

# COOK TO SELL



Photo credit: SCRAN, University of Central Lancaster



STUDENTS  
ORGANISING FOR  
SUSTAINABILITY  
UNITED KINGDOM

# CONTENTS

---

Cooking.....	01
Where to start.....	03
What to make.....	04
Sourcing.....	04
Equipment.....	07
Health and safety.....	08
Production.....	09
Signage and labelling.....	10
Sales and marketing.....	11
Impact and evaluation.....	12
Case study: Sussex Food Waste Cafe.....	13
Case study: Eco Soup.....	15

# COOK TO SELL HANDBOOK

GROW, SELL, EAT THROUGH SOCIAL ENTERPRISES.

## COOKING

The act, or even the art, of cooking is deeply rooted in our history and has been part of the human experience for a long time. Some anthropologists will even argue that it was the invention of cooking food over fire that made us human. Simply put, cooking is a process where we take raw food and apply heat, this gives the food new colours, new flavours and new textures. Cooking is the transformation of food into something that is more digestible and more delicious for us to eat. Food is also a forever memory of our past which can tell us something about who we are and where we come from.

It is fascinating to think that we are the only species who cook food, something that plays a fundamental role in our everyday lives, even to the extent that today cooking is considered a form of entertainment. The risk is that we might become more concerned with watching others cook, rather than cook for ourselves and others.

Food can be one of the best ways to spend time together with others. Can you imagine getting together with your family or friends and not have anything to eat or drink? Would it feel strange? Food is usually the uniting factor when bringing people together. No matter who we are, or where we are.

Cooking connects us to each other; it is that one thing we all have in common. We all eat.

## SET UP A FOOD ENTERPRISE

GOOD FOR YOU, GOOD FOR YOUR INSTITUTION, GOOD FOR YOUR COMMUNITY.

- Fresh affordable food for students, staff and members of the public.
- Provides real-life experience of setting up and running a business.
- An opportunity to see your ideas come to life.
- Enhances employability skills - leadership, teamwork, planning etc.
- A great way for emerging student enterprises and societies to market their products.
- Potential income generation for your students' union or society.
- A chance to raise awareness about the importance of buying sustainable food.
- Supports the local economy and community partnerships.





## WHY COOKING?

Setting up a social enterprise on campus with the aim to cook and sell delicious and nutritious food, is a great way to bring people together, share skills and engage people with the importance of food and its impact on our health and the environment. One of the most important things we can do in regard to food is to reconnect to its source, and bringing people together to cook a meal from scratch using fresh ingredients can do exactly that. All senses are activated, and it sparks a conversation about where food comes from and how we can transform food into a delicious meal we then share with others. The benefits of cooking are many and basing your social enterprise on it can help you achieve great things.

Cooking is a precious skill which seems to have seen a decline in the last couple of decades. A study by the Co-op showed that only a third of 18-35 years old's in the UK know how to cook a simple meal such as spaghetti bolognese from scratch. With instant access to ready-cooked meals, it seems many have given up on the skills of how to take the ingredients our local landscapes provide us with and transform them in to a meal. Setting up a cooking enterprise will be engaging young people with cooking from scratch and will play an important role in improving cooking skills among this age group. By providing an entrepreneurial opportunity for students that will stimulate creativity and boost their confidence in cooking, you can be part of breaking down the barriers many young people face when it comes to cooking, and together you can be part of creating a better and healthier food system for all.

Cooking food to sell will allow you to cover your costs whilst providing invaluable skills for students. One way to maximise profits is by using surplus ingredients and transforming them into a tasty dish. Approximately 1.9 million tonnes of food is wasted annually in the UK alone, of which 250 thousand tonnes is still edible! By serving meals that are made from surplus food, you can offer food that is yummy, sustainable, and accessible, but it also has an important story to tell.

Let's get cooking!



SOS-UK LEARNING ACADEMY

Learn more from our  
['Starting up a Social Enterprise' course](#)

# WHERE TO START?



If you are starting up a cooking enterprise on campus, there are few things to make sure you have in order before starting production.

