

# SPECIALITY FOOD

NEWS, COMMENT AND BUYING IDEAS FOR FINE FOOD RETAILERS

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### INTERVIEW

EVE REID:  
**SPACE  
PLANNING  
YOUR STORE**

P. 30



### EXPERTISE

CANDICE  
FONSECA:  
**STOCKING FOR  
PARTY SEASON**

P. 36



### INSIGHT

RICHARD FOX:  
**PUTTING  
BEER IN THE  
SPOTLIGHT**

P. 38





# In this issue

## 2 Update

Industry inside info

## 10 Dairy in Distress

The milk price crisis

## 12 Product News

Latest stocking options

## 14 Sweet Talk

Confectionery news and features

## 16 Meet the Buyer

Melrose & Morgan

## 19 Opinion

Expert perspectives

## 20 Cheese Uncut

Dairy industry news

## 22 Making A Success of Cheese

Top retailers and how they work

## 25 British Culture

How British cheese stands today

## 28 Farmshop Focus

Mainsgill Farm Shop

## 30 Retail School

Effective space planning

## 31 Meet the Producer

Peter's Yard crispbreads

## 32 How to Boost Christmas Profits

Preparing for seasonal selling

## 34 Guide to Jams and Preserves

Making ambients work for you

## 36 Extending Christmas

Party season: a reason to celebrate

## 38 Last Words

Deli Brief: the Hungry Guest

## EDITOR'S LETTER

### Coffee Time



**I**t won't have escaped your notice that cheese has become an increasingly important part of what we do here at Speciality Food. This year's first publication of Cheese Buyer proved popular with the industry and, as well as our monthly quota of industry news in Cheese Uncut, this issue we have two full length, cheese-centred features. The first, Making A Success of Cheese, looks at how British retailers are affecting our taste for cheese. Good cheese retailers have worked tirelessly to open consumers' eyes to the enormous variety of cheese now available to them and to broaden their tastes. New and artisan versions of familiar British cheeses are increasingly popular and a good place for retailers to start when it comes to improving tastes in cheese. Read British Culture to see what's happening in the world of British Cheese today. But where would British cheese be without the milk to make it? Milk prices have not only impacted on farmers but cheesemakers too, and we enter the debate with a look at the current state of play.

I hope we are often useful to people who have only recently become the owners of farm shops and delis. Through talking to a great many owners and soliciting their experience, we have been able to

“Where would British cheese be without the milk to make it?”

pass on advice and tips on a number of subjects pertinent to the successful running of an independent food shop. Recently we have looked at the pros and cons of installing a café or restaurant, and in this issue our Retail School series explains how to use good display to best effect. Also, I needn't remind you that Christmas is coming closer, but if you are looking for inspiration about preparing for it, you'll find it here. This issue comes with your copy of the new Confectionery & Chocolate Buyer, which brings you a lively look at this colourful sector, identifying trends, meeting the producers and suggesting essential stock for independent food retailers.

*Ross Gilfillan*

ross@aceville.com

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### INDIES NAMED IN SMALL BIZ 100

100 small independent food businesses have been named as one of Small Business Saturday's 'Small Biz 100' – a celebration of the UK's small businesses.

This year's Small Business Saturday is taking place on 5th December.

The winning food businesses include Town Mill Cheesemonger, based in Lyme Regis, Dorset; Cocoa Ooze, an Aberdeen-based producer of handmade chocolates; Whitstable Produce Store, a produce store and courtyard garden in Whitstable, Kent which sells food and drink from over 20 local makers and suppliers; Orkney Buffalo, a family farm in Deerness, Orkney which produces slow-grown, natural meats and farmhouse products which it supplies to shops and restaurants; Supernature Oils, a producer, harvester and bottler of cold-pressed rapeseed oil; and Ma Baker, an award-winning micro bakery in Fulham, West London.

### LUSCOMBE DRINKS ANNOUNCES NEW MD

The South-Devon producer of soft drinks has announced the appointment of its new MD. Adrian Collins, director general manager of the business since March 2015, will take on the role.

Founder of Luscombe Drinks, Gabriel David, has taken the title of chairman and will now focus his attention on new product development and ingredient procurement.

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# High Street Welcomes More Independents

According to new report by the Association of Convenience Stores, speciality shops are the most desired by British consumers.

The consumer's style of shopping is changing; no longer content with a buy-all trip to their local out-of-town supermarket, they are dividing their purchases between small, independent stores and larger retailers – making the most of the varied selection of food and drink offered to them at the various establishments, and in particular the quality produce offered by delis, farm shops and food halls.

We speak to James Lowman, chief executive of ACS, and Abbe Vaughan, co-owner of Home & Colonial in Porthcawl, to get their views on this new information.



**James Lowman, ACS**

We've been publishing the Local Shop Report for four years now, and every year our aim is to provide the most comprehensive look at the convenience sector available anywhere. The Local Shop Report demonstrates the value of the convenience sector, both in terms of the economy and the communities that stores trade in. We also use the report to provide every MP in the UK with information about the stores, jobs and training opportunities that the sector provides in their constituencies.

The report demonstrates that consumers continue to move toward shopping more little and often, as opposed to getting everything in one place from a huge supermarket. This is a significant opportunity for delis and farm shops.

The report shows that consumers believe that having friendly staff is the most important factor in driving people into the store. However, many consumers continue to move away from big brands and are looking to seek out local, artisan products which is where specialist food shops and delis can work with convenience stores to get their products out to a wider customer base.

In the report, we found that convenience stores and post offices were rated as having the most positive impact on their local high streets, followed by pharmacies, coffee shops and specialist food shops. Over 80% of these are involved in their local communities by fundraising, sponsoring events and getting involved with community projects, so we're not surprised by the results.

The specialist food sector has a real opportunity to work with local independent retailers and develop partnerships that allow convenience store customers access to a wide range of locally sourced products. When asked which service they want more of on

their local high street, consumers said they wanted more specialist food shops, so just having more physical stores would also be helpful in developing these partnerships.



**Abbe Vaughan, Home & Colonial**

There's lots of reasons for speciality shops being most desirable for the high street. First of all, customers are demanding variety – they want something niche, a little bit different. We provide them with that shopping experience.

I read somewhere that having a deli in your local high street can drive up house prices by as much as 10%. There's a feelgood factor that comes into play just by having a deli. This can have a knock-on effect on other businesses. Buckingham is a good example of this. It's a small town threaded through with delis, where there's that real feelgood

factor on the high street and house prices are particularly pricey.

Small independent and speciality shops add a sense of community and offer a personal touch not offered by larger retailers. Because we know our regular customers, and because we are a smaller retailer, I know Mrs Jones and how thickly she likes her ham cut. I know what she will be coming in on a Friday to buy and I know what she will buy here on a Monday. There's a definite sense of community. You become friendly with the older customers, too and can become a part of their lives. We pride ourselves on the sort of personal, friendly service which supermarkets are unable to deliver, although this is more difficult to achieve on Fridays and weekends, because we are trying to get numbers through the doors. Later in the week we have more time to achieve this.

We operate opening hours in line with the needs of our customers, and always extend until half past five in the evening so that we catch the travellers coming home. On Saturdays we open earlier than we normally would because people have things to do on Saturdays and like to get the shopping out of the way. We always open on Sundays – if you're located on a high street it's really important that you open seven days a week.

“ Over 80% of small retailers are involved in their local communities by fundraising, sponsoring events and getting involved with community projects, so we're not surprised by the results ”

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



### LOW HOWGILL OPENS IN CUMBRIA

**A husband and wife team who had previously been trading on market stalls has opened a retail store in Appleby-In-Westmorland, in a former bank building.**

Selling a wide range of products including meats, eggs, deli products and preserves, the business combines a takeaway deli service with a retail shop where customers can buy a selection of locally-produced items.

Jennie Allison, owner said, "We sell primarily beef, pork and lamb. The beef and lamb is all produced by my parents on their farm in the village of Milburn, and the pork we buy locally from neighbours and local suppliers."

"My husband, Steve is a butcher and produces traditional butchery products alongside some more modern products such as chicken curry, stir fries and marinated chicken breasts. I am the baker and produce all the deli products, such as pies, quiches, cooked meats, salads, sandwiches, coffee and bread. In the shop we also sell olives, cakes,

biscuits, drinks, jams, chutneys, eggs and curry sauces.

"We try wherever possible to use local products. The jams and chutneys we sell are produced by a lady in the town, the eggs come from a farm five miles away, the cakes are baked by a lady in the next village and the olives are produced by a company in the Lake District. The coffee roasters are also local to us."

"Our customer base is very wide ranging, from locals to tourists, old and young from every walk of life. We provide lunch trade for tradesmen to high quality Shorthorn Beef for foodie connoisseurs!"



### SOUTH WEST LONDON WELCOMES NEW MARKET

**Launched on 26th September, Primrose Hill Market will be taking place every Saturday from 10am to 3pm in the grounds of St Paul's School on Primrose Hill Road.**

The market will feature the produce of respected independent producers and street food vendors, as well as occasional special guest traders.

Many of the producers involved offer seasonal, organic, ethically sourced produce, as well as artisan goods.

Products on offer include include Mediterranean olives and antipasti from The Olive Bar, artisanal sweet and savoury bakes made from seasonal ingredients from Popina, British charcuterie from Cannon & Cannon, and cheeses from Wildes Cheese and Bath Soft Cheese.

Mike Norledge, Primrose Hill Market organiser said, "We want to create a market that serves local residents wanting to do their weekly shop and also brings more visitors to this wonderful area of London. There has been a fantastic response from London food producers keen to take part and we are delighted to be featuring some of the very best in the business."

"Shopping at markets is a choice more people should make as the produce is fresher, tastier and better value. By shopping at Primrose Hill market, every pound spent will support a local cheesemonger, butcher, baker or dairy farmer, so they can reinvest in doing what they do."



### LEWIS & JAMES LAUNCHES IN CAVERSHAM

**A new deli has opened in Caversham, Reading, supplying local residents with a range of teas, coffees, confectionery, preserves, ambients and quality chilled produce. The retailer will also sell fresh and smoked garlic bulbs from The Garlic Farm, as well as loose olives and antipasti to take away.**

Also available is a olive oil and vinegar dispensing service, and customers are encouraged to return to the site with their empty bottles for a refill.

Brands on show at the new retailer include Peter's Yard, Stag Bakeries, Luscombe, Woodall's and The London Tea Company.



Patricia Macgregor, owner said, "We opened in the area because there was nothing like it – I own a coffee shop next door, and found that I and other residents had to go into Reading or Waitrose to find good food; there was something missing in Caversham."

"We stock a wide range of products, from items from The Garlic Farm to loose olives, olive oil and balsamic vinegars on tap, and products from Cottage Delight and Seggiano among many others. We love Italian food and stock them as well as a lot of local foods, including cheeses such as Wigmore, Waterloo, Isis, and have a selection of Continental cheeses as well."

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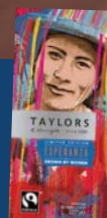
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## JOHN SHEPHERD OF PARTRIDGES



### "New ideas"

The headline of the Evening Standard on Thursday 10th September 2015 proclaimed the words "Store Wars" in bold type. The article goes on to declare that Lidl is now targeting middle class areas in an attempt to take customers away from Waitrose and upmarket delicatessens by using their very successful low price offer. Undoubtedly yet another worry for the beleaguered local deli, you might think. However, small independent shops have one thing in particular that the multiples may not have – the ability to have knee jerk reactions or perhaps, I should say, to innovate and be flexible quickly.

Over the course of our past I think we have come up with three ideas that have been particularly helpful in providing some distinction between us and the larger retailers, which the multiples may struggle to copy.

The first idea occurred in the 1990s, when we launched a pensioner discount scheme of 10%. This was relatively easy to control because pensioners usually have a ready means of identification at their disposal and are a distinct demographic. We had to exclude products where the margin could not sustain the 10% discount such as spirits, cigarettes and newsprint and the like, and initially started it on a trial basis just to ensure we did not go out of business in a few weeks.

The second idea has been the food market that we run outside

our shop on the Duke of York Square every Saturday and which is due to celebrate its tenth anniversary on 24th October this year. It is true that large spaces outside shops are somewhat rare luxuries, and it is also true to say that the market was not an overnight success. However, from a small start of about 15 stalls the market has grown over the years to 70 stalls. So what are the advantages that it brings? Increased footfall to the front of the shop with a greater feeling of community. The opportunity to work with local producers who it would not be possible to offer space to in the shop and to see how new products are received by the public. Increased sales in the café and wine bar and the ability to ensure that the market operates on a cost neutral basis.

The third idea has been our Startisans initiative. Like most if not all delis and food shops, we are inundated by suppliers on a regular basis urgently looking for shops to sell their products, so we offer them a low cost pitch to sell their own products. The benefits are that we are able to help start up businesses and obtain a great source of new and exciting products with the minimum amount of paperwork.

These ideas will never be the sole difference between success and failure. That depends on doing the basics properly and that is a challenge that we all face every day. However, to us they have been a good help over the years.

## DIARY DATES

### October

8th – 11th

FALMOUTH OYSTER FESTIVAL  
falmouthoysterfestival.co.uk

10th–14th

ANUGA  
Cologne  
anuga.com

23rd–25th

DARTMOUTH FOOD FESTIVAL  
dartmouthfoodfestival.com

### November

6th–8th

CAKE INTERNATIONAL  
cakeinternational.co.uk

BBC GOOD FOOD SHOW  
SCOTLAND  
bbcgoodfoodshowscotland.com

13th–15th

BBC GOOD FOOD SHOW  
LONDON  
bbcgoodfoodshowlondon.com

26th–29th

BBC GOOD FOOD SHOW  
WINTER  
bbcgoodfoodshowwinter.com



## Young Food & Drink Entrepreneur of the Year Announced

Monday 7th September saw the final of Cotswold Fayre's Young Food & Drink Entrepreneur of the Year 2015 – a competition to find Britain's most promising young start-up food business.

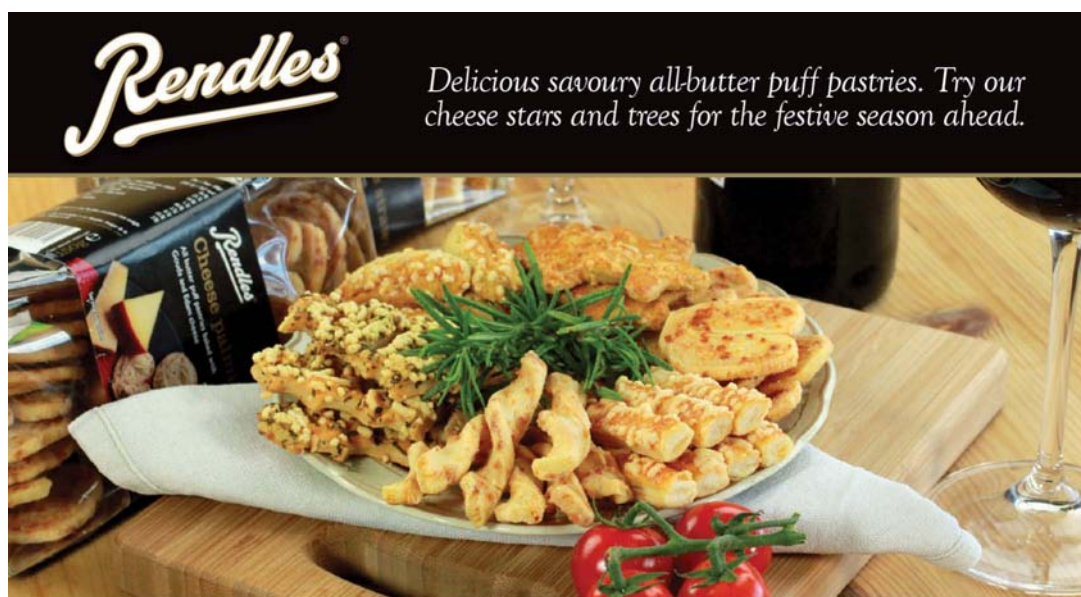
The title was awarded to Jerome Jacob and his brand PHROOTI, a range of fruit teas boasting 95–97 per cent real fruit, after being chosen winner by an audience at Speciality & Fine Food Fair.

Runner up in the competition was Cool Coffee, a brand of cold-press coffee founded by Joseph Devereux-Kelly.

As winner, Jerome Jacob will receive a year of mentoring from Paul Hargreaves, chief executive of Cotswold Fayre, £1000 and marketing and branding support.

Jerome Jacob, founder of PHROOTI said, "With the financial support I've won I plan to do a full nutritional analysis of the product and take it to market. In the next twelve months I shall be pitching to get listings and arranging the funds to expand, and taking on the fruit tea market... I hope to have a stand at Speciality & Fine Food Fair next year!"

Paul Hargreaves, chief executive of Cotswold Fayre said, "The most passionate person won, although both brands are saleable within the sector. Jerome's passion is second to none and he seems to have done a very good job of organising a supply chain and selling to consumers; the next step is to strengthen the design so that it sells from a retail shelf as well as online."



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# FARMA Announces Farm Retailing Course



**FARMA has announced an exclusive training course for its members in Management and Leadership for Farm Retailing, which will be running until early-November.**

Designed to build the skills and confidence necessary in farm shop management, the course is aimed at farm shop owners, managers, team leaders and those looking to progress into a management role.

The six-day course will cover communication styles and skills for efficient operations, leadership, motivating the team, marketing fundamentals and communication,

managing a customer service strategy, benchmarking performance, time management, procurement and waste management, delegation and empowerment, financial aspects of management (in the context of efficiencies), and setting objectives to manage productivity (inspiring a 'can do' mentality).

The course will be run in two groups: North England, Wales and Scotland (Group 1), and South of England and Wales (Group 2). Group 1 courses will run 12th-13th October and 3rd-4th November, and Group 2

courses will run 19th-20th October and 9th-10th November.

"This course would be ideal for anyone who's new to management, taking on a new farm shop or wanting to brush up on their management skills. Over the six days attendees will grow a strong support group of people in a similar position, and we'll be using real-life case studies – their actual farm shops – so they can learn how to adapt the skills they're learning to suit their business.

"Carolyn Leggett, a management trainer in the food industry, will be focusing on the core skills of management as well as the technical side of things – we'll be looking at personality profiling, recruitment and team management, allowing attendees to discover how they as a person can influence those areas of business more effectively.

"A lot of people have experience of these things, but this event is for those who'd like to build the confidence to bring that out. It's important that they're being offered someone to turn to who can offer valuable, tailored advice."

## Sunday Trading Laws: ACS Response

**The Association of Convenience Stores has submitted research to the Government's consultation on devolving the power to decide on Sunday trading laws locally, saying the suggestion is unpopular, will damage high streets and will cost jobs.**

The survey showed that 64 per cent of local authority chief executives are concerned that devolution of Sunday trading hours would cause confusion for consumers, 52 per cent considered out of town retail parks and supermarkets their first or second preference for deregulation, 45 per cent said they would be influenced by

the decision of neighbouring authorities, and 69 per cent are concerned about the displacement of trade between regulated and deregulated areas that this would cause.

