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EDITOR'S LETTER

Sustain and Excite



At this time of year, offering sustenance and excitement is what independent retail is all about. With days shortening and the weather becoming cool and rather dreary, customers will be looking for excitement in their food, both in what they cook up in the evenings and also in the grab and go bites they'll be purchasing throughout the day. Mood-changing calorific snacks, sandwiches, pastries and chocolate are the order of the day, but soup and one pot meals will be demanded too, as people find themselves with less time on their hands. Needless to say, it's now that an offering of interesting hot drinks comes into its own, whether you serve your own hot coffee over the counter to customers on the go, or with a pastry to consumers in your café. Include these in a seasonal promotion and you'll also be able to increase your sales of coffees, teas and hot chocolates from your shelves. Hot drinks are a must and as Christmas approaches, the demand for blue cheeses will soar, too. Stilton may still be king of the blues, but there are a great many fantastic British blues to be introduced to buyers these days, cheeses which the supermarkets don't major in and which can bring you one more point of difference. The excitement comes as you finish

“Mood-changing calorific snacks, and chocolate are the order of the day”

filling your shelves with Christmas comestibles, and to help you do that, the November/December issue of Speciality Food comes with this year's edition of Stock Check, which is chock-full of useful stocking ideas from every sector and features both new products and those which have already proven their worth on the shelves. Meals over the Christmas holiday period can call for all sorts of herbs and spices and with this in mind, we also carry a feature illuminating the best and most essential products which customers might like to add to their kitchen storecupboards. Italian foods continue to fascinate and we look at what's best in this burgeoning market. Have a merry and prosperous Christmas!

Ross Gilfillan

ross@aceville.com

NEWS IN BRIEF

COTTAGE DELIGHT RELEASES FESTIVE NEWSPAPER

The Staffordshire brand has produced a special edition newspaper to help consumers plan the perfect, hassle-free Christmas.

Available free of charge with all orders, the 12-page guide – named Christmas Delights – is complete with gift ideas and seasonal recipes, and tells the story of the business's history and its popular Bucks Fizz Marmalade.

Chloe Challinor, marketing manager said, "Cottage Delight is always looking for new ways that we can support the independent trade and help drive sales at crucial times in the retail calendar. Christmas Delights reflects the support that we offer throughout the year with merchandising, in-store tastings and free POS for retailers."

WAITROSE BOSS TO STAND DOWN

Mark Price, managing director of Waitrose and deputy chairman of the John Lewis Partnership, is standing down following 33 years of working at the national multiple.

It is believed that he will become the chairman of Channel 4, to succeed the current chairman at the broadcaster, who is set to retire soon.

In a statement, Mark Price said, "Leading Waitrose has been amazing and I feel blessed to have been given the opportunity; but I've always had in mind that ten years would be about the right length of time to do this. And so I've concluded that this is the moment to go and do other things in business, consultancy, writing and lecturing."

Boxing Day comes but once a Year

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WHO Report Sparks Red Meat Cancer Scare

A recent report from the World Health Organisation has stated that red and processed meat are carcinogenic.

In the report, red meat refers to mammalian muscle meat including beef, lamb, pork, mutton, veal, goat and horse, and processed meat which has been altered through curing, smoking, salting or fermentation to improve preservation or enhance flavour.

It was stated that red meat is probably carcinogenic to humans, while processed meat was classed as carcinogenic – meaning there is convincing evidence that it causes colorectal cancer. There are also links with stomach, pancreatic and prostate cancer.

To put this into context, an independent academic research organisation, the Global Burden of Disease Project, has found that worldwide, around 34,000 cancer deaths per year are attributable to high levels of processed meat consumption, while one million are attributable to tobacco smoking and over 200,000 due to air pollution.

Red meat has not been confirmed as carcinogenic, but the Global Burden of Disease Project estimates that if it were, 50,000 worldwide cancer deaths per year could be a result of diets high in red meat.

Here, we speak to the chairman of the Butchers Q Guild, representative of the highest quality independent butchers across the UK, and founder of charcuterie retailer Cannon & Cannon for their thoughts on if and how this news will affect our sector.



Sean Cannon,
founder and
managing director
of Cannon &
Cannon

Firstly, yes, believing everything you read in the newspaper can cause you cancer. Secondly, we at Cannon & Cannon

believe that one should be able to enjoy everything in moderation. It would be a shame if we didn't indulge in things that were a bit naughty every now and then.

