10th April at 8:00am** - Please see media launch invite attached.

All media are invited to attend. Please contact Christine Wilson for any pre-media interviews. If you have any questions please feel free to call or email me.

Best regards,

Deb McLucas

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Pre-Event Interview:	Tuesday, 9 April 2019
Media Event:	8:00am Wednesday, 10 April 2019 Greater Whitsunday Farmers' Market Bluewater Quay, River Street Mackay City Centre