Research carried out recently by Oxford Economics has shown that scrapping the rules currently in place would divert trade from small stores to larger ones and would cost jobs.

James Lowman, ACS chief executive said, "The Government claimed when launching this policy that it would boost high street sales, but this is simply not true because most high street stores are already able to open whenever they want.

The clear winners would be out of town retail parks and large superstores. While ministers think local authorities would use these powers to help high streets, councils themselves say that they would deregulate hours for out of town stores and shopping centres.

"Allowing large stores to open 24/7 will not create any more trade, but will simply displace it from local shops to large superstores. As a net impact, this will lead to job losses."

"During the Government's failed experiment on removing Sunday Trading laws for the Olympics in 2012, local shops lost up to 20% of their sales on Sundays while wider retail sales also fell between 0.2% and 0.4%. These plans have the potential to put thousands of small stores at risk. We urge the Government to scrap these unwanted, unnecessary and misguided plans."

## Beef Dripping Named Great Taste Supreme Champion

**Beef dripping made by a butchers based in Co. Tipperary, Ireland has been awarded the title of Great Taste Supreme Champion 2015 by a board of expert judges.**

The product is made by James Whelan Butchers in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary using grass-fed Angus and Hereford beef which has been rendered and clarified into a clear, rich dripping.

John Farrand, managing director of the Guild of Fine Food, organisers of



Great Taste said, "Great Taste recognises flavour above all else and James Whelan's Beef Dripping is a perfect example of this, astonishing our panel of judges with its pure beefiness and savoury depth.

"The dripping is a simple, quite humble product made exceptionally

well by a master of butchery. It succeeded through day-after-day of blind-tasting, winning favour at every stage of Great Taste and wowing expert judges who really know their stuff. As one of our judges said, just a spoonful would add sheer magnificence however it was used."



*Dunsan Hider*

**JOINT MANAGING DIRECTOR**

Hider Fine Foods Ltd, Hull, East Yorkshire

So in this year when The Queen became our longest reigning monarch and (only slightly less importantly....!) Hider Foods celebrated its 50th anniversary, I have been musing over longevity and its benefits.

As a 'mature' company Hider Foods has the benefit of years of trading experience and the customer and supplier relationships forged over this time. This has stood us in good stead over the years and earns us a certain amount of loyalty and a trusted name and profile. We realise however that we can't stand still and rest on our laurels. New customers and suppliers are popping up daily, new marketing avenues are developing at breakneck speed and crucially, new competitors enter the market all the time. So we have to keep moving and evolving if we are to maintain our position of market leaders in the sector, and what better time to focus our attention on our strategy than after a half century of trading?

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## GILES HENSCHEL OF OLIVES ET AL



### “The road to Damascus”

**L**ate October 1992, early in the morning, Sun just up. We quietly rolled up to Bab al-Hawa, 'Gate of The Winds'. We were crossing from Turkey into Syria. There was a definite chill in the air as we were led past queues of waiting lorries by the brown leather-jacketed 'Tourist Police'. Taken into Customs, our friendly Tourist Policeman asked us where we were from. "England," we replied.

"England! Ooof! I know English very well! Manchester United, Bobby Charlton, Nobby Stiles, PG Tips and Watney Red Barrel. Oh yes! I know England very well. Welcome to my country!" The smile changed, his eyes sharpened and he leaned in, head on one side, "Why you come to my country?"

We explained we were travelling all around the Mediterranean and Middle East on our way to North Africa and he seemed to soften a little, although he was still mighty curious as to why a woman was riding a large red motorbike and not sitting in the back of a Datsun.

He told us we must "go and see The Thin Man". We asked why. "So you can go and see The Fat Man. See Thin Man, give him five dollars. Then see The Fat Man." "Why do we give The Thin Man five dollars?" we asked. "So you can see The Fat Man and give him ten dollars." We chanced our arm and again asked why.

"So Fat Man can stamp on passport and welcome you to my country."

We saw the Thin Man and parted with five dollars. He opened the door and there was The Fat

Man, eyes closed and occupying most of a sofa. In one easy fluid motion, he rolled off the sofa, into a chair, stamped the passports, palmed the ten dollars and just as fluidly rolled back onto the bed and closed his eyes again.

Our Tourist Policeman beamed from ear to ear and proclaimed, "Welcome to my country! Now you give the man on the gate one dollar." He knew what we were about to say so he simply went on to say, "so you can be welcome in my country!"

His parting gift was a map of Syria. We still have that map. It tracks our journey through the most amazing, friendly, hospitable and welcoming place I have ever had the good fortune to pluck up the courage to go to. From Aleppo to Maskane (where we were given the recipe for our Moorish Olives by a Bedou chief, Abu Faisal and his family), to Rasafeh, Palmyra, Homs, Hama, Latakia and onto Damascus. Everywhere we were made to feel "welcome in my country".

In just 14 days, my whole appreciation and understanding of the Middle East changed and has influenced everything we have done ever since, forging many of the values of generosity and hospitality we feel are so important today. The warmth and friendliness with which we were welcomed everywhere is a testament to the people of the region, irrespective of the current sad and distressing situation and, it is, after all, the original birth place of the Olive Tree. It truly was our road to Damascus.

# Scotland Launches Farm Shop Drive

**Scotland's cabinet secretary for rural affairs, food and environment has announced the launch of First Stop Farm Shop initiative to encourage consumers to make farm shops their first port of call when shopping.**

The campaign, funded by the Community Food Fund, aims to support local farming industries as well as opening consumers' eyes to the produce local to them, and is part of Scotland's Year of Food and Drink celebrations – focusing on four key

themes of provenance, rural economy, education and health and wellbeing.

Richard Lochhead, cabinet secretary for rural affairs, Food and Environment said, "The First Stop Farm Shop campaign is a great way to encourage people to support their local farmers and really take advantage of the terrific selection of produce they have available to them – straight from the farm gate."

"Scotland has a fantastic natural larder, with some of the freshest, tastiest, most sought-after produce in the world. There are almost 140 farm shops across Scotland, offering everything from fresh eggs, succulent Scotch lamb and beef, delicious dairy produce and so much more. For those lucky enough to live near a farm shop, I would encourage them to make it their first port of call and support their local farmers."



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# Organic Sales Double in Past Year

Figures released recently by the Soil Association have shown that organic sales have been steadily increasing since August 2014.

This growth is simultaneous to the decline in sales of non-organic products according to Nielsen, which measured the statistics of the 52 weeks to 15th August 2015.

The results show consistent growth of 3 per cent in the organic market during that period, which is double the results reported in 2014 (1.2 per cent). Meanwhile, sales of non-organic fell 1.2 per cent during the same period.

Mike Watkins from Nielsen said, "To me it is clear that brands need to look for growth through new channels and to reach out to developing categories, such as alcoholic drinks, confectionery and snacks, that offer the opportunity to capture their customer and create loyalty. Products should be affordable, accessible and achievable."

Clare McDermott, business development director at Soil Association Certification said, "The UK's organic market is looking immensely positive for the future. Since the beginning of the year we have had over 1,000 new product applications with Soil Association Certification and an increase of 14 per cent in the last six months in number of new applicants for organic certification."

"This is really exciting as it shows us there is a real confidence in us and in the future of organic. Brands are releasing new lines and expanding their offerings to respond to food trends and demands. Organic September is having a real impact on organic across the UK too – everyone in the industry is linking up to help consumers make small changes for a big impact. Together with recent data from Nielsen, it's easy for us to see that organic is becoming a real pillar of UK business."

## What's Next for Irish Food in Britain?

Charles Flanagan, Irish minister for foreign affairs shares his thoughts on the future of Irish food within the UK.

"Speciality & Fine Food Fair 2016 has seen a sample of the very best of Irish food and drink, and we're proud to be promoting traceability – natural products with stories which link right back to the farm gate. Irish food is world class in terms of its quality, and a lot of food businesses are small and family-run which offers consumers a great story."

"Ireland is now exporting four billion Euros-worth of food and drink to the UK every year. We want to increase that and believe that more business can be done; we look forward to working closer with the retail sector in the UK."

"It's great to see so many new producers under our banner at the show – it's a vibrant collection and demonstrates that this is an exciting time for Irish food."

CHARLES CAMPION



## "Old dog or new tricks?"

There are two powerful forces at work in everyone who shops for food and drink. On the one hand there is the allure of the new, while on the other is the comfort of what is old and established. In large part Homo Sapiens owes his intellectual development to curiosity, so slap a 'new' label on that mammoth tenderloin and it will fly out of the door. This blind love of the new is not very logical, but it is certainly potent. When a product really is new, the shopper has to take its virtues on trust – the pack copy says it is zingy, refreshing and satisfying, but because this is a first-time purchase that is all hearsay until you try it yourself. At the other end of the scale there are products that are old friends. Like so many old friends they are a bit dull and familiar, but at least you know what you are getting.

There's a similar dynamic in the world of restaurants. When you're standing outside a shiny new establishment clutching the latest rose-tinted review and wondering whether to venture in, that newness may well be the only thing holding you back. But when you are considering a restaurant that is tried and tested, "long established" becomes code for reliable. The Gaylord Indian restaurant in London is remarkable. It first opened its doors in 1966 and has been ducking and weaving to the pressures of the marketplace ever since. Gaylord has quietly gone about its business for nearly half a century, and that timescale means that the restaurant is one

with plenty of modern ideas and rather good food.

When it comes to all things new, the boffins at the supermarket chains understand just how powerful newness can be. Pushing a trolley around a large emporium, it's hard not to wince at the display of little trays from Bon a PetEat. A new product is called Chicken Terrine with Rice and Vegetables, and the ingredients listed are chicken, brown rice, carrots, peas, potatoes, minerals, sunflower oil, salmon oil, dried tomatoes, dried kelp and dried basil. Shockingly, all this wonderfulness is aimed at the family pooch. It sounds good enough to eat. But although it retails at 75p for a 150g tray, this is dog food. The pack copy also suggests that a dog the size of my faithful companion should be getting four trays a day – so that's £21 a week, and it would be cheaper to roast him a couple of chickens. Granted, this stuff is prepared with 100% traceable British meat, but can anyone really think that Rover needs chicken terrine to make his day complete?

In the ebb and flow of information between seller and purchaser, the concepts of both 'new' and 'old' can end up bent into all manner of shapes. As a customer, it's comforting to know that the product you pick off the shelf has some history and some heritage, but then sometimes it feels really cool to push the envelope and take home the very latest thing. However, when it comes to trying those doggy delicacies, best leave it to the dog.

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**E**arly in August, a storm blew up over low milk prices. Farmers raided the chiller cabinets of Morrisons, Lidl and Aldi and grabbed their milk back. They trotted their animals into stores protesting they were getting less for their milk than the cost of production. And Britain's fourth largest supermarket backed down, launching Milk for Farmers – for which 10p of the retail price goes to farmers – alongside their usual own brand.

There are many reasons for the latest milk price drop – as shown in our fact file. However, milk prices have been fluctuating and dairy farmers going out of business for years. Today, there are fewer than 10,000, less than half the number farming in 2002.

One retailer who foresaw the effect on the rural economy was Booths. In April 2014, they decided to top up the milk price and tell customers what they were doing. In their 30 stores across Lancashire, Cumbria, Cheshire and Yorkshire, they sell their own-label milk as Fair Milk and every

# Dairy in Distress

Supermarkets have been criticised for putting dairy farmers out of business with their milk price wars. But is it that simple? And are we, the fine food sector, treating farmers any better?

Sally-Jayne Wright investigates

month, an independent price comparison consultancy monitors the farm-gate prices of a number of supermarkets to ensure Booth's pays 'more than any other supermarket.'

Edwin Booth, chairman said, "The retail industry's obsession with price wars is destroying the dairy industry. If we continue to neglect our supplier base, this will have long term ramifications for the wider rural economy." His customers appear to approve. Sales of Fair

Milk at Booths saw a five per cent growth in July, outperforming the market which saw 0.3 percent growth as a whole.\*

Edward Booth (no relation to the Booths family), a fifth generation farmer from North Yorkshire, explained that the Booths Fair Milk scheme

has changed the fortunes of their family farm and allows them to invest in their business for future generations. He said, "The benefit of an assured fair price for our milk not only sustains the livelihood of the farmer, but also the welfare of our livestock."

It's all very well for bigger players like Booths to pay farmers more, but can smaller independents also do their bit? When the EU stopped subsidising dairy in April, it was another blow for Northumberland tenant farmers, Blagdon Farm. Fortunately, their customers, the Northumberland Cheese Company, were sympathetic. They are artisan cheese makers with a dairy, café and farm shop on the same privately-owned Blagdon Estate who make 13 different farmhouse cheeses from Blagdon's milk, and their unique selling proposition is: local cheeses made with local milk. From April this year, they started

topping up the market price their supplier was getting from his wholesaler. Charlie Pears-Wallace, sales and marketing manager at the Northumberland Cheese Company said, "It cuts into our profits slightly and wholesalers sometimes whinge about the price of our cheese, but we want to pay more for a product which is so desperately important to us. Milk prices are prone to fluctuation, so if the market price was to increase, our subsidies would decrease." Every month Charlie settles two different invoices: one from their wholesaler and one for 'milk sub' from the farmer.

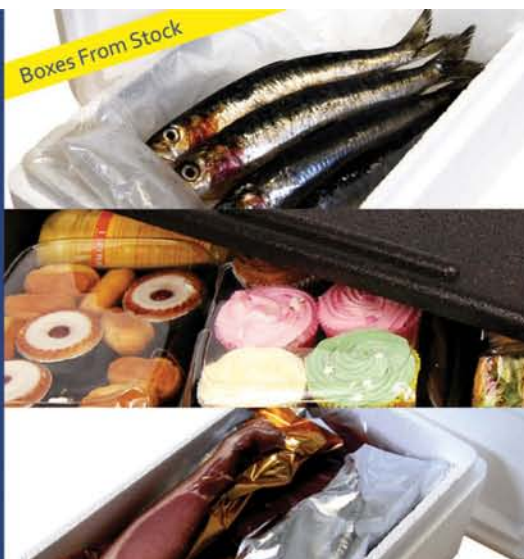
For dairy farmer, Liz Godsell of Leonard Stanley, Gloucestershire, the opening of a new kind of service station on the M6 was a turning point. In 2000, like many struggling farmers, Liz, diversified into cheese-making. She turned the milk of one day's milking a

week into cheese and sold the rest to an independent supplier. At first, she sold Godsell's cheeses to specialist delis and farm shops. When Tebay Services farm shop opened in 2003 and its sister company, Gloucester Services, on the northbound M5 in May 2014, they soon became her best customers. These motorway filling stations cum farm shops drive volumes and, crucially, provide steady demand.

Liz said, "The cheese business goes quiet through the summer then picks up again at the time the kids go back to school and carries on up to Christmas. There have been no dips since we have been selling through Gloucester and Tebay." She sells directly to them, driving her award-winning cheeses there in person as it's only four miles away. Her 10 cheeses sell equally well, but sales of the Single Gloucester are 'phenomenal – probably because it has a PDO (protected designated origin) and "people want to take a piece of Gloucestershire with them." She



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adds, "The Westmorland family (who own Gloucester and Tebay) is very ethical. They are great people to work with. They have stimulated interest in local food."

The Westmorlands say they understand Liz's situation because they are farmers who diversified themselves: "If a farmer came to us who wanted to diversify, we'd put them in touch with contacts who're examples of best practice."

One of the biggest fans of their policy is Professor Janet Godsell who lectures on operations and supply chain management at the University of Warwick. She said, "Gloucester should be put on a pedestal for what they are doing. Services like this could be rolled out across the country if the Government were willing to back such an initiative."

If you're doing the right thing, tell your customers. Booths dedicates a page of their website to their Fair Milk campaign including case studies of four Fair Milk farmers. The Northumberland Cheese Company blogs that "Rest assured, no farmer was harmed in the making of this product." At Gloucester Services, Liz Godsell told us there's "a great big blackboard the size of the wall where they put the names of their suppliers."

Many independents including Riverford, Gloucester Services and Abel & Cole sell organic, not conventional, milk. According to OMSCo (Organic Milk Suppliers Cooperative), which supplies two-thirds of British organic milk, supply and demand of organic milk in the UK are currently in balance and so they are able to provide organic farmers with a sustainable price. Demand for organic milk has dipped a little (because of the striking disparity between organic and conventional milk prices) but demand for organic milk for processing into yoghurt is up. They advise: "Ensure the supplier you source from has a fair pricing policy for their farmers and compare it with that of others."

## FACT FILE

### How much has the farm-gate price for milk dropped?

A quarter in the last year.

### Why has this happened?

Many reasons. A global oversupply coupled with less demand. Subsidised by the EU, farmers became super-efficient and produced a milk lake. But a strong pound makes British milk expensive. Plus demand from China reduced as their economy slowed. Demand from Russia reduced in retaliation for our sanctions.

### Are there any other factors?

Yes, animal feed costs increased more than 50% since 2007. EU subsidies for dairy farmers stopped in April 2015. Not all the milk on the market is British, and particularly good summers made New Zealand milk products plentiful and cheap.

### Who is worst affected?

Smaller dairy farmers (fewer than 200 cows); those in remote areas far from dairy processing plants; tenant farmers; those who needed

the EU subsidy to stay in business; farmers who didn't diversify or get themselves into partnerships.

Larger, better situated farmers may be part of a 'dairy development group' in partnership with a supermarket. They get a sustainable price for their milk in exchange for promising high welfare standards and are thus cushioned from the vagaries of the milk price. Only 600-700 farmers are in this situation which leaves 4,000-5,000 struggling.

### Are the supermarkets the bad guys?

Not necessarily. Many feel that everyone in the food chain has become fixated on price no matter how high the toll; there's also lack of transparency about who gets what on the journey between farm gate and supermarket shelf. Some even say that farmers can be stubborn and fiercely individualistic, and think it's not okay for the taxpayer to fund a lifestyle choice that isn't a viable business.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO AS AN INDEPENDENT RETAILER?

- Ask. Whatever milk products you stock, ask where the milk comes from and whether the farmer gets a sustainable price
- If buying directly from the farmer, pay your bills on time!
- If you're doing the right thing, shout about it. Explain your supply chain and go on a site like [mychainreaction.co.uk](http://mychainreaction.co.uk). Reinforce good feelings about your business. Give your customers the feel-good factor that by buying from you, they're contributing
- Look for opportunities. Why not a British-made unsalted butter with a French-style acidity? Work together with your suppliers
- Get into food tourism. How about a visit to the dairy with tastings or meet-the-farmer days?
- Educate your customer. Small artisan cheese-makers, for example, create more jobs than highly mechanised cheese factories
- Remember you are a consumer, too. Buy your pint from an ethical source

\* Statistics from IGD, Institute of Grocery Distribution.