Variety is the spice of life, and we would never encourage our customers to gorge on charcuterie all day every day – it's simply a

case of being sensible about what you eat and consuming a balanced diet. If you're going to eat cured meat, just make sure it's good quality, locally-produced, British cured meat. The Italians have a wonderfully long lifespan, as do a lot of Continental societies, and they eat cured meat almost daily!

I think this is just a case of the 'Nanny State' showing its face and I don't think our customers are really that bothered by it – we haven't had any comments. Customers who are careful and educated about what they choose to eat will usually be careful and educated in how they manage their diet.

If you're going to buy and consume cured meats, like all meats I think it should be for a special occasion. People know it's a bit of a treat; if people are going to

enjoy such wonderful things in life, including cheese and wine, they're well aware they're not eating a mung bean! That's what makes it so great – it's a treat. Ultimately, it's about being responsible.

Don't let the World Health Organisation tell you what to do – if you're a responsible foodie, you'll eat a responsible and balanced diet of which cured and red meat can play a really good part. Don't eat bacon every day – it's quite simple, really!



Mark Turnbull,
national chairman
of the Butchers
Q Guild

There is no real evidence to suggest that eating red and processed meat as part of a balanced diet causes cancer, and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has itself said that the risk from processed meat remains small.

Red and processed meat plays an important role in a balanced diet, providing protein, iron, zinc and B vitamins. There's no evidence that

removing meat from your diet protects against cancer.

Furthermore, traditional British sausages as served at breakfast, or as bangers and mash, are not the same as those referred to under processed meats. The concern from IARC is in processed meats containing nitrate curing agents.

Continental sausages such as salami, frankfurters and hot dogs contain nitrates. Nitrates or nitrites are added to provide the cured meat colour and inhibit growth of harmful bacteria from the genus Clostridium.

A typical Beef or Pork Sausage would include the following additives, none of which are nitrates: Salt, Rusk, Dextrose, Emulsifier E451(i), Preservative E221, Wheat Flour, Flavour Enhancer E621, Flavourings, Antioxidant E301, Food Colours.

To assume everything that is a processed product contains nitrates is wrong. No single food causes cancer. These scare stories are very detrimental to the whole meat trade, and we would suggest that for people on a balanced diet there is little to fear.

“Ultimately, it's about being responsible. Don't let the World Health Organisation tell you what to do – if you're a responsible foodie, you'll eat a responsible and balanced diet of which cured and red meat can play a really good part”

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



NEW DELI FOR NEWTOWN

A new delicatessen has opened in Newtown, Powys by husband and wife team Barrie and JoJo Thomson.

High Street Deli has opened following the success of JoJo's local homemade baking venture, The Schoolroom Kitchen, in order to showcase the food and drink of local and Welsh producers.

The retailer sells cheese and charcuterie as well as a wide range of speciality foods and treats. It also stocks staples such as great quality and organic gluten-free pasta, rice and cook-in sauces, and provides healthy lunch options to take away including salads and sandwiches, a 'grab and go' coffee service using beans from local roasters Coaltown Coffee.

Barrie Thomson, owner said, "We opened here because we are

passionate about food and food producers and this area, and Wales more widely has so many great tastes to celebrate. For the past three years, Newtown has hosted a food festival which is growing with each year. As a traditional market town, Newtown has a rich food history and a real connection with the rural economy of mid-Wales. We want to be part of that, bringing great tastes to the High Street.

"Our philosophy is to focus on local producers, Welsh and hand-picked ranges – that allows us to support small businesses in the town and surrounding villages as well as celebrating the amazing range of Welsh produce which is building a worldwide reputation. By curating other speciality products through the hand-picked range, we can introduce local shoppers to great tastes they may not have come across before."

KITCHEN TABLE PROJECTS OPENS NEW SITE

Kitchen Table Projects, the pop-up fine food retailer and café located in Old Street Station, has opened a new location for the Christmas period.

The new site is at Great Portland Street Station, and offers small producers a springboard into the industry and consumers a chance to experience some of the best artisan food and drink in the fine food sector which cannot be found in the supermarket, including bacon making kits, birch water and speciality teas.

Tara Sundramoorthi, founder of Kitchen Table Projects said, "Our first Pop Up Shop was a great success, and showed there is a real demand for independent artisan food and drink products.

"Our new shop is in the perfect



location, just yards from Oxford Circus, and is a fantastic shop window for all the brands that we have on our shelves; from Mallow and Marsh to Taking the Pea, The Teashed and The Artisan Kitchen. It took us nearly a year to hunt down each and every hidden artisan gem,

so it really is the place to discover the best new speciality food and drink producers around."

