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SPECIALITY FOOD

NEWS, COMMENT AND BUYING IDEAS FOR FINE FOOD RETAILERS



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BeanBoozled® jelly beans come in 8 colours and 16 flavours (8 delicious and 8 weird and wild ones), leading to the famous Beanboozled Challenge - will it be Chocolate Pudding or Canned Dog Food? Tutti-Fruitti or Stinky Socks? There's no way to tell until you try one. BeanBoozled is fast becoming a cultural phenomenon with nearly 400,000 YouTube uploads and millions of views of adventurous pranksters daring each other to compare beans. With sales skyrocketing +400% and an ever growing fan base, BeanBoozled is the surprising new, must-have item to add to your Halloween and Christmas range.

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EDITOR'S LETTER

A Matter of Focus



Nothing puts you in touch with the world of speciality food like a visit to a show. Whether you are exhibiting or only visiting, the food shows perform functions far beyond extending the markets for small and other producers. The last show I attended was Farm Shop & Deli, which was staged at the NEC for three days this April. As always, such a show provided a welcome chance to put faces to people spoken to over the phone, to reacquaint myself with contacts made at previous shows and to get an overview of the speciality food market as it stands now. It was also an opportunity to identify developing trends and to taste new products. Who knew there were sourdough crisps? Or that peanut butter is now more than something to pack for the kids' lunches?

The Speciality Food team spends much of its show time talking to producers, retailers and show visitors in order to glean important nuggets than will inform our upcoming editorial content. This is only one way in which we try to stay abreast of developments in the field and make the magazine as useful as possible to you the reader, whether you are the owner of a farm shop, deli, food hall or cheese shop, a producer of cheese, meats or ambient goods, or are in some other way involved in the world of fine food retail. Recently, you will, I hope, have noticed that the magazine has been redesigned. This has been done in order to bring more clarity to our content and allow you to find the information you need as speedily as possible. Features are in the process of being refreshed, with the aim of bringing you only the most essential content. This issue, for instance, we cover some important food trends: smoked foods continue to grow, while 'the third wave' of coffee seems unstoppable. Also showing no signs of slackening popularity are chilli products. We look at hot sellers in this line and examine the increasingly interesting world of charcuterie, in which British producers are now making a mark.

> "This is only one way in which we try to stay abreast of developments"

Ross Gilfillan

ross@aceville.com

NEWS IN BRIEF

LOCH DUART CEASES SUPPLY

Outer Hebrides smokehouse Loch Duart is set to close unless a buyer for the business can be found.

The business was scheduled to be bought by a local consortium, but the deal fell through.

Andy Bing, sales director at Loch Duart said, "The Smokehouse produces wonderful, delicious products, but unfortunately the business has not been the success that we had envisaged.

"We have been hoping that a local consortium would take over the business in time to ensure continuity of supply and, during 2014, we invested a great deal of effort into setting up a form of community ownership which fell through for reasons outside our control.

The smokehouse will continue to operate at its North and South Uist sites.

COTSWOLD FAYRE TO DISTRIBUTE NATIONAL TRUST HAMPERS

Todhunter, the creator of the National Trust's new gift and hamper range, has named Cotswold Fayre as its major distributor to the retail sector.

Paul Hargreaves, founder of Cotswold Fayre said, "We are incredibly excited to offer these beautiful hampers and gift sets as part of our gifting range. The National Trust is one of Britain's most loved charities and we are positive that these unique gifts will really resonate with consumers who are looking to purchase something special for friends and family.""



Fenwick

Assistant Buyer Fresh Food: Fenwick Newcastle

As part of our exciting redevelopment within the Food hall we now have an opportunity for an Assistant Buyer of Fresh Food.

Focusing on delicatessen and fresh food, including charcuterie, speciality cheese, traiteur and hot food to go, the role involves responsibility for the selection of merchandise and directly managing the business. With a 'hands on' attitude the successful applicant will drive overall profitability, leading the team to increase sales and deliver exceptional levels of customer service.

The role is full time and will involve working some evenings and weekends.
In return we offer a competitive salary and benefits package.
To apply please send in a CV with a covering letter to **lizrobertson@fenwick.co.uk**



What does the Government shake-up mean for us?

New Government policies will affect all elements of society, but with food and agriculture having been hot topics in the recent past, our sector has been waiting with baited breath to see what the new Conservative rule will mean for us. Elizabeth Truss, with her focus on boosting British-made food and its reputation across the world, has remained Secretary of State – this could be good news for producers hoping to expand their horizons.

But how does the big picture look? We spoke to Michael Mack of FARMA and Meurig Raymond, president of the National Farmers Union to garner their take on the situation, and learn how Speciality Food readers will be affected.



Meurig Raymond, president of the NFU

We welcome the fact the election has delivered a stable government and we hope this will mean that crucial farming issues are dealt with rapidly from the outset.

The NFU and the farming industry share the Government's ambition of wanting to grow more, buy more and sell more British food at home and abroad. We want to see a robust plan put in place to reverse long-term declines in farming productivity and the nation's self-sufficiency, increase the productive potential of farming, to stimulate investment, help farmers manage market volatility and ensure that the drive to increase British food production is at the heart of each government department.

We need a government that will champion British farming, give us the tools to invest to become more competitive, more efficient and carry that message to Europe. Farmers are up for the challenge, but we need the support and commitment of Government to back our industry so we can meet the challenges of feeding a rising population. An NFU report estimated that UK self-sufficiency would slump to 53% of the nation's needs by the mid-2040s if we stay at this rate of farm production – this is a worrying prospect.

Food and farming is vital to the UK economy, providing 3.5 million jobs and worth £97 billion. The British public have made it clear that they want to buy more British food; 85% stated they want to see more of it on supermarket shelves, according to a YouGov survey.

Like this government, the NFU believes in a science-led approach to policy decisions. Access to new biotechnology, GM crops and pesticides will all ensure farmers have the tools to produce more food with less impact on the environment. Regulation remains a major block to growing competitiveness for most farm businesses, and the NFU will work with Government to highlight where action can be taken to remove or streamline requirements, and recognise good practice. We will also continue to lobby for an extension of the grocery supply code so primary producers are protected from unfair trading practice wherever it happens.



Michael Mack, FARMA

With a new government in place and ministers taking their seats we can start to get a feel for how the new government may bring to life the Conservatives' manifesto of aiming to help British farmers grow more, buy more and sell more British food.

The top issues affecting farm shops are similar to most retail businesses; a secure and growing economy, access to high quality staff and a favourable tax regime.

Some of the key activities FARMA is watching closely are:

- Business Rates Review. While farms are exempt from Business Rates, diversified activity on farms is not and a review of the rates system could lead to a fairer assessment for shops located out of towns and cities and for smaller businesses
- The promise of a further 3,000,000 apprentices and an increase in childcare support will both provide positive boosts to enable businesses to attract staff
- Infrastructure improvements such as superfast broadband will also lead to improved communication and online retail opportunities for many shops
- A guarantee that there will be no increase in PAYE, NI and VAT will all help businesses to plan for the future

However it's not all good news, as big cuts are coming across the board. With local councils and central departments all being affected we can expect to see the services on offer being cut and others seeing charges attached. Top of the list of concerns will be the introduction of charges for food hygiene inspections. These are coming in across the EU with some member countries already imposing a €1,000 charge this could be the sign of things to come.

Overall, the promises (if kept) by this government will be positive to farm retailers across Britain, but the impact of the cuts will be felt by all. Can they really achieve the long promised cuts in red tape?

> "We can now start to get a feel for how the new government may bring to life the Conservatives' manifesto of aiming to help British farmers grow more, buy more and sell more British food"



OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Deli, farm shop and food hall openings and expansions across the country



MAJOR REFURB FOR CANNON HALL FARM SHOP

Yorkshire farm shop Cannon Hall has undergone a major refurbishment estimated to have cost in the region of half a million pounds. The farm shop, which is on the Cannon Hall estate located five miles from Barnsley, specialises in home-reared beef, pork and lamb.

Richard Nicholson, co-director said, "It has been a top to bottom job. We have extended our meat counter, installed new refrigeration units and extra tills and had new flooring. We also employed a professional designer to give its premises a modern, industrial look. It was a major job, but it has resulted in a more open and pleasant space."

"We knocked walls down in the night and reopened in the morning. We didn't want to upset any customers who had turned up expecting us to be open. It was a struggle, but we got there in the end."

The farm shop, which opened in 1999 and draws footfall from the half million visitors the farm attracts yearly, also benefits from the £1.5m extension for a new play area, a part of which was added on to the farm shop.

The shop, which has simultaneously changed its branding throughout, remained open throughout the refit, which has been in progress since October.



EXPANSION FOR WARWICKSHIRE RETAILER

Farmers Fayre, located on Stoneleigh Park in Warwickshire, is currently expanding its farm and coffee shop by 300 per cent.

The new-look retail space will measure 2,000 square feet and will house a 50-seater restaurant, while the extra space will also allow for food preparation and production to take place on-site.

A newly-created veranda and garden area will seat 100 people, and three large meeting and function rooms will be available for hire on the first floor.

Nicola Reece from Farmers Fayre said, "We will be carrying a full range of farm shop produce from over 40 local suppliers, from pickles to preserves and breads to cakes. There is genuine integrity behind the products we serve and sell.

"With our background in farming, agriculture is at the heart of our business and we take time out to meet our producers and suppliers, and go to great lengths to source products and work with suppliers to help them to grow with us.

"In the new premises, we will be partnering with a local butcher to provide a pre-packed butchery counter full of local meats including beef from our own farm in Daventry. We will also have an on-site production kitchen where our chefs will be making and baking lots of fresh goodies for the shop and restaurant."



NEW FOOD HALL FOR BELFAST

The Good Food and Wine Company has opened a new food hall in Belfast, selling premium artisan foods which have been locally-made.

Owners Nick and Michelle Lestas set up The Good Food Company three years ago, with the intention of promoting small and local food producers. The food hall opened in Queens Arcade in April, following successful trials with pop up shops the couple opened at Belfast City Airport and Victoria Square.



Nick Lestas, owner said, "Before launching their retail operation, the couple were business consultants. "We were working with small, local food companies and the first store we sold into was Harrods. Now we work with small businesses to develop new products, which we then buy."

"We sell premium foods at prices that compete with M&S. At the same location as the food hall, we have also set up a Brew Bar that specialises in single source coffee beans roasted in Northern Ireland, and a tea house serving good quality, pure leaf teas."



Among a comprehensive range of products retailed at the food hall are locally made non-alcoholic green apple beers, shortbreads, cheeses and salamis.



LAST CHANCE TO BOOK YOUR ENTRY

New edition: Speciality Food Directory

The only comprehensive directory of producers, suppliers, wholesalers and manufacturers for the fine food industry...

Register your business online at:
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or call to book on 01206 505934

Book Entry by 5th June!





GILES HENSCHEL OF OLIVES ET AL

"The rumour mill"

Now, apparently we're opening a new deli in town, in a recently-vacated and rather nice double-fronted shop. Apparently it's going to set itself up as direct competition to the local butcher and deli, who we supply. I discovered this when one of our team came and asked me whether it would be possible for them to work in this new deli as it all sounded rather exciting.

I said, "Eh?" and she said, "Well, my friend who works in the newsagent had heard from her friend who works in the pub who had heard from someone who drinks there that his friend who works for the butcher had said the butcher was not very happy about us opening up a new deli in town."

So I went to go and see the butcher, who I found amongst the carcasses hanging in his well-stocked cold room. To say I got the cold shoulder would be understating it a tad. I asked what he thought was happening, and he said he had heard that someone in the pub had said to someone who drinks in the pub had said to the guy from the estate agents had said to his mate that we were opening a deli and bakery three doors up from him. He really wasn't very happy, and considering he was the one with the cleaver I thought I'd better be careful. So I reassured him that it was all news to me, we really weren't opening up and it was simply the rumour mill at full swing which warmed him up a bit. The cleaver went away and I think relations are now back on an even keel.

But it really did get me thinking. When there is an absence of information or we don't communicate effectively, people will simply make up and spread stories to explain what they think they see happening. Often, these stories take on a life of their own and become distracting and destructive rumours which gain in both scale and momentum until they either become so ludicrous as to defy credibility or they become actuality.

There is a saying that 'he who controls the rumour mill has absolute control', and this, to an extent, is true and can be a force used for good or ill.

What to do? Well, we do our level best to communicate as best as we possibly can – we have a weekly meeting every Friday involving every member of staff in the building. We go through what's happening, good news, bad news, visits, plans, dreams, aspirations, ideas – the whole lot. It can be a little boisterous but at least everyone knows what is actually going on and the rumour mill can gently rumble on fuelled by actuality rather than the vapour of misinformation.

So, I say take control of the rumour mill before it takes control of you by communicating as far, wide, deep and openly as you can so that rather than rumour having it, you do. At least you'll be in control and there won't be a cleaver in sight.

DIARY DATES

2nd June
FOOD & WINE FROM SOUTHERN ITALY
Manchester
italian-food.org.uk

3rd–4th June
THE FOOD & DRINK TRADE SHOW
Cheltenham
thefoodanddrinktradeshow.co.uk

4th June
REAL ITALIAN WINE & FOOD
London
realitalianwine.co.uk

4th–5th June
FREE FROM FOOD EXPO
Barcelona
freefromfoodexpo.com

11th–14th June
BBC SUMMER GOOD FOOD SHOW
NEC, Birmingham
bbcgoodfoodshowsummer.com

17th–21st June
TASTE OF LONDON
Regents Park, London
london.tastefestivals.com

18th–21st June
ROYAL HIGHLAND SHOW
Edinburgh
royalhighlandshow.org

21st–23rd June
SUMMER FANCY FOOD SHOW
Washington DC
specialityfood.com

21st–22nd June
HARROGATE FINE FOOD SHOW
Harrogate
finefoodworld.co.uk

14th–16th July
GREAT YORKSHIRE SHOW
Harrogate
greatyorkshireshow.co.uk

Farm Shop & Deli 2015 Resounding Success

The trade show, which took place 20th–22nd April at NEC, Birmingham, saw a 40 per cent increase in visitors.

The event saw a number of accolades presented to businesses, including the Farm Shop & Deli 2015 Retailer of the Year Award.

The winning retailer, Johns of Instow & Appledore said, "It was probably the most special day in our lives. We walked up to the stage to collect our award with emotions of absolute joy and disbelief, with compliments ringing in our ears from our loyal customers and expert judges as they were read out.

"Just incredible, it's what dreams are made of! Thank you to everyone for your valued support, our dedicated team, our faithful customers and talented local producers, as without you there wouldn't be a Johns of Instow & Appledore. The beautifully carved wooden boards will take pride of place in our two delis! Let the celebrations begin!"



Jack Halliday, event director said, "We're really pleased, we worked really hard to put together the best show possible and the high number of visitors was the icing on the cake.

"With so many exhibitors, specialist areas and activities on offer, Farm Shop & Deli Show 2015 was definitely the best show for the speciality retail food and drink industry. Roll on 2016!"

Retailers Urged to Demand BRC Standards

Despite being set up in response to the horsemeat scandal of 2013, the BRC Agents and Brokers' standard has not been fully adopted by retailers.

Agents and brokers are requested to attain the voluntary certification in order to promote product quality, safety, legality and traceability, yet only a small number of retailers demand the standards as a minimum from their suppliers.

Sarah Marsden, technical director for Arden Fine Foods said, "This scheme was set up as a result of the horsemeat scandal in 2013 to ensure complete integrity through the supply chain. Representing Arden Fine Foods, I sat on the committee brought together to develop it and we were determined to be one of the first Agents and Brokers to be certified. We were, second only to an agent in the meat sector but first in the ambient products sector.

"Sadly, a year later, although the retailers are aware of it and have suggested that they want to move towards this standard they have still not fully committed to timescales of when suppliers need to comply. This allows numerous back-room operators into the supply chain who are then able to undercut professional suppliers. Product safety at consumer level is of paramount importance to us."





Free Organic Support Packs for Indies

The Soil Association is releasing a supportive package to help independent retailers boost sales of organic goods.

According to research revealed in its recent Organic Market Report, non-supermarket sales of organic goods grew by 8.7% to £558.6 million in 2014, while organic sales via independents exceeded £10 million a week for the first time – demonstrating that the independent sector is outpacing supermarket sales.

The package, available as a free download from the Soil Association website, combines point of sale materials, marketing advice and help with talking about organic. Lee Holdstock, trade relations manager at the Soil Association said, "Consumers clearly want organic products as part of a smaller, more frequent shop and are increasingly looking to independents to meet their needs. Retailers have told us they want more information about how to communicate the many benefits of organic to their customers, and this new package of support will help with education and accessibility.

"By leveraging existing interest in the organic products on offer, we can help support independent retailers and consequently build a stronger organic market."

Phil Haughton, founder and owner of The Better Food Company said, "Independent retail can be the champion of the high-street. From my 30 years in the trade I believe the most important elements in independent retail are a clear mission communicated well to your customers, great merchandising and above all fantastic customer service.

"The Soil Association campaign to support our sector is brilliant. The more training and support we can get the stronger we will be, leading to happier customers, sales growth and improved service and professionalism from our suppliers."



JOHN SHEPHERD OF PARTRIDGES

"Today's political menu"

As far as the 10 General Elections we have experienced go, like everyone who runs his own business, I have often been asked how the fortunes of Partridges have been affected by different political masters. In fact we have been governed by five Labour administrations, four Conservative and one coalition, and in reality it seems that the political hue of the Government has had a negligible effect on our profitability – a despite the instinctive reactions one might have. Similarly, whenever there is a recession we are often politely asked about the shop's current state of health and, although I believe during our lifetime we have endured four recessions (and I cannot say that we have always emerged unscathed), the reality is that macroeconomic factors and national politics have impacted only slightly on our bottom line. Other factors such as local business conditions and competition have had a far greater effect.

Of course, we are a small company that resides in a prosperous part of the country, but when we opened in 1972 it was just prior to the recession of 1974. The idea of launching a high quality delicatessen was met by a degree of scepticism at a time when the prevailing trend was for self service and lower prices. Then there was the recession of the early 80s and it was, in fact, during this time that we expanded in size to three units from our previous one unit, thereby tripling the floor space of the shop. I cannot recall what we did during the recession of 1990, but it was then that we started supplying Buckingham Palace and eventually were granted the Royal Warrant in 1994.

Finally, the recession of recent times has seen us open up a new front of activity by running a number of food markets and setting up the Startisans project which now has two branches. We have not done a lot of research on the matter, but in difficult times it seems that good food, good wine and innovative startups can hold their own. Possibly because dining at home or at food markets becomes a more attractive option, but perhaps also because quality and expertise in food production is particularly prized when the going gets tough.

This can be seen in the list of our best-sellers. During the 1974 General Election, game pie, jugged hare, bannocks and gulls' eggs were must-stock lines and avocados and kiwi fruit were new kids on the block. Chablis and champagne topped the wine department's best sellers, and smoked salmon was in all its various incarnations the king.

Fast forward 41 years and during the 2015 election a large number of café products appear on the list, which is a real indication of how our business has evolved over the years.

Bendicks, Bollinger, Evian, Wilkins,Twinings and Charbonnel are all brands that seem to have endured from Ted Heath to David Cameron, and I am sure will do so for many Prime Ministers to come.







CHARLES CAMPION

"The alchemy of books"

Speaking as someone who only feels really comfortable in a small office with 2,500 cookbooks lining the walls, there is something very reassuring about recipe books. Look up even the simplest dish and you'll find a variety of different methods and sometimes a variety of ingredients. In the alchemy of food you can take nothing for granted, and all too often the whole ends up much more impressive than the sum of its parts makes it sound. At one point it looked as if the internet would wipe out the cookery book. What could be easier than setting a search engine the task of finding the perfect fondant potato recipe and then scrolling through the responses to pick one?

The problem comes when you have sifted your way through dozens of recipes and they all seem pretty much the same. Why does so-and-so add more of this-or-that? With real recipe books the process is the other way round. You choose a book you trust, take it down and see what it says. Rather than choosing the recipe you choose the source. Good home cooks usually have a short list of books that they cherish, and the flickering screen of a tablet just isn't the same.

Earlier this year, a supercomputer called Watson (surely you'd want the one called Holmes?) was asked to produce recipes featuring food combinations that would taste good on a molecular level (whatever that means). The criteria for choosing these flavour combinations was that they hadn't been tried before. Is novelty the only thing that matters at the dinner table or when you're out doing the big shop? Like other celebrity cooks, Watson the computer has a recipe book out: Cognitive Cooking with Chef Watson: Recipes for Innovation from IBM & the Institute of Culinary Education.

It doesn't sound like the sort of thing to make customers hammer down the door.

When Heston Blumenthal coaxes his diners into trying some new combinations of taste and texture, it is usually because there is some intellectual trail that he's following. On the other hand, Cyber Chef Watson is searching for links purely on the basis that they have never been made before. Perhaps there's a reason that we have never put pepper, saffron and coconut milk onto the same ingredients list? It is certainly unproven, and on the face of it doesn't sound impossible (although the pepper and saffron will be playground bullies, intense and strident).

Our favourite cookery books are a step nearer reality; you can tell the ones that get most use because their pages will be stuck together with blobs of sauce from bygone days. A good cookbook is one that you trust. Computers have their uses, but you never see one tasting a sauce so they'll never get the seasoning right.

New Look For Chazwinkle's

Chazwinkle's, the Cambridgeshire-based producer of seasonal British preserves, has rebranded to help retailers boost sales.

Available in Apple & Mint, Beetroot, Cauliflower & Friends, Cucumber, Plum, Rhubarb and Tomato & Chilli variants, each jar of Chazwinkle's suggests various food pairings through text and illustrations to offer consumers an understanding of the versatility of the product.

The 'Use In, On or With' strapline also helps retailers with upselling – as well as being a good partner for cheese and charcuterie, Chazwinkle's can be used as an ingredient in cooking so can be adapted into meals throughout the year. To help with this, recipe cards are supplied to stockists as well as support via social media and the Chazwinkle's website.

Charli Elphinstone, founder of Chazwinkle's said, "We are leaning on a really old tradition – to preserve seasonal fruits and vegetables whilst they're at their most flavoursome – so when the fresh version is out of reach or out of season, Chazwinkle's can deliver on that real taste, at your convenience.

"The old labels were clean and simple but didn't really emphasise the versatility or convenience of Chazwinkle's to create easy meals, so we're hopeful the new labels will do that. The shelf presence is certainly more impactful with the animals roaming around the jars! So far they have been really well received."



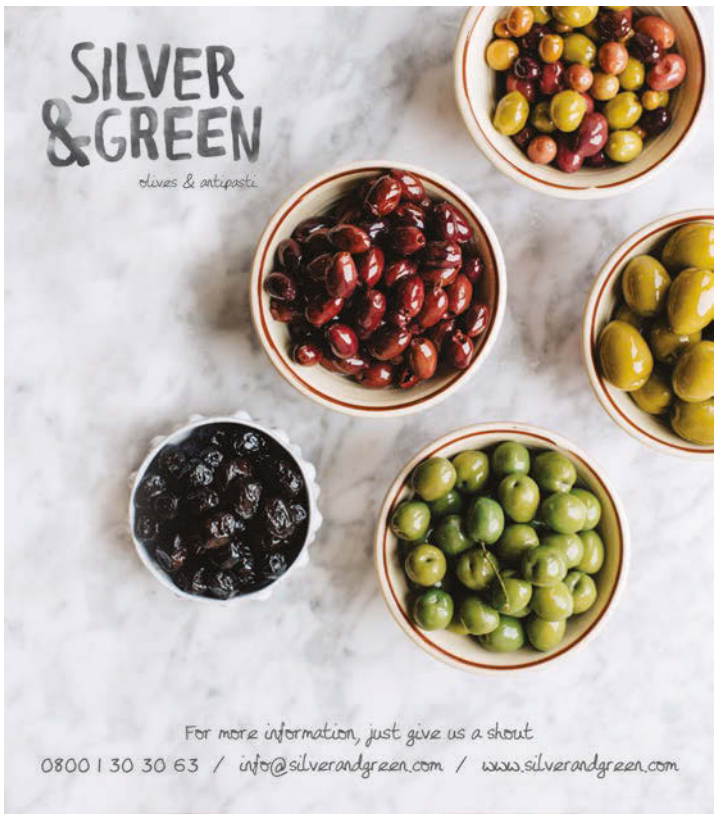


Welsh Wholesaler Expands Into the UK

Blas ar Fwyd, the Llanrwst-based company which has been delivering Welsh food and drink throughout Wales since 1988, will now be delivering its services to trade customers throughout the UK.

It is now offering a consolidated delivery service, which gives customers access to products from over 120 Welsh producers from internationally-recognised brands to small, hand-made and artisan products.

Anthony Cerrato of Blas ar Fwyd said, "Blas ar Fwyd represents the best that Wales has to offer and we're excited to be sharing a taste of Wales with the rest of the UK."





Organic Milk & Iodine Study: "Pure Scaremongering"



Following widespread coverage of the University of Reading's study regarding organic milk's iodine content and its affect on the IQ of unborn babies, two industry experts have shared their views with Speciality Food.

The academic report, published yesterday, claims that organic milk contains around a third less iodine than non-organic milk and that this could affect the brain development of unborn babies. However, the study took place 16 months ago and pre-dates independent testing which reveals that organic and non-organic milk now have comparable iodine levels.

Roger Kerr, chief executive of OF&G said, "The research relating to lower iodine levels in organic milk that has been widely reported on, has been exposed as out of date (July 2013) and no longer reflects the current state of organic milk. OMSCo – the Organic Milk Suppliers Cooperative, who supplies 2/3 of the UK's organic milk, has been working closely with farmers to ensure the levels of iodine in organic dairy cows' feed are equivalent to non-organic herds. Indeed, independent tests undertaken in January 2015 show comparable iodine levels.

"Organic dairy farmers work tirelessly to ensure they deliver high quality milk that has been proven to deliver other significant health benefits. Scientific studies have shown that organic whole and semi-skimmed milk has more beneficial omega-3 fatty acid, Vitamin E and beta-carotene than non-organic milk.

"It is damaging to the public's perception of organic milk and ultimately to the farmer's livelihoods that credence is given to a report, even when its findings no longer accurately represent the situation. Working with our organic licensees and other organic partners, OF&G will continue to support organic dairy farmers."