“ Ensure the supplier you source from has a fair pricing policy for their farmers and compare it with that of others ”



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Take stock with our new food and drink round-up

## James White Launches Ginger Zinger Shot

**Suffolk-based drinks producer James White has launched an Organic Ginger Zinger Shot – an intense shot of natural ginger juice.**

The 7cl shot is made with 26 per cent crushed ginger juice, 57 per cent apple juice and 17 per cent water and is completely natural with no preservatives, artificial colours or flavours.

Lawrence Mallinson, founder said, "We have been making ginger drinks using pressed ginger juice, rather than ginger flavourings, for many years and they still constantly surprise consumers who are used to ginger drinks made with flavourings."

"You really can taste the difference as the heat from real ginger comes more slowly and less intensively than expected. It is softer, but with 26 per cent of the Zinger made of ginger juice when the zing arrives you definitely know about it."

"The Ginger Zinger is a revolutionary new addition to the drinks market – a drink to savour and to get a jolt from. Add to that the renown that ginger has for its use in both traditional and Chinese medicine, as a help with nausea and arthritis."

[jameswhite.co.uk](http://jameswhite.co.uk)



## Chash Teas Expands Range



Stinging Snow, a combination of white tea, nettles and Verbena; and Jasmin, a blend of jasmine, spearmint and peppermint.

Dan Rook, founder of Chash Tea said, "I wanted to offer discerning consumers the opportunity to experience tea of a much higher quality than they're used to. Every single product in the world, whether it's a car, cup of coffee, loaf of bread or computer, has a luxury end to their market and you can pay a lot more for something that's much better quality – it struck me as very strange that the same didn't apply to the tea industry. I want to encourage people to drink better tea; it's incredibly good for us as it's naturally packed with antioxidants and is a gift from mother nature which we need to cherish and take better care to enjoy."

"We're a small company ourselves, so we're very much wanting to support independent retailers and give them the opportunity to provide their customers with better tea. The discerning customer can recognise immediately that this is different to the tea they've consumed before, and I love being able to give people that experience."

[chashtea.co.uk](http://chashtea.co.uk)

**London-based Chash Tea has updated its range of black, green, white and fruit teas, determined to offer consumers a refreshed outlook on tea.**

The brand's selection now includes Earl Grey 1833, a new take on the classic Earl Grey; Strawberries in Summer, a seasonal fruit infusion; 1,000 Days Red, containing Globe Amaranth; Tropical Tea, an infused white tea; Ginkgo & Popcorn, a softened Genmaicha tea;

## Pure Maple Now in UK

**Pure Maple, a range of pure maple syrup from Canada, has launched in the UK through Samways Fine Food Distribution.**

The brand has worked with maple syrup producers in South East Quebec, Canada, to produce maple syrup using the traditional manual 'tapping' process which can only take place during the harvesting season which lasts for six weeks.

Pure Maple syrup is the first in the UK to adopt the newly revised World Maple Syrup grading system from the International Maple Syrup Institute.

The range consists of Delicate Taste Maple Syrup, which is ideal for glazing meats and vegetables and as an addition to dressings and cocktails; Amber Taste Maple Syrup, for topping desserts and a natural alternative to sugar; and Dark Robust Maple Syrup which can be used as a replacement for honey.

Pure Maple is free of colourings and artificial flavours and is not diluted by cane sugar, corn syrup or carob syrup.

Rob Ward, owner said, "We are a family of British Canadians who are passionate about maple syrup, but when we moved to the UK from Canada were surprised by the lack of

real maple syrup and saw a gap in the market. Pure Maple is 100% Canadian maple syrup – it isn't blended like some other brands – so gives a clean, natural flavour and it's tapped and bottled in Canada too, so consumers know they are getting the real thing."

"Due to the premium nature of the product we are targeting speciality, fine food and farm shops with our product and encouraging consumers to use Pure Maple as a sugar replacement in everyday foods as well as baking."

[puremaple.co.uk](http://puremaple.co.uk)



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## Hampstead Tea Revamps Look and Product Offer



**Bio-Dynamic, organic and fairtrade tea brand Hampstead Tea has rebranded its packaging in order to represent the crisp and clean nature of its range of teas.**

The business has also introduced a new flavour to its range of green teas – Cocoa Green, a smooth and rich blend of premium whole leaf Darjeeling green tea and equatorially-sourced cocoa, plus a new flavour to its selection of black teas – Strong English Breakfast, a robust combination of Assam and East African tea leaves.

Mark Nicholls, head of marketing said, "Here at Hampstead Tea we are super passionate about the purity of the source in all the ingredients that we use.

We believe that only the best and highest quality organic, bio-dynamic and fairtrade should be used where available. This ensures that you always have great taste with peace of mind, from a company who is at the apex of sustainable and ethical trading.

"Our blends are designed from the cup upwards so there is no compromise in taste – using this method of single-minded focus on the consumer, we can rest assured that every time the kettle is put on you know that you're getting the very best flavours that are on the shelf today.

"We think they taste so great that we are happy to give anyone who asks a free packet to trial in their business (while samples last)." [hampsteadtea.com](http://hampsteadtea.com)

## Great Food Introduces Snack Packs

**Great Food, producer of chilled snacks and meals made with vegetables, pulses, herbs and spices, has launched a range of 100 per cent natural products for health conscious snackers.**

The new range includes Baked Sweet Potato Bites and Baked Moroccan Falafel, both of which come with a Cool Tomato Salsa Dip, plus two Asian snack packs: Fiery Channa & Red Pepper Pakora and Spicy Green Lentil & Coconut Bites.

The entire range is entirely natural and free from meat, gluten, dairy, egg and soya, and is suitable for Halal and Kosher diets.

Jane Rayner, CEO said, "There is a huge gap in chilled snacking and food-to-go products aimed at the UK's growing number of health conscious consumers looking for tasty, natural, real food that's also suitable for an allergen-free diet. Our new snack packs and confirmed listings will give us the opportunity to reach thousands of new customers, particularly via independent and convenience retailers."

"The biggest challenge for manufacturers like us is convincing retailers to make room for healthy, free-from snacks in the chiller cabinet. Everyone is expecting free-from sales to continue to rise but until now, free-from has been driven predominantly by the ambient category. Until retailers catch up, consumers are going to miss out on the opportunity to purchase 100 per cent natural, free-from snacks in the chiller that they can enjoy at home, in the office or on-the-go."

[greatfooduk.com](http://greatfooduk.com)



## Real Basmati Rice Co Unveils 500g Bags

**The Real Basmati Rice Company, importer of basmati rice direct from farmers in the Punjab region of India, has added a 500g bag to its range of matured rice.**

The business sources rice from small estates which cultivate rice in a natural way in order to ensure that the rice is pure and undamaged by heavy machinery, and the finished product is free from additives and preservatives.

Shahid Mehdi, founder said, "We source Basmati rice from farmers direct from

villages in the Punjab. The rice is then stored for a minimum of 12 months to 24 months, which helps the rice to mature and brings out its unique aroma and a earthy taste – this is not common practice with rice brands in the UK. Not many people know that rice is like wine, and the longer you leave it to store the better it will taste.

"Plus, all of our packaging is 100% recyclable which is better for the environment."

[therealbasmatirice.com](http://therealbasmatirice.com)



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# Organic Confectionery

The increasing concern about health has spawned new custom for organic confectionery

The confectionery shelf may not be the first place you might look for organic products, but they are there all the same and the variety of products which are claiming organic credentials appears to be increasing. For some retailers, stocking organic products will be a matter of personal ethics. Organic foods tend to be produced with ingredients which have been grown without the aid of sometimes harmful pesticides and in such a way that the product is harvested in a sustainable way and eco-systems are preserved. Given that organic sweets often differ little in taste from their non-organic counterparts, it can make sense to stock a selection of these and to flag up the fact that they are organic either with signage or by awarding organic items their own section in your display.

Chinzalée Sonami, grocery buyer for Planet Organic, explains why independent retailers should stock a selection of organic confectionery: "Part of the exciting and challenging role of independent retailers, especially organic ones, is to offer their customers choice that is not easily available otherwise. Organic sweets, treats and chocolate can be hard for consumers to find, which is why we've committed to offering these categories. Customers committed to eating clean, organic products and who want to indulge their sweet tooth shouldn't have to throw all of their values away when it comes time to choosing a sweet treat. Providing an organic option with clean ingredients allows for them to have their cake and eat it too."

The appeal of organic sweets, Chinzalée says, "really lies in the enjoyment of a sweet without the worry you are consuming E numbers, artificial dyes and other 'nasties'. An organic sweet is exactly what it sounds like – a chocolate, candy or candy bar made of non-GMO, organic ingredients."

But can retailers assure customers that eating an organic sweet is better for their health? "This is a difficult one," Chinzalée says. "Is candy made with real fruit juice instead of artificial colouring healthier for you? They both probably have the same amount of sugar and should be consumed in moderation, but should customers have the choice to avoid putting artificial ingredients in our bodies without fully knowing their impact on our health? I think so."

## Raw chocolate

For all and any of these reasons, "the demand for organic chocolate is through the roof!" Chinzalée says. "We have seen a steady growth in this category, which is impressive considering the vast array of conventional chocolates available to the consumer. We are lucky to be working with so many wonderful suppliers who offer our customers innovative and delicious products not widely available. We have also made a strong commitment to sourcing organic raw chocolates which our customers have become very loyal to."

There is a surprisingly wide choice available to those wanting to take the organic option. "The organic chocolate scene is very interesting and feels like its own world, much like the craft beer and coffee scenes," Chinzalée says. "There are great brands like Blanxart, Doisy and Dam

who are shaking up the category with beautiful single origin chocolates or interesting flavour profiles. Raw chocolate suppliers keep popping up left and right with beautiful bars and we've just launched our own raw and organic filled pralines as well. For those looking for traditional gummies made from organic ingredients, Biona have a great, broad range to choose from."

Does this go some way to countering the negative image of sweets? "Absolutely. For example, Doisy & Dam have been adding superfoods to their chocolates, turning the 'is this healthy?' question on its head, but most importantly, those who are committed to using organic cacao and sugar, for example, are actively supporting organic farming industry, one that we hope will continue to grow. It's also worth noting that dark chocolate and cacao really can be consumed as a health food (think of all of those heart healthy

polyphenols or the healthy fats in cacao butter)! The nutritional profile of raw chocolate is outstanding and it's hard to find something negative to say about it at all."

## Organic sales

Emma Jackman is founder and managing director of Conscious Chocolate, whose organic credentials are certified by Organic Farmers and Growers. It makes sense to stock organic products, she says, because "the consumer understands the benefits of organic and organic sales are increasing all the time. Lots of health food shops will only stock organic and most shops want to at least tap in to this side of the market; without it they are missing a huge chunk. Most

consumers do expect to have the choice of the more ethical brands." Producing organically isn't the easiest route for a producer to take. "In terms of paperwork and logistics, we have so many more processes now but all our lines are organic so this simplifies things," Emma says.

Some retailers may still be mystified about why a customer would be keen to search out organic confectionery. For Emma, the increasing demand for organic chocolate is all about a transparent food chain and purity of production. "If you are eating organic, you know that the ingredients are individually certified and that there is a clear chain of processes that guarantee the ingredients are quality checked and can be traced. The main point is that they have been produced without chemicals – who wants to eat insecticide with their chocolate?"



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“Customers committed to eating clean, organic products and who want to indulge their sweet tooth shouldn't have to throw all of their values away when it comes time to choosing a sweet treat”



**Musk's has a rich history and has now been going for over 130 years.** Back in 1884, James Musk was a butcher boy and he married the boss's widow. It may well have been frowned upon as they ran away to London to get married, but he put his name above the door nonetheless! From that day, they started running a butcher's shop. There were quite a few pork butchers around Newmarket at that time as there was a surplus of pork; this was because every stable had pigs to snuffle about around the horses, and it became a centre for pork and therefore pork sausages. James Musk died from pneumonia in 1905 and his stepsons and their children ran it through until the late 1970s. They had a shop on the High Street, which can still be seen, but decided to close it in 1979.

**The family auctioned off their sausage recipe and it was bought by a lady called Amanda Clarke, who set up a deli and put a Mrs Waddilove in charge.** They continued until the mid-nineties, when they sold the recipe to Lord Ronaldshay who had a particular passion for sausages. It was he who built the factory and sold the deli off to George Vesty.

**When I bought the business in 1999, it was purely a sausage factory.** The manager had been working for Musk's for 47 years and his father before him had been employed for

## PRIME CUTS

Chris Sheen, owner and managing director of Musk's, talks us through the past, present and future of the Royal Warrant brand



“ Apart from royalty, leading delis and top caterers are our customers. I love meeting a potential customer and saying “you can never be our top customer!” ”

60 years – so there's quite a bit of longevity! Early in the new century we introduced a gluten-free sausage which turned the company around – it was the first one on the market at that time. Since then we've designed a Pork & Leek, Pork & Cyder and a Christmas variety chipolata, and about six years ago we purchased The Braughing Sausage Company in Hertfordshire trading as D. White Butchers. Reluctantly we closed the shop in January this year as we couldn't compete with the supermarkets; Braughing Sausage Company is still in operation.

**The quality of the meat is what sets us apart from other sausage makers.** We use pork shoulder meat from outdoor reared pigs – which is the best meat for sausage-making. We also buy lots of bread from local bakers to keep the sausages light, as opposed to other sausage makers who use rusk which gives them a cloying texture. However it's the secret blend of spices which give the product its edge!

**We have been honoured to hold a Royal Warrant almost continually since 1907 when we were granted King George V's Warrant.** In 1929 Edward Prince of Wales granted us his Warrant and then in 1965 we received one from H.M. Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother. Finally in 2010 our present Queen granted us her Warrant. Apart from royalty, leading delis and top caterers are our

customers. I love meeting a potential customer and saying “you can never be our top customer!” which confuses them a bit, but they understand when I explain it's the Queen. However, I'm not at liberty to disclose how many she buys!

**Our philosophies are to produce the best product possible and provide our customers with great value for money.** The sausage market is pretty saturated – if you go to the supermarket, the sausage section is four metres across and four rows high and it's packed with products. Ultimately, the customer is looking for value for money – we believe that we produce fantastic products, but at the a sausage is only a sausage, and it's never going to replace a steak!

**Newmarket Sausages' PGI status means that they have to be made within a defined area around the town of Newmarket, which gives retailers a story to help sell them to customers.** Having said that, I liken the PGI status to the Red Tractor Mark, which I don't believe the average shopper



recognises. A Royal Warrant is a mark of quality which only a few producers have, so that is our key selling point alongside the use of local bread and the quality of the meat.

**Our factory is of limited size but isn't working flat-out, so we have room to expand our productivity.** We only have one filler so we have to be careful with flavours – the production manager would go mad if we introduced an exotic flavour which would taint the others! We're selling a reduced fat sausage too, to make the most of the current wave of health-conscious consumers, as well as a gluten-free reduced fat option... I can't tell the difference between the Newmarket and gluten-free sausages, which is a good sign! Something else which sets us apart is that we use natural casings which shouldn't be pricked while they cook – they should be allowed to marinate in their own juices.

**The next step for Musk's is to export around the world, as we feel that other countries would be receptive to our traditional British product.** We don't supply everywhere in the UK, except by mail order, but would indeed like to. When we did sell to northern supermarkets in the past they ended up turning us away as their customers were choosing locally-made sausages, proving the power of local produce. That said, we would be delighted to supply anyone and everyone, at home or abroad!



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**M**elrose & Morgan operates two London delis, Primrose Hill, which opened in 2004, and Hampstead Village, which launched in 2010. The business, says operations director, Tracey Bellow, is best described as "a premium food grocer stocking primarily British goods, plus a select catalogue of choice products from Europe. We have a unique range of carefully-selected products, and a team of chefs in both our savoury and sweet kitchen making products from scratch daily. In addition, we supplement the range with excellent products that we have picked from small producers."

Founders Ian James and Nick Selby "come from different backgrounds," Tracey says. "Ian had previously been in the theatre world and then opened the Wapping Project, while Nick had a photographic agency, but they both shared a commitment to really good food. They were inspired by Saturday shopping at Borough Market where they were able to talk to the producers and see only the best ingredients. They decided to source in the same way and open a place in North London where the local community could benefit from a different way to buy their groceries." Flavoursome food was on the menu from the start. "On the first day, they went to New Covent Garden Market, bought a truckle of cheese and some artisan bread. Chefs in the shop created a fresh soup, some of our still renowned sausage rolls and a wonderful treacle tart."

Getting the look right for the location can be an important factor in deciding how the deli is received locally. "When we first opened," Tracey says, "we had a shell of a shop that we populated with a mix of old furniture that sat in an open, airy

## MEET THE BUYER

### Flavour and freshness are at the heart of the food sold and produced by Melrose & Morgan's two North London delis

A SENSE OF ORDER PREVAILS AT THE HAMPSTEAD SHOP



space. This was very different at that time. We have continued to mix up the display formats but keep a sense of conviviality to ensure our customers feel relaxed and at home when they come through our doors. Each of our shops was designed individually; we worked with the same designer who created the brand with us 10 years ago. In Gloucester Avenue we have a more industrial feel. In contrast, our Hampstead shop was designed with reclaimed items and a softer tone that felt right for that site. Both shops

benefit from the simplicity that underpins our brand."

Locations were chosen in "the heart of the local community," Tracey says. "Connecting with the people there has always been important to us." The company opted for "spaces which ensured that we could create the right experience for our customers, with plenty of height" over being directly in the high street. "We may not benefit from the same footfall drivers, but we believe that if the offer is right and the shop is engaging, then the customers will come and thankfully, we have found that to be the case. We believed in the idea of bringing good food to local people and have invested in that over the years. At the moment we are looking for capital investment to take the next step in our journey and partner up with someone who will see it all as we do."

#### British classics

In-house catering has become a key part of the business, Tracey says. "As we scaled up the operation, that process has moved into a central kitchen, but the recipes remain the

same. We like to focus on British classics and add a little extra in terms of flavour with lots of herbs in our salads and spices. We make a cross section of dishes, both sweet and savoury. Breakfast options include our award-winning sour cherry granola. Among morning and lunch offerings are fresh sandwiches and savoury pastries to accompany our hand-prepared salads. There is a choice of daily sweet tarts and cakes for teatime and a range of soups, stews, hotpots and pies for dinner. When we opened our Gloucester

Avenue shop, we brought the chef and the ingredients out into the front of house and ten years ago this was quite radical. We wanted people to understand what we were cooking and see the integrity of our ingredients. Making our food in-house allowed us to work with only the seasonal quality ingredients we would want to buy ourselves and to create dishes that we have been eating since our childhood."