Kitchen Table Projects is also launching The Study on Portland Street, a co-working space for food businesses to carry out meetings, training and workshops.



HAWARDEN OPENS SHOPPING CENTRE POP-UP

Hawarden Farm Shop is opening a pop-up café at Broughton Shopping Park, selling a selection of locally-made produce, takeaway food and quality coffee.

Broughton Park is situated two miles away from the Hawarden Estate, and approached Hawarden Farm Shop as it wanted to add a local offering to its range of more corporate food offerings and shops.

Alan Downes, shop manager said, "We were contacted when Broughton Park took on a new consultant called Ian Daley, who has a wealth of experience in food and catering, and his advice was to offer something different to the usual corporate eateries which are at such places. They offered us a pod, which is a 2,500-3,500sq ft, and asked us to consider being the local food offering.

"These pods are not going to be available for about 18 months and we wanted to dip our toe in the water before jumping in at the deep end, so we agreed to put a pop-up café there with a food preparation space, table and chairs, great coffee from Allpress and a retail offering of own-branded products like apple juice and chutneys.

"We're also putting a takeaway offer together which will include popular items from our successful café at the farm shop, including homemade pies, salads to go, snacks and drinks to cater for something they don't have down there – locally made food.

"It's scheduled to open late November/early December so we should catch some Christmas trade."



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www.scotlandsspecialityfoodshow.com



Blakemore Launches British Alcohol Showcase



Blakemore Fine Foods has launched a new catalogue which showcases Britain's best ales, ciders, wines and spirits.

The new range includes over 400 products from more than 80 distilleries, breweries and cider mills in the UK.

The minimum order value is £150, and orders can be made over the phone and online.

Caoire Blakemore, commercial director said, "Britain now has more breweries per person than anywhere else in the world and we want to help raise the profile of these producers and give them access to a wider market."

"The craftsmanship demonstrated by the manufacturers that we have listed is of the highest quality and helps explain why

consumer demand for such products is growing faster than ever before."

Patrice Garrigues, trading controller said, "Our catalogue reflects the latest trends by showcasing traditional long-established producers such as Yorkshire's oldest brewery, Samuel Smith, right through to relative newcomers such as Tiny Rebel, creators of Cwtch, which was recently awarded the title of Britain's Best Beer by CAMRA."

"However our range is far more extensive than ales and includes products such as Penderyn Welsh Malt Whisky through to Two Birds Absinthe, Chase Marmalade Vodka and Cornish Pastis from the Southwestern Distillery."

"We are doing what nobody else is currently doing in the marketplace by bringing such a comprehensive range of quality British alcohol together with customers able to order bulk, gift packs or single pick bottles."

GILES HENSCHEL OF OLIVES ET AL



"Ryanair's 'less is more' equation"

Ryanair are brilliant. Utterly, utterly brilliant. I flew to Holland with them on a round trip – out and back in the same day. As ever, I went online and printed my own boarding card and checked myself in before carefully measuring my bag and sorting my stuff so I'd flow through security in the shortest time (no lace ups; no belt; change, phone, gum, mints, cards, pens all in the jacket and avoiding the queues with young families or foreign tourists).

I boarded by walking to the plane and climbed the integral fold out steps. I stared at the safety information on the seat back and, with no seat back pocket, tried to work out where to put my rubbish. With no inflight magazine or TV, I had to watch the safety brief and plot how many people I'd need to climb over in the event of an incident.

Airborne, the skeleton crew strode up and down flogging us stuff, strapped us back in, collected our rubbish and we arrived at Eindhoven. The door opened, the steps unfolded and we walked to the terminal past the folk about to get on the plane we'd just got off. Later, I did the whole thing in reverse. And that's when it came to me. Ryanair is really, totally, awesomely brilliant.

As a direct result of Ryanair, we now view air travel completely differently – everything has been simplified to the extreme with designed efficiencies unthinkable and unimaginable prior to their

- new thinking and methodology:
- We're conditioned to travel with the bare minimum = lighter planes = less fuel = less cost
 - No baggage = no baggage handlers + quicker to load = less cost
 - No check in = less staff behind desks in airports = less cost
 - No bus = less reliance on airport services = less cost
 - No frills = easier to train + fewer crew per passenger = less cost
 - Integral steps = no need to wait to disembark + no need to pay for the airport for the use of steps = less time + more control = less cost
 - Quicker on, quicker off, quicker on = less time on the ground = more flights = more money
 - No seat pocket so no rubbish = less use of cleaning services (the crew do it between flights) = faster turnaround = less time on the ground = less cost = more money
 - Safety info permanently in your face = more people read = safer passengers = easier to handle

Ryanair completely changed the business model by stripping every single last component back and, in so doing, have totally changed our behaviours and expectations. What equations of our own could we write? What + what = more time + more customer delight + less cost + maybe a touch more profit? Take a trip on Ryanair and have a think. After all, with no inflight TV, magazine or crew to look at, there's sod all else to do.