Helen Browning, chief executive at the Soil Association said, "This is pure scaremongering. Pregnant women should not stop drinking organic milk in response to this research, which repeats findings from a study published in 2013. This research is incomplete and to draw these conclusions is incredibly irresponsible.

"There are scientifically proven health and environmental benefits of organic milk which are valuable as part of a balanced and healthy diet. Studies show that organic whole and semi-skimmed milk has more beneficial omega-3 fatty acid, Vitamin E and beta-carotene than non-organic milk, and studies by Glasgow and Liverpool Universities found that UK organic milk has 68% higher levels of the essential fatty acid than non-organic milk.

"Any switch from organic milk risks losing all these substantial health benefits.

"The Soil Association is aware of potentially lower levels of iodine in organic milk and we are working with farmers and scientists to find ways of addressing this issue whilst keeping all the other benefits consumers rightly expect."



Defra: More Detailed Meat Labelling?

The government is in discussions with the food industry regarding making the labelling on meat more detailed.

Currently, all meat produced in the UK is labelled 'Born, Raised and Slaughtered in Britain', but under the possible new guidelines the specific country the meat originated from will be made clear.

If this idea comes into practice, the labelling will read along the lines of 'Born, Raised and Slaughtered in England/Wales/Scotland/Northern Ireland'.

A DEFRA spokesperson said, "Consumers have a right to know where their food comes from and we have already made real improvements in this area, for example, poultry, beef, lamb and pork from the UK are clearly labelled as British.

"We are pushing for food manufacturers to give as much information on the origin of meat ingredients in their products, provided it does not mislead consumers and does not put a disproportionate burden on food businesses."

Labelling dairy products with 'Made from British Milk' is also being considered for products including cheese and yoghurt.





Boost For Farm Shop Chicken Sales?

According to information contained in a report by the Food Standards Agency, there are 280,000 cases of food poisoning and 80 deaths annually. In excess of 72,000 of these are caused by campylobacter, the most common form of food poisoning in the UK. The FSA estimates that four out of five cases have been caused by contaminated poultry.

In the view of one farm shop owner, independent retailers of farm-raised chicken might take heart from these findings as it highlights the problems inherent in mass-scale chicken production, while offering farm shop owners the chance to flag up the advantages of buying home-bred fowls over those sold in supermarkets.

Nicky Dorward, owner of Limes Farm said, "Our chickens come out in the morning and run around, pecking at the bugs and worms of bits of grass that they find. They have free range of the farm and can go wherever they like. All this makes them fitter and stronger and produces better meat.

"Our chickens have a natural life. There is no mass feeding or risk of contamination from foods getting muddled up. The processes employed in mass feeding can lead to contamination. Often, the chickens are being fed using automatic feeders and if these may not have been cleaned properly. There is so much more of a process in feeding a huge number of chickens than you will find on a farm like ours. Our process involves opening the hutch in the morning and getting the corn bucket. The more you scale-up anything, the more risk you have of something going wrong.

"I think it is a bit iffy to make claims for food safety, but I think what you can say is that if you are buying a chicken from a farm shop that has been reared in a farm environment free range, you are going to have a chicken with a richer, more developed flavour."

This is not the first time that questions have been asked about the large scale production of chickens or that independent retailers have been advised to promote the natural credentials of their chicken. As a former food industry worker, Nicky Dorward is familiar with the practise of adding water to mass-produced chicken meat.

"They sometimes inject the meat with a brine solution and this makes the end product a lot heavier. They vacuum tumble the product to get the water into the meat. The customer is then paying for a lot of water. I don't think they can legally do this on the chicken breasts you can buy, but they definitely add brine solution to processed products."

PRIME CUTS

Jason Fraser, Bodnant Welsh Food's butchery manager, tells the story of the award-winning business



When Bodnant was reinvented from the traditional farm it was into the foodie destination it is now, there had to be a farm shop – and you can't have a farm shop without a butcher. It is a vital part of what we do here, and we sell everything you would expect to find in any butcher's shop (and a little bit more as well). That ethos has kept us growing and developing, and now the meat side of the business is one that thrives. The result is that we have just won eight major awards from the Welsh Awards for Excellence in Meat Products, five golds and three silvers. Among others, our pork pie was given the gold award for the second year running, one of our apprentices was named Young Sausage Maker of the Year and our Welsh Rack of Lamb also brought home a gold honour.

Three things make the business award-winning: quality, locally sourced produce and people. When it comes to quality, all our pork is rare breed. I know the farmers and their animals. I only buy from farms where I know the animal husbandry is top class, and that shows in the quality of the meat that we sell. All our beef is dry-aged on the bone for 28 days, which breaks down all the tissue and allows the meat to become more tender, and our sausages are all made on-site with natural skins and are hand linked.

The food is all sourced from within a maximum of 15 miles of Bodnant, which is important because it's all about traceability these days. After that it comes down to people. I never buy from a farmer who isn't as passionate about his animals and the quality of meat as I am, and within the team here we all share that passion. The passion of the staff shows through. We all really want

> "We always ensure we have the best products from small local farms, that use traditional farming methods and are as passionate about their products as we are at Bodnant"

to be at the top of the list, winning awards and making Bodnant better all the time.

We are surrounded by fantastic produce here. To find the farmers that can produce the kind of meat we want, we're in the best part of the world. We're in the foothills of Snowdonia, on the edges of the salt marshes, and we just couldn't get anywhere better. The people here are very supportive, too. We Welsh are very proud of our heritage and that shows in how people want to buy and support Welsh produce.

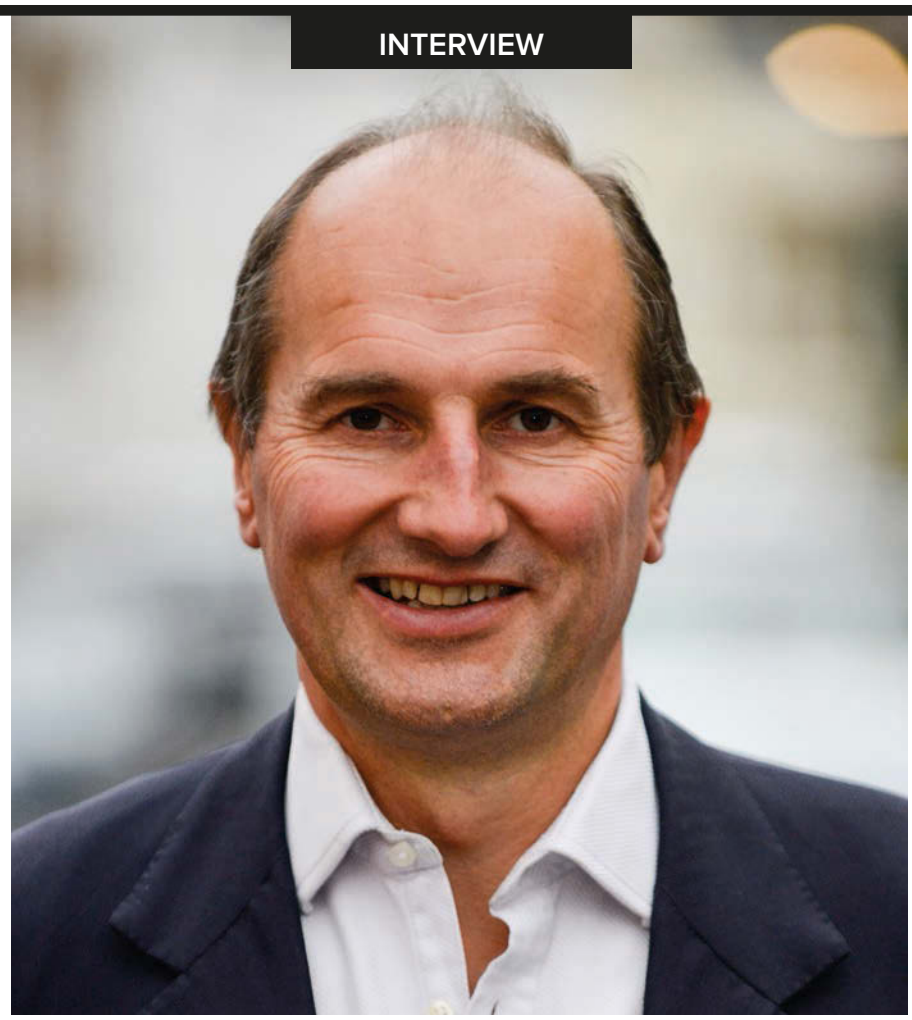
We have a complete mix of customers, but on the whole they're a lot more discerning nowadays. When I started out 30 years ago all people wanted was the right cut at the right price, but now they are prepared to pay a bit more to know that it's good. We have regulars, locals who come in all the time, coach trips on a day out, and holidaymakers visiting North Wales. Some people drive all the way here from Manchester or Merseyside just for one piece of meat. When you think about how many butchers they must pass on the way, that's when you know you're doing something right.

We have a wide variety of beef, lamb, pork and game, plus barbecue packs and oven-ready meats. We also do a lot of the more traditional cuts which are getting harder to find as we know customers like them, such as oxtail, ox cheeks, tongue and offal. We have a lot of game in season too, pheasants, rabbits, guinea fowl and partridges, and one of the gold awards we just won was for our speciality burgers – so it's a complete range.

Our lamb comes from Wyn Williams at Llanrwst, our beef is all Welsh Black and from Tegwyn Jones, also in Llanrwst, while our pork comes from Mary Benfield in Llanelian. I go to the livestock market in Llanrwst and see the animals I am buying, so I know each piece of meat that I am selling down to the individual animal – I could name its parents. That knowledge, and the insistence on quality, is what sets us apart. We have blackboards showing customers which farms have supplied the meat, so they can see instantly that is bred locally by award-winning farmers.

You have to encourage your staff. There's no point in just giving orders and not listening to suggestions. You have to let them come up with some ideas so they feel totally part of it – they might come up with something brilliant. I encouraged one of our 18-year-old apprentices to enter the Young Sausage Maker of the Year competition and he came away with a silver medal. That level of quality, commitment and passion shows through in his work as it does with all of us here at Bodnant.





THE INTERVIEW

Meet William Kendall, chairman of Cawston Press – a dab hand at making household names out of start ups with a heart

If you were to describe my twenties as a bit unfocused career-wise, you'd be right; I attended Sandhurst and was in the army before reading law at university, working in the city in the eighties, then doing an MBA at business school, which is how I moved into becoming a food professional rather than an enthusiastic amateur. I grew up on a farm (and still farm organically in Suffolk) – that's where my interest in food came from. If you grow up in farming you're steeped in food without realising it, but what really got me into it was trying to feed myself – I'm a bloke of a certain age so didn't cook that much when I was growing up, but when I left home I got really into growing and cooking my own food, so the idea of working in the food world was a natural progression.

When I was at university, my then girlfriend (now wife) inherited a farm – it all sounded great at the time, but we soon discovered that we had to learn how to feed ourselves. Soup was the easiest way to do this; various friends suggested that I started a company making soup, then one day a friend sent me a carton of soup with a stamp on it and sticker on the back saying, "someone beat you to it!" – I tried and enjoyed it, and set about approaching the business to share my brilliant (as I believed it was) expertise which I'd gained during my ongoing studies. I then discovered that the company which had produced it, The New Covent Garden Soup Company, had been set up by the brother of a friend of mine. I met him at a party at my business school, and few months later, once I'd finished business school, I found myself running the business and ultimately making a great success of it.

My team and I were looking for a business to take on after we sold The New Covent Garden Soup Company, so we bought an office, put a phone in it and waited for it to ring. Before too long I was invited to a supper party full of people involved in the organic movement, where I met a number of fledgling businesses. Over the next few days, each person from the party got in touch with me asking me to take a look at their company and give them a hand. Craig Sams, who started Green & Black's, asked for help as he'd had a lot of interest from investors and didn't know what to do. Contrary to all the advice we'd been given, we bought it despite it being so small – it resonated with what we were trying to do, and thanks to our experience with Covent Garden we were confident that we could make something of it. What we didn't quite realise was how much potential it had, and how much it would appeal to the spirit of the time.

I don't understand why the drinks industry sells people short – you could go to a lovely pub in the country and enjoy fantastic beer, artisan spirits and wine from an interesting producer, but if you want a soft drink you're often disappointed. As a rule, soft drinks are full of sugar and highly synthetic, and I can't work out why the industry doesn't work harder to satisfy the demands of the population. I have a horrible feeling that our current situation is thanks to the fact that the soft drinks sector is dominated by indifferent and complacent big players. There genuinely is a growing thirst for high quality soft drinks and we're in a very good place to enjoy and drive this change in people's habits.

The environment has always been important to me. I'm a pragmatic environmentalist, very passionate about the environment but a businessman, too. I've worked out that if you're the only person doing what you want to do, there's no point. I believe business is a force for good, and through it you can change the world in little slices. Green & Black's is a brilliant example of this – it proved that you can work very closely with your suppliers in the developing world, paying them a fair price and making their lives better, promote organic farming, and simultaneously enjoy delicious chocolate.

What drives me is a belief in making the world a better place. Individuals can make a difference – I get out of bed every day thinking that I'm going to make something a little bit better. I really believe that creating new businesses and helping them grow is incredibly important for society. I recently met the governor of a local prison and asked what the thing going to change the lives of the prisoners is, and he said it was the faith that they'd have a job when they get out. If you have a job, you're on the first rung of the ladder and can build your life. Subsequently, if you have a job that you find fulfilling and which does something for the wider world, that's just about as good as it gets.

QUICKFIRE QUESTIONS

PROFESSIONAL MANTRA?
One of my favourites, nicked from my first chairman of The New Covent Garden Soup Company is "when all else fails, try the truth". Honesty is really important; don't try to fool people into thinking everything's okay if it's not

WHAT DRIVES YOU?
Whatever you do in life, having a project you believe in and working with a team of people who are equally as passionate is incredibly invigorating

GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT?
If I'm good at one thing, it's getting a group of people to coalesce. I'm very happy to do myself out of the job, and it's a great source of pride when everyone's happily getting on with things and I can slip away for a pint of beer!

> "I believe business is a force for good, and through it you can change the world in little slices"

MAKING IT WORK

I've learned thousand of things during my time in the industry, and chief amongst them is that the most successful businesses are team efforts – cheesy but true. Often you read about a business from the spokesperson's perspective and as a result consider it a one-man band, but that's so not the case. It's about everyone having a significant role and playing as a team. This is something small businesses can do much better than big businesses. I was lucky that at Covent Garden Soup there was a group of us that arrived at roughly the same time, and we worked very well together. We each had specific skills which complemented each other. 'Playing in position' and collaborating is very important. It's very important to have someone in the team who's very good with numbers and know exactly what's going on figures-wise. As you get bigger you can survive on slightly less information as you have a sense of how the business is working, but in the early days it's imperative to have absolutely accurate numbers.

Understanding your customer kind of goes without saying, but so often people start a company with a great idea, based on their own prejudice and subjectivity – 'the world doesn't have x and I think the world would benefit by having x'. This is an example of someone coming up with a disruptive idea, which is how progress is made. Your idea of what the public wants, as the founder, is an imperfect idea. As an entrepreneur, you need to be convinced that you're right but have the humility to recognise that you may need to modify your idea.

If you look at what The New Covent Garden Soup Company and Green & Blacks started as, you'll see that they ended up being very different. The basic concepts didn't change – soup made with ingredients you'll find in your own kitchen, and rich dark chocolate which has been ethically sourced – and Cawston Press has been exactly the same. It was a company completely steeped in very high quality apple juice which was blending good flavours, but people's tastes are changing and we worked out what people wanted. We've come quite a long way in quite a short period, and are now producing vegetable juice blends – we listened to the market, which is key.

I discovered a long time ago that you must have ambition, and you need a five-year plan – I don't think there's anything stopping us from making Cawston Press a very big, international brand (we sell in a lot of countries already), but you have to be realistic and we need to overcome various challenges to get to the next milestone. It's not a local brand, but I hope it is friends with them – I'm part of a group of people who organise the Aldeburgh Food & Drink Festival, and we deliberately focus on brands and businesses that are very local to here. Cawston Press doesn't get invited as we don't want to tread on the toes of brands which are more local. Even though it's more of a national brand, I hope that my colleagues at the festival would agree that it represents our values. Green & Blacks, although it's got quite big, represents those values too.

It's 10 years since I sold Green & Blacks; I now sit on the boards of various companies and love it – it's just really good fun being involved in a small business again. The enthusiasm of the people who have maybe come from a bigger brand is incredible – they passionately share our views and want to work all hours of the day and get very hands on. Whatever you do in life, having a project you believe and working with a team of people who are equally passionate and convinced it's going to work is very exciting. I'm incredibly lucky that I've been able to do that a number of times. Their enthusiasm is infectious, and I hope that my experience is infectious too.


THE MANNINGTREE DELI

BACK TO BASICS

Running your shop as effectively as possible means that no one area can be neglected. Here's a reminder of the six key areas to keep up to scratch

How well do you do your job? Very well, if you have kept your head above water in these last few difficult years. But do you ever visit a rival establishment and see some things being done better? Is it possible that too fine a focus on some particular aspects of running your deli or farm shop have been finessed at the expense of others, which have been neglected or overlooked? How far have you drifted from the best practice of your early days? In short, although you clearly do a great job, is it possible that you could do just a little better and bring in a little more cash? In these pages, we go back to basics, look at the various components of the independent food retail business, and suggest ways in which part of the retailer's job can be performed with excellence.

1 Sharp signage

Don't underestimate the importance of signage. You only have to try a new product without one to see the difference in interest when you add an informative sign. Customers don't want to have to point at items and ask about them. People who are more used to the anonymity of supermarkets aren't always keen to engage in conversation with staff, either. Signs should be neat and their messages clear. If you are adding a sign to a cheese, you might include the following information: cheese name, maker's name, type of milk, place of origin, whether or not it is a vegetarian cheese, and price per kg. If you want to be a little more informative, add brief tasting notes and serving or pairing suggestions. A counter sign suggesting that customers ask to try the cheeses can be helpful. Without turning your store into a mini Las Vegas, you might consider more general signage which points out special offers, adds information about product ranges and encourages cross-selling with pairing suggestions. Ardross Farm Shop chooses slate signs to add an artisanal feel and remind customers of its ethos.



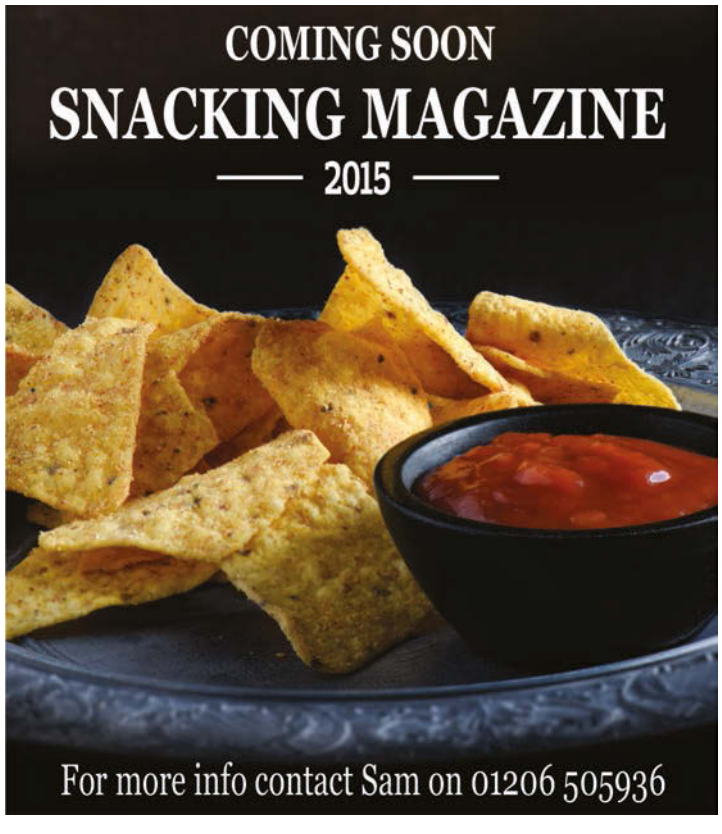


"Signage is key in our business. In this economic climate, customers are very aware of prices, therefore we aim to show prices for each individual product. Slate works very well for this as it is easy to update every day"

CLAIRE POLLOCK, ARDROSS FARM SHOP.

2 Superb service

Customers are at least as likely to remember the warm welcome and attentive service they receive from you as the food they take home. A friendly greeting to everyone who enters the shop is essential; no-one should leave without being at least acknowledged. How much attention you give them beyond this depends





on how well you can read your customers. Some will appreciate being offered help finding products or being recommended an item; others may prefer to be left alone to browse. Thorough product knowledge is a must. Being able to enthuse about the appeal, uses, provenance and story behind a product shows you care about what you choose to sell. It gives you an authority which assistants in supermarkets don't have and offers you the chance to offer an additional service as a source of useful (fascinating, if you add some story) knowledge. Imparting information without seeming to push it can help you get messages across. A gambit such as I don't know if you are interested in blue cheese (or whatever), but gives the customer a chance to signal his interest or otherwise in the product mentioned, without necessarily feeling obliged to feign interest.



"Providing good service should be simple and effortless, not a scripted routine. It starts with understanding the customer and the brand of the business you are in. The people who are best at customer service are those who can pre-empt the customer's thoughts, make suggestions and add something to their experience which leaves them satisfied"

TOM HUNT, LUDLOW FOOD CENTRE

3 Successful staffing

Good customer skills are a must. A good staff member will take a genuine interest in the customer and will often be able to address the customer by name on a subsequent visit. They will be sufficiently confident and enthusiastic talking about the provenance, taste and serving possibilities of the products they are selling. Your training should produce staff who know how and when to approach customers and engage them in conversation. They should also be ready to (subtly) cross-sell by suggesting items which perfectly complement the taste of the item being sold. Staff should always be aware of customers awaiting service and apologize for any delay in attending to them. Good staff are clean and presentable. Branded uniforms which include headwear not only suggest efficiency, but high standards of hygiene too. A charismatic personality, a love of good food and a willingness to work hard aren't qualities which can be trained up; thorough interviews, good recommendations and trial periods give you the chance to see how much of these you potential permanent staffer has.



"When advertising for staff, we request that they are passionate, loyal, dedicated and enthusiastic, with good customer service knowledge. We also require experience in the necessary field, unless it is an apprenticeship position, or one we can train in-house. They also need to be flexible with working hours as we are open seven days, and we always follow up references"

KATIE TAYLOR, DREWTONS.

4 Surprising stock

The most blindingly obvious stocking rule is to avoid stocking items which can be bought at the local supermarket, or even in the corner shop. Rules are bendable, though, and if customers have decided that they like a brand of jam you sell and are willing to buy it at realistic prices, then it doesn't make sense to drop it from your shelves on that principle. However, that way lies a slippery slope – how many more products do you allow before the line between you and the big shops begins to blur? With supermarkets having now picked up on the demand for artisan foods, producers can hardly be blamed for taking their money. This makes the need for you to stock original, even surprising, items which are hard to source elsewhere more important. Stocking local connects you with that economy and gains you friends. It cuts food miles and is a reason many people shop at farm shops and delis. But never forget that the more important consideration is quality. Customers won't buy repeatedly on grounds of locality. Finding new producers and sourcing new and original stock is a challenge and a little bit of a gamble too, if you don't promote your new lines to your customers. That said, so many of the owners who speak to us say that finding something new and exciting, or making a success of a little known product, is one of the most satisfying aspects of the business.



"For an independant deli, stocking is quite a tricky game; on the one hand, customer expectation means you have to have variety and quantity and full availability. On the other, it means a large financial outlay tied up in stock and the risk of date issues on products"

ABBE VAUGHAN, HOME & COLONIAL

5 Top tasters

The effect of putting good food out on taste is easy to see. I've watched customers in a deli crowding tasting areas like bees around a honey pot. This deli regularly left out three large bowls of different chutneys and plates of broken bread to dip. Above and around the samples, of course, were the bottles of chutney and the number of tasters who left with a jar was high, despite the jar price also being high. And when the customer approached the till to pay, it wasn't hard, either, for the proprietor to suggest an accompanying 150g of a local cheese. Tasting introduces customers to the sort of product on sale in the shop and may even hint



PROVENDER BROWN IN PERTH



that a similar quality pertains in other, untasted products. Tasting is also a device by which a conversation with the customer can be entered into and a relationship natured. And, it has to be said, offering something for nothing often induces a reciprocal obligation: it's not unusual for the taster to respond to your largesse by paying for his free taste by way of buying something before he leaves. While some people will enjoy what is put out and leave it at that, many more will stop to chat, ask about the tasted product and buy one to take away. How many drop into the shop on another day to see if something new has been put out to taste?



"As well as the obvious benefits of getting people trying new products, in-store tasters are also a great way of ensuring customers remember your business. A customer may visit many shops that day and by making the whole experience of visiting the store fun and memorable they will remember yours far more positively and for longer"

DAVE GREENMAN, ARCH HOUSE DELI

6 Dramatic display

How easy is your shop to navigate? What is the first sight which greets entering customers? Are your signs easily visible, bright and clear? Are your shelves always full, do they give the impression of being cornucopias of fascinating food? Does your display bring an element of theatre to the shop? How many passers by give your window display a second glance? How many stop to take a good look? What can be done to improve your display? You will have become overused to the look of your shop to be objective, so ask others for their opinion. Refreshing the look of your shop will invite people to look more carefully at the produce. Move stock and units around occasionally, refresh your paint, and keep an eye out for unsightly clutter, 'dead' areas which attract little notice and a floor that requires an extra sweep halfway through the day. Shelves can be arranged to add little dashes of drama: ambients arranged in triangular shapes or pyramids can add dynamic interest, while repetition of the same product can attract the eye and suggest that this is a good seller. Check spotlights are directed to offer maximum coverage and a little drama, too. Don't overlook the power of display. In the opinion of some retailers, a visit to your farm shop or deli should be an experience to be enjoyed as much with the eyes as with the tastebuds.