Cheese has always been central to Melrose & Morgan, Tracey says, "not only because we enjoy it, but also because the British cheese market is so wonderful. We like to keep the number of cheeses we stock small, with classics such as a Cheddar, a blue, a goats and a soft, and we work closely with our supplier to ensure that we bring a well-aged, perfectly ripened cheese to the counter, which is then cut to order by our staff (one of our training modules is specifically focused on cheese). That core catalogue is then supplemented with some seasonal lines and other European must-haves: Mozzarella in the summer and Parmesan to sell with our pasta and sauces. It has been fascinating to see the change in cheese tastes and right now, non-cow's milk cheese is selling so well with Perroche and Ragstone proving very popular alongside Manchego."

Flavour and fresh produce underpin the success of this North London business. "The product is everything to us," Tracey says. "We focus first and foremost on the taste and it is as simple as that. You always know when something has been made properly with great ingredients, because it translates into the flavour. When we buy from a supplier, we need to know that the product is something which really inspires us."



TEMPTING DISPLAYS AT PRIMROSE HILL



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# CHEESE??

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# SHOW REVIEW: SPECIALITY & FINE FOOD FAIR 2015

Bigger, better and more varied than ever before, this year's show offered a smorgasbord of fine food and drink

**R**everted across the food and drink industry thanks to its forward-thinking nature, trends abound at Speciality & Fine Food Fair 2015. No wonder the show was trending on Twitter throughout its run and clinched the top spot twice during the three days. From showcases of the best new food and drink to hit the market to product demonstrations, business advice and expert talks, this year's event saw more producers and industry professionals than ever before take to the stage to share their knowledge with the industry. Here, Speciality Food's editorial team shares their favourite finds at the show...



## EDITOR'S PICKS

Ross Gilfillan, editor of Speciality Food shares his picks of the event's best bites



### Cannon & Cannon Pre-packed Charcuterie Range

One product which impressed me was a new range of pre-packed charcuterie which Cannon and Cannon is making available from October. The flavours are unusual and the meats of the sort of quality we have come to expect from these specialists in British charcuterie. The packs are not vacuum-packed, either, a process which will often kill off much of the flavour and affect the meat's texture. Wholesale manager Alex Tsergas talks about the flavours available: "One is from Scotland, and this is our wild venison with green peppercorn salami. Then there is a Cornish Cider and Seaweed and a Cornish Chorizo and the last one is going to be a Veal and Sage Salami." The advantages offered by these packs, he says, are that they offer standardised portions and come in useful for those retailers who would like to offer charcuterie but don't have a slicer. The shelf life of these meats is three months.

### Snowflake Luxury Gelato

Originality and presentation

are important considerations when it comes to picking a top product, but the over-riding one for any food is, of course, taste, and that's what drew me to the Snowflake's range of luxury gelatos. I tried the raspberry flavour and was impressed by the depth of flavour, which seemed entirely natural. The experience was, I thought, much like that of tasting a freshly-picked whole raspberry. The company achieves their veracity of flavour by using seasonal fruit, and adds a luxury element by blending this fruit with organic milk from Jersey cows, organic cream and sugar. Snowflake takes an artisanal approach to the production of its range, which is made by hand. Also available from the company is the 'Guilt-free' Sorbetto range, which uses no added sugar. The range of flavours is quite comprehensive, offering over 50 varieties of luxury gelato and sorbetto products.

## DEPUTY EDITOR'S PICKS

Holly Shackleton, deputy editor of Speciality Food welcomes a new generation



### Col's Kitchen Tomato Sauces

In my job I get to taste a lot of superb food, but it's not often that I get entirely bowled over by a product – let alone a tomato sauce (not least because I'm a passionate advocate of making sauces from scratch). The range produced by Col's Kitchen has challenged this, however – its great texture, incredible flavour and truly homemade nature combined to make this a sauce I would be happy to add to my weekday cheat list. The founder's experience as a chef and her passion for food shines through the sauces, as does her dedication to using only the finest ingredients – which means no nasties, always a thumbs up in my book. Col's Kitchen's range currently sits at three: Roasted Tomato & Chianti Sauce, a blend of slow roasted cherry tomatoes and chianti; Amatriciana, made with pig's cheek, roasted tomato and chianti; and my favourite, Luganica, a combination of Luganica, a regional sausage, chilli, chianti and rosemary.

### Don Gaucho Dulce de Leche

I didn't think that anything could knock salted caramel off its high perch in my culinary heart, but this unctuous, decadent but not-too-sweet sauce may just have managed it. Not only is it spoonable from a jar, but it's pretty versatile too – delicious as a pancake, ice cream, fruit, dessert and toast-topper, it ticks a lot of boxes for consumers looking for a multi-purpose and easy-to-use sweet treat. Retailers would do well to position it on shelves alongside both their dessert and home baking ranges, as well as tell its unique story. Dulce de leche has long been a staple of my larder, and I feel very happy to say that Don Gaucho's version will take the place of my former favourite. A truly authentic Argentinian product, this traditional milk caramel is partnered in Don Gaucho's range by a unique pair of chimichurri sauces and a great Malbec red wine – add a barbecued steak and you're sorted.

“ Speciality & Fine Food Fair 2015 saw 780 fine food and drink suppliers exhibiting, meaning it was 5% larger in stand space than last year's, with buyers from leading retailers, chefs and food service buyers attending, plus overseas visitors. We expect the visitor numbers to be similar to our record breaking attendance in 2014. The Fair organisers, Fresh Montgomery, are extremely pleased with the event following its move to Olympia National ”

SORAYA GADELRAH, EVENT DIRECTOR AT SPECIALITY & FINE FOOD FAIR





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JULIET HARBUTT



## “Sharing the glut”

It's that time of year, when anyone with even half a green finger and an apple or plum tree is trying to figure out what to do with Mother Nature's overgenerous crop. As everyone has the same problem, you need to look further afield for a solution, and maybe this is something rural retailers could take on as a community project.

With my move back to New Zealand looming, my last harvest is more poignant and important than in other years. 20 years ago, when I first moved to Churchill, I couldn't believe how eight apple and three plum trees could produce so much fruit. So much in fact, that despite cupboards full of jams and chutneys and freezers bulging with pies and puddings, I barely made a dent.

In desperation, I did what any country dweller in New Zealand would do: I put a wheelbarrow laden with fruit at my gate with a sign saying 'Help Yourself'. Three loads of coxes, bramleys and Victoria plums disappeared, and I was starting to feel I could beat the glut when the wheelbarrow disappeared along with the fruit. Horrified, I assumed the English were rather more literal than

New Zealanders and put it down to cultural differences. So I was very pleasantly surprised two weeks later to find the wheelbarrow back with three jars of apple chutney and an apple pie and no indication who the kind person was – a New Zealander would definitely have boasted of their good behaviour! Mind you, a New Zealander would probably have pumped up the tyres...

Since then I have foisted boxes of fruit, herbs and vegetables onto schools, chefs, care homes and hospices. I had great plans to spread the love and get the glut to those who could really benefit from it but never had the time, so I thought I would try to inspire you through my column to do something. And what's not to like when it could gain you new customers, great local PR and the undying gratitude of gardeners and allotment owners?

A few years ago, my Slow Food group in the Cotswolds invested in a scatter and sturdy nine litre cast iron press for £150 from VIGO that can make around seven litres of juice an hour, to raise awareness of Slow Food by helping reduce the waste of all the wonderful apples and pears in

the area. We used it at events, village fêtes and farmers markets, and hired it out to individuals. In retrospect, the 12 litres [£175] would have been better – less effort, more yield!

We stuck notices up on village notice boards saying 'Apple Pressing – convert your apples to apple juice' (which, by the way, freezes superbly in used plastic milk containers). They paid per carrier bag and did most of the work – using the scatter to break up apples is very hot, hard work. But most were delighted, and social media made sure we were kept busy most of the day. It's not a huge investment for a retailer but is something you could take to schools or lend it out at events – just make sure they know it's donated by you, watch out for wasps and find a pig

“ This formula could be used in other schools, care homes, hospices and any institution responsible for feeding lots of people. It just needs someone to instigate and support it, and who better than a local deli or farm shop? ”

farmer for the mountain of pulp!

My favourite farm shop – Daylesford Organic – borrows ours and, along with their rather beautiful press, offers visitors a chance to taste a whole range of apple varieties at their annual Harvest Festival. It's a very popular event and a great opportunity to see a truly organic farm and remarkable retail establishment in action.

I managed to convince the chef of a large high school a few years ago to take 10 bags of my apples to convert to purée and pies. His initial reaction was rather negative, especially regarding staff, but a call for volunteers produced a surprising number of up and coming chefs and I think some miscreants found themselves in an unusual detention! From there we worked out a seasonal call of action which was sent out to parents and grandparents, telling them to bring in their fruit or vegetables on specific days. That way he and the staff could plan their time and deal with it. Not only does it help with the budget, but it encourages parents who didn't usually feel they could contribute to start participating in the school.

In an ideal world I would love to see the conversion of seasonal gluts into edible school foods as part of the curriculum for all children, as it demonstrates the various methods of preserving fresh foods and might encourage them and their schools to plant more trees that bear fruit, grow more berries and appreciate how the preservation of seasonal gluts – which of course includes milk, meat, game and fish – can help us feed the world.

# Cheese Talk

New retail perspectives from industry experts

GEORGE PAUL OF BRADBURY'S



## “Getting to know you”

It's largely true that overnight success in cheese is gained after 20–30 years of sheer hard work plus a stubborn determination to overcome the challenges, and a generous stroke of good fortune or even a great job in self publicity.

The UK has many well-known artisan makers, all rightly lauded as having earned their right to be in the spotlight. Such fame covers Montgomery Cheddar, Charles Martell and the famous Stinking Bishop, Keens Cheddar, Quicke's, Lincolnshire Poacher, Yorkshire Blue, Appleby's Cheshire, Kirkham's Lancashire, Sparkenhoe Red Leicester, Gorwydd Caerphilly, Westcombe Cheddar and other artisan royalty. These are the national and even international

bedrock of well-known brands and types.

Others should and must emerge to continue the legacy growth of great British and Irish cheese. The difference between success and failure is sometimes wafer thin, and in the UK there have been many casualties of those who didn't quite make it.

Amongst those paying their dues for a long time and entitled to even further success must be the likes of Rosary Goats Cheese, a smooth and truly elegant piece of cheese craftsmanship, rounded, creamy and smooth.

At the northern extremities of England's cheesemaking, the Northumberland Cheese Company has a whole range of cheese types, possibly too many, but their

brilliant white goats cheese, Elsdon, is a real delight and rivals anything our Continental cousins can make.

The Bamford family's Daylesford dairy is hardly unknown, but the semi-soft, washed-rind, 10 week-aged and organic Adelstrop is honeyed and creamy with a lingering delicate taste, reminiscent of Caerphilly in style, and may well become a favourite in the future.

A stalwart of this trade, with many generations of cheese-making history, the redoubtable John Bourne hardly gets the recognition his fine cheese deserves. Famed for his classic Cheshire, aged 3–4 months, it is a national shame that our oldest recorded cheese is a shadow of what it once was as it is simply outstanding. Quite separate to classic white Cheshire, his creamy soft, almost Gorgonzola-like blue is a real gem.

From Ayrshire, Barwheys cheese from maker Tricia Bey is a hard unpasteurised cheese made from with milk from its own special herd of pedigree Ayrshire cattle. The cheese is wrapped in traditional cotton cloth and aged in wooden slats for 12–14 months, creating a creamy texture

with a very slight crumble, a sharp taste and a hint of nuts and the sweetness of caramel.

From the rolling flatlands of Norfolk, a long time desert for cheesemaking, comes Fielding Cottage owned by Sam Steggles which produces various products using goat's milk including some outstanding cheeses.

Amongst his range there is the Norfolk Mardler, a waxed 8-week mature hard goats cheese, Ellingham Goats which is in the style of a feta, and of course the award-winning Wensum white goats cheese, a brie-style goats cheese with classic smooth,

creamy and sticky interior with gentle tones from the goats milk.

Next for something a little different; Burt's blue cheese made by Claire Burt – a pasteurised, handmade semi-soft blue which as it develops becomes rich and creamy with a distinctive blue character.

The step to fame, success and recognition is sometimes a yawning chasm, but with the support of like-minded independent retailers, these cheeses of tomorrow may join the ranks of the famous.

For all it is their opportunity and desire, for some their overdue destiny.

“ The UK has many well-known artisan makers, all rightly lauded as having earned their right to be in the spotlight. The step to fame, success and recognition is sometimes a yawning chasm, but with the support of like-minded independent retailers, these cheeses of tomorrow may join the ranks of the famous ”



News, opinion and comment from dairy insiders

## British Halloumi Sparks Debate

British producers of Halloumi cheese will have to cease or change production of their cheese as a result of a Cypriot attempt to protect the cheese under the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) scheme.

Three producers of Halloumi in the UK who would be prevented from producing this cheese are Aegean Heritage, Old Plaw Hatch Farm and High Weald Dairy.

Shepherds Purse, a Yorkshire-based cheesemaker, was made to change the name of their Feta-style cheese to Yorkshire Fettle when it lost a high court battle of their right to use the name Feta.

Matthew O'Callaghan, chair of UK Protected Food Names Association said, "Many now regard the name Halloumi as a generic word for a style of making cheese rather than a cheese from a particular area. Although this may affect only a handful of cheesemakers in the UK, nevertheless this is an important part of their business."



## New Lease of Life for St Swithins

Norfolk-based cheesemakers Nortons Dairy has added a new cheese to their range.

The producer's award-winning St Swithins Soft cheese has been combined with freeze-dried strawberries to create a flavourful addition to cheeseboards.

Initial trials proved successful, so St Swithins Soft with Strawberries will be available from distributors from October 2015.

Emily Norton, director said, "The creation of this cheese was down to a lucky conversation with some gentlemen's perfumiers at a farmers

market about a strawberry roule they loved in the 1980s and could no longer source.

"I knew that my St Swithins Soft takes both sweet and savoury flavours really nicely, and this part of Norfolk is known for its strawberry production, so I thought the combination could be really interesting.

"I put the strawberry cheese out with some biscuits when I had some girlfriends over. It didn't last long on the cheeseboard, so I'm confident it deserves to be part of our Nortons Dairy family."

## Talking Continental

Ros Windsor, managing director of Paxton & Whitfield, shares her insights on the Continental cheese market.

"Over the past five years our sales of Continental cheese have been fairly constant, and equate to a third of our annual sales. Where we have seen a slight shift is in actual countries – French cheeses have always had the highest number of sales for us, but over the past few years we've seen increases in cheeses from Italy, Ireland and Spain, and the relative percentages between countries shift.

"It's the classic Continental cheeses that sell well, but we do carry a range of over 50 Continental cheeses and the challenge is to get customers to taste the lesser known ones. They all deserve to be better known and enjoyed, and we support them by having them on taste on a regular basis.

"At Paxton & Whitfield our customers are still interested in these Continental varieties and we sell a good amount of them. Customers are looking for good cheeses for their cheeseboard, whatever the cheese's country of origin. What I would also like to see is newer cheeses coming onto the market from the Continent. We are seeing some new cheeses from Spain and Italy coming through as both these countries now have good routes to market."



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# Cambus O'May Launches PFN Bid



The artisanal Scottish dairy, located in Royal Deeside has launched a bid to gain Protected Food Name status for its signature cheese.

The cheese in question, Cambus O'May, is a two day curd cheese which has been hand-pressed into a muslin cloth bandage to produce a

creamy, melt in the mouth texture and rustic mountain flavours.

The bid was announced by Richard Lochhead, Scottish cabinet secretary, who said, "Scotland is world-famous for our wonderful food and drink, and people want to know they are buying the real deal. Achieving PFN status for Cambus O'May cheese will ensure that consumers at home and abroad have a one hundred per cent guarantee of the product's authenticity."

"Cambus O'May is an unpasteurised cheese, with a recipe that dates back for generations, and is the only one of its kind in Scotland. The PFN scheme can benefit producers of brands synonymous with Scotland by providing them with recognition of their product and safeguarding it from imitation, and I would encourage more producers in Scotland to look at taking this forward."

If successful, the cheese will join the likes of Arbroath Smokies and Scotch Beef in the list of protected Scottish foods.

Alex Reid, managing director of Cambus O'May Cheese Co. said, "PFN status for Cambus O'May cheese will play a big part in preserving the unique heritage of this cheese which was lost for a generation – the cheese was a mainstay of farmhouse life in the North East of Scotland in the past. We hope that the cheese and the unique manner in which it was produced with the very best of local natural ingredients can be protected and preserved by the granting of PFN status."

"The designation would be reward to the efforts of our staff to replicate the methods of old and reintroduce the cheese to our regional customers. It's a widely recognized food status designation so will be important in marketing our cheese to the wider UK and International markets where product provenance and certification of quality are essential."

"At a time when the Scottish Dairy industry is facing significant challenge it would be a welcome piece of good news and recognition of the unique quality of Scottish Dairy products."

## Yester Farm Dairies Enters UK Market

Family-run, East Lothian-based Yester Farm Dairies has announced that it will be adding an artisan cheese range to its retail offering in 2016.

The expansion of the producer's soft cheese processing unit is thanks to support from Clydesdale Bank, and is the latest development of a partnership which has lasted for more than 20 years through the family's farming business.

Yester Farm Dairies, run by Simon and Jackie McCreery since 2003, operates alongside the family's farm and uses milk produced on the farm to produce its range of soft cheeses, traditional-style Mozzarella and spreadable soft cheeses as well as crème fraîche and sour cream.

The business will now be extending its reach beyond the Lothians and Borders into the retail sector across the UK.



Jackie McCreery, director said, "It is an exciting time. We are really looking forward to getting our food service range off the ground over the next six months or so and then hope to develop an innovative retail range in 2016. The first trial batch is done and we will hopefully get final sign-off from our local environmental health officers shortly and so be able to sell products within the next six weeks."

"We were delighted to have recently been shortlisted as a finalist for Dairy Innovator of the Year at the British Farming Awards and we will continue to try new things. Our new soft cheese processing unit will allow us to offer new products, grow the business and break into new markets not only in Scotland but throughout

the UK, and who knows, perhaps even export."

David Hannon, head of agribusiness at Clydesdale Bank said, "We are pleased to continue our longstanding support of the McCreery family. Having worked with them since 1992 they have continually demonstrated their ambition and innovation. I am sure Yester Farm Dairies' new products will help the business continue to develop and we look forward to working with them in the years ahead. Our specialist knowledge of and focus on different sectors helps to bring a challenge to the market giving small and medium sized business the speed and flexibility they require to fulfil their growth ambitions."