- Space - is there a kitchen space that is Health & Safety approved that can be used? If you are a student, enquire if there is a kitchen space available that you have permission to use and that conforms to all necessary health and safety requirements. As your enterprise is built on the foundation of cooking, it is worth finding a space you have access to use at any time. Based on feedback from other cooking enterprises, it is important to have a base that students can have a sense of ownership over, and where you can keep your equipment safe and clean.
- Support - get in touch with your students' union and ask how they can support your enterprise venture. Would setting it up as a society be the right thing for you, or perhaps there is an enterprise aspect of the students' union you could feed into?
- Sales - where, how and when would you sell your products? Is there a market on campus or nearby? Consider placing your sales point in a high footfall area during lunch time for maximum impact. Have a chat with your students' union as they might be able to help you with this.
- Volunteers - work towards recruiting a strong volunteer base. This can be a core group of 3-5 students to support the start-up of your enterprise, and who are willing to take a lead on the project.
- Business model - create a plan describing how your enterprise will operate. A Business Model Canvas is a great tool that can help you visualise how your enterprise will generate income, sell products etc. This will help your understanding of the different elements of running a business and build a framework that will support your enterprise journey.
- Values - write a list of your enterprise's core values. This will be an important part of how you operate, source ingredients, promote your products and give back to your community.



## WHAT TO MAKE

Cooking to sell presents a great opportunity to be creative and you could offer a variety of meals to your customers. However, starting up an enterprise calls for simplicity and often requires some market research to get an understanding of what will sell where you are. Start with something simple and test your product on the market before you invest time and capital into something that might not work.

Your business plan and menu offer might also depend on what is available for you in terms of ingredients. Growing food on campus, being dependant on donations or saving surplus food from going to waste all requires flexibility when it comes to what your end product is going to be. Easy dishes to start off with regardless of your ingredients are soups, stews and curries.

## SOURCING

The options for where and how you source ingredients for your enterprise are many and varied, and this is where your enterprises' mission is of significance. Is your main focus to rescue food from going to waste? Or is it to offer students healthy and delicious dishes made from fresh, organic produce from a local farm, or perhaps that has been grown on campus?



### BENEFITS OF LOCAL SOURCING:

- Work with seasonal ingredients
- Build community relationships
- Save food from going to waste



## SURPLUS FOOD

Get in touch with local supermarkets, greengrocers and markets and ask what they usually do with fruit and vegetables no longer suitable for sale. There are opportunities to establish an agreement to pick up food destined to go to waste for your enterprise.

## LOCAL FARMS

Many farms will sell wholesale produce to local restaurants and markets, so it is worth contacting a farm to see if they would be able to supply your enterprise as well. Do your own research on what local farms are in your area and get in touch to see if you can place an order. Keep in mind delivery and or pick-up options from the farm, you may have to organise your cooking session to fit around these. Also consider contacting local community growing sites and Community Supported Agriculture farms.

## CAMPUS GROWN / ALLOTMENTS

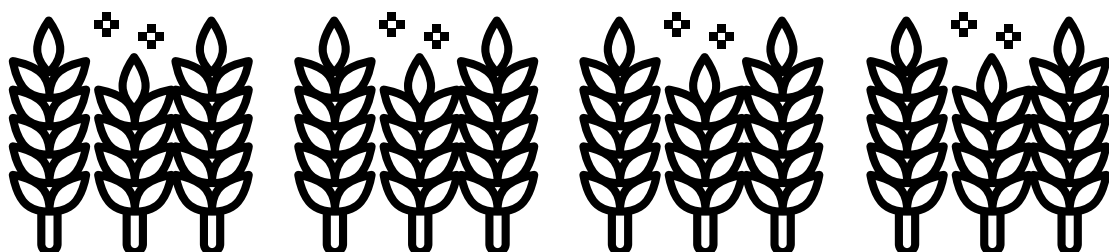
Cooking with ingredients grown and harvested on campus offers a unique selling point for your enterprise. If there is already a growing project on campus, get in touch to discuss possible partnership opportunities, this could be something as simple as providing fresh herbs to providing more seasonal vegetables grown especially for your enterprise. It can also be worth reaching out to local allotments over the summer months when they may produce more than the growers are able to eat.