"It's not always possible to engage personally with every customer who comes through the door and some don't want to be engaged with, but good displays can do the job for you. They can increase time spent in the store and therefore hopefully spend, encourage impulse purchases and help create an appealing and comfortable environment. They also help to give the impression of a professional establishment and inspire confidence in the business and the products on offer"

DIANE BROWN, PROVENDER BROWN



Take stock with our new food and drink round-up



Coldpress Launches Fruit and Veg Blends

Coldpress has added to its range of fruit and vegetable juices with three new blends.

The new additions are Mean Greens: celery, cucumber, lettuce, spinach, pears, pineapple and lemon, Pumpkin Power: pumpkin, ginger, cinnamon, carrot, pineapple, apple and lemon, and Juicy Roots: beetroot, carrot, lemon, ginger and apple.

Ian Hills, Coldpress spokesperson said, "As a pioneer of new-age juicing that prides itself on being attentive to the needs of all fresh fruit, from the shy, retiring raspberry to the bold, flamboyant Valencia Orange, we felt the time was ripe to turn our attention to the legions of too often under-appreciated veg.

"Coldpress and top notch vegetables are natural bedfellows for so many reasons. First and foremost our priority is flavourful, nutritionally-loaded juices. That means you consume less sugar and calories in your daily pursuit of your manifold 5-a-day needs (e.g. vitamin C, polyphenols and antioxidants).

"Of course vegetables come with less naturally inbuilt sugars, which aligns with our unflinching fight against consuming unnecessary sugars and calories, and fibre-rich veg come with many hidden extras (spinach: iron, carrots: vitamin A), which means our juices will always work diligently in your interests."

coldpress.co.uk

New Pâté from Findlaters

Findlaters, the Scottish producer of fine pâté, dips and pies, has added two new pates to its range.

The new additions to the range are Crab Pâté with Fresh Chilli & Ginger, which is fresh and lively, made with crab claw meat and given a zesty zing with fresh chilli and ginger, and Mushroom Pâté with Madeira Wine & Truffle Oil, which is warm and earthy, made with mixed wild mushrooms which are enhanced with white truffle oil and a splash of Madeira wine.

Both pâtés are sold as individual pots or in 600g serve-over pots for the deli counter.

The producer has also launched mini oatcakes, the perfect partner to pâtés and dips.

Martin Findlater Henderson, MD and founder said "We are absolutely delighted with the response to these new products at the Farm Shop & Deli Show. It was a great show for us. The mini oatcakes are a bit of a departure for us as we mainly focus on pâté and dips, but they are a great accompaniment and the new packaging looks fantastic."

findlatersfinefoods.co.uk





Cottage Delight Produces New Pasta Mix Range

Cottage Delight has released three new gourmet pasta mixes, in order to offer consumers a convenient taste of the Mediterranean.

Three varieties are available: Vegetable Marinara, Spicy Arrabiata and Creamy Carbonara, and each contains high quality vegetables, cheese, herbs and spices.

Gary Johnston, sales and marketing director at Cottage Delight said, "Artisan pasta products continue to sell extremely well for Cottage Delight and we expect these three new flavours to perform really well.

"They're extremely versatile and offer a quick and simple gourmet meal solution for busy consumers who love authentic Italian dishes but are short on time.

"The new pasta mix products complement our extensive range of authentic pasta, cous cous, risotto and pesto products perfectly and are the ideal store-cupboard staple for creating quick and easy Italian dishes on demand."

cottagedelight.co.uk





Mama Eti's Promotes Indonesian Cuisine

Mama Eti's has launched a comprehensive range of authentic Indonesian spice pastes and condiments.

Made using fresh ingredients, and gluten and additive-free, each item in the range is made to traditional recipes to deliver authentic Indonesian flavours.

The new range offers a selection of cuisines, from the delicate and aromatic flavours of Bali and sweetness of Java to the hot curries of Sumatra and Manado, Mama Eti's has selected the best dishes from the Indonesian archipelago.

Jeremy Stone, director at Mama Eti's said, "Combining the richness of Indian curry, Middle Eastern influences of cinnamon and cardamom with the subtle aromatic flavours of South East Asia, it is surprising that Padang cuisine still remains a secret to the UK, a nation of curry lovers.

"Offering three distinct spice paste blends for beef, lamb and chicken, our Sumatran curry kits contain both the wet and dry spices needed to create a fantastic restaurant-quality meal through a few easy steps. The curry kits are additive-free and follow traditional recipes, delivering true authentic flavours of Indonesian cuisine."

mamaeti.com





Revamped Rocks Expands Range

Rocks Drinks has revamped its organic squash range and launched a new selection of ready-to-drink products in time for the summer season.

The range of Lemon, Orange, Blackcurrant and Blueberry & Apple squashes contain only real fruit, sugar and water, and have a greater stand-out on shelf than before thanks to individual watercolours on each flavour.

The new ready-to-drink range includes 250ml bottles of Organic Strawberry & Blackcurrant (sparkling), Organic Ginger & Wasabi (sparkling), Pink Lemonade (sparkling), Organic Raspberry & Lime (sparkling), Organic Blackcurrant & Elderflower (still) and Organic Mango & Orange (still).

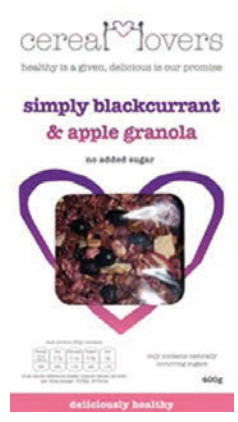
Darren Robinson, group sales manager at brand owner 3V Natural Foods says, "We are known for producing authentic drinks and are totally committed to creating drinks that families can enjoy with total assurance that what they are drinking is made with integrity and use only natural ingredients.

"We also believe there is a real opportunity to extend the enjoyment of our drinks out of the home, and the new ready-to-drink range means Rocks' unique recipe can be enjoyed as a premium, on-the-go drink. We believe it will appeal to adults, teenagers, and the whole family."

rocksorganic.com

Cereal Lovers Releases Granola

Dorset-based producer Cereal Lovers has released a granola made with natural ingredients, no added sugar and zero salt.



Very low in saturated fat, the granola is made with a simple blend of oats, malt, pure fruit juices, rapeseed oil and fruit pieces, and can be served cold with milk, with yoghurt and fruit compote, and hot as a fruity porridge.

Available in four flavours: Apple, Orange, Banana & Chocolate and Blackcurrant & Apple.

Jenny Fox-Johnson, founder said, "I'm just passionate about encouraging people to eat natural food that tastes really delicious."

"I've always been creative with food and love experimenting with it. One thing that fascinates me is the way you can take a set of ingredients, use a different type of manufacturing technology and come up with something totally new."

cerealloversco.uk



An up-to-date look at the confectionery and chocolate industry



"It's all about a taste adventure"

Speciality Food talks to Charles Foster, international business manager at Jelly Belly Candy Company, about the making of a confectionery classic



Jelly Belly jelly beans are the iconic and very modern innovation of a family company with a long and fascinating history. Founded in 1869 by two German immigrant brothers, The Goeltiz Confectionery Company (renamed as the Jelly Belly Candy Co in 2001) is known today throughout the world for producing inventive and delicious candy – though they are most famous for their jelly beans.

Jelly Belly is the original gourmet jelly bean®, and what makes them different is their authentic and unique flavours, made with natural ingredients whenever possible. Their introduction in 1976 revolutionised the jelly bean world, not least because four years after their creation they became the favourite treat of Ronald Reagan, governor of California and on the trail to become president of the United States.

Charles Foster, international business manager at Jelly Belly Candy Company says, "Reagan was asked what kept him relaxed while campaigning and still able to quit smoking his beloved pipe. He held up his favourite treat for all the press photographers to see, and Jelly Belly jelly beans became an overnight phenomenon. By the time three and half tons of red, white and blue jelly beans were sent to Washington to celebrate the inauguration of President Reagan, Jelly Belly orders were two years in arrears."

Reagan loved Jelly Belly and let everyone know it. He gave them as gifts to visiting heads of state and VIPs, and it was the London American Embassy's need for a steady supply that led to Jelly Belly being stocked in Harrods – its first outlet in the UK.

"All of the Jelly Belly jelly bean flavours are based on things that master candy makers have tasted and enjoyed. Once they determine whether a flavour is well known and recognisable, it is developed to achieve the authentic taste. This is a long process," says Charles Foster. Deciding first on a flavour and then bringing it to full bean creation can take up to two years. All methods of creating the right taste, using the best possible ingredients, are explored before putting it to the taste panel which makes the final judgement. "It can then take up to 21 days to create a single jelly bean, so meticulous is the manufacturing process. The new bean flavour – they're called rookies – then has to be accepted by the (now extremely discerning) Jelly Belly fan base," says Charles.

While the mystery of how such a small bean can be packed with so much flavour remains a mystery, the Jelly Belly success is not. "It is all about a taste adventure," says Charles, "and while this can take fans to the most delicious places imaginable, it can also explore the very weirdest of flavour horizons. The thing to remember about Jelly Belly Candy Co is that there is no flavour that they cannot or apparently, will not, consider!"

Back in 2008, the company was asked by Warner Brothers to manufacture Bertie Bott's Beans. They successfully developed a range of strange flavours which became notorious and massively popular with Harry Potter fans. However, the business then lost the licence to sell them and so developed their own version of weird and wonderful flavours – that is how BeanBoozled was born.

Charles describes the product as "a year-round trick or treat challenge that sees delicious classic Jelly Belly jelly bean flavours paired with wild-tasting lookalikes. Because they look identical, the real flavour of each jelly bean can only be discovered by taking a bite. Will it be Stinky Socks or its twin, Tutti-Frutti? Rotten Egg or Buttered Popcorn? Fans are dared to compare."

> "President Reagan loved Jelly Belly and let everyone know it"

The Beanboozled range had always ticked along and was not a core line, with Jelly Belly wanting to focus on its delicious beans rather than the "weird" tasting ones, but YouTube made the line take off last year and all of a sudden, teens and young adults started taking videos of themselves having fun with the flavours – "it was unbelievable," Charles says. "There was a major spike in demand in the UK, but we're also seeing the phenomenon in the Middle East and Australia – it's really a global trend."

The time has come for British independents to get involved, Charles says. "For the first time, we're putting together a promotion in the UK and the US and Canada to get people excited about Beanboozled across social media. It's still in the planning stages, but this is a summer initiative to get people really excited about the third edition in the lead up to the release of our fourth edition.

"We'll be offering independent retailers posters and other POS, but a big part of it is making the most out of what's happening online and using social media to invite people into shops – this is a great opportunity for Speciality Food readers to harness the power of social media.




JELLY BELLY ART INSTALLATIONS ARE A BIG ATTRACTION FOR JELLY BELLY RETAILERS



Cheese Talk

New retail perspectives from industry experts



JULIET HARBUTT

"Tell it as it is"

When you write a book about cheese and have to come up with unique and interesting descriptions for over 750, you quickly come to realise that the English language is extremely thin on the ground for words to describe cheese and even thinner for words to describe creaminess, the nuances of texture, the cheesy taste of a Cheddar or the milky taste of milk!

I therefore have no sympathy for retailers, or cheesemakers, who offer dull, lacklustre descriptions and justify it by telling me how difficult it is to come up with descriptions when they offer less than 100 cheeses. They have obviously failed to realise that the labels are not there as decoration or simply to tell people the price and name of the cheese. They are there, day in, day out, as your customers' first contact with your counter. They therefore need to sell the product to your customers, to persuade them to try something new, and to inspire them to step outside their comfort zone and try something different. Plus, the customer sees them as the voice of the owner and the passion for the things they sell.

Wine shops do this extremely well with cheerful, witty – and, yes, sometimes banal – comments, but they make us laugh, groan, think and eventually buy one of them. Cheese labels rarely have that effect.

Imagine if beer makers said their delicious amber liquid was 'mould ripened' – a term frequently used by cheesemakers and retailers to explain that the moulds on the outside of a cheese help ripen it, but for a cheese novice it is a definite negative. A bit like wine makers talking about malolactic fermentation; you rarely see it on a label. If people want that sort of detail they will Google it – they don't need it shouted out from the label.

It is not, however, as bad as using the description 'smear ripened': a term that describes how a cheesemaker rubs or smears the rind of his lovely washed rind cheese with brevi-bacterium and brine to create those gorgeous, outspoken, bright orange-rinded cheeses with their farmyard aromas. Much to the horror of their parents, the children who used to come into my shop in London would say "it smells like poo, mummy!" Still, it was true.

And tell me, dear cheesemaker, what is the advantage of calling a cheese full-fat? Probably 95% of all cheeses are made with full fat milk, i.e. the milk hasn't had the cream skimmed off the top. So why tell people, especially as around 60% think milk has a fat content of about 20% and cheese is around 60% or even 70% fat.

Now, I am sure all three of you reading this column know the fat content, but just in case... Cows' milk has a fat content of around 3.8%, goat about 3.5% and ewe around 7%, but when you make cheese from any of these milks it works out to be around the same – soft whites like Brie, 24-28%, and hard, 33-36%. A very reasonable amount, considering the rest is made up of very nutritious calcium, vitamins and water. So personally, I would start raving about how low-fat cheese is compared with, say, mayonnaise (79%) or peanuts (54%).

> "I doubt I have heeded the use by date of any cheese in my fridge for years, and mould growth is something I take to mean the cheese is still alive and well and waiting patiently for me to taste it"

But if you are determined to put someone new to cheese off buying it, as well as telling them it's a mould-ripened, full-fat cheese, make sure you or the cheesemaker adds to their concern and use a use-by date instead of a best- by date on your cheese. I doubt I have heeded the use-by date of any cheese in my fridge for years, and mould growth is something I take to mean the cheese is still alive and well and waiting patiently for me to taste it.

Then there are the numerous categories of cheese that only make sense to a cheesemaker, like 'cooked' cheese, 'pressed uncooked' cheese, semi-hard, semi-soft or wash curd cheese. Instead of these, we need a system based on what you can see – the rind – which is determined by its moisture content. So you can judge a cheese by its cover!

I developed this concept when I first started in the cheese industry because the categories were confusing and unhelpful. Most cheeses was either divided by country or described as hard, blue and soft. It was such a relief and a revelation to realise that the type of rind a cheese grew was determined by its moisture content, and that I could put 95% of all the cheeses I have ever met into just seven types. Since then I have enlightened thousands of cheese lovers and experts around the world.



GEORGE PAUL OF BRADBURY'S

"Land of cheese and money"

It is a gratifying reality that British artisan and quality Cheddar cheese is creating waves across the world. An overnight success after years of sheer hard work and challenges.

It's ironic that France is now one of the biggest export markets for British cheese; both quality Cheddar and speciality types are gaining traction and growing.

Further afield, the same is true – from China to the USA from the Middle East to Australia, all seem to have fallen under the spell of artisan British cheese.

It is, then, with a delicious irony that we see the breakdown of the UK core retailers threatens the strength of the home speciality cheese market. Because a number, with a stupefying lack of long term logic, will follow their usual DNA behaviour and cut ranges, taking out the lower sellers simply because they are the lower sellers. An army of category advisers will recommend the space is filled with extended lines of yellow brick wall Cheddar, which equally ironically is in total market decline and as the price wars rage therefore returns lower and lower margins.

Add to that the reality that more outlets sell cheese than ever in the past five years. However, the growth is not in high class delis but in high street discounters selling low-cost Cheddar and simple territorials.

When all these outlets have a bland range which leaves the shopper unable to distinguish one from the other, the artisan speciality paralysis will be almost complete, because only a very few in major retailing, like Waitrose and Booths, have kept the faith and gone every yard of the way for 30 years or more, whilst others have drifted in and out.

A number have tried to retain the speciality perception, using the deli counter as their medium, with very mixed success. Amongst these, despite its troubles, Morrisons has made strides to maintain both quality and real point of difference, and its grab and go fresh market plus the option of service is entirely in-line with shopper trends. Others have tried pseudo hand-wrapped grab and go items in adjacent cabinets, sometimes in long life pre-packs masquerading as 'fresh'.

This lack of availability, lack of choice, lack of specialism and premium, is diametrically opposed to what is now happening, as the facts show the shopper is gravitating to better cheeses – British and Continental – as the improved economy brings disposable cash back into the better cheese market. Certainly the shopper is more savvy than ever, but no one ever uninvented quality, and whilst doubtless there is always a case for rationalisation and refreshment in ranges, choice and premium probably affect 20% of the best spenders in the UK.

If proof were needed that roles are changing, Aldi and Lidl now stock extended regional speciality cheese at a time when the four majors are ditching range to meet their own agendas. I guess the consumer will decide who knows best.

No matter, as one door closes another opens, and after all, the independent retailers have been open for business here for generations. Any relief from the predations of short term retailer artisan tourism is probably much welcomed, so they can rightly dominate what they have worked hard to create. The farm shops in particular seem to be doing well, although I am hearing that farmers markets are in many cases beginning to see a decline in sales and success.

Quietly there is both growth and opportunity in food service, as many of the most famous names begin to access both top private restaurants and even a number of chains, and both regional and national cheese distributors have played a major part in transferring artisan recognition to the food service channel.

So far we can see that the shopper has the money, and the UK has the cheese variety, but it's where it will cross over in purchase and consumption that is the immediate challenge for many in the maker part of this trio of stakeholders.

> "In a dairy trade that has never been more demanding thanks to a tsunami of changes in legislation, technical, systems, regulations, opportunity, customer expectations, media and milk prices, I recommend you keep your options open"



JUSTIN TUNSTALL OF TOWN MILL CHEESEMONGER

"Rep relationships"

Are you now, or have you ever been, a rep? I was for a number of years, with responsibility for selling advertising in newspapers that had circulations in the millions (it was the 1980s), both in the US and the UK. Most of the job involved negotiating with regular clients and their agents, with very little cold calling, especially of the door-stepping or face-to-face kind. The exception was when I used to jet or motor off to trade shows with a brief to network, show my face to existing clients and also conjure up new business. I was never comfortable with trying to sell to people at these shows – my targets had all paid good money for space and time to sell their own products and services to customers, not to buy mine.

Similarly, in my current life as a cheesemonger, when my shop is open for business, I am there to sell to my customers. If I'm not actually dealing with customers there's always something that needs attention, and contact from sales people is by and large an unwelcome interruption to those efforts. Nonetheless, there's a constant stream of telephone calls made by eager business development folk, brimming over with self-assurance and the belief that time for their sales pitch trumps the needs of my customers. We also get unannounced visits from reps. They wait in the queue, A4 presenter clutched to chest, seldom looking at our merchandise but focused primarily on me, waiting to strike just as soon as they think I'm free to hear their pitch. Having 'been there', I feel for them, but they could help themselves more.

Lest this view sounds classic poacher turned gamekeeper, I've found certain interactions with reps invaluable in the development of my business. A tip of the hat to the rep that came and spent a day helping me set up the cheese stock before we opened. Thanks, too, to the wholesaler who took me through their entire stock, sampling as we went along, to establish a wish list of cheeses for my opening. An ad rep made a massively helpful suggestion about a product range that worked exceptionally well for us. All these examples of help came from people who bothered to find out what we were looking to do and positioned their offerings and advice to support those aims.

Shop owners and store buyers have responsibilities too, if we are to keep our side of the street clean and behave professionally. If I've asked for an email pitch, then I think it my duty to read it and be ready with an opinion – or be prepared to apologise if I haven't had time to do so – when I get a follow up call. If you're really not interested in a product that's presented to you, don't waste the rep's time with 'maybes' and requests for samples. Their time and their products have costs attached, and an honest 'no' means that they can direct their resources towards more likely prospects.

A good relationship between rep and buyer can be really fruitful for both parties and bear testament to the old saying: people buy from people. But if you are a rep, please never forget that we have selling to do to our customers, who will always be our first priority.

"We need Fairtrade For Milk"



The scandal of milk prices has been widely publicised for months, but what can our sector do to minimise the impact on the farmers producing our cheese? Charlie Pears-Wallace of Northumberland Cheese tells Speciality Food how this cheesemaker does things differently.

The issue of milk prices is well publicised: we all know that it's too cheap. Supermarkets are often seen as being at the helm of this problem, but really they have exacerbated a problem which is at a global level: a Russian trade-ban, less demand from China, and surplus production of milk due to good weather. The fact is, milk is bought by everyone – for most of us, it's an essential. Farmers are being subjected to issues within a global market, which are beyond their control.

Northumberland Cheese uses milk produced on the Blagdon estate, where we're based. It is extremely important to us to use local suppliers, and we are especially proud to say that the milk in our cow's milk cheese is from the fields surrounding us. Milk distributors have the monopoly on the markets, and our farmer is in a situation where market value is 25.3p per litre but milk costs him 30p per litre to produce. He, like farmers across the UK, is losing money on milk. We're a large customer, and so, when he came to us and asked if we would supplement the shortfall on the wholesale price, we willingly obliged.

Before I started working at Northumberland Cheese, I would read about the milk crisis and consider my cups of tea. But it affects our whole dairy industry: yoghurt, ice cream, cream and cheese. A product which, despite being so essential, has become far too cheap.

We have an extremely good local following; would we be comfortable promoting ourselves as a local company, knowing that our farmer was losing money on milk just to supply us?

We have a moral responsibility to support our farmers. They're going out of business every day. Booths are beginning a campaign, and I believe that it should span the industry. We need a Fairtrade for milk, and industries like ours, which are so reliant on our farmers, need to support them.

If you buy Northumberland Cheese, you know that no farmers were harmed in the making of the product. If you're considering cheese on the basis of pasteurised or unpasteurised, waxed or unwaxed, vegetarian or animal rennet, then you should also be questioning the ethics of the milk production, and if your farmer is getting a fair price.







Quicke's Unveils New Look

Quicke's, the famil-run producer of tradional clothbound cheese, is in the final stages of a brand update that will be rolled out to customers later on this year.

Mary Quicke, managing director at Quicke's and the fourteenth generation of the Quicke family to run Home Farm in Devon's Newton St Cyres, has chosen to update the business's overall brand identity to reflect its heritage and values, and employed a scraperboard artist to create a woodcut image of the local landscape to be used across the brand's new packaging.

Aspects of the original Quicke's logo will be incorporated into the branding, with the Quicke's 'beast' still apparent, and all of the pre-packed cheeses in the range will feature a 'peel and reveal' label which will provide further information about the cheese including provenance and taste.

Alix Reeves, marketing manager at Quicke's said, "Our cheese has a fascinating narrative, from how the cows are grazed, to the way our cheese is matured for up to two years. These factors are hugely influential on how we create a multi-award winning product range. Many aspects of our cheesemaking are bound up in artisan traditions and we strongly felt that the new look and feel should convey our rural surroundings.

"We want our customers to feel engaged with Quicke's. Our cheese is very much rooted in the fields around Home Farm so the new designs give people a better insight into our world — I hope that everyone will feel a stronger connection to our story as a result."

Godminster Releases West Country Giftset

West Country-based cheesemaker Godminster has launched a new gift pack, combining the traditional regional flavours of cider and Cheddar cheese.

The pack contains a 200g truckle of Godminster's award-winning Vintage Organic Cheddar, Perry's Grey Heron Single Orchard Cider and a Kilner jar of Apple & Beetroot chutney.

Deborah Chambers, head of sales and marketing said, "We're delighted to be working with Perry's Cider to bring together the well-loved Somerset tastes of Cheddar and cider in one gift.

"Bursting with West Country flavour, this brand new selection from Godminster blends the three core flavours of Somerset in one perfectly packaged gift set. Whether it's for a tasty treat for your customer or a foodie father's day present, our brand new gift pack offers two classic Godminster great tastes with a specially selected cider."



Džiugas Celebrates 90 Years

The Lithuanian cheese is celebrating its 90th anniversary, following a year which has seen sales in the UK rise by 5 per cent.

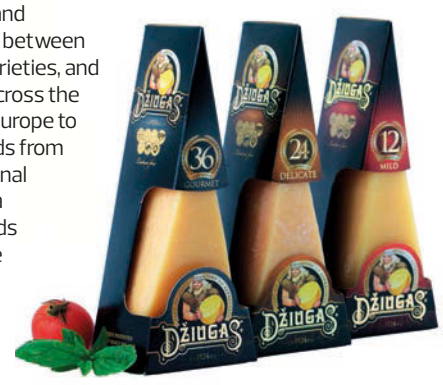
Džiugas's versatility has been a valuable selling point for retailers, who have sold it both as a cheeseboard item and a cooking cheese to traditional and adventurous consumers.

The cheese's complex and distinctive flavour evolves between its 18, 24 and 36 month varieties, and has garnered popularity across the world — from the UK and Europe to the USA — as well as awards from bodies including International Cheese Show (UK), Russia (ProdExpo), Gulfood Awards (Dubai) and Superior Taste Award (Brussels).

Bobbi Davy, Džiugas spokesperson for the UK said, "The 90th anniversary has been a fantastic year for Džiugas - we have expanded into new international markets, launched new products and have seen sales lift in the UK.

"This year and the last 90 years are a great cause for celebration, and we would like to thank all our stockists for their support."

dziugashouse.net







GOING SOFT

With the sun comes a new demand from customers for cheese that fits with their alfresco dining intentions, and it is at this time of year that soft and semi-soft cheeses really come into their own, says Nicola Whiteford





Although cheese is a popular choice throughout the year, as the summer months approach, different styles of eating have a huge impact on customer choice, with the weather contributing to new sales opportunities. Whereas in the winter cheese board staples are often earthier and richer, with blue and hard cheeses dominating, come the summer, people are looking for lighter options for picnics, cooking and entertaining.

"Some cheeses, especially soft, are often at their best during the summer months, and this is due to the condition of the grass that the cows, sheep and goats are feeding on," says Richard McWhinnie of Yorkshire's Finest Foods. "Summer is the time when grass is richer and fresher and as the animals are feeding on fresh grass, their milk becomes fuller and filled with nutrients which add to the taste of the cheese."

"As our palate changes in the summer months, our bodies crave lighter food and tangy flavours. Lighter cheeses such as goats cheese and Yorkshire Fettle become more popular in the warmer months because of their rich flavour and zesty taste when paired with a salad. Soft cheeses such as certain blues, including Mrs Bell's Blue from Shepherds Purse, are perfect in the summer months as they are fresher and produce that summer tang we require as our body adapts to the change in temperature."





"We find soft and semi-soft cheeses to be very popular in the summer," says Paul Adams, owner/manager of The Cheese Shop in Louth. "A lot of people will buy them for lunch to enjoy with a baguette, or to cook with. For example, Gorgonzola Dolce is a very soft blue that's excellent melted over pasta.