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WELCOME TO WONDERFUL

The season of glad tidings and great cheese

JOHN SHEPHERD OF PARTRIDGES



“Are food shows worth attending?”

As perennial activity in the life of someone in the speciality food world is visiting food shows in all their shapes and sizes.

As everyone knows, they can be very tiring experiences for both visitor and particularly salesperson, of course relieved by relentless food and beverage tasting opportunities and the camaraderie of meeting many old friends and one or two staunch enemies from the past. They also take several days out of the working routine and add tens if not hundreds of emails to the great nemesis of our working lives – the inbox – which is already a struggle to keep under control in the first place. However, like the lure of a bacon sandwich or aroma of coffee first thing in the morning, it is hard to avoid the lure of the well-organised food show. Over the course of the last month I have visited two – one in London and one near Glasgow.

The event in London was Speciality & Fine Food Fair at Olympia, held in early September. The very first show took place on a racecourse in Surrey and there were not many stands. Fast forward to 2015 and the stands took up both floors in Olympia, with a huge range of foods from around the world. Personally I found the transformation of the show perfectly reflected the transformation of the speciality food sector. Someone said to me after the show that they felt it lacked innovation but I couldn't

disagree more, especially when one remembers the speciality food world in 1990.

The second show was held at Gleneagles, close to Glasgow, and run by Scottish Food and Drink. The sumptuous surroundings of the hotel and the magnificent countryside were matched by the amazing range of suppliers and the quality of the products they were presenting. Following various meetings I felt we should be selling nearly every product we saw, although I may have been swayed by the sound of the bagpipes and the warmth of the Talisker – not to mention the recollection that I am, of course, half Scottish.

However, the fact is many Scottish producers have perfect provenance in that the land on which the product is made plays an integral part in the production process. Plus the packaging and quality of the food was extremely high and the meticulous organisation of the event meant that no scone was left unturned. Alright, stone unturned.

At Speciality we realised that we are in a fast-expanding new universe of startups and artisans and do not know where it will end. From Scotland I expect we will take on about five new producers, but the real lesson for me has been the inspiring stories, the can-do attitude of the producers and the very high quality of the products.

Are they worth attending? My conclusion: see you at Gulf Food next February.

DIARY DATES

November

13th–15th

FOODIES FESTIVAL
Edinburgh
foodiesfestival.com/edinburgh
BBC GOOD FOOD SHOW – LONDON
Olympia, London
bbcgoodfoodshowlondon.com

17th–19th

FOOD MATTERS LIVE
ExCeL, London
foodmatterslive.com

26th–29th

BBC GOOD FOOD SHOW WINTER
NEC Birmingham
bbcgoodfoodshowwinter.com

27th–29th

FOODIES FESTIVAL
Truman Brewery, London
foodiesfestival/xmas-london

Food Matters Live Turns the Spotlight on Natural and Organic

Food Matters Live, the largest ever cross-sector event focusing on the relationship between food, health and nutrition, is taking place at London's ExCeL centre on 17th–19th November.

The event is free to attend and is expected to see over 12,000 visitors from the world of food retail, manufacturing, government and healthcare.

Matters of health, ethics and wellbeing are currently strong influencers of the shopping habits of consumers, and the event offers retailers insight into how they can help promote a healthy and sustainable lifestyle within their businesses.

Visitors will learn about the latest innovations in nutrition, packaging and marketing strategies to build consumer loyalty through a wide range of seminars from industry experts including Rebecca Raynor, managing director of Glebe Farm Foods, Alex Smith from Alara

Wholefoods and founder of Green & Black's Organic Chocolate, Craig Sams.

The show will also play host to the Enterprise Zone, a collection of both new and established 'better for you' and healthy food and drink from brands including Coconut Merchant, The Nude Spoon, Ombar Chocolate and Islander Kelp, and Meet the Buyer, an opportunity to share ideas and opinions with fellow visitors and exhibitors.

New for this year's show is the Tea Garden, an area of interactive demonstrations featuring businesses such as Teatox and Finlay Tea Solutions.