## FORAGING

Foraging is a fun and engaging way to learn about wild edibles in your local area. It is also a great way to source ingredients for your dish for free! Common foods to forage that are easy to identify and work great in savoury dishes are nettles, plantain, and wild garlic. Familiarise yourself with [what is in season](#) in your area and ensure all participants practise [responsible foraging](#).

## GROW TO SELL

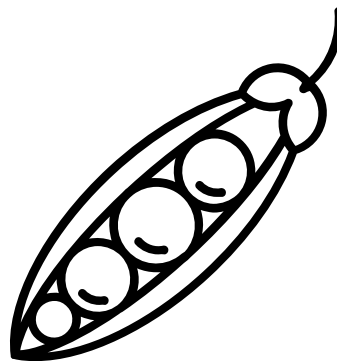
A future milestone for your enterprise could be to set up your own food growing plot on campus. This could be getting access to a small plot or container to grow your own herbs, or a space to alternate root vegetables such as potatoes and beetroots. Have a look in our Grow to Sell Handbook to learn more about setting up a food growing enterprise on campus.





Things to consider:

- Have patience. Contacting, networking, and building relationships with local supermarkets/green grocers, local farms and/or allotments can take time. It can be wise to put this on the top of your priority lists when starting up your enterprise.
- Be clear on what you would like but leave lots of room for flexibility when working with seasonal or surplus produce.
- Be mindful of delivery/pick-up times as this may impact your planning of cooking sessions and sales days.
- If you have a freezer available, you can freeze the majority of fruit and vegetables and cook these at a later time.



In addition to your main ingredient(s), you will need to source ingredients such as sugar, salt, vinegar, spices etc. You should be mindful of where you are sourcing these additional ingredients, so they adhere to the sustainable ethos of your enterprise.

- Buy from and support local businesses. Avoid purchasing your ingredients from the large supermarkets, but rather spend your money supporting local economies by purchasing from independent shops, markets, food coops or directly from producers if you can.
- Buy organic, Fairtrade certified products to ensure sustainable farming practises have been used and farmers have received a fair pay for their work.
- Have a look at [SOS-UK's Sustainable Food Guide](#), a guide calling for more sustainable food to be sold and served on UK campuses. It outlines 8 key actions institutions can take, and 15 actions students can take, with links to numerous resources and additional information for each action.



# EQUIPMENT

When starting up your cooking venture you can manage with the most basic utensils and equipment. You should think about how much food you plan to cook and sell each time, and base your list of equipment on this. You should also consider the space you have available and how many volunteers can participate in the cooking each time.

Basic utensils and equipment for starting a cooking enterprise:

## Cooking:

- Hotplates / Hob(s)
- Large pots
- Chopping boards
- Knives
- Stainless steel cooking utensils
- Hand blender
- Measuring jug
- Measuring spoons
- Grater
- Peeler
- Sieve
- Stainless steel bowls

## Baking:

- Hob and oven
- Baking bowls
- Baking pans and tins
- Measuring spoons
- Measuring jugs
- Scales
- Spatulas and utensils
- Rolling pins



# FOOD CONTAINERS

To ensure your food containers, packaging and cutlery match your enterprise's sustainable ethos, opt for products that are made from renewable raw materials or are compostable, or better yet, encourage your customers to bring their own reusable containers! Focusing on reusable containers as part of your enterprise model is a great way to encourage good habits for people to bring their own, and it saves you some money by not having to order so many single-use products.

You could also consider selling reusables that have your own enterprise branding on them and/or charging for the disposable option. If you need to offer containers and cutlery, do your research to find a company that can provide you with the most sustainable option.

# HEALTH AND SAFETY

It is your responsibility as a food enterprise to ensure the food you make and sell is safe for consumption. The space, the ingredients, method of production and the people making the food all have an impact on the final product. You will need access to a space that allows for the safe processing of food. You will need to make sure the space adheres to a high standard of food safety following your local governments' guidance. It is important that you have a risk assessment in place for the area you are working in, as well as for the activity itself. Make sure you have good routines in place before, during and after the cooking sessions, and that these routines are clearly communicated to the people involved.