## JUSTIN TUNSTALL OF TOWN MILL CHEESEMONGER



### "Pedanticism – pedantry, actually"

What does one do when a customer is just plain wrong? During the August melee I had somebody in the shop who was adamant that he didn't want Mrs Kirkham's Lancashire, but her Cheddar. I'd never heard of it and a quick look in the Directory of British Cheese didn't list such a cheese, nor did the catalogues of the various wholesalers whom we use. A web search didn't bring up a positive result, either. Rather than tell him that the cheese doesn't exist, I said that I couldn't find it through my usual channels, but that I'd love to taste it sometime. Sadly, he wasn't interested in tasting (or buying) any of the West Country Cheddars for which our area, and dare I say our shop, is famed. He may believe us a sub-standard shop for not stocking his favourite, but his next port of call might have been the Aquarium, perhaps to look for a mermaid.

As a youth, working in record shops (if you're under 25, ask your parents what those were), I soon learned to rein in my elitist disdain for some customers' purchases – as was swiftly pointed out to me by the store manager, the profit from the heavy metal albums at which I had turned up my nose had covered my wages for the day. Thankfully, I don't have such issues any more: if someone has come to the shop to talk cheese, they're okay in my book. Besides which, we don't stock cheeses that I don't like!

Nonetheless, my inner pedant still needs watching. Minor mispronunciations abound – and not

just for foreign cheeses such as Comté, Brie de Meaux (oft called Mool) and Brebrousse d'Argental, a tongue-twister for almost any Brit. More than a few people ask for Dorset Blue Vine-y (it's spelled Vinny – and pronounced like the first name of the footballer/actor Vinnie Jones). We have a rule in the shop – don't correct shoppers when they've got it wrong, but don't repeat an incorrect rendition of the name. There's usually two or three opportunities to say it correctly: as the cheese is cut, when it's put in the basket and when it's rung up at the till. They may pick up on that, or they may not. I'm quite happy to sell Vine-y to paying customers all day long. Similarly with Quicke's Cheddar, a big seller for us where the silent 'e' on the end of Mary's surname often gets pronounced.

I understand that the Dorset-made Woolsery goat cheese was first made in the village of Woolfardisworthy in Devon. The shorter name is how the locals pronounced it. I'd love someone to come into the shop and ask for Woolfardisworthy! People misread labels, too – I've been asked whether the washed-rind Burwood Bole, from James' Cheese, is as blue as Stilton by folk who've speed-read the name.

But we don't always get it right ourselves – Gorwydd Caerphilly, once from Llanddewi Brefi but now made in Somerset, is one that I still struggle with; just last week I asked a Welsh visitor to take me through the name just once more. Hopefully I'll get it right one day.

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# MAKING A SUCCESS OF CHEESE

You don't become one of the nation's best-known cheesemongers for nothing. We talk to owners of notable and award-winning cheese shops about stock, developing trends, and the secrets of successful cheese selling

**H**ow do you measure success? The success of artisan cheese can be measured not only by the amount of cheese sold annually, but by the constant appearance of new and interesting cheeses. Perhaps the number of cheese awards that recognise achievements in this field is also an indicator. It's all a far cry from the cheese scene of just a couple of decades ago, when good artisan and farmhouse cheeses were few and far between. Key to this success has been the role played by astute cheesemongers, who encouraged small producers, safe in the knowledge that a market awaited their efforts, and their customers to quit their comfort zones for new tastes and for cheeses that were either new or familiar products made by traditional methods.

In London, cheese sellers such as La Fromagerie, Neal's Yard and Paxton & Whitfield have blended tradition with innovation, sourcing Britain's finest cheeses, offering encouragement to their producers and maturing the finished product to its optimum state. Cheesemongers beyond London are also doing a good job in disseminating information about what artisan cheeses are, and showing new customers how much better they can taste than their supermarket counterparts. Tastes will vary, of course, and place of origin can be one factor deciding this. It would be no surprise to learn that Stilton sold very well in the counties making it, or that Lancashire cheese is a popular choice in the North West of England. Other reasons for a variation in taste are more idiosyncratic. Some change in local taste may have been affected by the efforts of the cheesemonger himself, as he introduces customers to fantastic new cheeses and word of mouth brings others to his counter. Cheesemongers who have a passion for promoting local cheeses will be swinging taste in that direction.

Here we talk to a handful of reputable cheese sellers, to find out which of their cheeses (both home-produced and Continental) are selling particularly well for them just now, and also to discover what it is which placed them at the top of their game.



## The Fine Cheese Co, Bath

The Fine Cheese Co was established in 1979 and has been selling a wide range of handmade British and Continental cheeses since then. A 'maturer, wholesaler, retailer and exporter', this well-established name, whose speciality is "West Country cheeses and cheeses imported by us directly from France, Spain, Italy, Switzerland and Holland" sums up its raison d'être in three simple words: "we love cheese." Owner and founder Ann-Marie Dyas lists her top-selling artisan cheeses:

**Best-selling cheeses?** Blues: Bath Blue, Colston Basset Stilton, Beauvale; Hard: Montgomery Cheddar, Parmigiano Reggiano 30 months, Old Winchester, Comté, Wyfe of Bath; Fresh and soft: Brie de Meaux Dongé, Bath Soft, Vacherin Mont D'Or (in season), Tunworth, Carboncino, Waterloo; Goats' or sheep's milk: Rachel, Flower Marie, Dorstone; Territorials: Montgomery Cheddar, Keen's Cheddar, Westcombe Cheddar hand-selected; Rind-washed: Rachel, Epoisses, Langres; Continentals: Brie de Meaux, Parmigiano Reggiano 30 months, and Comté

### Which cheeses are deserving of better recognition?

We are in love with La Oveja Negra Manchego, which is made with the original black sheep's milk which is richer and creamier. Stärrnächäs is an artisan-made Swiss cheese with a supple texture and deep, rich flavour, while La Tur is an Italian mixed-milk cheese that is the equivalent of cheese ice-cream.

### What else do you sell?

Unsurprisingly, we have every cracker and partner for cheese from The Fine Cheese Co and a pretty good selection from our sister company, Artisan Biscuits. We also retail bread from Hobbs House, charcuterie from Falorni and Savigny,



oil from Seggiano and Torres, balsamic vinegar from Giusti, truffle lines from Tartuflanghe and high quality chocolates from the chocolatiers, Artisan du Chocolat."

### What developing trends have you noticed?

A growing confidence and genuine enjoyment of goats' milk cheeses. It is a rarity to hear "I don't like goats' milk cheese" when 20 years ago it was the norm. French cheese continues to lose out to British alternatives.

### Which of your accompaniments sell particularly well?

Toast is hard to keep on the shelves. Our Chutneys for Cheese have a growing fan club, because they are slightly sweeter and as a result, make better partners for cheese than more acidic, general-purpose chutneys.

### What are the secrets of successful cheese-selling?

Understanding your customers, sell what you believe in, love your cheeses and care for them

### What are the pitfalls of cheesemongering?

1. Offering too many cheeses and not turning them fast enough. It's far better to have a smaller range that is



### WATERLOO

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[villagemaiddcheese.co.uk](http://villagemaiddcheese.co.uk)



### COLSTON BASSETT STILTON

Colston Basset Stilton is strong in flavour yet remains smooth and creamy, with distinctive blue veins which become more strongly defined as the cheese matures.

[colstonbassettdairy.co.uk](http://colstonbassettdairy.co.uk)



### COMTÉ

The texture of this classic unpasteurized cows milk cheese from France is relatively hard and flexible, and the taste is strong and slightly sweet.

[comtecheese.co.uk](http://comtecheese.co.uk)



### WYFE OF BATH

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always in tip-top condition. 2. Not sampling enough. Always let your customers try the cheese they are buying. Cheese is expensive, and a customer who finds they don't like the cheese they bought when they get home isn't coming back.

### How will the market develop?

It's definitely in good health, so I see a positive future. I sense that there is growing discernment about cheese from customers who shop in the independent sector. This tells me that artisan cheese will be increasingly appreciated and sought-after. More partners to make any cheese a new experience and an adventure will be part of that interesting dynamism.





## The Cheese and Wine Company

**The Cheese and Wine Company** was founded in 2010

in Hampton Village, Middlesex and is run by its founder and owner, Steve Parker. It is, he says, "dedicated to the tasting and pairing of artisan, traditionally-made cheeses and wines from family run producers" and specialises in "cheeses, wines and everything to go with them."

### Best-Selling Cheeses

Blues: Colston Bassett Stilton, Barkham Blue, Gorgonzola Dolce; Hard: Mature Cheddar, Comté St Antoine, Aged Gouda; Fresh and soft: Brie de Meaux, Rouzaire, Delice de Bourgogne, Camembert Petit Normand; Goats or sheep's milk: Chèvre d'Argental, Selles sur Cher, Manchego; Territorials: Hoe Stevenson Red Leicester – other than that, territorials hardly sell at all; Rind-washed: Taleggio, Langres, Epoisses Berthaut.

### Which cheeses are deserving of better recognition?

Monte Enebro, Tunworth, Old Winchester.

### What else do you sell?

Wine, olives, charcuterie, oils and vinegars, chutneys and pickles,

accessories, crackers, bread, wine-flavoured soaps, books, slates, local honey.

### What developing trends have you noticed?

Preference for British cheeses, people more willing to try something different.

### Which of your accompaniments that you sell are doing particularly well just now?

Our own caramelised onion chutney, all other chutneys,

### What are the secrets of successful cheese-selling?

Sell top quality products, know your products (train your staff), let people taste cheeses.

### What are the pitfalls of cheesemongering?

Poorly trained staff, poor display, not enough interesting cheeses in the range.

### How do you see the cheese market developing over the next few years?

Greater move away from big brands to artisan cheeses, greater need for information and provenance, shops to be open at right times (we sell a lot of cheese after 6.00pm).



## IJ Mellis of Edinburgh

**IJ Mellis Cheesemongers, of Edinburgh, Glasgow,**

**St Andrews and Aberdeen** was founded in 1993 and is owned by Iain Mellis and his wife, Karen. The shops offer "quality cheese and quality service" and specialise in "cheese from small producers."

### Best-selling cheeses

Blues: Lanark Blue, Shropshire Blue, Gorgonzola Dolce; Hard: Isle of Mull, Gouda V.S.O.P., Bonnet; Fresh and Soft: Brie de Meaux, Clava Brie, Mozzarella; Goats' or Sheep's milk: Ragstone, Selle Sur Cher, Berkswell, Orkney Grimbister, Kirkhams Lancashire, Keen's Cheddar; Rind-washed: Epoisses, Taleggio, Smoked Adrahan; Continentals: Dinarski (Croatian), Comté, Manchego.

### Which cheeses are deserving of better recognition?

Stilton (outside Christmas), Old Lochnager, Tomme de Savoie.

### What else do you sell?

Scottish charcuterie (Great Glen and Peelham) and a range of Italian charcuterie (Falorni)

### What developing trends have you noticed?

A slight move to more locally produced cheese.

### Which of your accompaniments sell particularly well?

John Mellis honey, Adamson's oatcakes, cheeses from fruit picked in Scotland.

### What are the secrets of successful cheese-selling?

Good service.

### What are the pitfalls of cheesemongering?

Like most retailing, location is key!

### How do you see the cheese market developing?

The awareness and appreciation of artisan cheese and cheese with real flavour becoming more mainstream.



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[paskisir.gligora.com](http://paskisir.gligora.com)



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[erringtoncheese.co.uk](http://erringtoncheese.co.uk)



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## Andy & Kathy Swinscoe at The Courtyard Dairy, Settle

The Courtyard Dairy is owned and operated by Cumbrian Andy Swinscoe and his wife Kathy. The shop is housed in a converted farm building near Settle in North Yorkshire and opened in 2012 with aims to "champion and support independent farmhouse cheese-makers in Britain". Specialities of the shop include "the unpasteurised cheeses made at Botton village: Dale End Cheddar, Summer Field; but also favourites are Martin Gott's fabulous St James and a new contender: Young Buck Blue



### What developing trends have you noticed?

People are still definitely up for local cheese over anything else, and are very happy to go out of there way for unpasteurised cheeses.

### Which of your accompaniments sell particularly well?

Red onion and apple chutney, then water crackers. These are best sellers every week.

### What are the secrets of successful cheese-selling?

Know your product (and those you don't stock, so you can offer an alternative), turn the stock fast (don't do too big a range – it is better cut fresh), taste out. Care for the cheese – it is a living product: wrap tight, turn, stop from drying....

### What are the pitfalls of cheesemongering?

Thinking they have to stock every product they're asked for. Not taking the time to wrap their cheese for display.

### How do you see the cheese market developing?

Hopefully, more farms will return to farmhouse cheesemaking. The upsurge of it has been good – in the last two years we've taken on three new cheesemakers (small-scale farmers with 20 or so cows) who have started out making unpasteurised cheese and are working to develop two more.

### Best-selling cheeses

Blues: Stichelton, Cote Hill Blue, Lanark Blue; Hard: Hafod Cheddar, Kirkham's Lancashire, Dale End Cheddar. Fresh and soft: Baron Bigod, Tunworth, Cheese with No Name; Goats or sheeps milk: Cais Na Tire, St James, Dorstone; Territorials: Kirkham's Lancashire, Cheddar, Wensleydale; Rind-washed: Capra Nouveau, St James, St Oswald; Continentals: Mons' Gruyere du Jura, Gorgonzola Dolce, Parmesan.

### Which cheeses are deserving of better recognition?

Hafod: when it's good, it is amazing. It's different from the Somerset Cheddars – buttery, warm and rich – and not a classic Cheddar, but so good. Kirkham's Lancashire: relatively well-known, but it should be in everybody's top three sellers. When it is good, it has such a depth of flavour. St James: again when it is on form this cheese is just one of those that you eat and want more of.

### What else do you sell?

We're pretty much a cheese specialist only but: Falorni charcuterie, Rosebud and Raydale preserves, Wooley oatcakes, Rude Health oatcakes



## Town Mill Cheesemonger, Dorset

Town Mill Cheesemonger is located in an artisan crafts development in Dorset's Lyme Regis. Owned by Justin Tunstall, 2014's Cheesemonger of the Year was established in 2009 and specialises in "West Country cheeses and everything to bring out the best in them."

### Best-selling cheeses

Blues: Blue Vinny, Barkham Blue, Cornish Blue. Hard: Quicke's Extra Mature Cheddar, Ford Farm's Cave Aged Cheddar, Woolsery; Fresh and soft: Sharpham's Cremet, Brie de Meaux (Rouzaire) Laverstoke Buffalo Mozzarella; Goats' or sheeps' milk: Rachel, Quicke's Goat Cheddar, Beenleigh Blue; Territorials: Thomas Hoe Aged Red Leicester, Gorwydd Caerphilly, Martell's Single Gloucester; Rind-washed: Francis, Stinking Bishop, Burwood Bole; Continentals: Manchego Curado, Parmigiano Reggiano, Brie de Meaux.



### Which cheeses are deserving of better recognition?

Royal Bassett Blue, Francis, Cremet

### What else do you sell?

Top sellers include local wines from Furleigh Estate, Langham, ports from Niepoort, charcuterie from Capreolus. Olives, too! In the summer we sell Mendip Moments ice creams and sorbets, which attract families to the shop entrance.

### What developing trends have you noticed?

People are starting to remember the names of cheeses that they've seen mentioned in the media or on their travels. This bodes well for artisan brands – we're getting away from the days when people would ask for goats cheese and expect just a soft fresh cheese, or coming in to ask for a cheese they found in a market in Provence – "you know the one!"

### Which of your accompaniments sell particularly well?

Peter's Yard crispbreads, Hillside preserves, Dorsetshire Sauce and our own label onion marmalade and Apple & Cider Chutney, made by From Dorset With Love.

### What are the secrets of successful cheese-selling?

Enjoy the cheeses you sell, know a lot about them and communicate both to your customers. Oh, and minimise the wastage!

### What are the pitfalls of cheesemongering?

Tired displays, lack of enthusiasm and knowledge about the range.

### How do you see the cheese market developing?

I hope that it'll continue to attract new entrants and ideas, similar to the artisan beer world. There's an almost infinite number of variables in cheese production, so lots of new tastes to develop and for us to experience. We've come a long way from homogenous 'Government Cheddar'.



### DORSET BLUE VINNY

Made to an old Dorset recipe which was revived by Michael Davies, this slightly crumbly blue cheese made with semi-skinned unpasteurized milk has a pleasantly soft taste. [dorsetblue.moonfruit.com](http://dorsetblue.moonfruit.com)



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# BRITISH CULTURE

Standing tall against the recent challenges of falling milk prices, the British cheese industry continues to perform very well indeed. John Bensalhia investigates the buying trends and most popular cheeses of the last year

If there's one food that British people enjoy in great quantities, it's cheese. It seems that the population of Britain just can't get enough of it. "More and more people are interested in cheese," says Andy Swinscoe of Courtyard Dairy. Indeed, statistics from the website britishcheese.com claim that around 600,000 tonnes of cheese are consumed in this country, whether in the home or in restaurants. When you factor in other foods that use fresh cheese (such as cottage cheese and fromage frais), then that total rises to around 700,000 tonnes.

Statistics from the AHDB Dairy website (with the source from Kantar Worldpanel) show that this last year has seen a consistent level of cheese sales in this country. For the year between July 19th 2014 and July 19th 2015, the figures make for interesting

reading. While there has been a very slight decline in total cheese expenditure (a dip of 0.8% to just under £2.8 billion), volume sales have improved year on year by 0.5% to 417,817 tonnes. The report also found that Cheddar sales have witnessed an increase (read on for further details about this).

The statistics make for encouraging reading, but elsewhere in the news, the dairy industry has been making headlines in other ways. Recent reports have told of many farmers who have found that the price paid for their milk has dropped in the last year, affecting business to the point where some could even lose their business. In a recent BBC report, the average farm gate price for milk dropped from around 33p per litre in May 2014 to around 24p in May 2015. It was also reported that in just one month in the summer of 2015, 148 farmers left the industry.

"One of the key factors influencing dairy at the moment is the free-falling milk prices," explains Owen Davies, category manager at Harvey & Brockless. "Farmers do tend to benefit from selling their milk to cheese makers, who pay that little bit more. When considering their futures, some farmers are also diversifying into making cheese; either making it themselves or in collaboration with cheese makers such as David Jowett and Kings Stone Farm."

But in challenging times, that resilient spirit of coping in a crisis always comes through. A real strength of the British cheese maker is that of resourcefulness. Even with recent alarm about milk prices, cheesemakers up and down the country have ensured that standards have remained high with a real innovative flair. "There is an admirable resilience about many British cheesemakers," says Owen Davies. "I recently met Jonny and Dulcie Crickmore from Fen Farm, who produce Baron Bigod, the UK's only unpasteurised Brie de Meaux-style cheese. They have been incredibly resourceful and innovative throughout the process –



ANDY SWINSCOE, COURTYARD DAIRY

## PERFECT CONDITIONS



"The quality and variety of British cheeses has increased greatly and sustained momentum over the past 25 years," says Caroline Bell of Shepherds Purse. "This, coupled with a growing appetite amongst the British public for quality local produce, has created the perfect conditions for the British artisan cheese market. Support for homegrown will continue to grow, I've no doubt. We, as producers, have a responsibility to continue to improve, innovate and strive for better to ensure that British cheese continues to thrive and develop its reputation as world class."