Briony Mansell-Lewis, director of Food Matters Live said, "Over three days, Food Matters Live provides a unique opportunity to forge industry relationships with some of the most influential people in food, health and nutrition – and experience first hand the latest innovations shaping a sustainable future for food and drink."



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Hider Foods Celebrates 50 Years

Hull-based distributor Hider Food Imports, established by Douglas Hider in 1965, has been celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

Distributor of speciality ambients to the independent retail sector, Hider is still a family-run enterprise – Duncan Hider, grandson to founder Douglas Hider, currently runs the business as joint MD alongside Mike Thirkettle, with second generation David Hider still present as chairman.

Duncan Hider, joint MD said, "We've been spreading the word about the anniversary at trade shows as well as thanking customers and suppliers for their support, and will be celebrating with employees at our annual staff party. We've created a golden product list within our brochure to shout about the occasion, as well as organised special promotions for retailers at exhibitions.

"Most of the employees here have seen a lot of change over the past 20 years, and although none of our staff

have been here for the full 50 years, they can all recognise the strength and customer loyalty that the business must hold to have been going for that length of time.

"Hider started as a predominantly greengrocery-based business before multiples were really prevalent on the food retail landscape, so the fact we've successfully changed with the times and kept ahead of the game makes us immensely proud.

"The next 50 years will see us continue to evolve and without resting on our laurels. Retailers buy from us now because we've updated our service to meet demand, both in terms of delivery, product range and packaging, and we can ensure that we will keep track of the latest trends and producers to give customers what they want. We feel we must be doing something right as we have won the retailer voted Best Distributor category in the Guild of Fine Foods-run Best Brands survey for the last three successive years.



"What drives staff who have been with Hider for a long period of time, including myself, is having a link with the founders of the business. A lot of employees have a link with my parents and even grandparents, and I think the pride and boost this gives to the business is invaluable."

"Increasing our warehousing space by over 30% to 100,000sq ft, we have used our anniversary year to put foundations in place to try ensure we are still leading our sector in 50 years' time, although I hope to have handed over the reins to my daughter or son by then!"

CHARLES CAMPION



"Time for a cool yule"

Christmas lies across the calendar like a fallen tree and blocks out sensible behaviour from early November until Twelfth Night in January. Each Christian country has its own 'special day' when the celebrations peak. On St Nicholas's Day (5th December) the Dutch hide presents around the house. On St Lucia's Day (13th December) Hungarians celebrate the twelfth day before Christmas. Then there's Christmas Eve, which for a number of European countries is the big day. As Britons, we save our most extravagant feasting for Christmas Day but keep Boxing Day in reserve for another bout of over-indulgence. On January 6th the French focus on Epiphany and the Three Kings.

As the Christmas juggernaut rolls ever nearer we become more and more traditional. This is the time of year when sales of Brussels sprouts peak, and when it slowly dawns on turkeys that they may not be the ones celebrating.

Our Christmas bill of fare is much the same as it has always been, in that there's a grandstand piece of meat to overcook – be it turkey, goose, rib of beef or a ham. Perhaps we should look at what the rest of Europe chooses as centrepiece of their Christmas revels?

Some years ago there was what would now be called a "pop-up" shop in the east of London. In the run up to Christmas, volunteers would take over the Finnish Cultural Centre and sell tinned foods and Finnish delicacies. There was iron-hard

dried fish that tasted of bad breath and pyramids of reindeer pâté in tins. It may be childish, but the idea of eating Rudolph on toast seems a very good one.

Venture to a German kitchen, or into Poland, and the Christmas Eve favourite could well be spiced carp. This being despite it being difficult to make anything magnificent out of carp, as the flesh is somewhere between muddy and flabby and there are plenty of small and irritating bones.

In Britain we ate carp on meat-free Fridays in the Middle Ages – but under sufferance rather than because of any gastronomic potential. Meanwhile, the newly arrived Eastern Europeans, who even now are fishing for carp in Britain's network of canals, are very puzzled when British anglers put the fish back rather than killing and eating them.

Continental cooks do have some strengths – rich fruit breads like Stollen from Germany and Pannetone from Italy are both becoming increasingly popular in the UK, but it would take a leap of faith to suggest that they are any match for a good Christmas cake. Or indeed the classic shortcrust mince pie (warm in an oven, cut a slit in the top and pop in a spoonful of brandy butter to melt into the hot mincemeat).

Perhaps this is the year that we should respect our own Christmas traditions while trying something new? Stilton is at its magnificent best at yuletide, but what if we served it alongside some reindeer pâté and a boiled carp?

