



Plenty for foodies to savour in Kilkenny

On a journey through the county by the Nore, *Aaron Dunne* gobbles up the very best on offer in **Kilkenny**, a culinary haven on the rise

“Kilkenny is fast becoming the food capital of the southeast

KILKENNY is renowned for its legendary hurlers, its abundance of marble and its Cats Laughs Comedy Festival - but perhaps the county's greatest treasure lies in the very land itself. Kilkenny is fast becoming the food capital of the South East, recently receiving its first two Michelin stars – Campagne restaurant and Lady Helen at the Mount Juliet **Hotel** – but it has so much more to offer than just high-end restaurants.

Locally-produced food is at the core of the grub revival there. And perhaps the best example is the wonderful Foodworks (www.foodworks.ie) restaurant in **Kilkenny City**. ‘Home-grown’ is the specialty of proprietors Peter Greaney and Maeve Moore, who source all their pork, vegetables and herbs from their own farm. And with its cosy surrounds and central location, it's a pretty special dining experience.

Another location fast becoming a foodie hotspot is the five-star **Lyrath Estate** which boasts two restaurants: Yindees and La Perla. Executive chef at the latter Ger Dunne prides himself on sourcing his ingredients from the many farmers' markets in the locality each week. And with top-notch **spa** facilities and a number of popular bars to boot, it's not a half-bad place to lay your head down either. (www.lyrath.com)

For something a little different, drop in to local radio celebrity and cook book author Anne Neary. Anne runs the Ryeland House Cookery School (www.ryelandhousecookery.com) from her own front kitchen in

Cuffesgrange, where you can try your hand at anything from bread baking to butter making, while she also runs courses for all levels of skill and even a children's cookery workshop.

All her food, of course, is locally sourced, from places such as Goatsbridge, a premium Irish trout farm located just outside Thomastown (www.goatsbridgetrout.ie). It specialises in smoked trout and has recently released a stunning and unique new range of caviar. Keep your eye out for that one.

Another well-known local producer, Knockdrinna Farmhouse, is famous for its multi award-winning organic cheese and apple syrup. And you can even dig in and get your hands dirty with one of a number of cheese-making courses it offers (www.knockdrinna.com).

Lavistown House, meanwhile, is another location already well-renowned for its top quality artisan food. Once best known for its cheese, its new range of sausages (see picture right) are proving a massive hit.

Made in small batches each week – in mild, chilli, garlic and tasty Italian flavours – they are free from preservatives, nitrates and nitrites and are also luten free. You won't find these in the supermarket though, so

gobble up as many as you can at one of the many local farmers'

markets or from the gates of the estate itself; alternatively take on one of their cookery courses. www.lavistownhouse.ie. For a fun and different experience try

a visit to Highbank Farm. Its owners, Rod and Julie Calder-Potts have become famous for their apple juice, syrups and a range of ciders that really need to be sampled to be appreciated. Rod will even take you on a train ride around the orchard where his apples are grown completely naturally and pesticide free.

THERE are so many things to do around Kilkenny – from afternoon tea and scones with Brede Thomas at Ballyduff House (www.ballyduffhouse.ie) to trying the multi award-winning chocolate of Mary Teehan

(pictured left) (www.trufflefairy.com) in Thomastown – and it's not all down to filling your belly.

A number of trails and walks, cycling trips and hikes, and a list of all the many local arts and crafts specialists to visit, such as Mark Campden and Caroline Dolan, will help to keep those calories off. Check out all there is to offer at www.trailkilkenny.ie.

And you can taste the very best of Kilkenny this week when the Savour Kilkenny Food Festival kicks off from October 24 to 28. Log on to www.savourkilkenny.com to see what else this jewel in the southeast has to offer.