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### Goats cheese

With the recent issues over falling milk prices, one outcome of this is the rising popularity of goats cheese. The problems affecting milk output have seen a particularly significant rise in goats' milk cheese, followed by ewe and buffalo. Courtyard Dairy has seen a rise in popularity goats and sheeps milk cheese. Andy Swinscoe explains that the demand for goats' cheese is partly due to customers becoming more adventurous. "People like to experience different kinds of cheese. While the traditional British cheeses will always be popular, people are also choosing different styles."

Quicke's modern-classic cheeses include an award-winning goats' milk cheese. "Here at Quicke's we produce an Elderflower Cheddar and a goats' milk cheese," says Tom Chatfield, sales and marketing manager at Quicke's. "Our goats' milk cheese has seen enormous success this year – it won the coveted title of Best English



Cheese at this year's British Cheese Awards. The British palate seems to be more comfortable with exploring goats' and ewes' cheeses these days. We find that trust is building now that cleaner flavours are being presented in that style of cheese."

"I am particularly interested in seeing more goats' cheeses and blue cheeses made with goat or ewe milk being developed," says Patricia Michelson, founder and director of La Fromagerie. With respect to the more

specialised section of the market and cheese shops as opposed to supermarkets, Ms Michelson comments on another notable recent runaway success. "We are seeing some good washed rind cheeses along the lines of Munster and Reblochon." Owen Davies says that the washed-rind cheese has become one of the must-buy cheeses in recent times. "Washed-rind cheese has also seen a huge growth with producers experimenting with different solutions – this includes everything from rose water, various beers, cider and brandy."

### Blue resurgence

Cheese producers and sellers have seen other notable trends emerge in the last year. For example, blue cheese is one of the brightest stars of the past year, as Billy Kevan, dairy manager at Colston Bassett Dairy Ltd explains: "The British public love blue cheese. This year, our Blue Stilton was awarded Best Stilton and Reserve Champion UK at the International Cheese Awards. We also received the top-tier of three gold stars for our Shropshire Blue cheese and made it onto the list of Top 50 winners at the Great Taste Awards 2015. This recognition unsurprisingly increases the popularity and demand for our cheeses."

Harvey & Brockless has recently seen a resurgence in blue cheese. "It's not all about Stilton in the UK now!" says Owen Davies. "Two Hoots has expanded its blue range with Rosethorn, Applebys are experimenting with a blue, and Cropwell Bishop has introduced Beauvale. There are cheesemakers specialising in just producing blue cheese such as Ceri Cryer from Brinkworth Dairy." In Britain, Stilton cheese performs particularly well around the festive season. It's just the ticket for eating as a savoury alternative to Christmas pudding or cake. Billy Kevan of Colston Bassett Dairy Ltd says that Stilton is always a favourite for the Christmas cheeseboard, which means that around the festive period, demand is even greater. "This year we completed our new maturation stores, which are part of our long-term investment programme. We hope this investment will eventually increase our capacity and help satisfy any future increase in demand." Mr Kevan adds that there are lots of new blue cheeses on the market, which is a positive indicator of how this market is growing.

One of the most gratifying plus points of the continued interest in British cheese is that regional cheese makers and sellers have experienced considerable interest. "Seeing it from our point of view as a cheese

business dedicated to small production of handmade and traditional or regional cheeses, there has been good development in the regional side of things," says Patricia Michelson. "For instance, Charles Martell has a great Single Gloucester made with milk from an indigenous breed. We also see that people love Sharpham's Goat Brie as we call it although it has some cow's cream added – its bloomy rind and rich buttery texture is a perfect foil for the harder, crumblier cheeses."

### Healthy cheese

Courtyard Dairy has also found that when it comes to cheese, there's no place quite like home. "One of the most popular cheeses at Courtyard Dairy is the Lancashire," says Andy Swinscoe. "People like to go with that choice in this area as it's a fresh, healthy cheese." Customers not only buy local cheese as a type that they recognise and enjoy, but also because it offers great value for money. "Cheeses such as the Lancashire and the Wensleydale offer good value in terms of what the customer buys. They are available at a good price and offer great quality and value."

"There is an ongoing trend for knowing where products come from and how they are made," says Owen Davies. "We all love a good story and this extends to the food we're eating... particularly when we've paid a premium price for it. Many consumers are keen to support local producers and foster a strong sense of loyalty. In the past French cheesemakers have exemplified this, but these days the British are able to complete with our varied artisan cheese range." Tom Chatfield adds that provenance and heritage are key influences on consumers in the speciality sector. "We have a great producer story to tell – Mary Quicke's family has been farming at Home Farm, in rural Devon, for over 450 years and has been traditionally making award winning cheese for

two generations. An interesting story is key to influencing sales."

Cheddar is a quintessentially British cheese, and it remains a popular choice of product. The Kantar Worldpanel statistics from the AHDB Dairy website show that there have been increases year on year for Cheddar (5%) and a growth in volume sales for mature Cheddar (a growth of 2.3% year on year). In addition, branded Cheddar products have seen some volume growth of 0.5% in the last year. "There is increasing recognition of the world-class British cheese being produced, and Cheddar is Britain's best-selling cheese," says Tom Chatfield. "We are the largest, naturally matured, traditional Cheddar maker and regularly receive awards for the exceptional quality of our cheeses – our Mature Cheddar and Extra Mature Cheddar both recently received gold stars at the Great Taste Awards 2015."

### Different choices

But today's British cheese consumer is also willing to opt for something

“Washed rind cheese has seen huge growth, with producers experimenting with different solutions, including rose water, beer, cider and brandy”



PATRICIA MICHELSON: SEEING GOOD WASHED RIND CHEESES

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## BRITISH CHEESE

MARY QUICKE OF  
QUICKE'S TRADITIONAL

that little bit different from the norm. While traditional cheeses such as Cheddar continue to perform well, manufacturers and sellers are experiencing interest from buyers in cheeses that are that little bit different from traditional choices. "Obviously Cheddar is always going to be popular, but it is the ones that have had time to mature, and have their own special flavour profiles that make it more interesting," says Patricia Michelson. "Stilton is great, but Stichelton has its moments – and we are enjoying it later into the summer and early autumn, especially with the new season's apples and pears."

"I do love Irish goat cheeses personally and they work very well as part of a cheeseboard selection, and customers love them too – although Golden Cross is ever-popular as is Stinking Bishop, Tunworth, Wigmore and Waterloo – you can see that the British palate is changing towards the softer, ripper styles. There are others like St Jude which are difficult to get in any quantity and therefore not always

available." That extra something can be found in modern British cheese, which customers are exploring with greater gusto. "It's very interesting when it comes to modern cheeses," says Andy Swinscoe. "People are looking for that next big thing when it comes to buying cheese – which is why they come to shops like ours." For Courtyard Dairy, the most popular modern British cheeses include Baron Bigod (which is a rich, unpasteurised British Brie) and Rollright (a soft, rich, washed cheese). Dunsyre Blue is also a popular choice.

It's an exciting time for cheese sellers who are encountering a new breed of cheesemakers who are using new, exciting techniques to make their products. "There is plenty of room for new cheese to expand from crumbly styles to richer and more indulgent textures," says Patricia Michelson. "Some are better than others, obviously, but what we are seeing is a new wave of young cheesemakers making their impact onto the cheese scene and also introducing milking breeds and herds

not seen before, or ones being revived into their regions. That is very enterprising and exciting."

While value is still a key watchword for cheese choice, other elements also affect what customers buy, as Patricia Michelson explains: "All our cheeses offer value for money as they have been carefully chosen and carefully looked after. You pay peanuts and you get monkeys!"

"But if I'm looking at it from the perspective of someone on a budget, then I would say ask our very able and helpful Cheese Room assistants to guide you with a selection that has all the elements you want and not too big pieces. It's not about value for money, it is how it is put together."

## Fresh futures

So what does the future hold for the British cheese? "We are very upbeat about the future of the artisan side of British cheeses," says Patricia Michelson. "We know there are issues with unpasteurised cheese but with legislation involving representation from people in the industry who understand all the elements of cheese making and milk production and farming values which must be encouraged and maintained – engendering an open engagement with the right professionals working with government – we can only hope to see the business of cheese making grow."

"There is such a wealth of cheese making talent currently in the UK," concludes Tom Chatfield of Quicke's. "their milk."



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## Hard work and determination underpin the success of North Yorkshire's Mainsgill Farm Shop

**M**ainsgill, a 20,000sq ft farm shop situated just off the A66 near Scotch Corner which attracts in the region of 20,000 customers weekly, is testament to what can be achieved through sheer hard work and a dogged determination to see the job through. Owners Maria and Andrew Henshaw "come from nothing," they say, and the farm shop, tea room and gift hall which siphon travellers off the main road to Scotland and the Lake District is solid evidence of their determination to succeed against the odds.

The story of Mainsgill Farm Shop begins in 1995, Maria tells Speciality

Food. "when Andy and I got married and moved from Lancashire to North Yorkshire, where we bought a 67 acre farm. I was 23 and Andy was 27." The couple both had backgrounds in farming. "My family had a dairy farm," Maria says, "while Andy had a small pig farm. Our hearts are farmers' and they still are. We intended to farm. When we first moved here, farming was on the crest of a wave. Everything was very good and when we mortgaged we set our repayments based on farming as it then was. But then came blue ear (the pig disease), foot and mouth and a decline in the dairy industry. Every sector of the

industry collapsed. A lot of people who went into farming at that time went out of business."

The retail business has its roots in Maria's decision to butcher a few pigs. "We took them to the local butcher," she says, "and when I went to collect the results, I found 180 lbs of sausages on the table at the butchers." The butcher thought this was quite humorous and wondered what she would do with them. "So did I," Maria says. "We are 90 miles from the nearest family or friend and we were new to the area. Nobody knew what Mainsgill Farm was or what it did. And so we went knocking on doors. There aren't many chimney pots around here, just a few small villages. I would knock on a door and say, 'Hello, I'm Maria from Mainsgill Farm. Would you be interested in buying some of our sausages?' I don't know if people took pity on me or what, but they bought the sausages and then came back for more."

AN ATTRACTIVE SETTING  
DRAWS CUSTOM



Andrew and Maria then converted a small garage into a butchery and installed a second-hand meat counter. "The butchery became our pride and joy," Maria says. "The butcher who had been helping us now had to stop as we were competing with his business, but another butcher would come in after finishing his shift at the abattoir. We would

work through the night, until three or four o'clock in the morning. Because of this, the first year was a struggle, but we kept going. The sun would be coming up as we went back to the house." In the meantime, the Henshaws sold food at the local farm shops which were then starting up in the area and built their first farm shop in a field adjacent to the A66.

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"Everyone said we would fail," Maria says, "but this only made us more determined. At this time we were building the farm shop, doing the farmers markets, the paperwork and the farm work too, because we couldn't afford to get anyone to do that either. We worked and worked."

Failure was never an option for this venture. "It was never not going to succeed," Maria says, firmly. "There was no choice. It had to succeed. You have to make something work. If you are chopping and changing, something is not right. You have to find your niche and you evolve and grow from that." Building a farm shop, Maria adds, "was a matter of survival." The fruits of their labour produced the first incarnation of the Mainsgill Farm Shop, which opened in 2001. Trouble, though, was only around the corner. "We got to windowsill height and then foot and mouth struck," Maria says. "We shut down the shop next to the house and just let the builders on the site, after putting in place high bio-security measures." The shop opened June 2001, but despite the couple's fears that they would never fill its shelves, it very soon became clear "that we needed to extend. And so, in 2006, we extended the kitchens and tea room with another 1,800 sq ft, providing seating for 50. In 2007, we built a separate building for the butchery and processing plant and then further extended the tea room." The following year, Maria says, "we opened a large gift shop." 2010 saw planning permission approved for a new two storey extension, and plans are now being drawn up for a new restaurant. The Henshaws are clearly believers in spending money to make money. Another large recent investment was called for quite recently, Maria says, "when we had to put in a new road. This meant dealing with the highways agency. We needed an access road, a road widening and a right turn provided. The plans were passed, but the cost is going to be £70,000. That's a lot of scones."



### Price point

Stocking has been done with the accent on local produce. "When we started, we already knew a lot of local producers from the farmers markets," Maria says, "and took products from them." The cheese counter very much reflects the produce of North Yorkshire and its bordering counties, with cheeses from Wensleydale Creamery, Swaledale Cheese, Shepherds Purse and Cotherstone, from over the border in Co Durham. As well as stocking a lot of local produce, as Maria very much wanted people to be able to do their weekly shop at the store. "I wanted turnover every week," she says, "not people just coming for their turkey at Christmas." Price point has been an important factor, too. "We wanted to be reasonably priced," Maria says. "I like to find good value for money wherever I go."

The farm shop is well known for the meat it produces. Sausages are still on the menu, but the on-site kitchens now turn out 40 varieties. The farm itself is stocked with around "350 cattle (heifer, beef) and we buy suckle herds from local farmers. We have 400 ewes and 300 fat pigs." From this the farm shop produces all its own bacon and pies for sale in the farm shop and for consumption in the tea room. "Just over 1,000 products are produced or baked on-site,"

Maria says. "It has always been our aim to produce and get as high a margin as we can from our own products." Other products are stocked as the result of customer feedback or visits to food shows. Around 45 producers stocked by Mainsgill are local, again mainly from Yorkshire and its contiguous counties.

Maria appreciates the importance of promoting the business and its products. In store, informative signage draws attention to the many special offers and lets customers know what the business is all about. "We have two girls in the office today, working on marketing and telling that story," Maria says. "We never take it for granted that people know we produce our own meat, for instance." Also drawing people towards this roadside destination are the animals which, of course, are popular with children. "We started with a llama and a pony," Maria said, but then we noticed that other people had beginning to copy us. That's when we bought the camels." Features like this will attract the curious and provide interest for large parties. Being on a main route means that coach party visits are frequent. "We do get a lot of coaches," Maria says. "We had six in half an hour just today. Coach customers mainly want a scone and a cup of tea and then they do a little browsing and shopping." The camels, being quite



**“ You have to make something work. If you are chopping and changing, something is not right. You have to find your niche and you evolve and grow from that ”**

rare in this part of Yorkshire, offer the business a visual USP, while an educational element is offered by the live lambing, which can be viewed by way of a 24 hour live web feed. Another feature which may provide visitors with something to talk about is the 5m x 1.5m window which offers a view over the valley of Holmedale. This connects the business with the land which produces its food and provides an ever-changing prospect.

"I like to think I have the right recipe for success," Maria says. "We started with nothing and we still work seven days a week, and this is a recipe which

works for us. You will always see us running around the place — we are very much hands-on. Customers like this because they can see we haven't lost our roots." Once attained, success must be maintained. "You cannot take your eye off the ball," Andrew Henshaw says. "It's like driving a Formula 1 car. If you take your eye off what you are doing, you end up on the gravel track and it takes some pulling to get yourself back on. We enjoy what we do, and have a very good core staff to help us to do it. For Mainsgill Farm, it's a recipe which appears to be paying off."

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# Retail School



You pay for every square inch of your store... Are you getting the most out of it? Eve Reid explains



FRANKLINS, DULWICH

**C**reating a 'comfortable' retail environment for your customers is one step in the right direction, but it doesn't stop there – you need to make the store work for you. A badly laid out store can have a negative impact on sales. In the UK an average of 64% of all products are sold from eye level; what if customers only see half of your store? That would seriously reduce your selling power. If customers are not shopping all of your store, you will end up paying a premium for space that isn't being used.

Imagine, for example, a two-floor store where only 20% of customers tackle the stairs. If we can make it more tempting or easier to attempt then we will increase our selling power. You as a retailer need to ensure that your store is working at it's optimum level – that means you taking control and deciding where you want your customers to go and what you want them to see.

Effective space planning will enable you to do just this. It impacts upon customer routing, product placement, fixture placement, operational areas, promotions and graphic placement, and is an integral part of any store design.

## Customer routing

Your mission should be to create a layout that naturally guides your customers around the store, allowing even a first-time visitor to clearly see every product you have to offer and ensuring that the whole shop floor is used. The customer's route can be pre-decided (by you) and through some clever merchandising tricks you can ensure that all your expensive floor space is being used.

Good customer flow should be continuous and uninterrupted, allowing customers to journey through the store and seeing all you have to offer before reaching the till point. By strategically placing key

visual elements in focal point areas you can encourage good customer flow, drawing customers to the back of the store and around the shop floor in the route you want them to take.

These visual elements include:

- Colour
- Clever product placement
- Theatre, action, life
- Lighting
- Communication

## Colour

Retail anthropologist Paco Underhill observed that as humans and as customers we are naturally attracted to bold use of colour, light and reflection. Used cleverly, the strategic positioning of colour in focal point areas can assist you in navigating customers around the store.

## Clever product placement

One way of encouraging good customer flow is through clever product placement. Destination products can be used in focal point areas to attract customers to the back of the store. A destination product is what you're known for, like white t-shirts and jeans in GAP. Your customers will walk past three competitors just to come and get this

from you. If it's your specialism, you're the expert and you can generally work a higher mark up. If you are the leader in this field, you're also in a much better position to negotiate a better deal when buying.

## Theatre, action, life

Customers are drawn to theatre, life, action and activity. If there is something interesting going on they will be drawn to it. If you have ever been to Covent Garden you will have seen how a little activity can draw a big crowd. Consider your customers and have some fun! Think of what you can do to entertain them and make your shop floor exciting. In-store promotions and retail theatre are a great way of gaining interest and ensuring people stay for longer.

Try:

- A cooking demonstration
- A DVD playing or a fantastic display
- A product demonstration
- Tasters

In-store theatre and activity is a great way to get your customers to explore different areas of your shop floor.

## Lighting

Lighting is one of the most under-utilised tools in retail, yet when we think about other creative industries

i.e. photography, theatre and film, lighting plays a key role. A Hollywood actress would never agree to have a portrait photograph taken without adequate lighting to ensure she was presented at her best, so why would you do that to your star products? Good lighting is essential and makes the difference between a store that looks good and one that is excellent. It can add mood and drama to your store. Lighting has the power to increase a product's perceived value and saleability. Use lighting to add emphasis and show what you are proud of!

## Communication

When planning your shop floor, consider where to position any signage and graphic communication. If done well, communication can help to encourage customer flow.

Different types of communication include:

- Storytelling: inspirational graphics or text that create a strong focal point and convey the brand's ethos and values.
- Departmental signage: signage denoting each individual zone. This needs to be positioned consistently and be clearly visible and easy to understand for customers walking around the store (i.e. positioned above the relevant product zone).