"We talk to people about what they require and naturally give them a taste of something appropriate. This is a fantastic opportunity to introduce them to new cheeses and help them understand the many uses of cheese beyond the cheese board."

The Cheese Shop stocks a huge range of soft and semi-soft cheeses, and Paul names Baron Bigod made by Fen Farm Dairy as a particular favourite, with other varieties such as French Truffle Brie, Langres and Stinking Bishop proving popular. He explains that his customers do tend to see the softer cheeses, such as goats cheese and Brie, as a more summery choice.

Summer demand

At London's renowned La Fromagerie, soft and semi-soft cheeses are available in abundance, with both continental and British varieties proving popular in the summer as people purchase them for more casual styles of eating such as picnics, or simple summer suppers. "There seems to be a more

ON THE COUNTER

Three cheese experts explain which soft and semi-soft cheeses are the most popular during the summer months, and the ones to look out for

"Some of our most popular British soft cheeses include Windrush (a fresh goats cheese), Tunworth (a cow's milk cheese), Aldwych (a goats cheese); and Goats Curd. As far as Continental cheeses are concerned, popular sellers for us include Brie de Meaux, Epoisses and Brie with Truffles."
Ros Windsor, Paxton & Whitfield

"Retailers should sell a good mixture of the 'celebrity' cheeses such as Vacherin, Brie de Meaux, Tunworth, etc. but also as many locally-made, interesting cheeses as possible. Britain needs these smaller producers to be encouraged and to have a route to market if they are to compete with the superstar celebrity cheese of the continent. We sell a lot of Whitelake cheeses under the Alex James Presents brand: Goddess, Little Wallop and we've just taken on a couple of gorgeous cheeses made by Wodehill in Bedfordshire: Chellington and Bayden Blue which are both wonderful and will sell really well because they're unique in that they're both mixed milk."
Matt March-Smith, Pong Cheese

"I recently tasted a brand new cheese called St Bartholomew from a new dairy called Nettlebed Creamery. It is a washed-rind unpasteurised cow's milk cheese with a traditional rennet that's beautifully made with a lovely richness that is not harsh or bitter. I am hopeful that this cheese will be something of a superstar in the future. We also make our own Truffle Brie every week which is immensely popular."
Patricia Michelson, La Fromagerie





relaxed approach to meals in the summer, and cheese is always an easy way to start the ball rolling," says Patricia Michelson, owner of La Fromagerie.

"In the summer we see a huge amount of summer cheese, goats cheese for instance, flying off the shelves. The cheese room team are full of ideas on how to enjoy them and what to match them with. Whether it is for a cheese board or a dish using cheese, we have suggestions and ideas to talk through with customers and we leave out tasting sheets with recipes and cheeseboard suggestions. This is vital for sales success."

"For the summer we stock all sorts of cheeses, from the obvious Mozzarella di Bufala to the rich and decadent Burrata from Puglia. We also love fresh smoked Mozzarella di Bufala as its smoky hit is fantastic,



particularly with roasted tomatoes. There are lots of goats cheeses around including Banon Feuille, which is a medallion of almost melting goats cheese wrapped in chestnut leaves which have been brushed with an Eau de Vie. This gives the cheese a really nutty hit with a hint of bitterness mingling with the rich melting quality of the goat's milk."

With lighter meals and alfresco eating the order of the day in the warmer months, Patricia explains that it is important to stock cheeses with big, bold flavours to work alongside cured meats and salads. "The fresh soft ones are lovely too, but I do like that great hit of goat's milk, especially with a super-chilled dry rosé." She suggests considering cheeses such as the little Rove de Garrigues fresh goats cheeses with a tangy hint of thyme, Innes Buttons or the Bosworth Log, especially when it has a little maturity. "Everyone likes Brie on the table in summer, and we do sell a huge amount, but I also find Wigmore is a huge hit for those wanting to enjoy a slightly chilled red wine or a glass of Champagne," she says.

Ros Windsor, managing director at Paxton & Whitfield agrees that the summer is a key time to get customers thinking beyond hard cheeses. "Sales of softer cheeses increase throughout June, July and August because it is at this stage in the year that all the seasonal goat's and ewe's milk cheeses are available again, boasting their lighter and fresher flavours.

"Most of our customers buy these styles of cheese to enjoy with others on a cheeseboard, but also to use them as a key ingredient in salads or lighter dishes. We find that at this time of year they sell themselves. For example, fresh, soft cheeses look so appetising when put on display that it is hard not to want to buy them!"

"However, when we do promote them in the shops we will put them on taste for our customers to try, and the team will all be briefed so they can talk to customers about them. There's often a really interesting story to tell about each cheese and our customers appreciate this extra knowledge."

Storage suggestions

Despite their popularity and the vast array of choices on offer for retailers looking to capitalise on the demand, soft and semi-soft cheeses do come with their problems, and storage is most certainly one of them. "We need to keep them refrigerated all the time," says Paul Adams at The Cheese Shop in Lough. "If we do open them from the wrapping we need to keep track of when they were opened and day date them."

"These styles of cheese tend to have a shorter shelf life, so you need to make sure you look after them carefully," says Ros Windsor at Paxton & Whitfield. "With fresh, soft cheeses, how they look visually is important to selling them. You want to have them looking at their best so you need to store them well and sell them in their optimum condition."

Storage beyond the shop floor is also vital to ensure that each customer can enjoy these cheeses at their peak condition. Richard McWhinnie at Yorkshire's Finest Foods suggests that instead of wrapping cheese in cling film, which can suffocate the flavour and prevent the cheese from breathing, retailers should suggest that cheese be stored in an air-tight container at the bottom of the fridge, while a light wrapping of tin foil around blue cheese keeps the live cultures active so the cheese can continue to mature. "Soft cheeses should be stored in a cheese wrap or porous cloth, which helps to control the amount of moisture and oxygen entering the cheese, adding to its longevity," he says.

"Softer cheeses really do need to be stored at around 4°C," says Elizabeth Ryan, who runs Sheridans Cheesemongers in Co.Meath, Ireland, where about 40% of cheese sales are made up of the purchase of soft and semi-soft cheeses. "We usually recommend using paper to wrap them – specialist cheese paper works best, but greaseproof paper can be a good substitute. Semi-soft cheeses can be stored at a slightly higher temperature, but the vegetable compartment of the fridge is a good solution."

Matt March-Smith at online cheese retailer, Pong Cheese says, "Soft cheeses can change quite considerably depending on their age so it's important to know how old they are when eating them. We send cheeses out at what we consider to be the optimum maturity and therefore on arrival they are in a perfect condition to eat straight away. If customers want to delay eating then a fridge is best to stop the maturing process and then they should be brought out three to four hours before eating to get them to room temperature for maximum softness."

> "Soft and semi-soft cheeses do come with their problems, and storage is most certainly one of them"



GODMINSTER ORGANIC BRIE
Godminster's artisan brie is lovingly handmade using organic milk fresh from its own farm.
godminster.com

SHEPHERDS PURSE BLUEMIN WHITE
A melt in the mouth, blue mould-ripened cow's milk cheese. When fully ripe it delivers a creamy texture and mature cheese flavours.
shepherdspurse.co.uk



SIMON WEAVER BLUE-VEINED BRIE
This cheese is unique to Simon Weaver and has a rich creamy texture that goes particularly well with pear.
simonweaver.net



CELTIC SOFT, PAXTON & WHITFIELD
This cheese has a slight chalkiness in its centre when younger, surrounded by a softer buttery paste.
paxtonandwhitfield.co.uk



SHARPHAM RUSTIC
This cheese has a fresh, lemony, creamy flavour when young, developing a lovely nutty taste when mature.
sharpham.com



FLOWER MARIE
This aromatic cheese is mushroomy, sweet and slightly citrusy in flavour, developing to a more intense flavour as it ages.
goldencrosscheese.co.uk




TRANI, APULIA

PREVIEW: FOOD & WINE FROM SOUTHERN ITALY

Sun-soaked Southern Italy is a cornucopia of fantastic food, and this month its producers will be showing off the best the region has to offer in Manchester and London

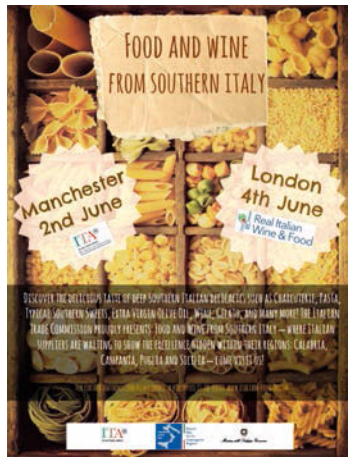
One of the all-time great cuisines, Italian food includes ingredients and dishes known the world over. Gnocchi, prosciutto and other charcuterie, Mozzarella and risotto are just a few of the Italian foods which have entered our culinary language. British retailers began satisfying the British appetite for Italian food over two hundred years ago, and fine Italian ingredients are now the mainstays of many delicatessen. In recent years, this appetite has grown as British palates have discovered the extraordinary range of delicacies and flavours to be enjoyed from this most food-loving of countries.

Some of the finest foods of Italy originate from the sun-blessed southern regions, Campania, Calabria, Apulia and Sicily in particular. Think of fine pasta, extra virgin olive oils, wines, pizza, cheeses, gelato, gnocchi and typical Italian desserts, and you glean just a small idea of what this beautiful part of the country can justly be proud. Each region has its own specialities, too. As well as citrus fruit, Campania is famed for its tomatoes, peppers, spring onions, fennel, artichokes and Mozzarella. In Calabria, you'll find distinctive wines, macaroni pasta and seafood. Apulia, (or Puglia) is celebrated for its extra virgin olive oil, but is also a substantial producer of wheat and vegetables.

It's not always realised, but Italian food is the sum of a collection of regional cuisines, with each region having its passionate advocates. There is much for natives of the southern regions to shout about; producer of the country's finest vegetables, the area is also home to the durum wheat which makes the country's world-beating pasta, and the olive groves which produce the distinctive flavours in its extra virgin olive oils. Characterised by strong and appetising aromas and full flavours, the cuisine of southern Italy features dishes based on fish, pasta, meat, fine bakery and fresh fruit, many of which betray the influence of the various foreign invaders who have, over the centuries, added their own distinctive flavours to its cuisine.

Showcases in Manchester and London

If this has left you with an appetite to taste the produce, the Italian Trade Commission is offering two great opportunities to do just that. On June 2nd at the Innside Manchester Hotel, food and wine producers will be on-hand at this trade-only event to help you get to know and understand the possibilities of Southern Italian food. Then, on June 4th, it's London's turn. Church House Westminster is the venue for Real Italian Wine and Food and representatives from Southern Italian regions will once again be happy to introduce visitors to the possibilities and potential of first class products, ingredients and dishes produced in the region. The London event will play host to exhibitors from all the other Italian regions, too. As well as meeting enthusiastic producers, sampling fantastic food and connecting with vendors, visitors can discover how Southern Italian food should be cooked from the people who know it best, at the live demonstrations which can be seen throughout the day.



IN DETAIL

FOOD & WINE FROM SOUTHERN ITALY
WHERE: Innside Manchester Hotel, 1 First Street, Manchester M15 4RP
WHEN: 2nd June, 10:30–18:00
WEBSITE: italian-food.org.uk
CONTACT: a.kelly@ice.it
BY CAR: located in the city centre
BY TRAIN: Deansgate Station is 0.2 miles away

REAL ITALIAN WINE & FOOD
WHERE: Church House Westminster, Deans Yard, London SW1P 3NZ
WHEN: 4th June, 10.00–18.00
WEBSITE: therealitalianwine.co.uk
CONTACT: email a.kelly@ice.it
BY CAR: Church House Deans Yard is located off Great Smith St, SW1
BY TRAIN: nearest station Victoria, nearest tubes Victoria and Westminster

> "At these events, importers can find interesting new niche products not yet available on this market, making their catalogue original"
>
> **FORTUNATO CELI ZULLO, ITALIAN TRADE COMMISSION DIRECTOR**


SOUTHERN ITALY PRODUCES A WIDE VARIETY OF FOODS, INCLUDING PASTA

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turanogroup.it

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olearia clemente.it

Oleificio Cooperativo della Riforma Fondiaria, Paladino
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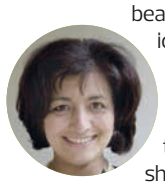
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MEET THE PRODUCER

Hampstead Tea's range of organic iced teas offers customers healthy refreshment with an ethical twist

The range of organic iced teas produced by Hampstead Tea (Oolong with Elderflower, Oolong Tea with Peach, Green Tea with Lemon and Green Tea with Raspberry) offers all retailers an ethically sound alternative not only to carbonated drinks, but also to the iced teas produced by major tea companies. These sugar and extract-laden drinks, says Hampstead Tea's founder and owner Kiran Tawadey, bear no relation to the iced teas she has added to her range of entirely bio-dynamically grown teas. The drinks are, she says, "great-tasting, on-the-go impulse buys. They're great with a sandwich or for popping in a picnic or lunch box. This is a perfect product to drink after after a game of tennis and a great alternative to carbonated drinks." It's a plus for a lot of consumers that each of the 330ml packs contains only 75 calories.





The iced teas in this newly-rebranded and repackaged line are, Kiran says, "made from brewed tea; we don't use tea extracts, which have no benefits or food value whatsoever." Much effort has been spent in choosing the optimum tea/flavour combinations for this range. "We decided to use Oolong, (a semi-fermented tea which is between a green and a black tea), and green teas as our bases," Kiran says, "These are under-represented within the soft drinks category. Also, Oolong is full of antioxidants and possesses amazing health properties, so it's a real super food.

"Elderflower goes very well with Oolong because it is delicate and mild. The infusion of elderflower juice that we use is purely organic and it is absolutely amazing! The Elderflower iced tea is a really refreshing product, and it's selling very well. Elderflower is very much a flavour of the moment. We decided to try a peach flavour because we found that customers associated tea with peach; a lot of teas have a kind of peachy overtone. This is a new product, but early feedback is highly positive. We also combine green tea with lemon, a combination which is easily understood, but also with raspberry, which is another superfood full of antioxidants. We tried combining it with green tea and it worked well. We've had some really good responses, and last year, we won a Great Taste Award."

Fairtrade principles

The products sit on a sound ethical foundation, and the company has long been practising Fairtrade principles. "Having grown up in India," Kiran says, "I felt it was important for the producer to get a piece of the action. All the value was created at that end of the cycle, and so I felt there had to be a way of ensuring that the producer could have a stake. This is why all of our products were, and still are, Fairtrade." As important as this is the company's interest in biodynamics, a method of growing in which, Kiran says, "you put more into the ecosystem than you take out."

It was Kiran's interest in organic tea – or the dearth of it available – which sowed the seeds of Hampstead Tea. "I started the company 14 years ago," Kiran says, "when I found that you couldn't really find organic tea products in the UK market. I was concerned about pesticide residues in drinks." Around this time, Kiran says, "I happened to run into an amazing chap called Rajah Banerjee, who owned a tea garden which had been in his family for four generations. He told me how he was growing his tea without any additives, fertilisers or chemical pesticides. I said, 'why don't you tell people?' but these were pre-internet days and this wasn't so easy. Rajah said, 'if you feel so strongly about it, why don't you tell them?'

"So I started selling his tea in bulk to various tea packers. It went really well, and six years later, when my children were a little older and I could spare more time, we decided to launch the tea under our own brand, so we could have more influence over the end product. I began supplying a few health food shops in North London and then, in 1998, we won the Organic Food Awards at which Prince Charles was the chief guest. This was brilliant. We got lots of press coverage and received enquiries from many stores asking for more product and also for different products. After this, we started to diversify and that's when the Oolong tea came along."





The company now produces "a full range of black and green teas, and then we have herbals as well," Kiran says. All teas are produced, she adds, "to the same high standards and organic credibility." Hampstead Tea also offers "leaf teas, so we are a real tea company, not just a teabag producer. We really believe in our loose teas. We offer products like First Flush, which is the first harvest of the season, Darjeeling leaf teas and Muscatel Darjeeling. We consider ourselves real tea people." The company intends to focus its attention on the UK market in upcoming months and promises new products for this Autumn. "Watch this space!" Kiran says.



FARM SHOP FOCUS

Pick-your-own fruit drives customers through the farm shop at Malt Kiln. Speciality Food talks to owner, Chris Lea



CHRIS LEA: "OPENING WAS LIKE UNCORKING A BOTTLE"

It's very often the case that a farm shop will owe its success not to just one part of its operation, to its fine quality local food or its fantastic customer service, perhaps, but rather to the sum of all its parts. In Stretton Under Fosse, near Rugby, is the Malt Kiln Farm Shop, which uses its pick-your-own fruit facility to drive custom through its varied farm shop. Malt Kiln manager Chris Lea describes the business as "a family-run farm shop where we sell our own beef, lamb and pork reared on my mum and dad's farm through the butcher's counter. We also have a deli counter that sells local, territorial and Continental cheeses. We have a coffee shop which serves breakfast, light lunches, teas and coffees, but also makes quite a few of the items sold on the deli counter, such as quiches, flans, and pork pies made of pork from the butchery counter. As well as this, we have pick-your-own soft fruit, so it's a fairly mixed operation."

The business was started in 1976, Chris says, "when dad planted the first strawberries. We didn't start the year-round farm shop until the early nineties." This delay was caused by red tape, he says. "It took a long time to get any sort of sensible planning permission, because back then the planners were against any out of town development. This meant we didn't get planning permission to build the current shop until 2004." Because it had taken such a long time to get planning permission, he says, when the shop eventually opened "it was like uncorking a bottle: it just went." The farm shop has continued to prosper and since opening its doors has been able to add the butcher's counter, coffee shop and the deli counter. The farm shop is operated as a partnership by Chris's parents and his three younger brothers. Chris has worked there since 1996 and heads the team that serves "between two and three thousand" customers every week. Average basket spend, he says, is just under £15.

> "despite the distance from large centres, footfall is still considerable and that, Chris says, is because the Malt Kiln farm shop offers good service and high quality produce"

The butcher's counter is "probably the busiest" food counter, he says. "It's our own meat," Chris says. "We started off with a suckler herd but we've put a Herefordshire bull on that to put a bit more fat into the meat. Our head butcher is always looking to add value and put little twists on products." Come the summer, the meat counter faces competition when "the pick-your-own becomes a key part of the operation. We sell a large volume of strawberries and potatoes from the farm, on top of the beef, lamb and pork." The shop also has a bakery, which it franchises to the award-winning Revel Bakery.

Assured provenance

A factor that can be crucial to the success of a venture like this is location, and Chris readily admits that his might be better. "Ideally, if I was picking the shop up and dropping it somewhere," he tells Speciality Food, "I would move it a bit closer to a major town. We are midway between Rugby and Coventry, which are seven or eight miles distant. Really, it would be better if we were a bit closer to one or other of these places." Attention is drawn to the farm shop by signage on the road, use of Facebook and the website, and also by the placing of occasional advertisements in local newspapers. Chris admits to having his doubts about the efficacy if this last method. "Recently, we put an offer specific to the paper to see if we were getting value for money from the advertising, and I wasn't fully convinced by the response that we were," he says.

Despite the distance from large centres of population, footfall is still considerable and that, Chris says, is because the farm shop offers "good service and high quality produce." There's also the matter of assured provenance: "the meat is our own, and butchered on-site," he says, and in the fields outside, "the pick-your-own always draws people in." The pick-your-own side to the operation is now stronger than ever. "The season has extended since we first started," Chris says. "It used to run for about six weeks. Now it kicks off at the end of May and goes on through to the end of September. It pulls in an awful lot of new customers. Just when you think things might be getting a little stale, the season comes along and you drag in more people."



FARM-REARED BEEF, HAM AND PORK ARE STRONG SELLERS

Among suppliers for the Malt Kiln Farm Shop are Cottage Delight, Bramble Foods and Fosters. "Also, we stock lots of local beers and Healeys Cornish Cider, which is very good," Chris says. "The wine that we stock is a new one from the Bearley Vineyard, which is only a few miles away, at Stratford. They came along and sampled some wines to me and I thought they were very good. Some people want to buy English and if you put a decent product in front of them, they are prepared to pay a little bit more."

Organic food is not a strong point for the farm shop, partly because demand does not seem to be there at present. "We always used to get a few people who came in and ask specifically for organic produce but these days, we don't seem to get anyone," Chris says. Another reason is the difficulty of producing good soft fruit. "Our climate specialises in growing mould, especially when it has been warm and wet," he says, "so we've never really gone in that direction." The pick-your-own fields produce quality crops of "strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, blackberries and blackcurrants, all of the classics," he says. "We also do pick-your-own broad and runner beans, pumpkins, marrows and courgettes. On top of this, we grow potatoes. All these items go through the shop, as you would expect."







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Lean operation

Chris points out that arriving at a selection of stock which suits your customers is relatively easy for the independent seller of fine food. While larger shops can be sluggish to respond to customer demand, farm shops and other independent food retailers are in a better position to tailor their stock to local taste, he says. "One of the advantages of being an independent is that you can be fairly fleet of foot, and with the business being a fairly lean operation," he says, "you can see when to alter and when to respond to customers' requests."

Cheese is an important part of the Malt Kiln offering. "We sell a good range of cheeses," Chris says, adding that he sources his products through Harvey and Brockless, Rowcliffe's "and deals with Fowlers of Earlswood, who are local." His best-selling Cheddar, he says, is "Fowlers' Mature Warwickshire, but we also sell Wookey Hole and Cheddar Gorge." Blue cheeses in demand at the farm shop's cheese counter are Cropwell Bishop and Colston Basset. "We also sell lots of little speciality cheeses, such as the Slipcote," he says, "and Black Bomber sells amazingly well." Topping his Continental sales are Gruyère, Taleggio, Brie de Meaux and Manchego.

Malt Kiln's coffee shop, Chris says, it an important part of the set up. "It makes the place a bit more of a destination," he says. "People who have been picking our fruit in the fields like to come through and have a coffee or something to eat. In winter we sell a lot of the hearty sort of foods such as home-made cottage or shepherds pie and stews. In the summer, we offer salads which use goods from the deli. The coffee shop is an area we are now looking to redevelop."

Coffee shops can be ideal ways of encouraging customers to prolong their stay, but for Chris, staying longer can be "a double edged sword. The longer they are on the premises, the more high maintenance they can be. Initially, we set off with the view that we liked them in and out, but as time has gone on we've got to be a little bit different from the multiples, especially as their focus these days seems to be on discount. We can't really do that, but we can be a destination. This is why we find the pick-your-own is so good. I think if you were solely running a pick-your-own, you'd struggle. What makes it work for us us that they have to come through the shop. If they didn't have to do that, we would probably find it hard work. People like the pick-your-own because they think they are getting a little of something for free but then they will go through the shop and pick up something else. As a package, it works." Running a farm shop is much like any other business, he says. "Because it's small, you are tied to it and it's a responsibility. But every day presents something slightly different."


QUICHES, FLANS AND POK PIES MADE FROM BUTCHERY COUNTER MEAT



THE AWARD-WINNING IN-STORE REVEL BAKERY

If there a secret to running a farm shop successfully, Chris says, it lies in "hard work and attention to detail." The most important thing to get right, he thinks, is high quality, fresh produce and the right sort of customer service."

Staffing is key, he says. "It all depends on having the right people. Staff are your front of house, the people your customers see. If the customers aren't happy, they pretty soon desert you." Ideally, Chris would hire "someone who has an interest in food, a nice bubbly personality and some experience in the field of customer service."



WINE IS SOURCED FROM A LOCAL VINEYARD


PICK-YOUR-OWN IS A BIG FOOTFALL-FINDER

A little entertainment helps, too. Among the events organised at the farm shop have been a 'cow pat lottery'. "A local ice cream supplier bought one of their cows, we marked out a grid, and people bought tickets," Chris says.

Further income is provided by letting out space for people doing arts and crafts. "They pay us a rent and we sell the stuff for them," Chris says. Asked to name a farm shop that he admires, Chris mentions Farndon Fields in Market Yarborough, because of their "attention to detail and the quality of their produce. They grow a lot more fruit and veg than we do and it's presented very well."

> "Staffing is key, says owner Chris Lea. It all depends on having the right people. Staff are your front of house, the people your customers see. Ideally Chris would hire someone with an interest in food and a bubbly personality"

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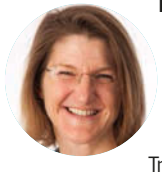
The British public is embracing chilli like never before. SF investigates the story and products behind the trend

Whether smoky and sweet or blisteringly hot, these days chilli can be found within a kaleidoscope of foods. From an Italian puttanesca sauce to a BBQ-ready chipotle sauce, it's an ingredient truly earning its stripes across the fine food world. It's versatility is second only to its popularity; EHL Ingredients has witnessed a 40% surge in its super spicy scotch bonnet and habanero chillies alone, while according to Mintel, 32% of British consumers are eating more spicy foods than ever before. This popularity extends beyond consumer kitchens: "we have already witnessed an increase in demand from food manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers looking to stock spicy ingredients and hotter chillies in line with developing consumer tastes," says Tasneem Backhouse of EHL Ingredients.

EHL Ingredients attributes this new-found widespread popularity to the media coverage of the health benefits of capsaicin, the compound in chillies which give them their heat; not least, capsaicin is known to reduce the risk of bowel cancer (The Journal of Clinical Investigation, 2014).

This trend doesn't seem to be going anywhere fast, and EHL is making the most of demand. "At the end of 2014, we introduced a new range of 20 herb and spice blends, rubs, marinades, coatings and seasonings to tap into the growing popularity of world cuisines, particularly from the Tex Mex, Asian, Mediterranean, Caribbean, Middle Eastern and African regions," Tasmeen says. "These blends are already performing well with Berber spice, Mexican adobo, Sharma kebab mix, Creole, West Indian jerk and Za'tar the most popular so far."

With the demand for chilli getting hotter and hotter, and the range of products at an all-time high, now's the time to cash in on the chilli heatwave.



Becky Vale of Tracklements explains the value of chilli to the business

Chilli is one of Tracklements' vital ingredients; whether it's fresh, chopped chilli or dried, ground chilli it plays a fundamental part in our range of mustards, relishes and chutneys. We rely on this versatile spice, which can be mild or blisteringly hot, to provide the light and shade so important to our products.