## REGISTERING YOUR FOOD ENTERPRISE

Assuming your enterprise will offer a mainly vegan/vegetarian menu, this will greatly reduce the risk of contamination and foodborne illness. However, you still have to register your enterprise with your local authority. It is free but you need to register 28 days before you start trading. You may get prosecuted and fined if operating a food enterprise without registering.

## FOOD HYGIENE TRAINING

Lead staff and/or students should be trained in Level 3 Food Safety and Hygiene, which will allow them to train, supervise and instruct volunteers to a level appropriate to the activity. You can easily find Level 3 Food Safety and Hygiene courses available online, and they usually cost £15 - £25 per certificate.



# PRODUCTION

Before you start cooking ensure you have all necessary routines and risk assessments in order. This is crucial for your enterprise's success, ensuring that you offer a product that is safe to prepare and safe to eat.

Below are some of our recommendations, but please also make sure you do your own research and find the processes that are best suited for your enterprise's production. You can learn more from the Food Standard Agency's 'Safer Food, Better Business' pack.

- Wash your hands before preparing or handling food. Long hair should be tied back or covered by a hair net.
- Ensure work tops, chopping boards, pots and utensils are clean and kept in good condition at all times.
- Wash any fresh produce before cooking.
- All bacteria in food is killed at 100 degrees (boiling), but it is recommended that food is cooked to at least 70 degrees and kept at this temperature for a minimum of 2 minutes. Bacteria stops growing above 63 degrees, so all food must be held at minimum 63 degrees when served. Read more about safe cooking on the Food Standards Agency website.
- Keep a food hygiene checklist, which will also provide evidence to potential inspectors that you are compliant with the food hygiene standards.

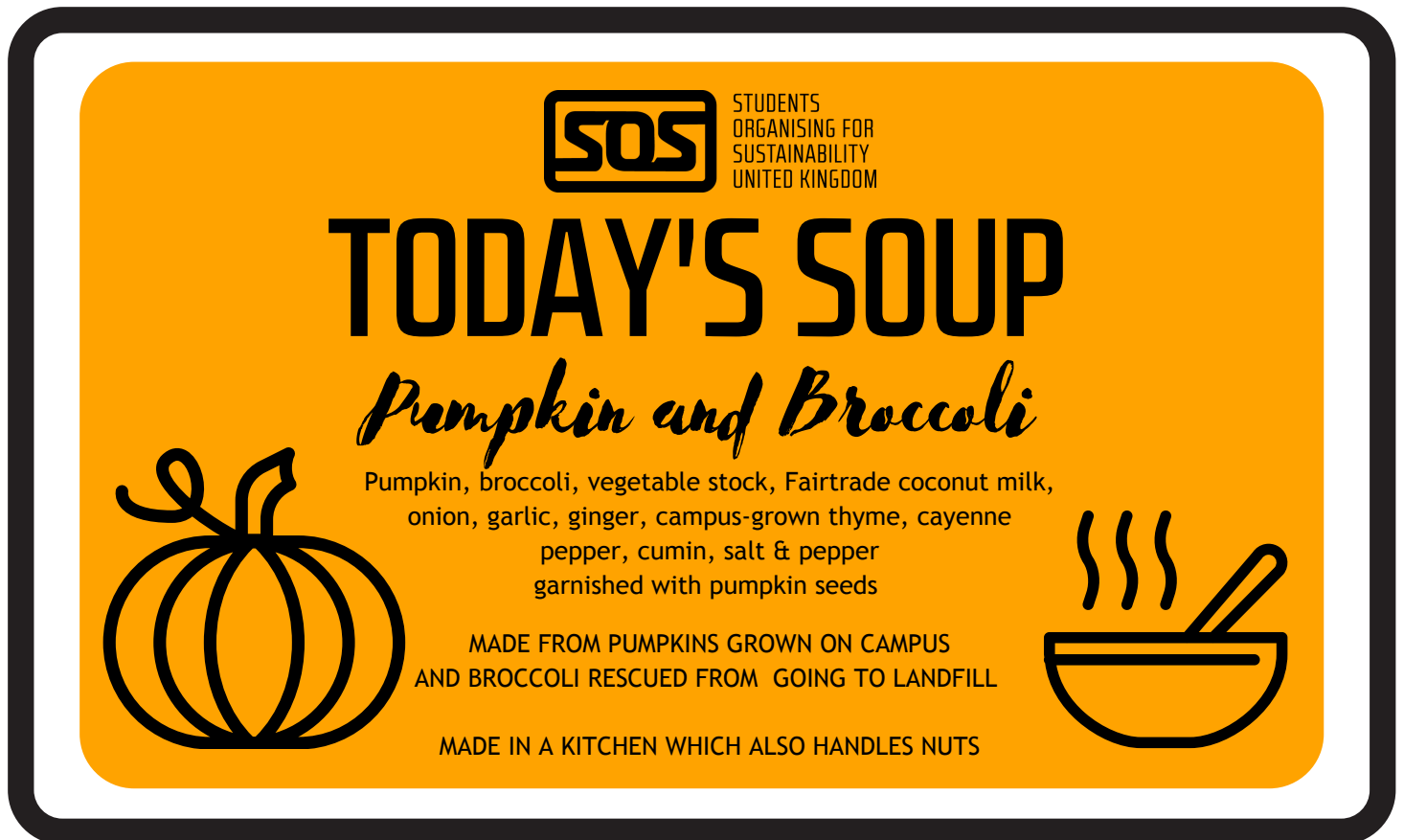
Things to consider:

Will you be able to sell from where you cook, or will you have to transport your food to a different location? Be aware of health and safety regulations for keeping food at a certain temperature and acquire a container/equipment for keeping your food at the correct temperature during transport and/or at the sales point.

## SIGNAGE / LABELLING

As you are serving your food at a sales point, all you need is a sign that clearly states what you are selling. This should include:

- Name of the dish
- Ingredients with any allergens in bold
- A warning if food is processed in a place that also processes nuts



You can learn more about correct labelling at [gov.uk/food-labelling-and-packaging](https://www.gov.uk/food-labelling-and-packaging)  
or  
contact your local Trading Standards office for support.



## SALES

A student-led social enterprise offering hot dishes made from campus grown/local/organic or surplus ingredients all offer a great story and unique experience for volunteers and customers alike. Once you have set up a sales point, identify a pricing system that works best for your enterprise. This could be a set price for a bowl of food, or perhaps a pay-as-you-feel strategy would be the preferred option. Choose the option that allows your enterprise to run sustainably, ensuring you can cover your basic expenses such as ingredients and containers/packaging.

## MARKETING

Creating a name and developing a logo for your enterprise is a valuable way for people to get to know about and recognise your enterprise. It will help you promote volunteering opportunities, events, and your products. When your enterprise is ready, plan and organise a launch event to make your enterprise known to your customer base. Consider collaborating with your students' union and other student societies/groups to maximise attendance.

Using social media to promote your enterprise is an easy way to reach your target audience, communicate with customers and engage student volunteers. Keep your engagement consistent to build up a following, no matter what channel you use. Decide on the imagery and tone of your profile and stay consistent with this. You can keep it interesting and interactive by using hashtags, captions, competitions, polls and so much more. You want to capture the attention of your audience and share your story. Social media also offers some great platforms for you to share recipes and cooking methods with your audience by uploading videos.

Signs and labels at your sales point also play an important role in sharing your story with your customers. Communicate what makes your enterprise unique, for example:

'We are a student led social enterprise tackling the issue of food waste!'

'Our goal is to support our local farmers by offering organic, nutrient rich and delicious food made from produce grown right here in the West Midlands!'

'Today's soup made with campus grown beetroots and herbs...'

# IMPACT & EVALUATION

Keeping track of your enterprise's operations will support you in developing your enterprise by helping you to see whether you are reaching your aims and that your time and effort is making a difference to the people you are working with. It will also support any future funding bids, award applications and reports. Set up various impact reporting spreadsheets on Excel where volunteering hours and amount (weight) of food cooked can be tracked on a weekly basis. These should be stored either in the cloud (shared), or among a core group of project leaders. Ensure any personal data for volunteers is stored appropriately and securely.