Consider directional communication – directional signage and graphics can be used to encourage customer flow and guide customers around the store. These should face the customer and be positioned and angled in relation to your customers' journey.

Remember: a picture is worth a thousand words. Product displays/vignettes can be used as visual signage instead of conventional signs and positioned at the top of each fixture or at the entrance to each zone to convey the products that are available in that zone.



STRATEGIC PLACEMENT AT FRANKLINS, DULWICH

“ Many shops tend to grow organically, which often means that their layouts are confusing and can have a negative impact on sales. The best layouts are carefully planned to mimic natural behaviours, enabling customers to intuitively find what they are looking for ”



# MEET THE PRODUCER

Why a top awards judge called Peter's Yard crispbreads "the best biscuit for cheese out there"



**M**ention artisan cheese and someone will mention Peter's Yard, the thin, crispy sourdough crackers which have attracted the interest of fine food retailers and not a few celebrity chefs since their launch in 2008. Peter's Yard crispbreads are available in a range of formats, most notably as the ones which are often referred to by consumers as 'CD-size' and the large round flatbreads which are ideal for sharing.

October sees Peter's Yard enter the growing baked snacks sector with the launch of Knäcks, bite-sized snacks which come in three flavours. Sea Salt, made with Halen Mön Sea Salt, is light and crispy, while linseeds give Cumin & Nigella Seed a pleasant, crunchy texture. Five Seed is created from a tasty spice mix which includes cumin, nigella, caraway, anise and fennel. "We always listen to our consumers and regularly hear that people like to snack on our crispbread," says Peter's Yard's co-founder Wendy Wilson-Bett, "yet our current sizes and packs don't lend themselves well to that usage. Snacks with all-natural ingredients are growing at a phenomenal rate, so we are confident that these bites will succeed in this category."

The company is the brainchild of Ian Tencor and Wendy. Ian, who had lived in Sweden and was already a huge fan of Swedish baking, was frustrated that he couldn't find similar baked products back in the UK. His original idea had been to set up a company baking Swedish goods here in the UK and, knowing Wendy's background in commercial strategy, NPD and marketing, asked her to help with the business proposal. "Fast forward to 2008," Wendy says, "and we left the corporate world behind and started to work full-time on the business. First step was a research tour of Sweden, visiting wonderful craft bakeries and learning what the best of Swedish baking really meant. It was a fantastic trip and I suddenly understood why Ian was so passionate about Swedish bakeries."



At this stage, neither Ian nor Wendy was specifically looking for crispbreads. "We were just looking at the best, traditional bread, cakes, buns and biscuits that the country had to offer," Wendy says. "Strangely enough, we were redirected to Edinburgh and advised to meet Peter Ljunquist, a Swede who had run a wonderful bakery in Sweden and had already started to introduce the UK to top-quality bakery products in his Swedish bakery café. Ian and I were both so impressed by Peter's range of baked goods including some very special crispbread, that we suggested we became business partners having met him only twice!"

All three had spotted the huge hole in the UK market. "In the UK," Wendy says, "we tend to associate crispbread with diets. In Sweden, crispbread is like another form of bread, and is used every day alongside fresh bread, for breakfast, lunch or supper. Peter's sourdough crispbread was as good as any

authentic artisan loaf, just thinner and crisper. Scandinavian food and culture was also gaining greater interest in the UK and we were confident that there was a gap in the market for a brand like ours."

## Craft bakery

Peter's Yard sold its first order, Wendy says, "to Martin Wishart's Michelin-starred restaurant in Edinburgh in 2008. We had the invoice framed as a reminder of when we started out." After they had begun production, the founders "met with John Lister, the founder of Shipton Mill, who had been supplying flour to the Edinburgh bakery café. John became the fourth member of the team."

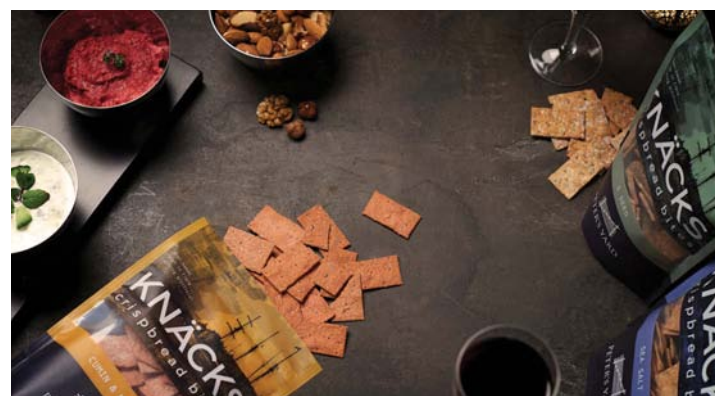
The crispbread made by Peter's Yard is authentic, Wendy says. "It uses a traditional Swedish recipe and is made with all-natural ingredients and a naturally fermenting sourdough starter. This means no two crispbreads ever look the same

and our fans love the crisp, light texture that comes from the air bubbles that occur naturally from this style of baking. Everyone tells us the flavour of our crispbread is subtle enough to allow the cheese, salmon, butter or whatever you are serving it with to be the hero. That's why we call it the perfect host for cheese." The crispbread is made with a few, all-natural, high-quality ingredients, she adds, "whole-wheat organic flours, fresh organic milk, honey, naturally fermenting sourdough and a little salt."

The Peter's Yard range extends "from a small 'mini' crispbread, through to a larger 'single serving size', a size I always call the CD size, which is great for serving with a cheeseboard, and then a much larger 'sharing size' crispbread. We've also boxes and tins that make great gifts. Last year we launched two new flavoured variants: Seeded Wholegrain and Spelt & Fig which have been exceptionally well received. Consumers curious about

the hole in the centre of the crispbreads may be interested to know that the hole is traditional. "In years gone by it was customary for Swedes to bake large discs of crispbread during the harvest and to preserve them by hanging them on a wooden pole, often above the fireplace."

The range is a perfect fit with independent food retailers, Wendy says. "The distinctive nature of our range makes us ideal for people shopping in farm shops, delis and food halls. Being a Great Taste winner helps to give shoppers confidence, especially being a Top 50 winner with our Original recipe. The independent stores have created some fantastic displays when our entire range is merchandised together, and many of the packs we produce are only available to the independent trade. The stores who also position the brand at the cheese counter see an excellent uplift in rate of sale and are able to recommend the crispbread with different cheeses."



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# CHRISTMAS



## HOW TO BOOST CHRISTMAS PROFITS

The festive months may be the most profitable time of year for retailers, but the opportunities to get it wrong are rife. We speak to three retailers to find how they make a success of the season

Christmas can be a make or break for independent food retailers. Get it right and you'll be reaping the rewards for months to come – both in terms of profit and returning customers – but get it wrong, whether with regard to stocking mistakes or by lack of preparation, and the consequences can last until the following December.

Perhaps the most common problem independent food retailers face come the festive season are over or under-stocked products. To an extent one can bet that Christmas puddings, cakes and the accompanying sauces, and Stilton, biscuits and booze will be popular sellers as each year comes around, but what about the trends – how to know which ones to cash in on, and which to stay clear of? The answer lies in your understanding of your customer base. Do customers prefer to keep it traditional at Christmas? If so, it may be a safer bet to stick to classic foods and flavours, and avoid the more gimmicky, trend-led options available at this time of year.

Alternatively, are your customers experimental and up for treating themselves to something new at this most indulgent time of year? If so, it's well worth keeping an eye on this year's Christmas trends, and on what

products famously forward-looking retailers such as Selfridges are adding to their books.

When your stock is ordered and your staffing schedule sorted, consider decoration. It can be off-putting to customers to walk into a shop full to the brim with sparkling tinsel, Christmas lights and novelty reindeer – not to mention that all these extra items in the shop will take the focus off the food and drink you're trying to sell – so keeping adornments simple and focused on a well-positioned Christmas tree complete with subtle decorations and a clearly signposted display of festive products will work well.

mid-December there is a really big increase in fresh produce. Christmas is brilliant! All of our production units have been working towards this time so all chiller cabinets are completely full... the dairy counter always looks incredible.

Our entrance foyer has a very large decorated tree and we introduce additional signage to help direct consumers and keep them informed i.e. when the last orders for Christmas turkey, ham and beef can be placed with John the butcher. We also display our hampers to showcase our best-selling products – they give a brilliant flavour of what the Food Centre encapsulates.



**Caroline Jones, buyer at Ludlow Food Centre shares her hard-earned advice for running a successful shop at Christmas**

**In terms of your range, what have you got this year?**

My goodness, there is such a long list! We are fortunate that we make so much of our produce on-site as it means each department has an opportunity to shine with some great seasonal products. The turkey and ham cutting pie containing cranberry sauce and stuffing is going to be a very popular choice for Christmas parties. We also have a pressed duck terrine with apricots and raisins.

In terms of traditional meats we produce a classic three bird roast (made to order and featuring any

**How should retailers promote their Christmas offering?**

Our decorations go up on the 1st December. Prior to this we'll start introducing bought-in products such as Turkish Delight during October and gradually introduce our ranges throughout November. Then from

“It is all about offering something that really captures people's imagination and adds something extra special. Hampers are a perfect gift for families as they are indicative of the spirit of giving and sharing. Additionally, we do have customers coming back to repeat buy items they've sampled in one of our hampers, so it pays to include the best food money can buy”



combination of chicken, partridge, duck, pheasant or turkey). Alternatively, there is the extraordinary rib of beef from our cattle reared on the Estate. John also prepares a range of home-cured hams from our Gloucester Old Spot pigs.

Dudley in the dairy creates a mixed cheese pack that allows people to sample each of our own cheeses. To accompany the traditional festive cheeseboard, Tess and Darren have created a pear and walnut chutney; there is also a Yuletide Pickle in the pipeline. There are also plans for a Christmas pudding ice cream – which I'm looking forward to!"

#### How can independent retailers maximise sales?

Tastings are always popular in the week's preceding Christmas and have proved to be very effective for promoting sales. I think sometimes retailers can over complicate matters by trying to offer too much. It is the one time of year where consumers are most likely to indulge, so retailers need to make that process easier; with tastings, longer opening hours and clear and attractive displays that enable customers to navigate easily around what will hopefully be a packed store!

#### Tell me about your hampers

We sell hampers that cover a wide range of price points from £15 up to £250. Each is named after a local place that associated with the Estate. The objective is to select the perfect partners for yuletide food – such as seasonal preserves to accompany cold meats and cheeseboards, through to a range of luxury, locally-produced spirits or limited edition craft ale from local breweries.

### PISTACHIO & PICKLE'S 5 TOP TIPS FOR CHRISTMAS RETAILING



- Focus on a few select, unique products. Hand-sell 'til your hands bleed – product knowledge is one of the key advantages that we have over the multiple retailers
- Avoid costly, gimmicky products – customers are predictably conservative at Christmas
- Embrace the traditional – because for most customers that's what Christmas is all about
- Make sure that you get long sell-by-dates on your Panettone, because you can shift them at Easter the following year
- Have a gathering/party/shopping night to profile your seasonal products for your customers – this reminds customers that you are thinking about their Christmas requirements and generates good-will

### FROM THE RETAILER...



#### Candice Fonseca, Delifonseca

"Christmas is a time for treats so it's important that the products you sell all taste great and, where possible, are things that they can't get hold of all year round. Whether it's American crazy-flavoured giant peanuts, gorgeous Turkish Delight or marron glaces, people like to have something special. That said, it's important that entertaining doesn't break the bank, so good homemade dips like hummus and baba ganoush are good to have on the counter.

"Prime selling spaces are limited, so make sure that you move your seasonal produce around so that they all get a moment in the limelight! Clear price labelling is essential as customers don't like to ask the price. Use multi-buys to encourage sales but, most importantly, try and chat with the customer and help them plan their party food. Quite a lot of customers find entertaining daunting, so working out easy tasty solutions bespoke to them will earn you not just that sale but a customer for the rest of the year."



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# THE SF GUIDE TO: JAMS & PRESERVES

Fruit preserves may be traditional, but their popularity is showing no signs of waning – new varieties and exciting flavour combinations abound



**A** consistent seller at retailers of all sizes across the UK, jams and preserves have rightly earned a reputation as a must-stock. Arguably the most popular toast-topper – rising above the ranks of honeys and other sweet spreads – and just as popular as a filling for cakes and scones, this is one sector you'd be a fool to not cash in on.

While a decade or so ago, jam may have had a reputation as a tired

and traditional product with staid, WI connotations – a selling tool for some, not so much for others – as with a number of other products within our sector, it has recently enjoyed a revival. Some may call it an offshoot of the 'make do and mend' philosophy that has swept the nation in the past five to ten years, with comforting, familiar and homemade foods seeing a boost in popularity, while others may see it as a long-awaited revamp of one of our nation's most popular products.

The consumer is becoming more adventurous when it comes to their stock of jams and preserves, but that's not to say that traditional favourites don't deserve a valuable place on your shelves. Herb and alcohol-infused fruit concoctions are opening the door to an exciting new era for jam lovers and makers, but there'll always be a place in their hearts for a top quality raspberry or strawberry, and a fruit cake waiting to be glazed with a fine apricot jam.

Curds are also enjoying a renaissance – no longer does the thought of a fruit curd conjure up thoughts of a custard-yellow, sickly sweet and mass-produced lemon gel, but a flavour-rich and tongue-tingling confection available in a myriad of flavours. Passion fruit, blackcurrant and classic lemon are popular flavours well worth stocking – not least for their versatility in desserts and puddings as well as the ever-popular toast or scone accompaniment.



**Emma Macdonald,**  
Founder of The  
Bay Tree Food  
Company talks  
trends

## Which styles of jam are the best performers?

We have seen a real increase in sales of fruit curds which has given us the opportunity to develop new products in this range. Specifically, our Passion Fruit Curd has been a great success and won multiple awards. Curds are so versatile – made with all butter, they are already really luxurious so they can help to transform a simple dessert or become an essential ingredient for a pavlova or sponge cake filling. Our raspberry curd is also very popular and has a real fresh berry taste – there is nothing synthetic about our curds!



## Which flavours are popular?

At The Bay Tree we continually invest in new product development, although from experience, the jam buying public tend to be creatures of habit. This means our best-selling varieties remain fairly consistent so it's a case of strawberry at number one followed by raspberry at number two.

We have seen a particular rise in jams with alcohol as these are perceived to be more interesting, especially for the gifting market. Our Strawberry & Champagne jam is our best-seller in this category.

We have had fun developing alternative flavours such as Blackcurrant & Bay Leaf which was specifically produced for a Jo Malone product launch – I would love it if people were more adventurous when it came to flavours. With our own production facilities we can produce bespoke batches to order, but you have to order quite a lot!

## What else affects sales?

I think that the popularity of home baking is having a double-edged effect on sales. Firstly, some people are prepared to have a go at making their own preserves, especially when there's a glut of freely available fruit such as blackberries. However, not everyone has the time or inclination to go through that process but may still enjoy creating homemade cakes; additionally, the UK's climate restricts the fruits that can be easily grown outdoors so shop-bought jam is the most convenient alternative.



**Elsbeth Biltoft,**  
founder and owner  
of Rosebud  
Preserves talks  
us through the  
unique brand's USPs

## What jams and preserves does Rosebud Preserves produce?

We produce a range of over 12 jams, including classics like Strawberry, Raspberry and Blackcurrant, to less common varieties such as Damson, Blackberry & Apple and Greengage. We source local fruits and flowers for some of our preserves, our Rhubarb & Ginger jam uses Rhubarb from a sixth generation grower of Yorkshire rhubarb from the famous triangle in West Yorkshire, and we pick wild Elderflowers in Wensleydale for our Gooseberry & Elderflower jam.

## And other fruit-based products – curds, marmalades etc?

We have a range of seven marmalades, from classics such as Seville Orange, Lime & Lemon and Red Grapefruit Marmalade, to modern twists such as Seville Orange & Cider Marmalade, in which we use a premium cider from Ampleforth Abbey, a local monastery near York in North Yorkshire. Ampleforth produces a cider from its own orchard. We also make a delicious, classic Lemon Curd in which we use no artificial stabilisers or pectin. It is a completely natural product that is kept chilled at all times to help retain its burst of sharp, fresh, citrus flavour, and made rich with unsalted butter and free-range eggs.

## What principles does Rosebud Preserves work to?

Since 1989 our products have been created with the emphasis on simplicity of ingredients, natural flavours, generous quantities and a passionate commitment to our preserve-making tradition.

**“The difference is in the taste!”**

**CHRISTMAS MARMALADE  
ORANGE & CRANBERRY**

[www.mrsbridges.co.uk](http://www.mrsbridges.co.uk)

“ The consumer is becoming more adventurous when it comes to their stock of jams and preserves, but that's not to say that traditional favourites don't deserve a space on your shelves ”



**Where did these originate?**

These principles have evolved since my childhood. We had a kitchen garden and allotment where my father grew a huge variety of fruit and vegetables. He used to take me foraging throughout the seasons for watercress, mushrooms, sloes, crabapples and blackberries. My mother would cook whatever we brought home, including a small range of preserves. The other thing that I learnt from my upbringing was how to make things simply and without any unnecessary additions. It was how my mother used to make jam at home and it's how I continue to make preserves today. The idea is to let the ingredients shine through in the product. Simple recipes and good produce is key to what we do.

**Where do you source your ingredients?**

We source ingredients from growers in the UK, where possible.

For example we use damsons from the South Lakes in Cumbria, quinces from a family farm in Essex, greengages from Cambridgeshire, pickling onions from Norfolk, the list goes on! We also source some product from abroad. Our Seville oranges come from an organic grower in Spain who has supplied us for over 20 years.

**What does this add to the range?**

Remaining true to the principle of using generous quantities of fresh ingredients and unrefined sugars to achieve natural sets and 'homemade-style' finishes instils our products with a real honesty. We hope that what you see on the label is exactly what you get in the jar – simplicity at its best. All of our production takes place in the small hamlet of Healey, near Masham, in two converted nineteenth century barns. We're very proud that we are a Yorkshire company, based in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales.

**5 MINUTES WITH...**

### Anthony Johns, owner of current Retailer of the Year 2015, Johns of Instow

**What jams, honeys and spreads do you sell?**

We sell both branded such as Hartley's and many local brands.

**Which are the most popular?**

Local is our most popular. Waterhouse Fayre and the Proper Marmalade Company along with honey from hives within Appledore and Instow outselling others by zero to one.

**Have you noticed consumer tastes changing? How so?**

Local is now the in thing due to its quality. Many people buy local honey as well due to its health benefits.

**Do you tend to stock traditional or trend-led jams etc.?**

Many traditional, but the Proper Marmalade Company has introduced an Improper range with items like black pepper and chilli. These are very popular.

