

Food System Change for Cornwall *by Becky Ndegwa*

Food unites us: **we all need food to survive**. However, what we eat today is produced in ways that are hugely dependent on fossil fuels, mechanisation, fertilisers and poisonous pesticides. In other words, the food we eat is a major contributor to both climate and biodiversity crises. **Our food systems are broken.**

RJ Working is offering a Restorative approach to fix things. Restorative practice offers a solution to repairing broken food systems – literally meaning the practice of making things better. While it is often associated with repairing harm between people, the **core principles** of respect, relationship and responsibility can help us rethink our relationship with food. How can we show **respect** and care to the land that grows food to nourish us? How can we work in **relationship** with each other, and nature to ensure food resilience for our futures? How can we all be **responsible** for the health of our future generations?

These questions were central to the conversation at three huge Community Feast events this summer of 2026, for which RJ Working created **sustainable partnerships** in **Redruth**, **Camborne** and **St Day**. We intend these to become annual events locally, and an example for other communities across Cornwall, of **youth leadership** and **intergenerational learning**. (Please see RJ Working website Projects page for details and films)



Each feast was unique, shaped by the people and place where it was hosted. What the events had in common was delicious local food and intergenerational conversations which explored the question: ***How can we make our food systems in Cornwall better for everyone?*** The partnership RJ Working team has developed with **Sustainable Food Cornwall** and our relationships with young people in schools and colleges, led to the potential for a stronger, wider understanding of ***the role of education communities for the needed changes.***

Local young people were at the heart of all three events, planning, orchestrating, visibly front of house and invisibly behind the scenes. They helped to **grow food, prepare, cook and serve meals and lead discussions** about the food future they want to see in Cornwall. Each table was decorated, each course served, with care and meaning.

Cornwall is distinctively positioned: the last peninsula at the end of the land mass we inhabit, with many rural and remote communities, its unique geography means vulnerability to the **negative impacts of extreme weather and biodiversity loss**. At the same time however, Cornwall has enormous potential to become more resilient by **supporting local growers**,

strengthening community food networks and helping people reconnect with where their food comes from. These developments could generate accompanying benefits of food becoming **more locally sourced, more healthy and more affordable** – which would be a very tangible expression of the abstract term ‘**community resilience**’.

Food is so much more than just what's on our plates. It deeply affects **our health, our environment, our local economy and our communities**. RJ Working is enabling conversations – while sharing and eating – which consider this and wider related questions about food poverty and how to create **fair, accessible food systems** that are good for people and the planet.

Restorative practice provides **a framework for rebuilding our relationship with food** and each other. **Restorative Community Feasts** bring people together **to plan the planting** of literal seeds; these events also plant in the collective community mind **a series of possibilities** which, with tending, have **the potential to grow into fruitful actions**.