## VOLUNTEER SURVEY / FEEDBACK

When your food enterprise is up and running, consider sending a survey to your volunteers once or twice a year at the end of the academic term(s). Although you are running an enterprise that focuses on the production and sale of ready-to-eat food, your activities will inevitably have an impact on the people participating in running the enterprise. Volunteers are at the heart of your enterprise, and that is why measuring this impact is so important. Regardless of your enterprise management structure, there should always be space for volunteers to give feedback about their participation, ideas and wishes. This will provide volunteers with a sense of belonging and ownership, which in turn will encourage long-term participation. It will also help you implement collaborative strategies to improve and develop your enterprise.

## IMPACT REPORT

Producing a yearly impact report at the end of the academic year is a great way to collate all your data and produce a document which tells your story. It also acts as 'proof of impact' and can make it easier for you to pull information out for writing funding bids, award applications or to promote your enterprise in social media. An impact report should include a mix of storytelling, quantitative (numerical) and qualitative (quotes/experiences) data. The impact report will also be of value when the time comes to write a handover document to ensure a smooth transition from outgoing to incoming student leaders.

## SOCIAL IMPACT

Some things are harder to measure than others, especially anything that cannot be easily measured numerically. That does not mean it is not equally as important. Measuring your social impact is of great importance in measuring the success of your social enterprise but can often be challenging to capture. The Social Impact Toolkit is a multimedia tool full of useful information and indicators to help you understand the outcomes of measuring your social impact and how to do it.

# CASE STUDIES



## FOOD WASTE CAFÉ

The Food Waste Café is a non-profit student-led social enterprise that sits within the University of Sussex Students' Union, and whose goal is to reduce food waste by serving up meals that are made using ingredients saved from going to landfill. The enterprise started off with a bang in 2016 when they catered to over a hundred people, in under an hour they turned over enough money to become self-sustaining from the get-go.

After such a great accomplishment, the café team put their energy into continuing this success and further develop their enterprise. In 2019, with the help of 34 student volunteers, the café served deliciously cooked food to over 400 people, which helped save 540kg of food destined for landfill.

Since then, the Food Waste Café has gone from strength to strength earning them an invitation to the Seed and Chips Global Food Innovation Summit where they were recognised as an SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) Food Innovation Initiative. Their great achievements allow them to support others on the same mission and they have so far donated £500 to charities working to tackle food waste in Brighton, and £650 to food charities such as the Refugee community kitchen, Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, and Mutual Aid Vegan Foodbank. The Food Waste Café is a great example of a social enterprise whose work is supporting and benefitting a large part of their community, on campus and beyond.



“We want people to have the option on campus of food that is accessible, sustainable and delicious!”

- Food Waste Café team

Photo credit: Food Waste Cafe, Sussex SU



As for many other enterprises, 2020 brought with it a few challenges of trying to adapt to the restrictions caused by Covid-19. The Food Waste Café were no longer able to host their usual café pop-ups and their committee members and volunteers were finding themselves in different parts of the world, making communication challenging. However, the Food Waste Café team agrees that the worst challenge that year was to see the demand for food reaching its peak and students not able to access food or go food shopping as they were stuck in

quarantine. Not being able to help at this time was the greatest challenge they had faced.

Luckily, this all changed when FareShare Sussex reached out to the café in November 2020, suggesting that they adapt their café events to be able to give away surplus food in a Covid-safe way. And so, the team set up pop-up shops where students could buy surplus fruit, vegetables, and other rejected canned and boxed foods on a pay-as-you-feel basis. Finally, they could support and feed their community again, and managed to save over 900kg of food from going to landfill.

The creative forces of the students behind the enterprise seem endless. In February 2021 they launched Surplus Food Bundles where students can order food online; this new ‘click and collect’ offer has seen over 1100kg of food saved so far. We can expect many more kilos of food to be diverted from landfill by the Food Waste Café as they are excited to implement a community kitchen and fridge on campus during the 2021/22 academic year.

“Our hope is that our café allows students to have a zero-waste meal on campus, which will showcase what can be made with only rescued food. We also wanted to create a space for students to socialise, and hopefully bond over a passion to live a sustainable lifestyle.”