We use it to a greater or lesser degree in almost every Tracklement, so whilst chilli is the main protagonist in our Rocket Hot Mustard, both our Chilli Jams and our Hot Habanero Salsa, it is also an essential ingredient in Hot Lime Pickle, Red Pepper & Chilli Jelly and Hot Mango Chutney.

As an indication of how important an ingredient it is to us, 33 of our range of 57 Tracklements contain chilli in one form or another and each of the 8 different types of chilli we use contributes a distinctive flavour nuance.

Best-sellers

Our Chilli Jams (both Red and Green) are without a doubt two of the most popular Tracklements in the range. Our original Chilli Jam (the red one) was a ground-breaking product when it was launched in 2001 and immediately secured a massive following which has grown and grown over the intervening years. People have written odes to it, tried to copy it, and eaten it with everything from chicken to cheese to ice-cream! We believe that part of its irrevocable appeal lies in its versatility, a feature of its distinctive sweet, sharp, powerful heat.

Taste evolution

A person's reaction to chilli is as unique as their fingerprints, so whilst







TREND **TALK**

Mark Wiltshire, director of Diverse Fine Foods

some of us might find Scotch Bonnet chillies inedible, there are other people who can eat them without flinching – we were once sent a photo of a Tracklements fan eating Chilli Jam straight from the jar! Our tastes are constantly evolving and, in the best tradition of food exploration and adoption, chilli as a flavour continues to grow in popularity.

As people travel much more widely and frequently, so other cultures culinary customs are brought back home and adapted to domestic tastes. This is not a new phenomenon; our predecessors did the same with sugar and spice when they travelled to the Indies for the first time, so as we discover and enjoy more diverse cultures, so our palates and diets will develop and become more varied.

We currently supply several amazing chilli-based products including Lakrids Chilli Liquorice, Seed & Bean Chilli & Lime Chocolate, Chilli Purely Pickled Eggs, Soffles Pita Chips Mild & Hot, Wild Peanut Chilli Peanut Butter, Helt Honey with Chilli, Chilli Cornish Ketchup, Wild Island Chilli Oil and Ruby Blue Chilli Pepper Liqueur to name just a few!

The number of chilli products on the market has certainly increased over recent years; we now have lots of ranges that include a chilli version, and this is mainly down to a demand from consumers not only wanting to try new things but to experience the heat and flavour that comes along with adding chilli to a product that might otherwise not have a kick.

Today's consumers are more experimental and open to trying new exciting concoctions. A true chilli fan is always looking for something that is hotter then your everyday product, and for some its the hotter the better!

UK consumers' desire for chilli products has been around for a long time and goes back over 200 years, to when the first dedicated Indian restaurant was opened in central London. UK consumers will continue to look for more diverse chilli products in commonly found products while also looking for different ways to use chilli as an ingredient to add to dishes they are making themselves.

I think the popularity for chilli products will continue to develop and grow, along with lots of other special flavours that we will see added to well-known products. This is down to the fact that the consumer looks to the speciality market for inspiration and something outside of the normal everyday products. The availability and education around chilli is also becoming better, with chilli growers like Devon Chilli Farm and Wiltshire Chilli Farm giving the consumer impressive information and selections.

We are constantly looking for new exciting products and are currently finalising our Christmas range for 2015... There will definitely be chilli products involved!



STOCK CHECK



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SELLING THE MED

How offering Mediterranean products can bring a zing to your deli, explains Robin Goldsmith

Despite the growing importance of home-grown food and drink products, especially within the farm shop sector, many items just cannot be grown here, including citrus fruit and olives, for which consumer demand is strong. Indeed, between 2012 and 2015, 15% of fruit and vegetable product introductions in the UK were described as Mediterranean, matched only by Italy among countries worldwide (Mintel). Local provenance is extremely relevant, but in addition to knowing from where the products are sourced, consumers will want assurance that these are of high quality and differ substantially from typical supermarket offerings.

Increased popularity of home cooking, the growing prevalence of pop-up bars and street food stalls, plus a greater awareness of tapas and other Mediterranean dishes, mean consumers are more aware of food styles, ingredients and health benefits. For example, Mintel analysts report that 22% of Brits used hummus at home between September and November 2013. Furthermore, they also note new research supporting "the adoption of the 'MIND' diet, a hybrid of the Mediterranean and 'DASH' diets, which claims to be effective in lowering the risk of Alzheimer's disease." So which type of products should form part of a successful portfolio of Mediterranean food for the summer?

Simon Bell, CEO of Lupetta, believes that it's important for deli and farm shops to stock Mediterranean foods as they will always be sought-after by consumers. "A brand that provides staple, high quality cupboard ingredients is well-suited to this consumer clientele. Niche products, such as our Amaretti biscuits or cherry tomato sauce range, will stand out on the shelves. British consumers associate Italian food with quality, great taste and authenticity, and Lupetta is a direct response to current culinary interest in provenance and regionality. We use authentic Italian ingredients that meet the desire for quality and great taste, sourcing only from accredited suppliers who meet our exacting standards."

Health benefits

The Greek Larder Delicatessen is another business for whom attention to detail when sourcing products is vital. The company opened in London last year alongside its sister restaurant, using a style and offering based on the Greek 'Bakalico', a grocery and eatery. The deli shelves are stocked with traditional and innovative foods, often obtained from small, independent and lesser-known producers. These include bottarga (a fish roe appetiser), traditional Cretan biscuits and the deli's own homemade dips. "Customers are very conscious of food quality," reports co-founder and chef, Theodore Kyriakou. "They can taste before they buy and there is also a growing understanding of the health benefits of a Mediterranean diet, especially for fresh, simple foods sourced seasonally. Many products are offered loose so that customers can buy the exact amount they need by weight, thus providing a more flexible service."

The concept of providing fresh, seasonal, carefully-selected foods of good quality is particularly important for fruit and vegetables. FESA UK Ltd is part of Anecoop, the largest fresh produce cooperative in Spain. The company works directly with farmers and customers to ensure that it imports only the finest fruit and vegetables from around the world. Investing in long-term relationships with growers helps improve the quality and taste of its products, rather than relying on poorer quality and discounted prices, according to commercial director, Sisco Tello. "We are committed to supplying good quality, as opposed to cheap produce, always abiding by social and ethical principles. For example, our fresh watermelons from Almería in southern Spain have been ripened on the plant to improve flavour and freshness, before being transported by road to the UK."

Fratelli Camisa is a family-run concern that opened its first store in London's Soho in 1929 and continues to import fine Italian deli products into the UK. The company sells to independent outlets as well as national retailers and has a successful online business selling an extensive range of speciality gourmet foods delivered directly to the home. General manager, David Rogers says: "Some of our best selling items, essential for any summer portfolio, include our range of grilled and roasted vegetables and mini salami in five great flavours, perfect for antipasto dishes and picnics. Additionally, our new artisan cheeses from Pier Luigi Rosso make perfect additions to the cheeseboard, including Cravot, a firm and tangy pure goats' cheese."

Snacks, especially baked products, are crucial components of a Mediterranean portfolio and Crosta & Mollica, the top Italian bakery brand in the UK, supplies both national and independent retailers. Sourcing each product from the area in which it would traditionally have been produced, the company makes unique artisan foods produced through traditional





methods without artificial preservatives or additives. Their range of savoury biscuits includes several that appeal to the speciality food market, including fennel-infused Tarallini and black olive Grissini.

Family-run

The appeal of Spain among British tourists has given the country's food a strong association with summer and Spanish food company Delicioso provides a full range of paella ingredients, which can be bought individually or as part of a kit. The company, which supplies many specialist outlets, has around 475 products, incorporating authentic gourmet Spanish foods, drinks, gift items and kitchenware, sourced from artisan, family-run businesses throughout Spain. Co-founder, Kate Shirley-Quirk, also believes that Delicioso's range of salsas, made to the company's own recipes, are particularly good for a portfolio of summer Mediterranean food, as they complement barbeques, fish, seafood, grilled meats and vegetables.

Charcuterie is an important part of any Mediterranean food offering. Spanish food specialist, Brindisa, sells a wide range, including Jamón Ibérico and Cecina, a delicately smoked beef product ideal for a portfolio of summer Mediterranean food. Nevertheless, there is such variety among meat products that it can be hard to retain a point of difference. Iberian Deli was created in 2013 to bring top quality acorn-fed ham to the UK. Director Antonio Hernandez details what makes his award-winning Cárdeno ham special and why it appeals to speciality food consumers: "our Cárdeno Ibérico products come from a Spanish family that has been exclusively breeding free-roaming Ibérico pigs for four generations, traditionally producing and curing the meats. The pigs enjoy a minimum of five acres of land densely populated with acorn trees and the ham is naturally cured for at least 40 months. Good Spanish Ibérico acorn-fed products are like night and day when compared to other charcuterie and should not be considered the same when putting together a varied range."

Olives are a staple ingredient of the Mediterranean diet, and Olives Et Al buy directly from growers, cooperatives and agents. Managing director, Simon Hurley, describes their approach: "We regularly visit our growers, working very closely with them to ensure we get the first pick of the crop. To produce the best food, you have to start with the best raw ingredients. We have selected very carefully, over the last 21 years, the growers and suppliers who care about quality as much as we do." Simon sees merit in farm shops and delis stocking Mediterranean food alongside home-grown produce. "British food is a reflection of the multi-cultural society that we live in and has been influenced over the years by many nations' appetites. The key for any retailer is to get the product mix right, focus on quality and get products into your customers' mouths. Nothing helps great products sell better than tasting them."

Cumbria's Silver & Green also sources traditional antipasti, particularly olives, from artisan producers. Rachel Hannaford describes her company's ethos: "Being a small business supplying other small businesses, we're able to offer hands-on product advice, support and knowledge to help the indie retailers we work with create a wonderful shopping experience." Rachel recommends her crunchy, nut-like pickled garlic, sweet, bite-sized balsamic onions and early-harvested Sicilian Nocellara del Belice olives, commenting that many customers are now asking for olives using their varietal name."





LIGHT SUMMER SNACKS, MEDITERRANEAN STYLE

Olive oil

Olive oil is another essential store item and Olive Branch, launched in 2011, produces a vast range of Greek products with top quality ingredients, unique recipes and fresh packaging, appealing to speciality retailers and chefs. Examples include Chunky Olive Tapenade, a fresh approach to the traditional, available in four original flavours, and Dakos, the traditional dried bread of Crete, double-baked and used as a base for tomato salads which are dressed in olive oil and vinegar.

No portfolio of Mediterranean products would be complete without wine, and there is a wide choice available. However, specialist knowledge is vital in matching wine with food and Simone Botti of Moreno recommends Sorbet 2014, a pale rosé made from white and red Garnacha grapes. "This is ideal for the UK market and goes brilliantly with light cuisine, spicy food, pasta, salads and fish-based tapas." However, one of the biggest growth areas in wine consumption has been Prosecco and Alessandra Zambonin of Italian wine producer, Casa Vinicola Zonin, believes that Prosecco Ca' Bolani, made entirely from the premium Ca' Bolani estate-grown grapes in Italy's top white wine region of Friuli, would suit speciality food stockists. "It is excellent as an everyday apéritif, but can also accompany the whole meal, from traditional Italian gastronomy to the sophisticated modern kitchen. It goes perfectly with light summer food such as canapés, buffalo mozzarella, risotto, delicate fish dishes and also with salads."

There is an ever-increasing range of good quality Mediterranean food and drink available and since specialist retailers endeavour to retain a point of difference from the major multiples, a careful choice and knowledge of Spanish, Italian and Greek products remain essential. As Rachel Hannaford of Silver & Green explains: "The multiples may stock olives, artisan cheeses and charcuterie. However, as the staff working there don't have the same direct link to the producer as we have, they are missing out on the knowledge, story and product understanding to pass on to the end consumer."





2015 SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE STOCK CHECK



OLIVES ET AL ROSEMARY & GARLIC OLIVES

These mixed green Amphissa and dark Kalamata olives are naturally infused with sun-dried tomatoes, garlic and rosemary, which make them particularly good with lamb dishes.

olivesetal.co.uk



LUPETTA PASTA

The range has a higher than average protein content due to the Kronos wheat semolina, which gives the pasta a perfect al dente texture and enables it to keep its shape better when cooked.

lupetta.co.uk



DELICIOSO TORTAS DE ACEITE

These Great Taste Award-winning olive oil biscuits, hand-made in Seville, are lightly flavoured with caramelised sugar, sesame and aniseed. Almond, orange and salted flavours are also available.

delicioso.co.uk



SILVER & GREEN SEMI-DRIED CHERRY TOMATOES

More versatile than sun-dried tomatoes, this sweet-tasting and softly-textured Italian product is perfect for baking, and for use as an open sandwich topper.

silverandgreen.com

GOING CRACKERS

Both sweet and savoury biscuits can be sold with other products, so make sure you stock the best

Some of the most important items on the shelves of independent food retailers are what might be termed 'link' items. They are important because they offer an immediate opportunity for the retailer to cross-sell two items at once. It's all basic business sense: chutney points customers in the direction of the cheese counter and vice versa. Good jam can sell good bread; ham can move mustard and pickles, and so on. Biscuits are a particularly useful link item to stock because a good, artisan biscuit cries out for a similar standard in your selection of teas and coffees.

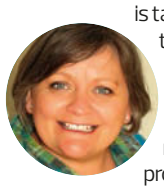
We may know what cheeses pair perfectly with what wines, but work remains to be done on establishing which biscuits are the perfect matches for which teas and coffees. Everyone knows that, treated with care, a digestive makes a good dunker, but you might be hard-pressed to say which artisan biscuits are the perfect complement for which speciality beverages. At bottom, a biscuit with a certain amount of absorbency and one which won't immediately give up the ghost and crumble into a hundred pieces the minute it's shown warm liquid would be ideal, but all biscuits benefit from being consumed with hot drinks, and displaying packets of speciality tea or coffee alongside packets of artisan biscuits will encourage sales of both commodities.

When it comes to biscuits made with the independent retailer in mind, there's a lot to choose from. As with other products, it can be worth your while finding out what people are buying in similar shops to your own, but it can also reward your effort to source one or two of those products which can make your offering stand out. All sorts of interesting types are available, from toothsome flavour combinations such as chocolate and raspberry, through to the various gluten-free ranges, which will appeal on grounds of health as well as taste. Biscuits for special occasions are popular just now, and if you have the capability to produce bespoke items, this can be another way of adding that necessary point of difference to your range of sweet biscuits.

As always, the rule is to taste before you buy: a lot of biscuit products aimed at the farm shop and deli market are very attractively packaged, and with many, the product itself is clearly visible through a cellophane window, showing off the artisanal, rustic look of many cookies. That said, though, not all of these biscuits will match their appearance with their taste and mouth feel. Another factor which may determine your choice of product is its price point. Though some of these products fit well with the luxury niche, customers attracted by beautifully presented cookies may leave disappointed if the price is markedly higher than a roughly similar product found in the supermarket.

Sweet biscuits

With the choice of artisan sweet biscuits growing, so what do you look for in a biscuit? According to Dawn Reade, co-owner of Island Bakery Organics, what people want primarily is taste. "People come to delis and farm shops to find food that's a cut above the quality of mass-produced products in the multiples," she says. "Farm shops and delis look for high quality products with great provenance and an interesting story to tell."



The range produced by Dawn and her husband Joe has that story, she says. "Being based on the Isle of Mull is probably the most unique thing about us. It may seem like a crazy place to run a business, but despite the extra hurdles in getting things to and from our bakery, we think it's worth it. And we really do make all our products on the island. Not only is Mull a fabulous place to live and work, but it provides us with all our energy needs. The abundant rainfall and wind generates all our electricity, while wood grown on the island fuels our ovens." This, of course, is a great story to retail to customers, if you want to engage interest in these biscuits.



Ingredients for the bakery's range ("six varieties of certified, all-butter



ISLAND BAKERY ORGANICS ON THE ISLE OF MULL







organic biscuits, from simple shortbread and rustic oat crumbles, to chocolate-dipped lemon melts and chocolate gingers'') are sourced, Dawn says, ''as close to home as possible, so we use Scottish butter and oats, and English flour.'' All sorts of considerations, including ones of health and ethics, go into this choice of ingredients. ''Butter not only gives a rich flavour, but using it exclusively in our recipes means there are no hydrogenated fats or palm oil in our biscuits.'' This, Dawn says, chimes with what independent retailers are looking for in the products they sell. ''I think customers of independent retailers are a bit more savvy about the products they buy, and are perhaps more ethical when making their choices. Perhaps they try not to buy products containing palm oil, or things that have been grown or harvested in ways that harm the environment. So it makes sense for independent retailers to source their stock accordingly.''

An ideal biscuit for Louisa Mayor, sales and new product development manager at Farmhouse Biscuits, is ''mouthwatering and extremely moreish.'' Presentation is important, as well. The product, she says, ''has to look traditional and artisan, and definitely not mass-produced.'' Farmhouse Biscuits, she says, are ''essentially traditional in both the way they are manufactured and also in their appearance. Our iconic black and white pack has remained relatively unchanged for nearly 50 years.'' There's a lot of value in this, she says: ''some may criticize us for it, but the packs have become a symbol of Farmhouse Biscuits and the traditional family values we continue to hold dear.''

The company offers a free-from range, an option which is becoming increasingly important in the world of biscuits, especially now that free from products can match the taste of regular ranges. ''The free-from market still goes from strength to strength,'' Louisa says, ''with more and more people making lifestyle choices and changes to their diets. Whereas once these foods were developed specifically for strict dietary needs, these days, we are seeing the consumer making that switch to free-from products for other reasons.''

Another reason Farmhouse Biscuits fit well with independent food retailers, Louisa says, is because the products ''are not widely available in the multiples and are reasonably priced. Our savoury cheese thins are a great accompaniment to any cheeseboard and the range of flavours we offer enables the consumer to select the right flavour to match their cheese. With Stilton, Cracked Black Pepper, Sea Salt, Sundried Tomato and Basil, Chive and also Onion and Mustard, there is a flavour to suit everyone.''

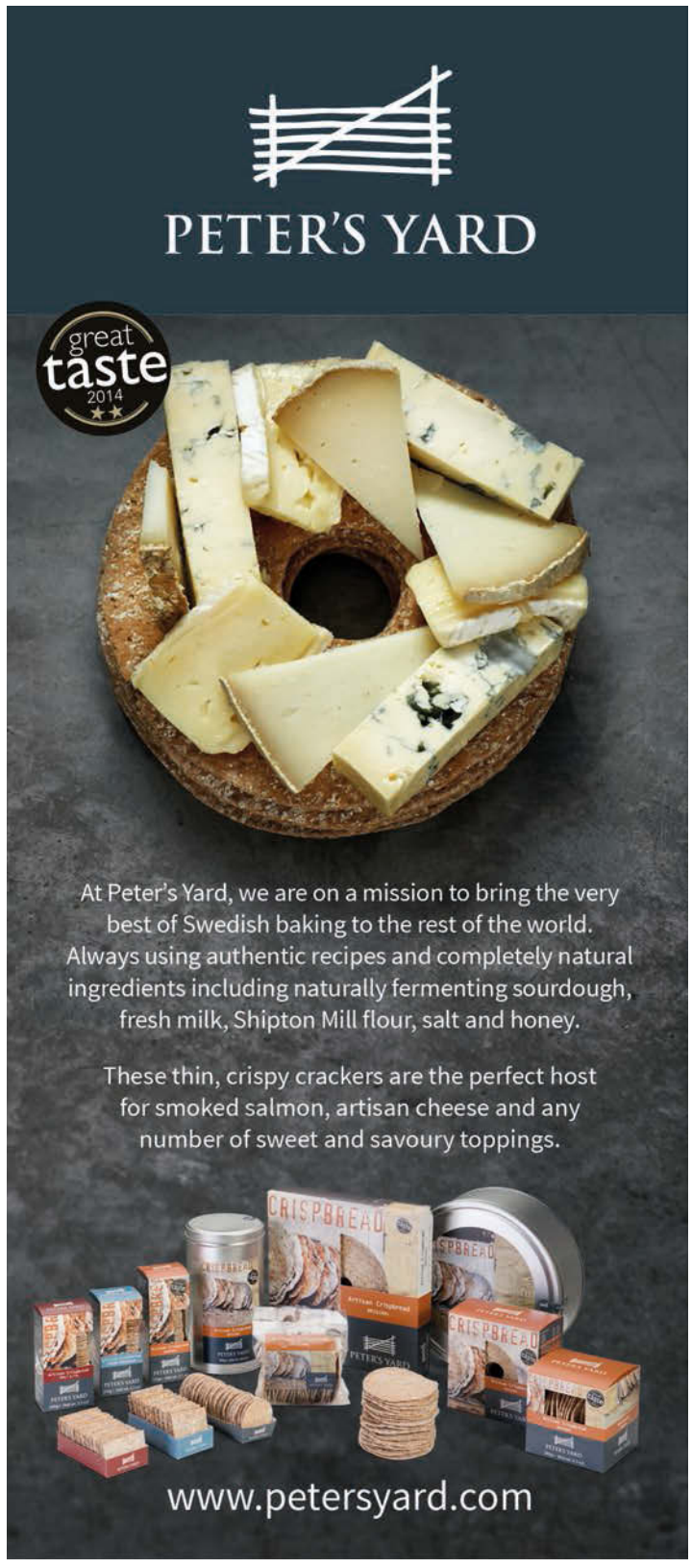
All-year shortbread

If you've regarded shortbread as only a Christmas stocking item, think again, urges Anthony Laing, owner at Shortbread House of Edinburgh. His company has experienced ''the strongest start to the year we have ever had.'' Anthony attributes this not only to his product, but also to the results of the recent rebranding and repackaging of the biscuits. ''We've gone for a bright and modern feel for the packaging in order to help shortbread appeal to a slightly younger market, as well as to the older customers,'' Anthony says. This has helped his product escape from the Christmas confines often associated with shortbread and become much more of an all-year-round one, he says. The 300g tall tins of original recipe shortbread are selling particularly well. The eight varieties of shortbread he produces are Original Recipe, Stem Ginger, Chocolate Chip, Chocolate & Orange, Macadamia Nut, Cinnamon & Demerara, Lemon and Christmas. The biscuits are designed to appeal to the



ANTHONY LAING: ALL-YEAR SHORTBREAD







field-fare READY-TO-BAKE CHOCOLATE COOKIES
field fare's ready to bake cookies are all sold as frozen pucks of dough and cook from frozen, making freshly baked cookies in just 15 minutes.
field-fare.com



SHORTBREAD HOUSE EDINBURGH TRULY HANDMADE SHORTBREAD
These tall tins of rich-tasting, hand-cut shortbread will bring a bright and modern feel to shelves
shortbreadhouse.com



STAG SMOKED BUTTER OATCAKES
Smoked Butter Oatcakes gently smoked over oak and beech chips in the last traditional smokehouse in Stornoway.
stagbakeries.co.uk



PETER'S YARD
Peter's Yard Spelt & Fig and Seeded Wholegrain crispbread have been specifically designed to create interest and diversity on a cheeseboard.
www.petersyard.com



RENDLES CHEESE PALMIERS
All-butter gourmet puff pastries baked with Gouda and Edam cheese which are perfect with cheese and delightful eaten on their own.
rendlesuk.com



BOTHAM'S OF WHITBY TEA BISCUITS
Botham's of Whitby offers 10 if its rich Tea Biscuits in attractive packaging which allows the product to be easily seen.
botham.co.uk



ISLAND BAKERY LEMON MELTS
Irrestible tangy treats dipped in ridiculously rich white chocolate. The zesty lemon biscuit is the perfect foil for the rich, sweet blanket of white chocolate.
islandbakery.co.uk



FARMHOUSE BISCUITS DARK CHOCOLATE COATED GINGERS
A buttery, ginger treat encased in deep velvety chocolate. This biscuit offers a truly extravagant and very indulgent experience.
farmhouse-biscuits.co.uk



FURNISS GINGERS
Furniss has been using ginger in their biscuits for over 125 years and the new Gingers range comprises Original, Dark Chocolate Chip, Blossom Honey and Spiced Lemon
furniss-foods.co.uk



BUITEMAN GOAT'S CHEESE BISCUITS
Add a point of difference to your biscuits for cheese and snacking range with the unique and tasty Buiteman Goat's Cheese Biscuits
empirebespokefoods.com



speciality end of the market and are performing well in delis, farm shops and also in garden centres. "Unlike those made by a lot other shortbread companies, our biscuits are truly handmade," Anthony says. "We still cut each biscuit individually, which gives it a unique texture taste and appearance."

Ready-to-bake

An interesting variant is the ready-to-bake biscuit, which offers consumers a just-baked experience. field fare's range of ready-to-bake cookies are sold as frozen pucks of dough and cooked straight from frozen, making freshly baked cookies in just 15 minutes. Customers can buy as many or as few as they want from the field fare freezers.

"There's great sales potential from our cookie range," says Karen Deans, managing director of field fare. "When we sample the range in farm shops, the feedback is always amazing. People love the fact that they can have the quality and taste of freshly-baked cookies in their own home, and at the same time, the convenience of being able to buy as many as they want as frozen pucks of dough, meaning no waste. They are also ideal for coffee shops and cafes because of their convenient format and quick cook times." The field fare range of cookies consists of Chocolate with Chocolate Chip, Plain Chocolate Chip and Pecan with White Chocolate Chip.

Savoury biscuits

The ideal biscuit, in the view of Jenny Burton, head of sales and marketing at Stag Bakeries on the Outer Hebridean island of Lewis, is one which complements whichever food it accompanies, while still working as a stand-alone snack." Stag has a reputation for pushing the envelope when it comes to new products. "We brought out our seaweed biscuits a couple of years ago," Jenny says, "and now everyone is jumping on the bandwagon."

Stag's biscuits are ideal partners for artisan cheese, Jenny says, "because we use ingredients that complement the flavours of those cheeses. They work hard to bring out the best of each cheese they accompany, without quashing the individuality of that cheese." Not only can some savoury biscuits overpower the flavour of the cheese, she says, but the "taste can be too bland, in which case the biscuit is just a carrier; it's not doinjg the job of enhancing the cheese."

