

Olio: combating food waste

Kate Kelland

I've titled the article "Olio: combating food waste" but I did wonder if "Why does Kate Kelland keep offering free bread and potatoes on the Everything Aldbury Facebook page?" would be a more honest title.

It all starts with food waste, which Olio was founded to help combat. Olio works with supermarkets and food stores to collect the food that is at its use by or best before date and get it distributed to people so that it doesn't go to waste. The company uses an app that anyone can download for free.

The food collected would otherwise be thrown out once the shop closed at the end of that day. Some places, like our Tring Tesco have a good reputation for sending their food to pig farms or to be composted, but others can't arrange this (it costs money and requires someone to administer the process) and so the food is thrown away.

What a waste!

I'm what's called a Food Waste Hero, which means that I am one of the volunteers who collects food and then lists it on the app. Once it's listed then anyone who has the app (hopefully you soon) can request the item to pick up free. This is the answer both to the question, why do I offer food on Facebook and why I'm writing this article. I need more of the good people of Aldbury to sign up as my freezer is full and I cannot fit a single extra baguette or seeded loaf in it!

Olio has become very popular and as more and more people become worried about waste, they've opened up the app to a wider range. You can now list your own food that you're not going to use. Have you got a mountain of apples from your tree? List it and see if someone local wants to pick them up (probably not here as the orchard is plentiful this year!) Tried a new jam and can't stand the taste? List it! Items can be opened and/or past their best before date – all you need to do is put that information in the comments section. (You can't legally list anything that's gone past its use by date though.)

But wait, that's not all.

You can now put virtually anything you no longer need or want in the non-food section. Flooded with bath bombs and don't have a bath? List it! Bought a few extra kitchen tiles that you won't use. List it!

But that's still not all!

There is also a borrow and wanted section. Have a strimmer? List it for a neighbour to borrow! Need a stairgate? Request it in the wanted area! And it's all FREE! When you download the app Olio might put a huge pop-up across the screen asking you to donate or subscribe to the app. This is not needed to use the app, Olio is not a charity and is paid by supermarkets and shops to take away their waste food. So please don't let that put you off.

The more of us locally who use the app, the more lovely things that will be on offer. Although, please don't list soft toys...I can't resist them and have a mountain of them at home which I keep promising I am "really soon" going to take to work. Or pink flamingos, we already have one from Olio and don't need two whatever my children tell you...

I hope to see your name pop up on the app soon!