-Food Waste Café team

FOLLOW  
THE FOOD WASTE  
CAFE  
ON INSTAGRAM:

[@foodwastecafe\\_sussex](https://www.instagram.com/foodwastecafe_sussex)





## ECO SOUP

Eco Soup is a student-led social enterprise run by Leeds Beckett Students' Union. It was originally set up by the ENACTUS society in 2017 in response to the growing issues of food waste and access to affordable food on campus. The society would cook up delicious soups using surplus food sourced from local supermarkets, which were then sold at a weekly pop-up on campus. In 2018 this great idea was awarded with additional funding from SOS-UK which helped to further establish the enterprise with the development of a kitchen and serving area. The funds also covered a paid position for a student coordinator to oversee the enterprise in the start-up phase.

After great success in their first year, where they saw continued engagement from students and customers alike, the students behind Eco Soup, together with the staff supporting them, wanted to grow their service and organise more workshops and food events. This resulted in the running of cooking, preserving and kefir making workshops, which were all well attended. Their success continued into the next academic year when Eco Soup set up a weekly delivery from The Real Junk Food Project and started selling food saved from landfill as part of their service. 2019 became yet another great year for the enterprise when many student volunteers were able to engage with Eco Soup, learning valuable skills in leadership, teamwork, cooking and running a real-life enterprise. It is safe to say that this was the year when Eco Soup really made its mark on the campus landscape at Leeds Beckett, providing healthy, sustainable food to students through their pay-as-you-feel scheme.

Move forwards to 2020 and Eco Soup's service had to be put on hold due to Covid-19. Even when they managed to get all the relevant risk assessments signed off by the University, the lack of volunteers and students on campus meant that Eco Soup remained closed for the majority of the year. However, these challenges have not stopped the positive and enthusiastic team of staff and students who have plans to start off the 2021/22 academic year with a bang! New and exciting events will be on offer to complement the opening of their new zero waste shop. The plan is to bring together elements from the zero waste shop, surplus food enterprise and campus-grown produce to demonstrate ways in which we can all tackle food waste and create a better food system for all.



The Eco Soup team also express the importance of learning from others and are grateful for all the support they have received from SOS-UK. The Student Eats enterprise programme provided support to their enterprises by organising support days and conferences where enterprises could learn from experts, but perhaps more importantly, from each other.

“One highlight that still stands out was the trip to Growhampton at the University of Roehampton to meet other Student Eats enterprises. It was a hugely inspiring day with lots of new ideas being discussed and plans for the future being made.”

-Eco Soup Team

The future is looking bright for Eco Soup, and a dedicated group of students have now taken full ownership of the enterprise space and are helping it grow and flourish. Beyond food, Eco Soup is also providing a space for students to meet like-minded people, create new friendships and be a space where everyone can feel valued and free to be themselves. And it is here, where exciting ideas and plans for the future come to life. By linking together with the other food ventures, Eco Soup aim to build a community of students that are passionate about creating positive change on campus and within their local community, all whilst inspiring others to set up similar enterprises where people can connect with each other through something as simple as food.



Photo credit: Eco Soup, Leeds Beckett SU

FOLLOW  
ECO SOUP  
ON  
INSTAGRAM:

[@ecosouplbsu](https://www.instagram.com/ecosouplbsu)

# COOK TO SELL

Since 2017 our Student Eats enterprise programme has worked with almost 80 student and staff groups to help them establish sustainable food social enterprises on campus. These have included zero waste shops/stalls, vegbox schemes, growing to sell and food preserving enterprises, pay-as-you-feel cafes, beekeeping and many more.

We have been working with universities and colleges across the UK to bring social enterprise ideas to life. These enterprises have changed their local food systems and encouraged students and staff to choose ethical, healthy and affordable food.

Visit [SOS-UK](https://www.sos-uk.org) and check out our training opportunities:

[Setting up a social enterprise](#)

[Set up a no-dig food growing site](#)

[WWW.SOS-UK.ORG/project/food-and-farming](https://www.sos-uk.org/project/food-and-farming)

This work was funded by the [National Lottery Community Fund](#), through the [Our Bright Future](#) programme. Special thanks to the Food Waste Café and Eco Soup for contributing to this document.



STUDENTS  
ORGANISING FOR  
SUSTAINABILITY  
UNITED KINGDOM