Happy Christmas!

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I've never not been part of the food and drink industry. Tracklements has been part of my life since I was five or six years old. Food was a big part of every day when I was growing up and it was always an adventure, which meant nothing was ever a surprise. Whether foraging for food, going fishing and checking out crab pots or going musseling, there was always food in my life and great smells coming from the kitchen. When we created making wholegrain mustard in 1970, I used to spread it on toast and still do to this day as it's so evocative of being a particular age. I genuinely didn't know what Heinz tomato ketchup was when I was growing up as we didn't have it in the house, and when I first tried it, it didn't taste of tomatoes. I recognise what it is now, but at the time it was alien to me. We weren't living at the top of a hill in a hut, don't worry about that, but there were always jars full of homemade produce stacked up in the larder instead of branded goods. This childhood means that I have the grounding to understand how tastes go together as well as what works and what doesn't. Why does this one need a bit of ginger rather than a bit of chilli, and why does this one need a bit of chilli and this one not? It's because some things just work, and there's a historical balance in that. I always say that what we do is remarkably easy, but doing it well is the hard bit – that is what we've spent 40 years perfecting.

We've been making simple, quality products for so long that they've become trendy again, so when it came to rebranding we wanted to combine the heritage of Tracklements with the more modern side of the business. Our new look is contemporary yet traditional; I describe the design as a little bit of Edward Lear and nonsense combined with some Victoriana, which is equally as appealing to the modern consumer as to people who have been buying our products for years. We have a very wide customer base, and we don't want to be thought of as modern and trendy, but equally, we don't want to be considered traditional and fusty. It was a difficult balance to strike and the feedback has been phenomenally positive.

The fine food sector is full of wonderful people – it's a fantastic industry and I love being part of it. There's a collective spirit which you can see at events and shows, even between the people who may be considered your competitors. There's a great number of people who want to change the world we work in. When you look back at the early eighties, you can see what a brilliant place our industry is to be in these days; look at the opportunities available to everyone, and look at how consumers are so engaged with



THE INTERVIEW

The key to success, according to Guy Tullberg of Tracklements? Determination, consistency and enthusiasm

quality. We launched red onion marmalade 17 or 18 years ago and people wondered what it was, but now look at it; consumers are now so intrigued, interested and inquisitive and I think that is a huge change that we have put into motion. We've created an environment where people can create whatever they want to and it will be accepted, whether it be a cheese, biscuit, snack or whatever – that is a huge change, and makes our industry a brilliant place to be. The opportunities are

enormous and these days a good product, well made using the correct ingredients, will always have a place.

The moment people's belts are tightened a bit or wallets are squeezed, they come back to the things they like and consider a treat, whether that be amazing meat or cheese or great charcuterie and nice condiments to go with it. These are the things we come back to as they're the things we hold close to our

hearts. The sector we sell in is not necessarily a rich market; I think that good food should never be exclusive – that's not what it's about. I think it should be accessible. When the country has experienced an economic squeeze – and Tracklements has seen a few – it's never made a difference and we've continued to grow. The people buying our products are probably the same people who are trying to make their car do more miles to the gallon, but they're not cheating on their cheese by buying cheaper. The major market is affected but the eating out market is growing year on year, so the spend is still there but is just moving round a bit. I think the speciality food business has proven that really well-made stuff in moderation is exactly what we need. Don't interfere with stuff if you don't need to, as I don't think it necessarily improves the matter at hand. Taxing sugar? I don't know whether something like that works or doesn't work, but as sugar is in everything – including artisan chutneys and pickles – more than anything else it should be a process of education.

Looking to the future, I think the opportunities are going to become even greater, particularly online. The growth of online means that it doesn't matter if you're a small start-up, as you still have a way of communicating. As the food industry moves online, and I think it will, people will be able to buy their washing powder and all the basics online which will free up some time to make an experience out of food shopping – a great opportunity for independents and their suppliers.

QUICKFIRE QUESTIONS

THE FUTURE

I will continue to be in the speciality food business. Tracklements has always been an enormous part of my life and will continue to be so, but at some stage I'd like to go and make cheese and brew fire water, rind wash the cheese in the fire water and be quietly, permanently pissed somewhere!

BUSINESS MANTRAS

'If you scratch beneath the surface, it's got to be real'. I say that about everything. If you walk around the factory and open a cupboard, it has to represent what we do. If you pick up a jar, everything you think that happens in that jar and to that jar has to have happened. Every part of the business has to be real.

TEAMWORK

I can refine and develop, but I require the input and effort from other people to ensure that what we produce comes out just how we want it every time.