There are particular biscuits which go very well with certain cheeses, Jenny says. "Sam Rosen Nash, buyer at Fortnum and Mason, once said that she enjoyed eating the seaweed water biscuits with a blue cheese, because the saltiness of the biscuit (although there is not very much salt at all), enhances the salt that is coming through from the blue cheese." Jenny's own personal favourite combination is "a rosemary water biscuit with a Brie, or Perl Wen." The company has "new and exciting stuff coming out in the later half of this year," Jenny says, "which will be completely different from what we have been doing." Innovation appears to be key at Stag Bakeries. "We do like to have unusual flavourings," Jenny says."because if you conform, where is your USP? We like to be market leaders, not market followers. So watch this space!"

Jason Goody, director of Rendles UK produces Rendles Cheese Palmiers, a product with the cheese already on board. These, Jason says, "are baked according to an old family recipe. We only use natural ingredients and real Gouda and Edam cheese, which gives our savoury biscuits a full and delicious flavour. As well as a high cheese content, we use real butter. The dough is folded over and over again, which creates a light and crunchy structure." These, usefully, can be sold both with your biscuits and cheese and also as a stand-alone savoury snacking item.

Own branding

Adding your own-branded cheese biscuits can strengthen your brand overall, says Ros Windsor, managing director of Paxton & Whitfield, which offers an own-brand line of accompaniments for its cheese. "I hope it enhances our appeal, as it extends the brand and validates our expertise in all things cheese," Ros says. "It also gives us an opportunity to expand into different areas ie, fine foods. It goes without saying that as a cheesemonger you should offer your customers a range of products that they can enjoy with their cheese, and biscuits are an important cheese accompaniment. However, there is no point in doing it if the quality of the crackers is not to the same standard as your cheese." An own-brand biscuit will be trusted by the customer as a good choice, Ros says, "if the customer trusts and likes your brand to begin with."



As with other products, cheese biscuits for Paxton & Whitfield are developed in various ways. Shop staff "listen to our customers and get their comments or feedback on what they are looking for and what they like. We talk to our teams in the shops and at our head office to find out if they've had customer comments/ideas and if they have ideas themselves. We also work closely with our producers not only on existing lines but also on developing new ones, and we do competitive shopping to see what is out there. Finally, we also do our own research. For example, when we are in the process of launching a new biscuit, we will carry out market research with focus groups, in order to get feedback on the new products.

"We've been seeing a lot of Continental-style biscuits being shown at the trade shows, for example, Italian flat crisp biscuits, either plain, with olives or with herbs. As far as trends in cracker buying go, we've seen crackers moving towards having a more global feel and influence, rather than just traditional British cheese biscuits." This, Ros says, could well be because "customers travel more and are exposed to different ways to enjoy cheese abroad. They are also happy to experiment with different textures and flavour combinations, and hence are keen to try new things."



MEET THE BUYER

A prime location and a fine wine selection has helped the Pallant deli in Arundel ride the recession. Ross Gilfillan talks to owner Mark Robinson



The Pallant deli of Arundel is "a good mix of things," says Mark Robinson, who runs this West Sussex food outlet with the help of business partner Jonathan Brantigan. "You can come in and find surprises, but everyday things, too. We have a lot of local products, but we don't specialise in these." Pallant, he says, "is like a treasure trove where people can rummage around and find something unusual." The shop offers deli produce, "cheese, grocery, a very good wine selection, malt whiskies and port." If there is a stand-out category, Mark says, "it is our wine selection." The deli had been a wine merchant and this, he says, is still an important part of the business.

Pallant began trading in Chichester, and is named for an area there of that name. High rents probably forced out the then owners Mark thinks. "They found premises in Arundel, which is a much smaller town, but which nevertheless suits the business." Pallant has now been a feature of the town for around 15 years. The present location is "pretty good," Mark admits. "If you come to Arundel, you will find us, because we're right in the centre of town on the square at the bottom of the hill. It's more a matter of getting people to come to Arundel, because once here they'll see us and pop in."



THE DELI BENEFITS FROM LOCAL AND TOURIST TRADE

"We bought the shop as a going concern eight years ago," Mark says. "A French couple had run it for about five years and it was very |French focused. The shop sold a lot of French wines and cheeses." Because the shop was bought as a going concern, the transition between owners was relatively easy. "We opened it out a bit and introduced a little more local produce," Mark says. "We had people coming through the door from day one." He was, he says, lucky with his staff, "the vast majority of whom we inherited with the business and are still with us. They have product knowledge, experience and enthusiasm. Five out of the eight are original members who have actually been here for over 10 years."

It helped too that Jonathan has a head for figures and experience as a London-based management consultant, while Mark had accumulated experience in high-end food retail. After working in Selfridges, Fortnum & Mason's wine department and in a food buying department at Marks & Spencers' head office, Mark worked for 18 months with Patricia Michelson at La Fromagerie. "That really was an eye-opener," he says, "it was very interesting to see how she operates." At this key London cheese shop, Mark learned merchandising and gained an understanding of the "detailed knowledge you need to have about every cheese you sell."

Sales increase

The Pallant, which has a staff of eight although only two are full-timers, is experiencing a welcome upswing in its turnover. "When we took over," Mark says, "we had a couple of years of growth, which was good to see, and then we had a bit of stagnation at the height of the recession. Last year, we saw sales grow by about 8%. It's very important to get the peaks of Christmas and Easter right. In December, we saw sales increase by 15%." Unlike a lot of delis, Mark says, "most of which offer some kind of coffee or whatever, we don't have any of that. We made a conscious decision to be just a retailer. A lot of delis offer a few coffees and then before they know it, that side has grown larger and larger. When this happens, the shop itself gets smaller and smaller."

Trade in Arundel is partly dependent on weather and visitors. "It's a touristy town, although we have good local trade as well," Mark says. "If you get a very wet summer like that of 2012, people just don't come." Tourism boosts turnover for the six months of year when the castle is open, and owners of second homes who weekend in Arundel offer another source of revenue. These customers, Mark says, "are more adventurous and knowledgeable about food. They know about the different salamis and charcuterie." Selling particularly well recently have been Portuguese custard tarts made by Galeta. These "have been an incredible success story. We get through cases and cases of these things," Mark says. "They come down frozen and we just finish them off in the oven."

Having a love for the food he sells is crucial to the success of a venture such as this, Mark says. "Without the passion, it's not going to work." Staff need to share this passion too: "they have to have confidence and a rapport with customers, because there is so much competition and supermarkets are so good these days." One of the foods Mark is passionate about is his local ham on the bone, which customers can watch being carved to their requirements, which, Mark says, adds a little theatre. Among his cheese selection are fresh goats cheeses from the Loire which are delivered to the shop every fortnight and which "you just don't see in the supermarkets." Up until now – the shop is about to install an EPOS system – stocking decisions have been based on Mark's considerable experience in retail, "very much a matter of getting a feel for what will work and what will not."







In The Know





Food futurologist Morgaine Gaye shares her predictions for our industry

As a food futurologist, I focus on global trends and carry out ethnographic research to discover what the future looks like, what people will want and why they'll want it, then translate this for the food business. I have to be quite observant – I travel a lot to gather ideas which seem interesting to me, then try to find ways to prove their significance.

For large food companies I work three years in advance and am not particularly interested in fads – I don't work towards conclusions like 'Korean food will be popular this summer'; my work is much more about proving a massive social trend and what will be affected as a result.

Since I was very young I've been interested in what people think and what makes them do the things they do. Food is the best indicator for that, as we can see throughout history. Its part of culture and behaviour, it's ethnographic, it's how we share and come together and how we identify ourselves. Aspiration, religion – it affects everything.

For me, the important thing to focus on is not what's becoming big, it's why. Many people will say when sales of porridge oats see a boost that consumers are on a health kick, but I see beyond that. For me the 'why' is much more interesting than the 'what', as it reveals the finances, geopolitics and the economics of our culture.

> "Nothing exists in a vacuum – every element of our culture affects the food we eat"

Coming soon...

There's a great number of food evolutions which we'll see emerging over the next few years. For me, one of the most exciting is water – across the world people are experiencing water shortages and droughts, and questioning the quality of their water supply. Water sommeliers are beginning to offer a myriad of different types of water, from tree sap and maple water to water which has been pumped with a flavoured gas so is calorie-free. 'Melts' are becoming popular as people care more about the provenance of their water, for example Icelandic water which is melted from glaciers. There's actually a company creating icebergs and melting them! Water is going to become a luxury, both in the realms of food and entertainment – much more than simply filling a glass from the tap.

Together with Paul A Young, I created The Sweetshop of the Future for FutureFest, based on five main premises. One was water, so we created Thirst Globes; as a lot of chocolates contain a soft or liquid filling, we decided to fill chocolate shells with dehydrated vegetable powders (in line with the move away from sweet and sugar) which blend with the saliva in your mouth to make a ganache. Another creation was the Micro Disruption Bar, which was inspired by the rising cost of cacao and made with 100% cocoa and coconut sugar.

In 2017 I see a rise of social disruption and anti-fashion – ugliness will become the new beauty – so the third thing we created was edible furniture which represented the sense of impermanence. The fourth was edible diamonds, a reflection on fracking and the way we view human resource and suffering; I think that in the future we will see diamonds in the same way we see fur coats. The final premise was Nano Rings, for which we looked at the luxury of volume and space in the increasing crush of life. They looked like a lattice-work metal rings, so although the surface area was big you were consuming a lot of air and space.

The world of alcohol will change – the younger generation are already changing their approach to alcoholic drinks, and new taxation will means that it becomes subsumed into foods, like boozy jams, instead. People will also play more with alcohol; there won't be as much straight-up drinking to get drunk as we can see at the moment.

Future retail

The way we purchase food is continuously evolving, and this will always be the case. For years the industry's been talking about intelligent fridges, which will know when we're low on something and will order it to be delivered to us, and these are very nearly a reality. At the moment we have access to things like Amazon Dash, which offers a time-saving and convenient way to shop – such things will become more widespread.

Understanding the way our bodies work is becoming very important, as is recognising the individual needs each of us have. Once we have a more personalised approach to keeping healthy, diets will become a thing of the past. DNA testing for the quantified-self is already on the rise. Survival will become more prominent, as will cutting out the middle man – I expect to see groups of people clubbing together to buy fruit fresh from the grower, for example, rather than individually from the supermarket.

Ultimately, these things aren't a question of access, but awareness. Small independent retailers may not have the time to search out new trends and have their fingers on the pulse, while bigger businesses will have the manpower to do so. Big organisations often employ someone specifically to attend international food shows and seek the next big thing. This doesn't mean that the future of food is beyond the realms of independent retail, though – Speciality Food readers just need to keep their eyes open all the time.





BAKE SALES

Cash in on the home baking boom with our guide to this thriving market

It will come as no surprise to read that the home baking world is booming – no doubt thanks to television shows such as *The Great British Bake Off* – but how to harness this popularity? In the UK, the sector is now worth £1.8 million and growing according to Mintel; with artisan flours more readily available and the quality of sugars, flavourings and decorations on the rise, now's the time to act. Keep an eye out for local independent producers, put *Bake Off* dates in your diary (you could always theme your displays to reflect the subject of that week's show), and attend trade shows – you may be surprised by the number there are, and the variety of products on offer.

Baking provides opportunities for events – as well as offering freshly-baked bread, cake or biscuit samples to showcase the range you stock, why not hold baking occasions? Cake decorating classes are as popular as ever, and a cupcake decorating class held on a weekend morning could make for a great kids party.

The best thing about stocking home baking products? It's not a seasonal thing. Strawberries and cream positioned alongside self-raising flour and local free-range eggs could make an attractive summer display, while brown sugars and dried fruit scream Christmas cake when October rolls around.



Hannah Marriage, director of Chelmsford-based Marriage's Millers shares her sales tips

Marriage's provides A5 point of sale recipe cards that can be displayed in-store alongside the home baking fixture. For a personal touch and to involve your staff, you could ask them to also share their favourite recipe with customers in-store and through your social media.

POS can be used to convey the provenance and the story of brands in the home baking fixture; if your flour is organic, traditionally stoneground and from an independent flour miller, why not shout about it?

Staff can also be great advocates; if they enjoy baking, encourage them to try different home baking ingredients and then they can talk about them to shoppers. They'll see the difference when using higher protein strong bread making flours, for example, as these can provide a greater tolerance when baking, so you are less likely to have bread making failures. The same with using high quality cake flour – this will often offer a superior white colour than lower quality flours.

As well as quality, consumers have a greater awareness of the health benefits of ancient grains like spelt. Our Light Spelt flour is already proving a popular seller with home bakers. Spelt flour is a good source of fibre, so an ideal choice for people looking to increase their fibre intake. It is also versatile and can be used in homemade breads, pizza, cakes and pancakes. Spelt is an ancient wheat variety which some people find more digestible, and produces bakes with a sweet, nutty flavour.

As well as an awareness of the health benefits, a trend towards more adventurous baking is contributing to the growing popularity of ancient grains. Shows like The Great British Bake Off have generated excitement around home baking, encouraging people to bake more frequently and be more experimental in their bakes, as well as wanting to create their own variations on recipes and try out different grains alongside conventional wheat flours.

Also currently popular is our new Moulsham Malted Seeded – a malted brown flour packed with sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, millet, brown linseed and poppy seeds for extra taste and texture. This can be used for hand baking or in the bread machine (as can all our strong bread flours – which come recommended from Panasonic's est Kitchen to use within their bread machines).



> "Staff can also be great advocates; if they enjoy baking, encourage them to try different home baking ingredients and then they can talk about them to shoppers"







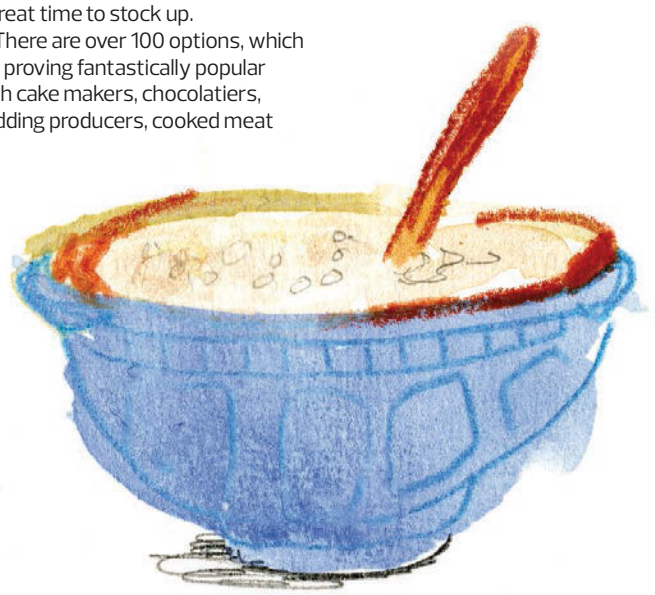
Roy Anderton-Tyers, director of Uncle Roys tells Speciality Food about his ever-popular baking ranges

The award-winning, family-run Uncle Roy's has two ranges which are particularly popular with the baking fraternity. The Eat Me! Edible Flowers are wonderful for decorating cupcakes and celebration cakes (as well as being great in shortbread, jams, jellies and sauces), but the big success story is the Natural Extracts & Essences range, described in *Good Housekeeping* as ''Astounding'', that keeps popping up in recipe books and blogs – so this is a great time to stock up.

There are over 100 options, which are proving fantastically popular with cake makers, chocolatiers, pudding producers, cooked meat makers, bakers, dessert designers, cupcake creators, entrée engineers, cocktail shakers – anyone who wants to ensure that their creation tastes 'just right'. Spotted more than once in the background of TV baking-experts' kitchens, this extensive range is proving popular with cooks, chefs and foodies at home and abroad.

All varieties are gluten-free, nut-free, dairy-free, soya-free and suitable for vegetarians and vegans – plus most flavours are alcohol-free (even the gin, whisky and brandy flavours!). With fruit, flower, nut, vegetable, dairy, seed, spirit, herb and spice flavours as well as 'brown notes' such as caramel, chocolate and butterscotch, customers add the range to meringues, drinks, sauces, confectionery, desserts, dressings, marshmallows, ice cream and all forms of baking and savoury cooking.

All varieties are presented in smart 50ml screw-top bottles with an in-built dropper so that you can add the flavour you want a drop at a time – and, of course, unlike fresh or dried materials, these handy bottles keep their flavour to the last drop.





TREND **TALK**

Duncan Hider, joint MD, Hider Foods

We sell a pretty complete range of all the ambient lines needed for baking, and because of our role as importers of dried fruit and nuts, we would consider our range to be more extensive to that of our competitors. Ranges include artisan flours from Wessex Mill, baking mixes from Wrights, gluten-free mixes from Mrs Crimbles, our own-brand range of nuts, dried fruits and seeds in various size formats from 150g to 1kg for home bakers and up to 25kg for more commercial operations, huge ranges of cake decorations, cupcake cases and pastry cutters from Scrumptious Sprinkles, all-natural flavourings, essences and extracts including vanilla, rose and orange from Steenbergs and Taylor & College, and cooking chocolates and cocoas from Green & Blacks and Menier.

We have responded to the recent rise in popularity with expansion of the size and variety of our ranges to cater for the increased demand. As a distributor and wholesaler, we have to act as barometers for the sector so that our customers have the choice they need to keep up with trends and, where possible, be ahead of the curve. Wessex Mill Flours are a huge success for us even though we've only recently taken them on. Our new own-label 1kg range of nuts and fruits is also proving very popular and demonstrates the increase in serious domestic bakers.

When it comes to upselling, I suggest product placement close to breads and cakes can help by association and cross-selling. Recipe suggestions and POS material are always invaluable, as with all products. Celebrity endorsements or associations are as powerful as ever, particularly any reference to the doyens of the sector, Mary Berry and Paul Hollywood.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Baking mixes by Sweet Pea Pantry, spelt flours by Sharpham Park, ready-to-roll coloured fondant icings from Renshaws, and a limited range of AGA Cookware.

> Sales of baking products have shot up in recent years, and the huge media exposure from *The Great British Bake Off* played a large part in making it fashionable again. Having said that, the cupcake phenomenon from the States possibly predated this



Lisa Martin, director of Taste Direct talks us through the convenience of frozen baking mixes

Taste Direct has been going for nine years, selling frozen part-baked bakery products primarily into the UK foodservice market. In September 2014, we launched a new frozen home baking range at the Speciality Fine Food Fair under a new brand name that we created for the range, Baking Agent.

We developed the range as a result of our extensive knowledge of frozen bakery, and we felt that there was an opportunity to offer a home baking range to consumers that was convenient to use but still gave them the flexibility to add their own personal touches to our doughs and mixture and feel part of the baking process.

Consumers can create our range in three easy steps:

- Defrost – and take a break for 45 minutes
- Roll – a little effort needed for 10 minutes
- Bake – like a pro for 15 minutes

The range is perfect for those aspiring bakers who are willing to give baking a go, but may not have the time to do it from scratch.

We have three products currently in the range:

- 500g Scone dough – butter flavour scone dough that makes eight scrumptious scones per pot
- 500g Cookie dough – vanilla flavour cookie dough that is crunchy on the outside and soft in the middle once baked. Each pot makes 24 cookies
- 390g Vanilla flavour muffin mixture – a smooth muffin mixture that is deposited in a disposable piping bag ready to pipe directly into muffin cases. Each piping bag can make six large muffins, 12 fairy cakes or 24 mini muffins for those who just want to sample!

Our range is different to others on the market, firstly because it's a frozen product. Most home baking products are ambient but our range is the first in the freezer display. This allows the product to keep its quality for longer period of time. Our total shelf life is nine months, which allows the consumer to use our products when it's convenient for them.

Our packaging for the muffin is unique. There is no other product on the market where the mixture is already in a piping bag, ready to pipe directly into muffin cases once defrosted. Less time and less mess – providing you don't point the piping bag downwards after you cut it!

The products give you the flexibility to choose whichever size product you want to make. You can use a large cookie cutter if you want large scones or cookies or mini muffin cases for sample size muffins.





FINAL **FLOURISH**

Ruth Yard of Ooh! Chocolata introduces us to the new Let's Bake range



WHAT'S IN YOUR RANGE?

Within our new Let's Bake range, we offer eight different varieties of chocolate buttons for baking and 16 types of sprinkles and ingredients for cakes. Our baking button range includes a 38% milk chocolate; 72% dark, a high quality white chocolate as well as three single origin dark chocolate varieties: Colombian Fino de Aroma, Ecuadorian and a Madagascan. In addition, we have a dairy-free milk and a no added sugar dark – so it pretty much covers all bases. The sprinkles are 16 of the most popular – natural colour hundreds and thousands, white chocolate stars, lots of chocolate curls, and bake-stable chocolate chunks and crystallised ginger – and more besides.

WHAT ARE THEIR USES?

All of the buttons are perfect for any recipe that requires good quality chocolate – if you can stop nibbling long enough! As for the sprinkles and cake ingredients, they are also pretty handy for ice cream toppings (our proper chocolate flakes are a must).

WHY STOCK?

We want all our products to inspire customers to buy. With our sprinkle boxes in particular, we also want to inspire them to bake – even if that hadn't been their intention! The small, pink sprinkle boxes are very cute and just asking to be popped into baskets. These are products that can be used to get customers' interest and help sales in other areas of the shop too – after all, you can't make a cake without flour, sugar, eggs, butter...

WHAT'S IN THE FUTURE?

We will keep listening to our customers and thinking about how we can improve on what we can offer them – that is what drives us and will influence where we take the range in the future. The dairy-free milk and no added sugar ranges are new lines for us and ones we will keep a close eye on. It's a developing sector and may well be one we will explore further.

More generally, baking may have become a bit more on-trend recently but it has always been here, and, as long as there are birthday parties, there will always be a place for hundreds and thousands – so home baking is here to stay. It's our job to help inspire cake baking by providing excellent quality and beautifully presented products to the independent sector.

> "Baking may have become a bit more on-trend recently but it has always been here, and, as long as there are birthday parties, there will always be a place for hundreds and thousands – so home baking is here to stay"



STOCK CHECK

SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE 2015



UNCLE ROYS EXTRACTS, ESSENCES AND COLOURS

Over 100 varieties that are very popular with manufacturers and home bakers to produce just the right flavour in all forms of baking.

uncleroys.co.uk



STEENBERGS ORGANIC ORANGE SUGAR

Citrus sweet flavours of Mediterranean orange peel mixed with a wonderful organic unrefined cane sugar.

steenbergs.co.uk



OPIES STEM GINGER

A young ginger that is picked when it's soft so perfect for using as an ingredient in baking. Steeped in syrup, which can also be used in baking and for drinks.

opiesfoods.com



MARRIAGE'S DARK RYE FLOUR

A 100% wholemeal rye flour, ideal for traditional pumpernickel style breads.

flour.co.uk



DIVINE COCOA POWDER

This rich cocoa powder delivers an intense chocolate flavour that is a testament to the pride Kuapa Kokoo farmers take in their fermentation and drying techniques.

divinechocolate.com



BIONA COCONUT PALM SUGAR

Enjoy the rich butterscotch, caramel flavours of this coconut blossom sugar. Use as an alternative sweetener in drinks, baking and desserts.

biona.co.uk



DOVES FARM BAKING POWDER

Our baking powder is a classic raising agent for adding to plain flours when making cakes, scones and puddings.

dovesfarm.co.uk



BAKING AGENT FROZEN MUFFIN MIXTURE

Made in the UK, using quality ingredients with no preservatives or artificial colours or flavours.

bakingagent.co.uk



OOH! CHOCOLATA STRAWBERRY CURLS

Perfect for cake and ice cream topping. Just one of 24 new varieties of baking products from Ooh! Let's Bake.

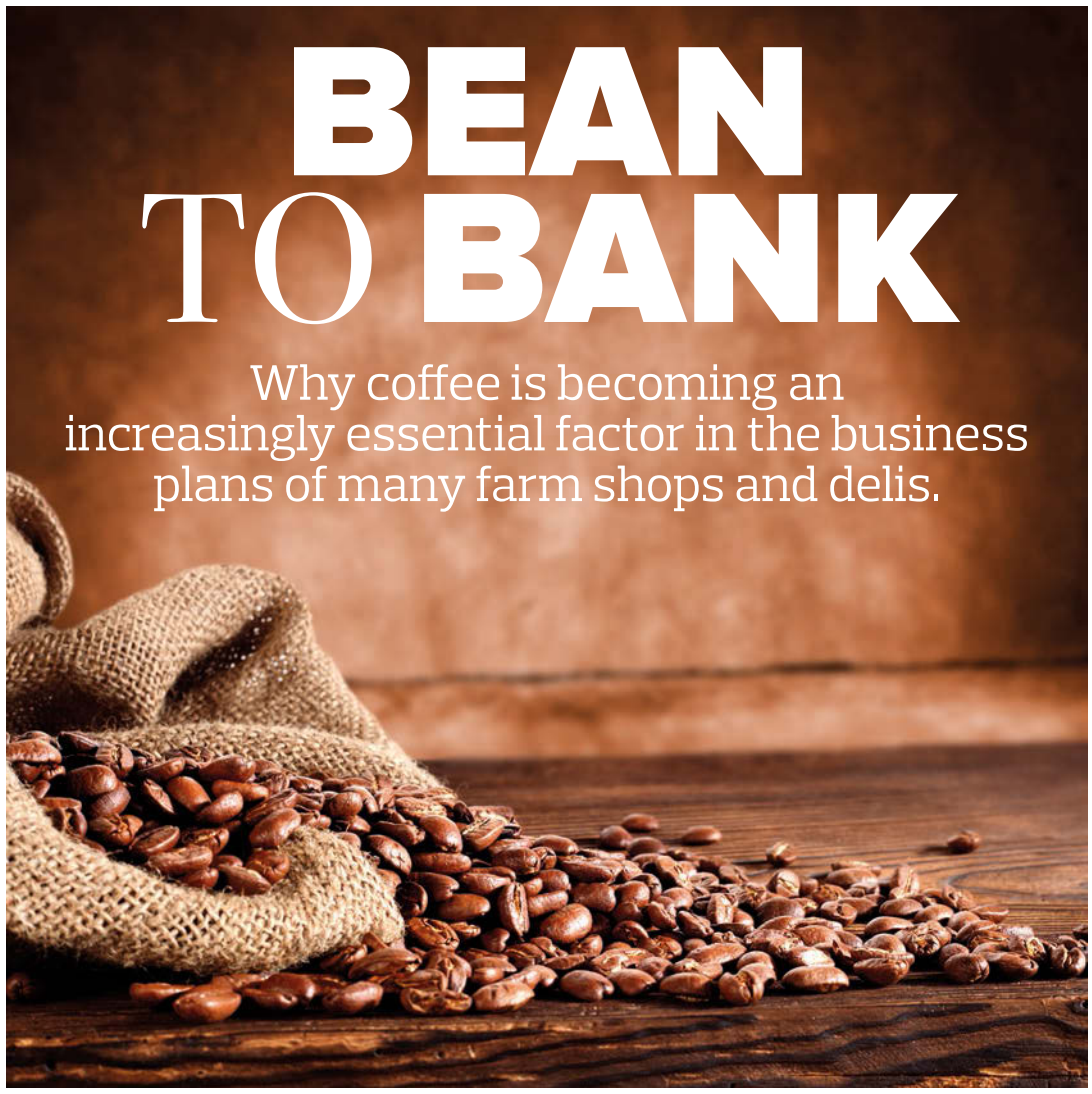
loveooh.co.uk



CHÉ DULCE DE LECHE

The traditional Argentinian Ché Dulce de Leche is a high quality, premium product which is made from the freshest milk.

empirebespokefoods.com



BEAN TO BANK

Why coffee is becoming an increasingly essential factor in the business plans of many farm shops and delis.

