

A MARKET REVOLUTION

WITH HELP FROM THE IRELAND FUNDS,

COTTAGE MARKETS ARE

REACHING COMMUNITIES ACROSS IRELAND

The Grow It Yourself (GIY) Cottage Market movement is changing Ireland with its simple, fresh take on community-led markets in towns all over the Republic. In addition to the early Cottage Markets that began in Cork, Louth and Galway, twenty more Cottage Markets are being established all over Ireland, thanks in part to Flagship Grant support from The Ireland Funds.





Markets have been at the heart of communities for centuries, and to this day provide opportunities for communities to trade and socialize. They make a positive contribution to the local economy, promote sustainability and serve as inclusive gathering spaces.

SOMETIMES SOCIAL GLUE CAN BE A LOCAL JAM

GIY is the engine behind the Cottage Market movement in Ireland. GIY is a not-for-profit social enterprise dedicated to supporting people to grow some of their own food at home, school, work or in the community. Their interest in the Cottage Market movement began when GIY Head of Community Development Karen O' Donohoe saw much of the Ireland she loved, rapidly changing.

*"The Cottage Market here in Headford has had such a positive impact, both economically and socially. The social aspect of our market is vital as so many rural towns and communities in Ireland need this. It has brought folks together that normally would not have met. On Cottage Market days you look around and there are people from all walks, ages and origins and all are as welcome as the sun. **We are very grateful to GIY and The Ireland Funds for all their help and support.**"*

— Cait McMahon, Black River Wild Foods

"So many communities in Ireland have lost the social glue that holds them together," says Karen. "There are less and less opportunities to gather and socialise as small independent shops close down. We're losing our knowledge and appreciation of basic life skills such as growing, cooking, and some would argue conversing, and as a result we are increasingly disconnected from our food, each other and the responsibility we all have for the people and places around us."

Ireland is quickly learning that Cottage Markets help communities to develop from the inside out, as each village or town creates a market that reflects the diverse skills and interests of its local people. They work in harmony with other community initiatives towards cohesive community development. They promote community spirit and support the development of grass roots enterprises.

Cottage Markets typically offer a great mix of homemade, homegrown and hand-crafted food, arts and crafts. They are eclectic, unique and welcoming. Stallholders and clientele are mostly made up of the families, groups and individuals from the area, with visitors and passers-by dropping in.

The Cottage Market concept is all about bringing people from a local area together to showcase their skills, interests and talents, from growing to sewing, baking to knitting, wood turning to jam

making. Cottage Markets give people a real sense of belonging and from that place anything is possible.

EARLY SUCCESS

Eimear Cullen, the force behind The Cottage Market Drogheda and member of GIY Drogheda, jumped at the opportunity. Even while working full-time as a teacher in New Cross College, Finglas she pursued her dream to start The Cottage Market Drogheda. "It's something I always wanted to do. Having the support from Karen and the GIY brand name behind me gave me the confidence I needed to actually go ahead with it. They provided me with materials, flyers, banners and tables as a starter package to kick it all off but it was actually the enthusiasm from Karen that really pushed me to do it."

The Cottage Market Drogheda celebrated its 1st birthday in March, 2017 and is a testament to Eimear's determination, and ability to garner support for her cause. Every month, when the market is on, Eimear can rely on her local GIY group to man the gate, run a stall and give her a helping hand with running the market. Building on the success of the Cottage Market Ladysbridge, Drogheda and Headford, GIY were selected to as a recipient of The Ireland Funds 2016 Flagship Grant.



A WINNING COMBINATION

The economic and social benefit of recruiting, training and supporting budding Cottage Marketeers nationwide drew the attention of The Ireland Funds and other funding sources. They also saw the enormous potential in setting up several locations throughout the country for micro-entrepreneurs to hone their skills and develop their passions. The double impact of training and upskilling locals, and providing communities with a social and economic nucleus is a winning combination. The financial support is now helping to establish 20 new Cottage Markets. GIY will provide everything from a tailor-made training program marketing materials and equipment like trestle tables and gazebos.

“We hope that Cottage Markets in communities across Ireland will provide people with an opportunity to take simple but effective action,” says Karen. “By putting homegrown and homemade food back in the heart of their communities where it belongs. In fact, we know they will.”

“We’ve witnessed first-hand over the years the many thousands of transformations that food empathy can make in the lives of people and communities in Ireland,” says Michael Kelly, founder of GIY. “We’ve seen how it can bring people to a new level of physical and mental wellbeing and happiness. We’ve always viewed our task as leading that transformation, and at scale. Receiving The Ireland Funds Flagship Grant was an endorsement of our work, because it showed us that a major grant making organization believes that putting food back at the centre of Irish communities is important work too.”



The Cottage Market Headford in Galway



QUOTES

FROM STALLHOLDERS AT GIY COTTAGE MARKETS

"This is such a vibrant, eclectic and modern market, the vendors are fantastic. People love to view, touch, hold the artwork and engage with the person who made it." – Roisin Macken, Lovebird Gallery

"I love the atmosphere, all traders look out for each other a great bunch of people. The impact has been great. I have had people take my card at the market and often contact me for an order or two." – Margaret Walsh

"Having to re-invent myself after losing my business after 25 years it has given me more confidence in my products and general wellbeing." – Ann McNamee

Photos: Aengus McMahon