“ It's lovely to have an entrepreneurial spirit but that'll only get you so far – you need to surround yourself with good, professional people who can do the things you can't. Nobody can do it all! ”

MAKING IT WORK

An entrepreneurial spirit is required to be successful in our industry, but that will only take you so far.

You then require professionalism and a business-like manner. You need to take it as read that your products are the best before you can start work. The rest is the real key; 'passion' is a terrible word that we've banned in our business – yes, there are a lot of people who

are passionate about what they do, but I sometimes think you should pull that away and spend your energies on being focused and determined instead. For example, a while ago I decided that I needed to be formally trained, so I went off to business school for a year and fed the skills I learned there back into the company. It's lovely to have the spirit of the entrepreneur but that'll only get you so far – you need to

surround yourself with good, professional people who can do the things you can't do. Nobody can do it all! Determination, consistency and enthusiasm are integral to success.

I've never not wanted to jump out of bed, as I've always seen work as an unfinished adventure. I don't want to do something that would make me want to pass the bucket, which means that in 30 years I've never

got bored. We keep things moving which keeps things exciting. Really early on, when Tracklements only had three or four staff and I was working the filling machine, someone asked me how I could stand to do that all day. My response was, "50p, 50p, 50p..." and I still feel the same about it today. We have a joke down in the warehouse, when I stick my head through the door last thing at night and say, "good night,

fellas" – the workers think I'm talking to them but, in fact, I'm talking to the jars because they go out and represent us. I find that enormously exciting. I don't think I'll ever be out of the fine food world but I may be out of Tracklements at some point in the future – having said that, I'm in no rush. I'm relishing making great products, and making it enjoyable for as many people as possible.

I took this business on in 1986 when I was 21 years old – so I've been here almost 30 years. We've won various accolades such as the Champion of Champions sausage competition, which is national, and I've captained the British butchery team for the past three years, which is a tri-nation event with Australia and New Zealand.

We are very proud of using locally-sourced produce – we're in a rural area of Yorkshire where there's plenty of great produce on our doorstep. Being a farmer's son brings a knowledge of how livestock should be looked after, and an appreciation for the welfare of the animals – basically an understanding of what makes good meat, which I may not have had I not grown up around cattle, sheep and pigs. Just the handling of livestock in a sensible manner means that the meat is naturally of a better quality, so welfare's very important.

We're very good on the production side of things – we produce almost everything in-shop, including small goods such as sausages, pies and other savoury baked produce, we cure our own bacon, and we make our own charcuterie. Because we're producing this in-house, we're very hands-on and know what we're doing. I consider us to be experts when it comes to this, as we have a good depth of knowledge in production and this shows in the items we produce. We make truly crafted meat products, and you can't pick that expertise up in weeks or even months; it takes years to gain the expertise we have. It's a case of learning new things, making mistakes and improving all the time.

We supply local businesses including delis, restaurants and pubs with our ham, bacon, black pudding, sausages and charcuterie, but only the ones which are

PRIME CUTS

David Lishman, owner of Lishman's of Ilkley, discusses the value of standing out from the crowd



“ We make truly crafted meat products, and you can't pick that expertise up in weeks or even months; it takes years to gain the expertise we have ”

interested in food – we tend not to work with greasy spoon-style businesses! We try to be better than the run of the mill without being so exclusive that the price becomes prohibitive.

We try to keep as much as possible of the produce we're buying local. It's not difficult for us; we're in the heartland of great food and surrounded by grassland where plenty of livestock can thrive. It would be different if we were in London, as local would then mean 100 miles away, but it's relatively easy for us to source good meat from a stone's throw away. Price isn't our main concern when it comes to working with suppliers; our focus is the continuity of the supply of good quality produce. For example, our pigs have come from the same man in York for the past seven or eight years, and it's only been that short a period of time because our previous supplier gave up farming. We've been using the same beef farmer for even longer, and even though he's 93 and

no longer producing his own beef, he's still sourcing cattle for us from markets. We like to build up relationships with our suppliers and stick with them, as we can then trust them to give us good quality produce and they know what we want. You can chop and change suppliers too easily and it doesn't always work. Loyalty does a lot of good!