There's a name for everything, it seems. The current interest in artisanal coffee and everything that goes with it – such as improved methods of production at every stage, stronger links with the growers and the rise of the microroasters – is known as 'the third wave of coffee', which, coffee experts at Whittard of Chelsea say, "is now gearing toward lightly roasted coffee, featuring bright fruit notes and high levels of acidity. Although not suited to all beans, lighter roasts allow you to detect the delicate origin characteristics of the bean without being masked by heady roasting flavours." According to the Roastworks Coffee Co, "The Third Wave coffee movement is advancing at a stellar rate. Consumers are quickly becoming more aware of the coffee they drink and learning to appreciate lighter roasts, new brew methods and the intrinsic qualities of different growing regions. The challenge for everyone now is to keep the momentum going."

As a nation, we're actually drinking less coffee than we did years ago. The real growth has been in the lattes, mochas, macchiatos and Americanos that we guzzle in the coffee shops. The big change appears to have been in the way people drink their coffee, opting for the ease of barista service and a view of the High Street rather than the bother of struggling with the coffee machine at home. All this has meaning for independent food retailers such as delis.

"Education is the key," says Kimbo UK's managing director, Angus Mckenzie. "People get stuck about how they should make their coffee, so a switched-on retailer should research the coffees they sell and how they will work. Producing 'how to brew' guides across filter, espresso, moka, chemex, aeropress, bean to cup, pod and capsule methods is a great way to share this expertise. People who make great coffee at home will associate their eureka moment with that store, and thus loyalty is born!" By providing information, says Whittard of Chelsea, "consumers are able to make an educated decision with their coffee choices."

"An exciting new trend," says Whittard of Chelsea, "is cold brew coffee." This refers to "the process of steeping coffee grounds in cold water for between 8 and 24 hours. Grounds are then filtered, as per hot brew method. Cold brewing neutralizes a coffee high in acidity, bringing out the sweet, fruity flavours without any of the bitterness." Cold brewing is one of the trends noted by Kimbo UK's Angus Mckenzie, who says, "Trends we see are single origin blends, more Robusta-based blends and micro roasters. Cold brewed coffee and healthier versions of iced coffee are making an appearance also. People can now buy great coffee and make it at home, with equipment that won't break the bank. More stores and delis can provide the help and support to delight consumers discovering their perfect coffee." Will Little of Little's sees flavoured coffee as "definitely one of the big growth areas in the in home coffee market, fuelled by the popularity of syrups in cafes." Little's coffees are "seeing a pretty rapid trickle-down effect from this."



Own-label

Kate Jones of Cherizena Coffee has noted a trend in demand for single origin and unusual coffees. "Interest seems to be generated every time we showcase something a bit different or out of the ordinary," she says. "As soon as we mentioned we had some Mount Everest Supreme Organic Coffee in stock, for example, we had a flurry of new orders. It was the same with the Indonesian Toba Coffee." Cherizena Coffee supplies "a couple of delis with own-label branded coffee and they like to offer customers something new fairly regularly in addition to their normal range," Kate says. Many coffee drinkers are very discerning now and are also quite adventurous, so it makes sense to offer them coffees that they perhaps can't always get elsewhere."



Conversely, cafés that are mainly known for their food have realised the importance of their coffee offering. Jason Wells owns Brew, which has several outlets in South London. "Coffee is something that Brew is very passionate about," he says. The company sources "only the best beans, from Allpress in Shoreditch, who "roast on site." Jason receives two deliveries weekly of "fresh, 100% Fairtrade Arabica beans." Jason "didn't plan to set up a coffee business initially – Brew has always been a café business. We're a breakfast café and given that people love coffee for breakfast, we started to focus on the coffee as much as the food we serve."





Fads come and go and bubbles burst, but this isn't the future Jason sees for coffee drinking in Britain. "Everybody thinks the UK is a nation of tea drinkers, but 150 years ago, there were more coffee shops than tea shops. What's happened in the UK in the last 10 years or so is an acceptance of this coffee culture. 99% of people just want straight-up, great coffee from fresh beans, a well maintained machine and a barista who knows what they are doing." Owain Antcliff says, "This isn't a bubble. Our family have been doing this since 1979 and has seen a steady increase since day one. Although apathy towards large coffee chains may be starting to creep in, the vast majority of people don't know that coffee can have flavours like lemon or muscavado or peach syrup. We have a long way to go."

Saving on machinery

These days, no one is in a position to overlook the extra revenue stream offered by coffee, says Soner Yilmaz, whose Cafitalia company offers a complete coffee service for the independent retailer. With a background in coffee roasting, Soner was well-positioned to launch into the coffee machine market, and his focus in recent years has been the sale and maintenance of commercial coffee machines. Choosing a machine through Cafitalia makes sound business sense, Soner says. "Typically, we see delicatessen over-buying, or buying the wrong machinery. They buy very expensive pieces of equipment which are just not right for the job." Space can be tight in delis, he says, and "then there's the cost of getting the right power and water supply to the machine." Two machines offered by his company solve both problems.

"One is a traditional, two grid machine with a manual fill tank, so you don't need to have it plumbed in. All you need to do is fill it up and plug it in. It's quick, cheap, efficient and portable. The other is a compact, two grid machine with which you can have an internal or an external pump to maximise the space. This, Soner says, has a full chrome finish and is on special offer for a limited period at £1,800 plus VAT. Cafitalia also offers a range of Great Taste Award-winning coffees, and everything from coffee grinders, water filters and frothing jugs to after- sales maintenance and barista training. The company is currently offering a unique line of coloured sugars.

Micro roasting

Artisanal coffee roasting is on the increase. Chartley Coffee was launched in 1979, "well before milk-based coffee drinks were the norm," says founder's son and now partner Owain Antcliff. Micro roasting has grown "hugely," Owain says, "new micro-roasters are cropping up all the time." Chartley Coffee's roaster says that the company has gone "from hand-sealing sachets in the garage to roasting over 100 tonnes of beans a year." Owain wants to take the mystery out of coffee buying. "Our aim," he says, "is to take snobbery out of coffee, and make it accessible to anyone wanting to offer something more traceable and hand-crafted, whatever their size. It takes lots of experience and experimenting to find new tastes and flavours. The beans have different sizes, shapes, densities and moisture contents." Specialised equipment enables the roaster not only to arrive at the best result, flavour-wise, but also to replicate that flavour in the next batch.


THE CHARTLEY COFFEE TEAM


OWAIN ANTCLIFF, ROASTER

Easy and ethical

John Quilter, is a founder of CRU Kafe, a London startup offering an easy solution for independent retailers wanting to provide coffee by putting 100% organic, speciality coffee into recyclable Nespresso-compatible pods. Selling the pods themselves can add a new coffee dimension as well. John estimates that 15% of UK population have Nespresso and compatible machines. CRU offers Fairtrade coffee in a biodegradable pod, which ticks the ethical boxes. "CRU focuses on using Arabica, speciality beans rather than using robusta (mainly used in bulking out coffee blends as it packs a more caffeinated punch)," John says. "Coffee specialists may still turn their noses up at 'pod coffee,' but it's undeniable that speciality grade coffee is now being encapsulated and is producing a high quality cup." The system is ideal for farm shops and delis, he says, because "CRU's coffee is artisanal and therefore fits in with the produce often displayed in farm shops and delis (organic, fair trade and biodegradable)."

And what does the future hold for coffee and coffee shops? "Coffee shops and coffee will keep evolving," predicts Kimbo's Angus Mckenzie. "They will become hybrids of education, entertainment, choice and quality. The established chains do well, but the new energy of operators with passion, high quality goals and exciting ideas will create and exploit a new niche of the market. I'd like to see retailers combining selling coffee with machine elements whereby you can spend, learn and consume under one roof. That model has real mileage- think of it as the Apple store for coffee and you get the idea! Such stores already exist and have become real destination stores.

"If your staff don't know where their coffee is from and five key points about it, you've got some work to do!"

STOCK CHECK



LITTLE'S HERITAGE COSTA RICA TARRAZU
Bright, fruity flavours in a coffee whose beans were harvested in Costa Rica. Enjoy a smooth, chocolatey flavour.
wearelittles.com



TAYLORS OF HARROGATE COLOMBIA BEANS
Bright and aromatic, the ethical Taylors of Harrogate's sources its top quality Colombia Beans in the foothills of the Andes.
taylorsofharrogate.co.uk



CHERIZENA MOUNT EVEREST SUPREME
Grown in the world's most northerly plantations this coffee has very little acidity and offer consumers a soft, smooth flavour.
cherizena.co.uk



ORIGIN FAZENDA PANTANO
Expect flavours of ripe plum, berries and dark chocolate with a medium to high body in an appetizing cup of Origin's Brazil Fazenda Pantano (Pulped Natural).
origincoffee.co.uk



COALTOWN BLACK GOLD
Coaltown's Black Gold No 3 Signature Blend employs whole coffee beans from Colombia, Peru and Brazil to produce great depth of character.
coaltowncoffee.co.uk



GRUMPY MULE RWASHOSCCO
This ground Arabica coffee from Ruli, Rwanda, offers jammy, berry notes and is sweet, with a balanced citrus acidity.
grumpymule.co.uk





MEAT THE MAKER

No longer the preserve of European makers, charcuterie is becoming one of Britain's proudest specialities

Over the passing years, Britons have adopted a number of traditionally continental pastimes – from eating al fresco and late into the evening to becoming connoisseurs of smelly cheese, the European lifestyle is one we've truly taken to heart. Charcuterie offers a valuable example of this, with consumer demand booming in recent times and a new wave of producers proudly waving our flag. Three experts at the front line of the revolution share their thoughts.



TREND **TALK**

with Graham Stoodley of dell'ami

Dell'ami stocks a range of charcuterie from artisan producers in Spain, Italy, France, Germany and, of course, the UK. This cross section provides the best possible scope for us to highlight the regional differences and specialities in cured hams, salami, bresaola, chorizo and salchichon etc.

What's new?

There is a much broader product offering available in the UK today. At dell'ami we have focused on delivering top quality products made by specialists, who take pride in carefully rearing and curing their meat. All our continental charcuterie is made using traditional ageing processes and time-honoured recipes – which in some cases date back hundreds of years – to deliver great depth of flavour and authenticity.

I think because it's an emerging practice in the UK, our producers are freer to experiment. They are not constrained by tradition and heritage so we have some marvellous innovations such as Green Pepper & Venison Salami from Great Glen Charcuterie and Suffolk Salami's Rosemary Salami.

British vs continental

In our product range, the overall quality of British charcuterie stands admirably alongside its continental cousins. It must be remembered that there is some really unpleasant mass-produced cured meats made overseas, and so retailers have to educate themselves and their customers to be discerning about their purchases. This means looking at meat content, how the animals were reared, what they ate and so on.

Geography plays a big part in influencing the characteristics of charcuterie, for example free-range Iberico pigs roam the ancient forests in south-west Spain and are fed on a diet of acorns which lends a rich marbling to the meat.

Looking forward

I have been looking at a couple of potential new suppliers who both have something different to offer. There are effectively two distinct routes to market: producing a heritage range or creating really innovative products which accentuate thoroughly British flavours rather than replicating charcuterie that is traditionally associated with the Continent. It's great to see people championing the tastes that as a nation we're all familiar with and partial to.

DELL'AMI'S CHARCUTERIE ESSENTIALS

JAMON SERRANO
8 month cure and beautiful deep sweet flavour

PROSCIUTTO DI PARMA
Aged for 12 months and made from pigs fed on grain and whey from Parmesan production. It's a classic

IBERICO BELLOTA CHORIZO
The best available, and the most familiar, but maybe alternate with Sobrasada, also an Iberico Bellota with chorizo flavours but this is a soft spreadable sausage that's delicious grilled.

SMOKED PANCETTA
Air dried and delicious in so many dishes

GREEN PEPPER AND VENISON SALAMI
British and delicious

The trend for DIY is growing exponentially, with cheesemaking kits just an example of the gifting successes we've seen over the past couple of years. Ross&Ross has stepped the home curing sector up a gear with its quality offering. Ross Bearman, co-director of Ross&Ross talks us through the consumer demand for DIY.

The trend for DIY cooking processes has been growing steadily over the last few years, but 2015 is set to be the year for it. Encouraged by media interest in the form of popular television shows like The Great British Bake Off and the ever more adventurous contestants on Masterchef, the general public are now turning their hand to the tricky processes used by chefs and artisan producers the world over.

With kits available that enable you to make everything from cheese to wine to chocolate in the non-judgemental, safe environment of



ROSS BEARMAN AND ROSS WHITMILL OF ROSS&ROSS: SPEARHEADING THE DIY CHARCUTERIE TREND

your own kitchen, it's a trend that has taken the nation by storm. This foodie DIY trend has been supported by a shift in public behaviour. People are turning away from supermarket giants and going back to their local butchers and bakers, preferring to know that their food is coming from a trusted source.

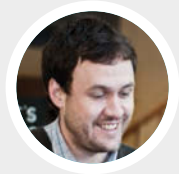
With all the publicity around eating free-range, better quality food, the high street is making a comeback and lots of people are returning to their allotments and keeping their own chickens rather than buying food of questionable origin. If you're making your own food – whether that be mixing up cheese, brewing beer, or curing bacon – you know exactly what is going into it and you can be proud of your creations at the end of the process.

It was armed with this knowledge that we created The Homemade Curing Kit... Bacon, as we could see nobody applying the trend within the charcuterie sector. The kit makes the artisan techniques used to cure bacon accessible to everyone, and contains everything you need to create your own original, sweet and smoky bacon at home.

A staple of British charcuterie, bacon has been around for much longer than you'd think, and dates back to the days when people had to cure meat with salt to be able to feed themselves through the winter. Now one of the most popular and widely eaten food products in the western world, bacon is set to stick around for while and has a reputation for tempting even the strictest of vegetarians to stray. While we may have just started the trend for home curing, the wider trend for DIY cooking processes is growing all the time and showing no signs of slowing. With an astonishing variety of kits and home recipes available, it's rapidly becoming a central trend of both the food and foodie gift industries of 2015.



MEAT TALK



Sean Cannon is the founder and managing director of Cannon & Cannon, which retails and wholesales British cured meats as well as offering a range of courses and events through meatschool.co.uk

These days, customers want to know where the animal is from and how it was raised. Customers' expectations are very high on welfare, and they are happy to spend a little extra if they know that the provenance is impeccable.

WHAT TO STOCK

We offer wholesale and retail a range of small (around 90g) cured sausages which offer the customer an easy way in to British cured meats as they can select a range of 3 for £10. Once customers have experienced the quality, then a range of large salami for slicing is important from simple pepper salamis to more complex venison salamis, truffle sausage or cobnut and red wine salami. A few key muscles such as air-dried belly (pancetta), a ham or culatello, a venison and a beef bresaola and then something a bit special such as air-dried and smoked mutton and of course a big juicy 'nduja sausage for the chilli lovers!

WHAT SHOULD WE KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR?

British charcutiers are using more and more local meats to produce exceptional charcuterie such as Romney Marsh cured lamb and air-dried duck breast. 'Nduja is becoming very popular and is wonderful to cook with. A simple dish of pasta stirred through with 'nduja, broad beans and crispy fried onion is a fantastic weekday dinner to look forward to.

HOW DO YOU LOOK AFTER CHARCUTERIE?

Charcuterie, like cheese, is a product that requires love and attention. It is generally ambient stable so it likes conditions around 4-18 degrees. Ideally keep whole pieces vacuum packed as much as possible (overnight for example), and always (like with cheese) 'clean up' the meat each day prior to opening by taking the ends off which may have gone dry. Finally, try to be innovative in selling it at a reasonable speed. It doesn't want to sit around for ages. Developing a sandwich offer or slicing and vacuum packing it for retail sale are ways of ensuring stock never gets 'tired'. Cured meats should look vibrant and appetising. There is nothing worse than a dull looking, sweaty sausage!

ANY DISPLAY TIPS?

Very much like with cheese – make it look abundant. Customers want to see the cross section of the meats. Open up the meats. A good, abundant display of clean and vibrant-looking cured meats is impossible to ignore.

HOW DO YOU UPSELL WITH CHARCUTERIE?

Good quality crackers and jars of pickles (these are really easy to make in house and jar up) always go well. The best quality meats need very little with them, though. I serve platters at home to guests straight up on a wooden board with just a small bowl of pickled veg. Make it abundant and include variety. Bring out the inner caveman in you and watch your guests drool!

> "We believe that the very best meat in the world is raised here in the UK, and that charcuterie is the best showcase for that meat"

STOCK CHECK



PAXTON & WHITFIELD SMOKED WILTSHIRE HAM
Cooked and ready to eat. A smoked British ham. Lightly smoked to give an intense flavour. Boneless for easy carving.
paxtonandwhitfield.co.uk



SUFFOLK SALAMI WITH ROSEMARY
Taking the finest cuts of pork we add salt, spices, garlic and freshly picked rosemary and then hang them to air dry until they are ready to eat.
suffolksalami.co.uk



THREE LITTLE PIGS SPICY CHORIZO
Our range of six products are all made from free-range, rare breed pork raised on our Yorkshire farm.
threelittlepigschorizo.co.uk



BRINDISA COOKING CHORIZO
A juicy chorizo with a moderate heat and balanced spicing, at its best roasted or baked.
brindisa.com



BELLOTA IBERICO RESERVA 42
Hand-sliced Iberico de Bellota which has been cured for 42 months, from the home of Pata Negra – Salamanca.
bellota.co.uk



GREEN PEPPER VENISON SALAMI
This salami is made with pure wild venison and gently spiced with added green peppercorns for the right balance.
greatglencharcuterie.com



NO SMOKE WITHOUT PROFIT

How important is including a selection of smoked foods in your offering?



There was a time when for British consumers, 'smoked food' meant smoked bacon, smoked salmon, or herring smoked as kippers. While smoked salmon remains enormously popular, the smoked seafood sector has expanded to include smoked trout, haddock, prawns, langoustines, mussels, sprats, bloaters, oysters, eels, sardines and cod roe. Smoked meats have seen a similar expansion beyond long-time favourite, smoked bacon. Along with smoked gammon, ham hock and sausages, people with a taste for the deep flavours imparted by wood smoke can now enjoy smoked beef fillets, duck breast, chicken, salamis and smoked pates. We have quickly discovered that there is very little which doesn't offer up new and interesting flavours after a visit to the smokehouse. Among the smoked cheeses available now are Cheddar, Stilton, Brie, goats cheese and Halloumi, while smoked salt, chillies, garlic, olives, mushrooms, spices, rapeseed oil and olive oils have given a spin to some storecupboard essentials. There is also smoked water, vodka and beer.

Exposure to American South-style barbecue food through TV, street food vendors and speciality restaurants has widened interest in smoking still further. Home smoking has seen a rise in interest, and the availability of small home-smokers has opened up the technique to the amateur smoker. What this means is that there is now a much-increased demand for smoked food products. Rob Cunningham, owner of Maynard's Farm has been smoking bacon using traditional methods for the past fourteen years. "If retailers can convey the glory of this natural process, then they will sell more smoked products," he says. "The story of artisan smokers is really appealing and it can be told through point of sale, or verbally." Rob offers an evocative description of his own Shropshire smokehouse: "the selected flitches of bacon hang from high hooks in the blackened brick chamber. The rich smell is deliciously intense as the local oak wood shavings gradually smoulder over a period of 48 hours. The finished smoked flitches of bacon have an extraordinary colour and richness, which is very attractive to display." Among the products smoked here are his best-selling Treacle Smoked Bacon. "As the popularity of smoking has increased," Rob says, "I've also developed a Hickory Smoked Haute Dog – this is proving to be very popular. In fact, we have seen sales of smoked products increase by around 15% in the past year."

Balancing flavours

Chris Mills, owner of Upton Smokery, says that the taste for smoked foods is increasing. "People are looking for interesting foods and I think the smoking technique is getting better and better," he says. "Smoking has gone from something done out of necessity, to something which is more of a luxury. Now it's not all about preserving, it's about achieving a balance of flavours."

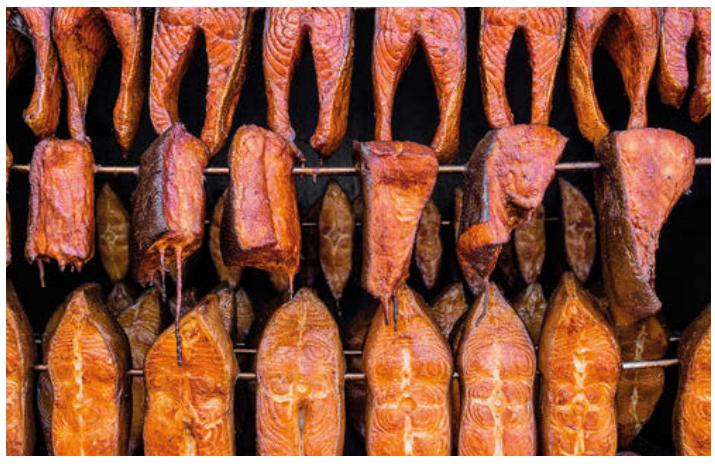
Of the increase in the variety of smoked foods now available, Chris says, "you can pretty much smoke anything now. We do a lot of things like pigeon, goose and guinea fowl, all of which smoke very well. A lot of white fish is smoked these days, which was never done before. It's a very broad spectrum. People are becoming more aware of this, too."



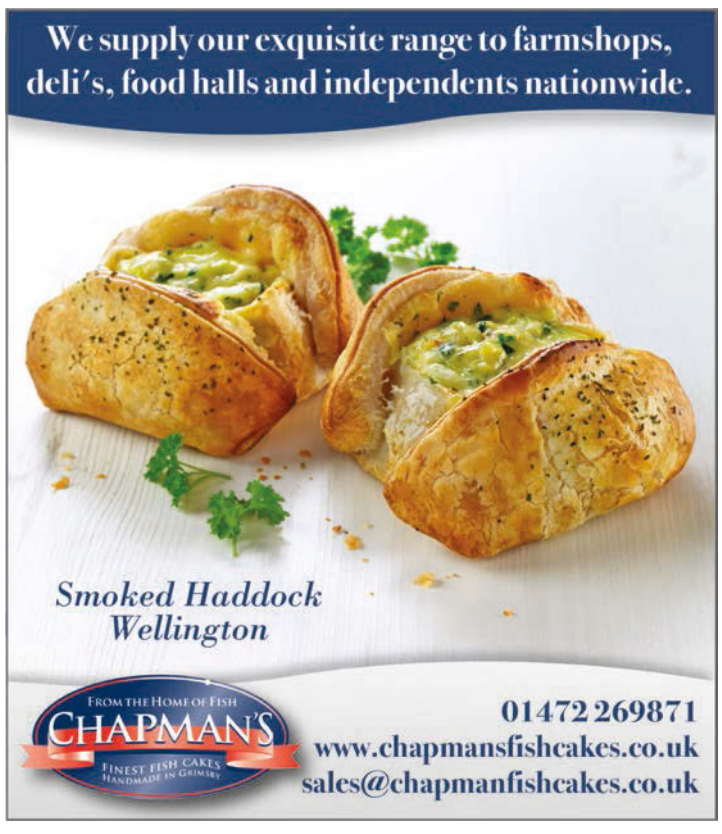
GOOD SMOKING ADDS, RATHER THAN MASKS FLAVOURS

Smoking brings a new dimension to food, Chris says. But can it mask flavours, as some people still think? Not if it is done properly, Chris says. "It all goes back to the principles of cooking, which is to find a balance of flavours. If it's too smoky, you don't taste the meat, and if it's too salty, you don't taste anything. It's striving to find that good balance of flavours. Chicken is a mild-tasting meat: if you smoke it too heavily, or salt it too heavily, you can't taste the chicken. A chef will tell you that what he strives to do is to get a balance of flavours on his plate, and I guess that in a very rudimentary way, that is what we try to do at US."

"The thing about smoking is that you can go off on weird tangents,"



> If retailers can convey the glory of this natural process – then they will sell more smoked products







Chris says. "You will always sell your core products, but we also smoke salt and pepper, garlic and sugar for smoked salted caramel. You can smoke a good range of condiments, meat, fish and, to a degree, vegetables, but probably not fruit." Selling particularly well for this Cotswold smokery are chicken duck and trout. Chris sees smoked foods as a sector which will continue to grow in popularity. "A lot of people smoke their own stuff in a basic way at home, so the process is quite widely understood. Whereas originally it was the domain of the Scots, there's now a much broader base of smokers around the country. However, there's not so many who specialise, as we do, in high quality smoked meat."

According to Graham Stroodley of Harvey and Brockless, "in recent history, smoked products have often been viewed as second rate – a flavour that is added to mask an inferior product. Supporting this assertion, there have also been some pretty dire quality products that use artificial 'smoke' additives. Fortunately, it seems that we've turned a corner and discerning customers recognise that proper smoking can deliver a special intensity and genuinely alter the character of foods in exciting and imaginative ways. For speciality retailers, there's an opportunity to promote the current trend for smoking, particularly over the summer months, when there's a seasonal leaning towards barbequing and complementary 'outdoors' flavours."



