



Pat Whelan

@pat_whelan



Pat Whelan is so comfortable online that yesterday's tweet asked: "Is there anything good on TV tonight?" Partnering with Avoca in Monkstown, Dublin, where he secured a meat concession in December, this dynamic Tipperary butcher is on a roll, as his 4,390 followers on Twitter will attest.

Pat's 2010 book *An Irish Butcher Shop* was a great success and you get the feeling he's got quite a few more projects tucked up his carnivorous sleeve.

"In the Celtic Tiger years, it was all about: Where did you eat? Who did you meet? Now it's: What did you eat? Where did it come from?" Pat says.

He's emphatic about quality meat and honest-to-goodness recipes on www.jameswhelanbutchers.com.

"I love being a butcher as every part of the meat has value, from the oxtail to the tongue," he says. "We owe it to the animal to put it all on the plate. A living thing dies so we can eat – it's an unreal sacrifice."

As a conversationalist, Pat enjoys social media but, more than this, it's a vehicle for promotion.

"It means we're communicating with a global market. It's opening up a conversation with people from Australia to California. I can tweet 10,000 people for free and ask them: 'Can you freeze butter?'"

Pat contributed brawn to our tasty feast – a cold cut made from cuts of pig's meat, eaten with pink horse-radish (adding beetroot juice changes the colour) and mouth-wateringly delicious sausage rolls in puff pastry.

Echoing Lorna Sixsmith's sentiment about the sometimes lonely existence of a farmer, Pat encourages anyone who feels isolated to get online to connect quickly with thousands, even millions, via social media. It's by far the easiest way to learn and share lessons on farming practices in other countries, he says.

CREDITS

Shot on location at The Village at Lyons, Celbridge, Co Kildare. The Village at Lyons is a haven for foodies, incorporating La Serre Restaurant, The Cookery School and The Canal Café. The Mill has established itself as a premier wedding venue and with the addition of 17 suites is ideal for a romantic getaway. For information, log on to www.villageatlyons.com or call 01-630-3500

Ella McSweeney

@ellamcsweeney



Ella McSweeney is a presenter with RTÉ's popular *Ear To The Ground* series and a familiar voice too on RTÉ Radio 1. More than 4,600 follow her daily comments on Twitter.

"I want to get all farmers tweeting," says Ella. "It's important to get conversations going online and to engage with other farmers and markets. Urban people are fascinated by photos of food and farms."

Interviewing foodie entrepreneurs for her day job, Ella is able to introduce relatively new food brands to our picnic table: a leg of Connemara Hill lamb, along with delicious flapjacks made using Pat Lalor's Kilbeggan oats, and organic butter, yoghurt and buttermilk from Aidan Harney's Ballymore Farm.

"My one principle with food is to eat as much porridge as you possibly can in the morning and then you'll be okay," Ella says.

"Apart from that, the best part of my job with *Ear To The Ground* is that I'm well fed in farm houses! I'm not a big person for dining out as I prefer eating in people's homes."

Ella has a gripe about the number of cookery programmes on TV. She feels they're more about entertainment than food. "I think it's wrong. Cookery books and shows have never been so popular, and people have never cooked so little."

Ella favours simple recipes and back-to-basics cuisine. She's not shouting about her own cooking abilities but Ella hides any kitchen failings by sticking to "amazing premium foods – the less interference the better". Part of this is having local farmers and food producers on call. "Everyone should have at least five numbers that they can text or contact for fresh meat or vegetables," she says, "so get out there and introduce yourself to a farmer!"