**Are there any new jams/honeys/spreads on the market you're excited to stock?**

The Improper range is great fun.

**And any you would never stock?**

We will always consider anything, but find in our area that high priced branded is difficult to sell.



#### NEWTON & POTT FIG & LEMON VERBENA TEA JAM

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[newtonandpott.co.uk](http://newtonandpott.co.uk)



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#### UNCLE ROY'S ROSE PETAL JAM

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[uncleroys.co.uk](http://uncleroys.co.uk)



#### THE ARTISAN KITCHEN BLAISDON RED PLUM JAM

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[theartisankitchen.co.uk](http://theartisankitchen.co.uk)



#### MRS BRIDGES CHRISTMAS PRESERVE

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[mrsbridges.co.uk](http://mrsbridges.co.uk)



#### HAWKSHEAD RELISH RIPPING RASPBERRY CURD

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[hawksheadrelish.com](http://hawksheadrelish.com)

**TALKING SHOP...**

with Darren Marsh, jam and preserves maker,  
Ludlow Food Centre

"Overall, marmalade continues to be our best seller – this is primarily because of our customers. It's been reported that marmalade's popularity is in decline but we continue to see our sales grow. Maybe it's because Tess and I are experts! In the World Marmalade Awards we've collected a prize every year since 2009. We have won five awards in 2015 already!

Our selection ranges from our prestigious Lady Windsor's Rich Seville Orange to Lemon and Lime. We use Seville Oranges sourced from a single plantation in Spain where we know quality and attention to detail is paramount. We certainly have our own way of making marmalade but the quality of the raw ingredients is crucial in the process."

We also like to focus on seasonal recipes – so we've been trialling a new Christmas Conserve which will be a really rich, berry flavoured mix of redcurrant, gooseberry, strawberry and cranberry. This is a work in progress but we still have time to hit the shelves!"

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**A**t this time of year, the focus is, of course, very much on the Christmas season and ensuring that your stock is a perfect fit for customers who want to offer their Christmas guests something original and delicious. A lot of your long-term economic planning will have been based on the success of the Christmas season. By now, much of your stocking will have been done and very soon, your shelves will be heaving with seasonal specialities (which you pray will be off your hands come closing time on December 24th). And what then? It's certainly not unusual for a lull to follow Christmas itself but it would be wrong to think that seasonal trading is over and all that's left now is the sweeping up and preparing for a New Year which probably won't get under way until the end of January, or even later. It sounds bleak.

But hold on. There is actually another season which extends from some undefined date in early December right through to New Year and that's party season. From the first office parties of December, through the various pre-Christmas bashes to the statutory New Year's Eve beanos, there is always something going on of a celebratory nature, events which all need supplying with party foods and the right sort of drinks. Revellers will be throwing and going to parties throughout this period and this is an opportunity which should be exploited to its fullest. Your regular customers will be doing their share of partying and you will also find it possible to attract new customers by offering a really different selection of food and drink. There will be demand throughout December for nibbles, cheese, charcuterie and drink and if you are open between December 28th and 31st (New Year's Eve), party goods can be pushed during this period, too. This is also a last chance to offload the remnants of your seasonal stocking, too.

To a varying degree, owners of delis and farm shops have already caught onto this idea and their establishments have become go-to



## EXTENDING CHRISTMAS

Retailers can promote Christmas party food from early December until New Year's Eve

places for anyone wanting to add a certain special something to their parties and simply want to arrive clutching food that will be eaten and a bottle that isn't immediately emptied into the punch bowl.



**Matt Kelly and Steve Cooper of Pistachio & Pickle: seasonal products**

We spoke to the owners of delis in London and Liverpool to find out how they approach party season selling.

Matt Kelly and Steve Cooper own Pistachio & Pickle, a two-site deli and artisan cheese shop business in Islington and take a very pro-active approach to party season. "We host a pre-Christmas shopping night where we invite all our customers to come and share a glass of mulled cider and mince pies," Matt says. "Our deli chef prepares a selection of nibbles using the seasonal products that we are retailing and we take pre-orders for Christmas cheese, hams, pies, smoked salmon, hampers etc. It's a great opportunity to thank our

customers for their patronage and to profile our seasonal products."

During the Christmas season Matt and Steve reduce their range and "focus on those products in which we excel – smoked salmon, cooked, glazed hams & British charcuterie, cheeses, pies, chutneys, sparkling wine, port and sticky pudding wines." All these can easily be promoted as party foods. Other varieties of alcoholic drink they have ready to cater for party people are "sherries, Winter Pimm's, dessert and sparkling wines". Mulling syrups and spices are

made available for those who want to personalise their drinking experience. While some delis provide a catering service, in Matt and Steve's experience, "party catering is a unique proposition and simply slapping a piece of smoked salmon on top of a blini doesn't really cut it anymore. Canapé production is labour-intensive and expectations are increasingly high! At the deli, we focus our efforts on supplying quality, well-sourced products of unique provenance to customers who can fashion their own party nibbles. I mention this because I think some businesses spread themselves too thin at Christmas, trying to be everything to everyone, and it's important that Christmas be as lucrative and as stress-free as possible for retailers, who feel the spectre of a dismal January and the end of tax year looming."


The days between Christmas and New Year are not something that this deli focuses upon, but its sister business, Pistachio & Pickle Dairy on Camden Passage, does. "Our deli customers are on the slopes of Chamonix and Val d'Isere by the 27th Dec," Matt says, "so the deli closes and the staff get a well-earned rest. But cheese never sleeps and at the Dairy we are back as soon as we dare, prepping the cheeseboards for New Year's Eve parties. The key selling point pre-Christmas at the Dairy is, 'you'll need to top up before New Year.' This little tip brings customers back, in their droves, between Christmas and New Year!"

### Luxury items

**Candice Fonseca of Deli Fonseca: indulgent products**



"Customers tend to entertain more during the festive period," says Candice Fonseca of Liverpool's Deli Fonseca. "They also tend to go for more luxurious or indulgent products, so it's important to make sure that you have those types of things available for tasting in the run-up to Christmas, preferably in easy to




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“ At the deli, we focus our efforts on supplying quality, well-sourced products of unique provenance to customers who can fashion their own party nibbles ”



“Quality charcuterie or smoked produce also work well and stuffed olives or other antipasti are also very successful”



prepare formats. That could be showing simple but delicious canapés or starter ideas during your busiest shopping times on the lead-up to Christmas. Whilst people want to indulge, they are often short of time so the easier and quicker the better. If they try something on sample and like it, this makes it easy for them to place a pre-order.”

The foods to promote during this season, Candice says, are luxury items which are also easy to prepare: “fantastic, indulgent, creamy cheeses like Mont d’Or but with more discerning accompaniments such as truffle honey; unusual festive preserves or continental festive specialities. Quality charcuterie or smoked produce also work well. Stuffed olives and other antipasti are also very successful.” As for drinks, Candice says, “people tend to drink more fizz and affordability is the key, so bulk discounts are a good incentive. Also magnums of Prosecco or Cremant sell well as they look impressive to take to a party, but won’t break the bank. Adult soft

drinks are worth stocking, but they aren’t massive sellers. The seasonal ones such as ginger ales and mulled soft drinks sell steadily, but nice-looking French lemonades with flip tops sell well, both as soft options when entertaining but also in gift hampers for the family.”

It is important, of course, to stock a range of original nibbles and speciality snacks. “Large packets of speciality crisps, corn chips and Italian bread sticks for dipping sell very well,” Candice says, adding that “there is also interest in premium nuts and snacks with interesting spices such as wasabi or chilli.” Cheeseboards aren’t just for Christmas, but make ideal New Year party fare, too. Candice prefers to avoid ready-made ones in favour of making boards fresh for people to take to their parties. “We like to talk to our customers to find out what’s ideal, and then cut everything fresh. Staff are trained to be able to construct a traditionally-balanced cheeseboard, but in the end it’s the customer’s call. In many ways, Christmas is still very traditional and

peoples still love Stilton.”

Deli Fonseca’s outside catering division supplies all sorts of requirements. Providing outside catering, Candice says, “can be lucrative but it is important not to overstretch your resources. It is the busiest time of the year for the retail deli, with lots of new shoppers coming in, so it is important to look after them and turn them into regulars for the rest of the year. If you do decide to do outside catering, work out when and how many times you are able to do it, and do not book any more than that.”

In order to draw attention to party foods, Candice displays “all of the snacks together and near to the deli counters and beer display. The power of suggestion through proximity seems to work on quite a few customers. In the end though, your staff are the best way to sell things. If your staff chat with the customers, then they get to know what their tastes are like and what they might be looking at. People can sometimes be overwhelmed by so many nice things close together so it’s good for customers to be able to bounce ideas off the staff.”

Getting people in the party mood can be achieved by holding events such as tasting evenings. We tend to hold a couple of weekday tasting evenings in the run-up to Christmas,” Candice says. “Getting your suppliers on-site to chat the customers works well. Also, circulate complimentary, easy-to-make canapés made up of the products that you sell along with wines that you want to sell. We invite all our regulars, but it is open to the public. The aim is that they will sort out pre-order for Christmas or party food and purchase a variety of suitable food gifts for their friends and family. All on a mid-week evening after work!”



#### OPIE'S COCKTAIL GHERKINS

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# Last Words

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## The Hungry Guest, Petworth, West Sussex

Owners: Brett Coleman Opened: November 2011



### WHO'S BEHIND THE HUNGRY GUEST?

The business is owned by private owners, and each site has a manager. Our Petworth food shop is managed by Brett Coleman who is a passionate foodie (especially for anything that happens to be sweet!)

### TELL ME ABOUT YOUR SHOPS

The food shop in Petworth opened in November 2011. Our Petworth café opened in July 2011, and our newest site, a second café in West Malling, Kent opened at Easter this year.

### HOW'S BUSINESS?

We are seeing growth year-on-year and are always delighted to see so many new faces through the doors each week who then come back.

### HOW HAVE CUSTOMERS REACTED TO THE BUSINESS?

We have a very loyal local following with some customers driving many miles just to buy their bread (we produce all our own bread in our artisan bakery near Chichester, in West Sussex).

### WHAT IS THE FIRST THING CUSTOMERS SEE?

We have never called ourselves a deli, but a food shop. When you walk in the doors, the first thing you are greeted by is our extensive bakery range.

### WHAT ELSE WILL CATCH THE EYE?

As you continue to walk around the shop you will find our butchers, a walk-in cheese room, charcuterie counter and, of course, a huge array of products displayed on our shelves. We work hard to source exciting and unusual products both locally and further afield.

### WHAT MAKES THE HUNGRY GUEST SPECIAL?

What makes us really stand out is the huge range of products we make in our own kitchens; pasta and curry cooking sauces, ready meals, jams, marmalades, chutneys, granola and pies. The list is extensive.

### THE PLACE HAS EARNED SEVERAL AWARDS?

We are delighted to have won many awards, including Great Taste Awards, World Bread Awards and, of course, UK Deli of the Year in the Farm Shop & Deli Awards.

### HOW MANY STAFF?

We cover many areas, so employ around 50 staff across the business.

### WHO ARE YOUR CUSTOMERS?

This is very broad. We certainly have regular, local customers who visit us for their everyday essentials such as bread, dairy products and fruit and vegetables. We have also seen a rise of the foodie tourist.

### WHAT CHEESES DO YOU SELL IN THE CHEESE ROOM?

We sell a range of British and Continental cheeses. The selection changes regularly as we stock seasonal cheeses and also batches from small artisan producers.

### WHICH BRITISH CHARCUTERIE DO YOU STOCK?

Beals Farm Charcuterie is one of our favourites. They are based in Sussex too and specialise in the production of charcuterie made from a heritage rare breed pig, the Mangalitzia

### WHAT INFORMS YOUR STOCKING DECISIONS?

We are continually developing products in our own kitchens. We see something we like and then see how

we can make it better. We have a dedicated product development team who work on this.

### DO YOU SUPPORT SMALL PRODUCERS?

When it comes to supporting other producers, we are often sent products. We meet as a team and taste-test before making decisions on new lines.

### HOW SUCCESSFUL ARE SCHEMES LIKE YOUR MEMBERS' CARD?

This has been fantastic, it has really helped us understand our customer spend and provided us with a platform to give something back to our customers. We run regular masterclasses and tasting evenings for members and these are always fully subscribed.

### WHICH OF YOUR FOODS ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT?

The Hungry Guest all came about from a love of real bread, so our sourdoughs are central to our ethos. We are passionate about all food, though. You have to create a shop and experience that attracts, and more importantly, retains a loyal following. People come to us not just to buy their food but for advice on how to cook it, different ways to serve it and for inspiration.

### AND YOUR HANDMADE SUPPERS TO TAKE AWAY?

Our range of frozen ready meals is one of our most popular lines. We are currently expanding this with plans to grow this section of the business in the coming months.

### OTHER PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

We have plans for a second shop but no date yet.



### Beer For All

If you think beer is the preserve of the pub, the armchair or the house party, think again. For a start, there are more flavour variations in beer than there are days in the year. And when it comes to beers for the girls, that's an important factor – predominantly because women experience bitterness on the tongue more acutely than men. You ladies simply have more bitter receiving receptors on your tongue than us insensitive fellas.

From fruit-laden lambics to sweet, sour and zesty wheat beers, these are beverages to convert the staunchest resistor. The secret is to start going for those beers that use old hops for their preserving qualities rather than their bittering qualities, such as the magical Kriek and Framboise, as well as soft, mellow and herby wheat beers.

And when it comes to matching beer with food, we start to get into a whole new world of taste and flavour that can often turn the bitterest of beverages into the most sympathetic of bedfellows with the right dish. From the spiced foods of India and South East Asia, the cured fish dishes of Scandinavia, the hearty stews, game and sweet pork of our own fair isle, there's a beer out there to get everybody excited.

During the food revolution of the last twenty years, we've been slowly but surely educating and developing our palates – experimenting, breaking out and cutting loose old prejudices. Now, we know flavour when we meet it and we've got the confidence to embrace it. So when the soft, natural carbonation of a Schneider Weis bier combined with its refreshing citrus character acts to cleanse, refresh and stimulate the palate for the next mouthful of finest Scottish mussels, we know we're onto a good thing.

Hopefully, this little 'taster' has at least aroused your curiosity and changed a few perceptions – so next time you're planning your beer selection, spare a thought for the taste, the flavour and the company – there's more to beer than a pint of best down the pub.

## SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE

Inside the next issue  
of Speciality Food:

- Italian Food Special
- Pies & Pasties
- Hot Drinks
- Blue Cheese
- Soups & Ready Meals
- Store Cupboard Essentials
- Last Minute Christmas Ideas

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### Next issue available

November 2015

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# SPECIALITY BITES

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



“What percentage of the businesses at Speciality & Fine Food Fair are investible? Not enough, I fear”

wrong with having other sources of income whilst you are growing the business, but for a brand to grow, it needs 100% commitment of effort and time.

The question we sometimes ask when we are deciding on new product ranges is: “Would we invest in this brand?” Not that we do often, although we're not averse to the idea, but that it helps sharpen focus on the brand and the people behind it. What percentage of the businesses at Speciality & Fine Food Fair are investible? Not enough, I fear. How many original ideas are there? There are too many businesses

that have “me too” products, and perhaps not enough that are pushing the boundaries. There are some, no doubt, and we saw a few at our Meet the Buyer event on all three days at the show, but, for me, there are not enough that make me excited and I don't think I am too old and cynical just yet – although some may say I am! That said, because the number of products and brands is expanding rapidly, it does mean there are plenty for us and other wholesalers to form our 2016 ranges, but I fear for the ones that will be left behind.

As usual, the Great Taste Awards reflected this diversity with

10,000 entries – they capped it this year at that number so entries were closed prior to the deadline, from what I understand. The winner? A beef dripping from Ireland. I haven't tried the product yet as I was too busy to make it to the Great Taste Awards area, but can't wait. I don't envy the PR companies as they push out the message to consumers about the winner though, and wonder how they will spin it with all the emphasis on healthy eating at present. Having such a “retro” product winning pleases some of the judges, I think, who love to fly in the face of current media messages!

Coming back from the show always means that our warehouse starts to be crammed with Christmas stock, which is great as it's my favourite time of year! Have a good month as the merchandising starts!

## Best Practice

Kerry Sidney, marketing manager at Bodnant Welsh Food

**Having 16 years marketing experience working with large global corporations within the business to business sector, I was looking for a new challenge. The role at Bodnant immediately caught my eye, as not only could I utilise my skills and experience within a new company with market opportunities within hospitality, tourism and retail sectors, I could enjoy my passion of great food and drink! I joined Bodnant Welsh Food Centre in February 2014, and what a journey it has been so far.**



different awards at the British, World and International cheese shows, plus when our butcher and his team won numerous gold awards at the Welsh Meat Awards.

We have recently expanded our online shop and introduced a number of new departments to our offering. I am proud of its beginnings and so excited about its development over the next few months. This is a growing sales channel for the business and I am excited about the opportunities this will bring to the development of our business.

I once underestimated the order volume of hampers at Christmas time; it was my first Christmas at Bodnant, and sales orders exceeded expectations, which was great! However, you need to ensure you have the staff and stock in place to manage these orders as well as continue the smooth running of the Farm Shop during a key trade period for the business.

I'd also advise that retailers carefully consider introduction of a loyalty scheme – what do you want to achieve from the scheme, what is the value of the customer data, how you can obtain this vital shopping data easily and find the time to invest in doing this well. Having inherited the Bodnant scheme, my role is now to identify these points quickly.

I think I am still learning about the business, as most of its sectors were a new landscape for me when I joined Bodnant. I have learnt about food production, its procedures and the impact to the business. It's key to understand what's involved day-to-day for our food production specialists (bakers, chefs, butchers, dairy) and involve them from the

very beginning with all seasonal promotional planning. The team have such a passion for their skill, and to ensure the very best quality Welsh, local food is served to the customer, it's important to foster this expertise within the marketing communications.

I have learnt about the importance of national and international tourism initiatives, working closely with Visit Britain, Visit Wales and North Wales tourism to understand the climate, the market and the requirements from tourists, in particular from group overseas visitors. Co-ordination, patience and persistence are key. As a marketing manager I am used to working to schedules, planning events and promotional campaigns. Many of the departmental heads work to their own schedule and so it's important to understand their workload and balance with what you require from them without losing focus on the sales requirement for the business.

### DO

- Keep your eye firmly on the end goal and don't get too wrapped up in the detail. Although detail is important, it's vital not to lose sight of what you are trying to achieve for the business

- Delegate – ensure your team fully understands the goal, and how they play their part to achieving this goal

- Communicate – working in one centre, it's important to keep all department heads fully briefed on plans and how this could affect their functions

### DON'T

- The customer is king – don't lose sight of who your target customer is and what they are looking for. We can sometimes get wrapped up in what the business has instead of what the customer wants

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