GODMINSTER ORGANIC OAK-SMOKED CHEDDAR

Smoked cheese

Smokey cheese is winning a lot of fans as customers discover the interesting range of smoked examples now available. Smokers like The Artisan Smokehouse can provide smoked Stilton, Cheddar, goats and Halloumi cheeses, while Ilchester 's Smoked Applewood is a long-established smoked cheese. Cheesemakers themselves are now getting in on the act. Godminster is one of a number of cheesemakers who have augmented their offering with smoked cheese. "We thought that a smoked cheese would make a great addition to the range," says Jess Kimber-Holloway, production and technical manager of the Somerset cheesemaker. "The success of our Vintage Organic Cheddar meant we looked to branch out and offer something new, whilst keeping the same quality values we've always had. We could see a gap in the market for a properly smoked cheese." Adding smoked cheese turned out to be a smart move: "We launched it in 2009 and it is absolutely flying," Jess says. "It did so well in its 200g incarnation that we launched a kilo truckle two years after!" Demand for the cheese has been strong, she says, "both with customers and some of the restaurants we supply. Smoked food has been a real trend recently and smoked cheese is a quick way to get that hit of smoked flavour in an easy and convenient way."

Godminster's Oak-Smoked Vintage Organic Cheddar "is rich and creamy," Jess says, and "when we smoke it, it keeps that depth of flavour. We use a medium smoke, so it's not too thick and heavy, and balances the cheese and smoky flavour. A lot of smoked cheese is made from a product that is already lower in quality, and that's why it's then smoked, whereas we smoke the same quality cheese we would sell as Vintage Organic Cheddar. You'll find that lots of smoked cheese has a thick rind on it, whereas our smoked cheese doesn't."

Truckles of Godminster Vintage Organic Cheddar are smoked over sustainable oak chippings." In order to retain the cheese's delicate balance of flavours, Jess says, "we don't smoke it for as long as others. We smoke our cheese for nine hours. Others leave it for up to 12 or 15 hours. The oak chippings we use from local saw mills give the cheese a completely natural and pure flavour, rather than the chemical flavour you get with some smoked products."

Independent market

Making smoked products with an eye for the independent market is Chapman's, an innovative seafood company known for its premium fishcakes which is located conveniently close to the sources of its ingredients, in Grimsby. "We launched in 2007," says owner Kevin Chapman. "We had seen a gap in the fishcake market. There were plenty of cheap and cheerful fishcakes out there, but nothing in the way of high-end, handmade products, so we decided to focus on this. We are now a producer of high quality, handmade fish and seafood products."

The company, whose locally sourced ingredients include not only fish but fresh herbs and Lincolnshire-grown potatoes, produces a number of popular smoked products. "We make two smoked fishcakes, smoked haddock and bacon, and smoked salmon and horseradish," says Kevin. However, he adds, his best-selling smoked fish product is Chapman's Smoked Haddock Wellington, which, he says, "is a portion of smoked haddock which is wrapped in puff pastry topped with a creamy sauce."

The company, whose two upcoming new products are salmon fillets marinated in garden mint and also in sweet chilli sauce, has a reputation for innovation. "We are always looking to do something different with fish," Kevin says, adding that Chapman's products are a particularly good fit with farm shops and delis, because "you will never find them in the supermarkets. They are all made especially for the independent end of the market."



SMOKED HADDOCK FISHCAKE
© CHAPMAN'S FISHCAKES

STOCK CHECK



RR SPINK & SONS SMOKED TROUT

, RR Spink's kiln roast Loch Etive trout offers a tasty and flaky alternative to smoked salmon which can be enjoyed hot or cold.

rrspink.co.uk



INVERAWE SMOKED SCOTTISH SALMON

Inverawe smoked salmon is created entirely by hand, in old style brick kilns, which results in deeply smoky, mouthwatering smoked fish.

smokedsalmon.co.uk



CUDDY'S CAVE OAK SMOKED CHEESE

Smoked Cuddy's Cave Cheese gets a 48 hour oak chip smoke, resulting in a succulent, smooth and creamy smoky cheese.

doddingtondairy.co.uk



OLIVES ET AL SMOKY CHIPOTLE OLIVES

High quality whole green Amphissa olives are immersed in Chipotle Chilli infused with extra virgin olive oil to warm and smoky flavours.

olivesetal.co.uk



THE BIG FISH BRAND SMOKED HADDOCK & LEEK FISH CAKES

The Big Fish Brand smoked haddock and leek fish cakes are packed full of flavour and Omega 3 they are sold in a freezer to table format.

bigfishbrand.co.uk



CHAPMANS SMOKED HADDOCK & BACON FISHCAKES

Best haddock, smoked with crunchy streaky bacon, fresh chives, mustard and hand mashed maris pipers.

chapmansfishcakes.co.uk



ALL WRAPPED UP

Good presentation can make or break a purchase. We speak to three experts to find out what's new in the world of labelling and packaging

When it comes to retail, how you present your product is key to successful sales. This will come as no surprise – bold branding will catch the eye of consumers quicker than a more muted look, and a well presented display will equal more sales than one languishing in a dark and dusty corner. There are many ways to ensure that the packaging of the products you sell does its job as well as you need it to – from branded waxed paper for wrapping your cheeses to hard-working and versatile chilled packaging to ensure your perishable items arrive at their destination in optimum condition – meaning that it's well worth doing a bit of research to find out which options will work best for you.

Own-branded paper is a relatively inexpensive and versatile way to wrap your foods while simultaneously spreading the word about your business – if you're proud of your branding, why not print it on the paper you use as well as on your bags? Be sure not to overlook labelling, too – the right information, presented attractively, can be the difference between a sale and an empty-handed customer. Make sure, too, that you adhere to the latest labelling regulations, and seek out advice if you're not up to date.

Chilled transportation is also a valuable investment if you transport your products, whether over relatively short distances or overseas. Speciality Food has spoken to two producers to find out more about its value.



Stuart Grant, director of ThermaFreeze Europe explains what makes its product stand out

The quality of the materials that go into the construction of our products is something we really pride ourselves on. The range isn't made cheaply abroad; ThermaFreeze is based and manufactured in the USA, then we (ThermaFreeze Europe) distribute it across the continent. Durability and re-usability have been the primary focus when creating ThermaFreeze – it's a long lasting and quality solution to current chilled distribution issues; it's not a throwaway item which will end up in landfill after only one use.

We've come across ice packs from other manufacturers which have to be vacuum-packed to prevent any leakage and damage. We do things differently – there's no chance of leakage with ThermaFreeze. Once our ice packs are used and fully thawed they're completely bone dry, then the end user can put them in their freezer to use again.

We've tested our cells against those made by other brands – ours can withstand 45kg of pressure which equates to over a 1,000kg of pressure per 6x4 sheet, whereas others have been known to burst when you apply pressure with just your thumb. This means they're ideal for everyday use; we recognise that there may well be multiple items in a couriered box, and ThermaFreeze ice packs mean that each item will be protected.

2015 is a very exciting year for us as we're releasing new products – we can't go into too much detail at this stage, but the product development team in America has been pushing the boundaries of performance and we're confident that their findings will revolutionise the chilled shipping industry.



PAXTON & WHITFIELD: MAKING THE MOST OF BRANDED WRAP

This new development means that companies can sell British products across the world using a standard courier service, keeping the product at its ideal temperature. Currently, products are sent via pallets on chilled transport which costs hundreds of pounds; this often isn't manageable for smaller food producers. We work closely with cheese producers and distributors, and this news will mean that they can send individual products around the world for a reasonable price – this is great for British businesses who want their product to reach a wider audience, and for retailers overseas who would like to offer more British-made chilled food. There's a lot of innovation in the UK food sector at the moment, and this offers a convenient and affordable way to spread the word internationally.

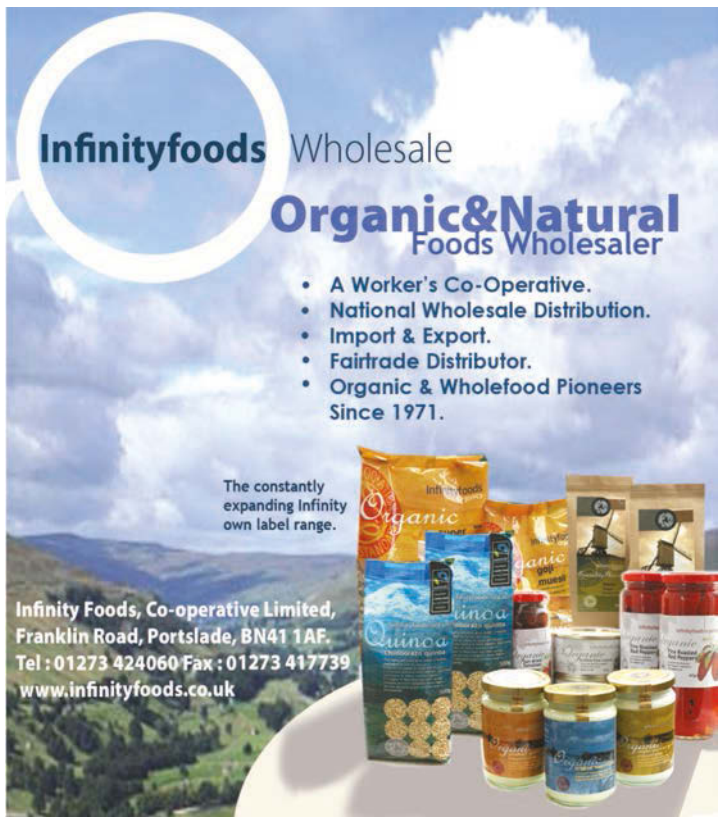


Colin Brown, director of Sorba-Freeze talks us through his versatile product's USPs

Transporting chilled foods can be a headache, especially when the packaging you're using to keep the product cool arrives at its destination lukewarm and therefore failing to fulfil its role. Colin Brown, director of Sorba-Freeze explains his product: "Sorba-Freeze provides a low cost solution to the refrigerated transportation of perishable goods, in the form of either a range of pre-sized sheets or a flexible perforated roll. Sorba-Freeze comprises a super



THERMAFREEZE'S HARDWORKING ICE PACKS







absorbent sodium polyacrylate which, once hydrated, can be frozen and used as required by the user, accompanying goods in transit, ensuring that a stable temperature level is maintained throughout.'' It also solves the age-old problem of soggy products upon arrival: ''Sorba-Freeze retains all moisture in transit, returning to a gel form that can be rehydrated and subsequently used again.''

It's also perfect for the fine food sector, having been created specifically for this sphere. ''Sorba-Freeze has been developed specifically for the artisanal food market, as a low cost, easy to store, flexible refrigeration alternative for businesses whose wider output is mainly served via mail order purchase and parcel distribution.'' It's ideal for use at a number of fine food events, Colin says: ''Provided that it is kept in the polythene liner provided, in a low moisture environment, Sorba-Freeze has an extremely long shelf life, suited for low intensity artisan use. Sorba-Freeze rolls also provide an excellent refrigerated table surface ideal for use at markets, trade fairs, and other speciality food demonstrations.''

When it comes to clients, Sorba-Freeze's customer base runs the full gamut of the fine food sector. ''We regularly provide refrigeration solutions to producers of cheeses and cured meats, seafood and shellfish, patisseries and bakeries, smokehouses and farm shops, specialty food stockists, and other business specialising in the promotion of locally-sourced food and drink production, or the preservation of organic farming and rare breed cultivation.'' But it's not only the food sector which trusts Sorba-Freeze to deliver its products in top condition, ''it is also widely used by veterinary practices and research institutes for the treatment of animals and the transportation of temperature-sensitive samples and medicines.''

When it comes to comparisons with its competitors, a selling point of Sorba-Freeze is that it's ''supplied unhydrated, which allows it to be transported easily and more economically than heavier pre-hydrated alternatives, and offers compact, space saving storage benefits.'' Convenience is also on its side: ''Sorba-Freeze can be quickly prepared for use, and retains its moisture content even after a temperature increase, ensuring that the contents of your package will arrive in the same condition as when sent.''

How to get the best out of Sorba-Freeze? Colin suggests that ''Sorba-Freeze is used by completely covering the top internal surface of any package being sent, in order to allow the cold to descend down through the box whilst in transit. The addition of a void filling or insulating material will minimising any internal air pockets which might allow the internal temperature to rise once the packages is fully sealed. We would also recommend chilling all elements of the packaging, including the box itself if possible to prevent other packaging elements contributing to a rise in internal temperature.''



> We use branded waxed paper to wrap our artisan cheese in for two reasons; one – it continues to promote the company once our customers have got their cheeses home and provides attractive/practical packaging for the cheese; and two – waxed paper is the best way to store cheese once you have it at home, as it helps the cheese to breathe and remain in a good condition
>
> **ROS WINDSOR, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF PAXTON & WHITFIELD**



Bee Hodge, managing director of InkREADible Labels offers a rundown of the business's expertise

WHAT DOES INKREADIBLE LABELS PRODUCE?

Self-adhesive labels and swing tags for artisan and independent food and drink producers and retailers.

HOW DOES THIS DIFFER FROM OTHER LABEL PRODUCERS?

We work from initial concept through to the finished product. We guide our customers on the best way to achieve their objectives. However, unlike many label companies, we work in partnership with our customers and will not simply recreate their design or idea if, in our opinion, it is not feasible, not cost effective or is unlikely to meet the desired outcome. We have a lot of interaction with our customers.

HOW CAN THIS BENEFIT INDEPENDENT RETAILERS?

We are family-run and independent, as are the majority of our customers. We understand the needs and challenges independent businesses face – so we are flexible, react quickly and work to a budget, but will also try to save money for our customers where we can. We are also able to produce small quantities of labels when market testing, launching new products or change of ingredients are required – all at a fairly low cost.

HOW CAN INDEPENDENTS USE LABELS TO STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD?

Label designs tend to follow trends. For example, is the 'rustic' or, alternatively, full colour and highly gloss look in vogue? Your labels and packaging may look fantastic, but the most important factor is that your product must look different to other brands. Sometimes doing the opposite of others can pay dividends. 'Don't be afraid' is our motto, and we try different combination of colours, print processes and materials.

WHAT DOES THE RECENT LABELLING REGULATION CHANGE MEAN FOR YOUR CUSTOMERS?

Our main advice to customers is to contact Trading Standards at the design stage to ensure that their label and packaging conforms to the new regulations. Many customers will require their labels to be updated, but this can be done cost effectively without necessarily having to complete rebrand. It is worth speaking to us and considering various options.









COTSWOLD FAYRE*

-EST 1999-

Sponsored by the speciality food wholesaler to the UK & Ireland
www.cotswoldfayre.co.uk

Last Words

the final word of fine food

Last issue's Food Chain recommended the Finzean Estate Farm Shop and Tearoom in Aberdeenshire. Ross Gilfillan talks to Catriona Farquharson and Kate Farquharson



WHO OWNS AND RUNS THE BUSINESS?
Myself, (Catriona) and Kate and our husbands, Donald and Andrew.

HOW MANY CUSTOMERS DO YOU HAVE ANNUALLY?
Approximately 30,000 through the door, but this can vary between someone simply popping in to pick up their morning paper, to someone coming for a lengthy browse and lunch.

HOW GOOD IS YOUR LOCATION?
We have the most wonderful views, although we are somewhat off the beaten track.

WHAT'S SPECIAL OR UNUSUAL ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS?
We are very rural, but part of a small thriving community. The estate is very much an integral part of the community and the farm shop plays an active role within it. We are very much a family business with old and young taking part, from Catriona's father, Alastair, who is 89 and still has an active role, down to the younger family members, who help during school holidays.

TELL US ABOUT THE CHEESE YOU STOCK
We stock Cambus O' May, Devenick Dairy as our local cheeses and also from slightly further north, such as Highland Fine Cheese and Connage Dairy.

WHAT DO YOU STOCK APART FROM CHEESE?
Our own beef and game, homemade preserves and bakes, local vegetables, Huntly Herbs, Kincardine Kitchen, Tilquillie oat products, Berry Scrumptious, Great Glen Game.

HOW IMPORTANT IS PRICING?
We aim to be competitive but quality is also important to us, so we feel we are realistically priced. We prefer to give our producers and suppliers a fair price.

DO YOU OFFER OTHER FACILITIES?
As well as the shop, we have a tea room serving coffees, teas and lunches and we hold monthly buffet evenings. We are often asked to cater for small private functions either in the Finzean Hall or in Finzean House – these might include talks on the Estate or local history. We sometimes organise and cater for clay pigeon shoots and encourage local walking groups – recently, we helped establish a community path, linking the village, church, farm shop and school.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOT SELLERS AT THE TEA ROOM?
Stovies are always popular during the winter, and in the summer, our taster plates go down well. Our favourite cake is the Victoria sponge made by Donald and Andrew's mother.

WHAT DIFFICULTIES WERE ENCOUNTERED IN SETTING UP YOUR BUSINESS?
Our rural location was probably our biggest hurdle during the winter months, especially when snow makes the roads less accessible. We commissioned a business plan before setting up the Farm Shop, which indicated that the business wouldn't be viable; however, we have managed to remain cash positive from the outset.

HOW WERE THESE DIFFICULTIES OVERCOME?
We invested huge amounts of our own time and have been very hands-on with management, which helped to get us established. Once we got our core customer base, they helped to spread our reputation, word of mouth being our strongest marketing tool.

HOW IMPORTANT TO THE BUSINESS HAS BEEN HAVING ANOTHER REVENUE STREAM?
Having the backing of the Farm and the Estate helped us to get the business established and formed; each area of the business helps the other parts to function smoothly.

HOW DO YOU PLAN TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS?
We hope to make more of our own ready meals and products to sell direct; we've often been asked to send products further afield, and this is something we are exploring.

WHAT'S THE BEST ASPECT OF RUNNING A BUSINESS SUCH AS THIS?
One huge reward is being able to give training to the young from the community and watching their confidence in the work environment being built. Also, it's wonderful to have a building with such a buzz in so rural a location and to see what a hub the farm shop is for the community, old and young.

WHAT'S YOUR BACKGROUND BEFORE DOING THIS?
I was an interior designer and Kate's background was sales and marketing.

WHAT'S YOUR DAILY ROUTINE?
We both get involved in all aspects of the farm shop business as well as helping with certain parts of the estate and farm. No one day is the same and might involve waiting on tables, getting called into the kitchen, hanging pictures and arranging stock, making deliveries or dealing with suppliers and helping with upstairs in the office with the admin and the accounts. The roles are ever-varied!

WHAT ARE YOUR INTERESTS, OTHER THAN RUNNING THIS BUSINESS?
Spending time with our respective families is our biggest passion and we both love sport.

HOW DO YOU RELAX?
Going for long walks and enjoying the countryside, as well as cooking for family and friends.

IF YOU HAD TO START OVER, WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY?
Perhaps our building being an old steading was not the best base for us – we may have been better with a cheaper more flexible new build which would have allowed us to grow more easily.

SPICE OF LIFE

Looking Up



When I began this column, I introduced my home town, which at that time was dazed and slack-jawed following the opening of a Sainsbury's. It's not a town where a lot happens, so this was big news. Nor is it a hub of diversion and excitement. If you are too old for the skate park but too young for the Elderly Gentlemen's Club, then your best hope of entertainment on a weekend is either window shopping over-priced homes in the back-to-back estate agents, or trawling the charity shops for stuff you don't need. (Well, at least this stores up amusement for the following weekend, when you can give it all back) No, there's really not a lot to do in this town.

Unless, that is, you are into fine food. Until a few years ago, food culture here wasn't much to shout about. There was the single-decker burger bus, which soaked up the late-night drinkers, and the kebab shop which doubled as a bareknuckle fighting venue. But that was about all. We were still licking our wounds after the closure of the family deli which had traded on the market square for decades, and also of M&S Simply Food, which had closed as unexpectedly as it had opened. Then, as the town caught the national mood, something happened.

A farmer's market was tried in the decommissioned church. It caught on and became a regular feature. Local people discovered local food: charcuterie, fresh fruit and veg and especially the ales and fruit vodkas put out on taste. A well-stocked cheese van arrived, and farm shops opened on the edge of town, two good ones, and one that is a bit rubbish. There's been a twice-weekly general market here since Chaucer was a boy, but this has been augmented by pop-up ventures selling everything from artisan breads to hot soups and ready-to-eat curry. We host foreign markets and now have our own annual food fair which, has become a huge success. Food is helping change this town for the better. Things are looking up!





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SPECIALITY BITES

Paul Hargreaves of Cotswold Fayre offers his slant on issues affecting independent retail today



There has been some talk recently in wholesaler circles about exclusivity – to do it or not. Sometimes wholesalers are portrayed as being dictator-like for insisting on complete control and ultimately world domination. Believe me, it is not quite like that!

Essentially, there are two options for new brands within the speciality food world. Go with and put all your energies behind one good wholesaler, or spread the business amongst several. Both can work, but certain conditions apply for success; and with many more brands than there were 10 years ago and more wholesalers, you should give careful thought to your strategy.

Generally, successful brands that are listed with a whole raft of wholesalers fall into two categories. Either they are brands that were early into the speciality food sector and gained a good share of the market before it was as large and fragmented as it is now, or they are new brands with large investment where there is enough marketing power to gain traction in the market. In either of these two scenarios, supplying more than one wholesaler may be a good strategy.

Buyers will be pleased to see these brands in wholesalers' catalogues as they are already aware of them and have possibly already decided to stock them before the sales person or catalogue arrives on their doorstep. Actually, there is a final category where the best strategy may be multi-wholesalers – these are products that are really so innovative and interesting that they create a large wave of PR in the sector. Sadly this type of product only comes along once in a blue moon, but it's great when it does!

> "Certain conditions apply for success; you should give careful thought to your strategy"

The vast majority of brands and products within the sector need introducing and selling to retail or food service buyers. Yes, you may have advertised in the trade magazines, done several trade shows and sent countless e-mails, but the vast majority of your contacts will not have bought the products. Chances are that you have introduced your brand personally to those retailers near you, but, for decent growth, you need a sales team to roll your brand out across the UK. When this sales team show their customers your products they are far more likely to buy, as there is a relationship dynamic at work.

So how do you get the sales team to talk about your brand? By being exclusive with that wholesaler! It is not rocket science to work out that they are clearly going to talk up the brands where they know they are going to benefit from all the repeat sales. They will not always have time to go through all the brands in the catalogue when their time is precious, so you would want your brand to be near the top of their list. Exclusivity buys you this time.

So, in my mind, a new brand has two options: a heavy marketing spend or partnership with an exclusive wholesaler. I hope you make the right decision for your business.

Best Practice

Eira Roche, Bodnant Welsh Food Centre cookery school manager on the consumer desire to learn



I started out as a tutor in the cookery school just over two years ago, teaching children to cook and also teaching adults how to make pasta. Because I used to run a cookery school and restaurant when I lived in Tuscany a few years ago, I had an interest in the way the school was run, so when the opportunity arose to get involved in its management, I jumped at it.

I started out as a consultant with the school, not thinking that it would necessarily last forever. But it was so rewarding that I soon fell in love with Bodnant itself and the school and was lucky enough to become a permanent member of staff. I've now been managing the school since January 2014 and enjoy everything about it.

Here at the cookery school, we run a wide range of classes such as baking, bread-making, pasta and cooking fish and game, ranging from basic skills to advanced cake decorating. Here you can learn about different cuisines, from pan Asian to Italian and Spanish – plus Welsh specialities, of course.

My day varies massively and involves meeting new tutors for the school, researching their professional backgrounds and checking out their suitability to work with the school. It's a case of getting to know them, their temperament and personalities to see if they are as good at teaching in the school as they are at being a top-class chef.

Another important part of my role is discussing with the tutors about the menus for our courses. It is important that we use local, seasonable produce when possible, and, in particular, the produce that is made on-site here at Bodnant.

Several of the cookery school courses are run by other members of staff – such as Dai Chef, our executive chef who is an ambassador for Welsh food, and Jason Fraser, butchery manager – so I'll liaise with them about what they are planning to do. My colleagues in the Wine Cellar often pop into the classes to talk about what wines work with the dishes being created, whether it's spicy food or sushi.

An increasingly important part of my job is interacting with our audience on social media. We are developing a large following on Twitter and Facebook, and people who have been on our courses in the cookery school like to share their pictures and experiences that way, so it's very important to respond to them.

I've also become very much involved in sourcing the ingredients we require for particular courses. That means everything from ordering the stock to making sure that everything is present and correct when it's delivered and is ready for our courses.

My proudest achievement at Bodnant has to be teaching basic cookery skills to young children. I estimate that during the time I have been cookery school manager, we have had about 50 young people, aged from seven to 17, on our Bodnant Kids' Academy classes.

The reason I am proud of this achievement is that we have taught them some key skills that they'll keep with them for the rest of their lives. You're not improving on somebody's preconceived ideas about what cooking is, you're teaching some absolutely basic skills that they'll be able to keep with them forever.

One of the main things I've taken from this job is that people are very interested in learning key skills, such as bread making, cake baking and decorating. I have also learned that people are interested in international cookery courses such as Spanish, Italian, Thai, Bengali and Burmese. People certainly like the more exotic food flavours and styles. When we have these international courses we try to introduce some kind of fusion with the products we have here at Bodnant Welsh Food – for example, our vintage Aberwen cheese makes a great substitute for Parmesan. Another good lesson for me has been that the subjects we deal with in the school are much better when they are taught on in person, rather than from a book.

DO

- Do make sure that you always source the finest ingredients. People come to us for a high-end service and they naturally expect the very highest quality food
- Do maintain excellent lines of communication with your tutors
- Do make sure that you always respond to feedback from cookery course participants

DON'T

- Don't ever forget that planning ahead always makes things go much more easily and smoothly
- Don't ever neglect the absolute necessity to seek out new food styles and trends – and don't whatever you do take your eye off the ball
- Don't take your staff or tutors for granted. They are the key to the success of the school

> "It's a very old adage but it's still just as true as it always was: the customer is always right. I think the best and most successful retailers take notice of the feedback they get from their customers, because it would certainly be a big mistake to ignore it"

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