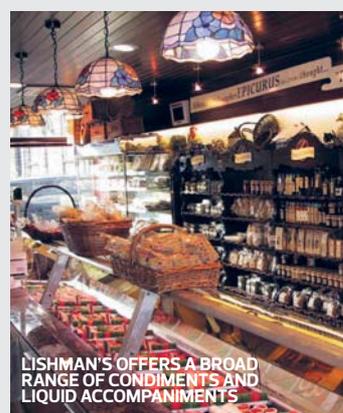
We have a lot of visitors in Ilkley, and with Yorkshire being a strong brand across the UK a lot of those visitors like to take a taste of Yorkshire home with them. Having said that, a large number of our customers are from Ilkley which is a well-heeled town of 14,000. A lot of professionals who work in Leeds live in Ilkley, and it has great traffic, so we have lots of trippers to town and people staying in the Dales on breaks. We try not to be overly expensive, but you

wouldn't come to us for supermarket prices! We use Cottage Delight for a number of our condiments and have done for 15 years. We also have a wine display which is sourced by Yorkshire Vintners and not available to buy in supermarkets, so nobody's ever going to come in and tell us they can buy one of our bottles for cheaper elsewhere. We also sell local beers, including those from Ilkley Brewery, and Yorkshire cider.

When creating a butchery counter, it's imperative to get an experienced butcher to run it. As well as skill, they need to have a knowledge of waste management and of how to source good quality meat. There's plenty of average and poor quality meat available, and independents need to offer a point of difference. If a deli has a bakery element, it's very useful to work together to avoid waste. When it comes to building a team, apprentices can be great. We take them on from Leeds City College, which I'm honoured to have a connection with. A couple of my employees were former apprentices, and one was named the British Apprentice of the Year a couple of years ago, while another just came runner up in Britain's Young Butcher competition and is now going to compete in Frankfurt next year representing the British Young Butchers team.



DAVID LISHMAN: BEING A FARMER'S SON BRINGS AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT MAKES GOOD MEAT



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**JULIET
HARBUTT**

“Christmas markets and tastings”

Are you ready for Christmas this year? If you opened sometime in 2015 then you have an excuse – the rest of you should know better. But in the 15 years I was in retail I can only remember one year that I was really organised – it was when a friend came to stay over for Christmas who loved cooking and cleaning, so I could focus all my attention on my staff, my sales and my sanity.

Sadly I am not able, let alone willing, to do that, even for my favourite cheese shop – I am far too busy doing tastings for Christmas parties and planning my own Christmas party. But I do have time, experience and the luxury of hindsight to come up with ideas that I hope will increase your Christmas sales.

One possible threat to a profitable Christmas is the huge number of pop-up Christmas markets, as with their festive atmosphere and potential for bargains they are very appealing to your customers. Often created by local foodies thinking they are doing the world and their favourite producers an enormous favour, whereas it quite often has the reverse effect if the stalls are owned by street traders rather than local producers.

To counteract this, create your own Christmas market with local foodies, fundraisers (football clubs and schools) and other local retailers. It is a good way to ensure your customers buy from you, and if you invite the producers along to be a part of your stand then it's a win-win. They sell more without the hassle of setting up a stall and you get staff to man the stall plus profit on the sales. Make sure all your PR material emphasises that you are established,

local, reliable and there all year round.

Wine tastings with a twist are always popular, for example “What wines to serve with Christmas dinner?” – do it with a local wine merchant if you don't sell wines. “New Blues – Alternatives to Stilton” or a tasting that never fails, “My Favourite Tipple” with various fortified wines from Port and Sherry to Sloe Gin or any other sweet wine you care to include.

Whether to serve panettone or pandoro is a real dilemma in many Italian families. The first faction finds pandoro to be too simple and buttery, the second group usually hates raisins and candied fruits which abound in panettone.

Personally, I have never liked mince tarts and went off Christmas cake when my mother and I made 30 one year for a Christmas charity market and I ate a whole cake's worth of raw mixture. In fact, Stollen is my Christmas cake of choice as I love marzipan and there is lots of dried fruit, nuts and spices but less than in Christmas cake.

Consider offering discounts for placing Christmas orders early, free delivery or maybe storage till the last minute to avoid the drama of stuffing three times more food in the fridge than can actually fit!

I wish you all the best for your Christmas. I hope it's profitable, that you don't have too much wastage, and that you retain your sense of humour till you lock the door on the 24th and spare a thought for me. I will be celebrating my last Christmas in my lovely 320 year old Cotswold cottage and be preparing to swap it for a 10 year old ultra modern home in New Zealand where Christmas is synonymous with sauvignon, sunshine, seafood and the beach...



**GEORGE
PAUL OF
BRADBURY'S**

“The year in cheese”

With 2015 coming to a close, a look back over this interesting year shows the developing trends for the future. Milk prices have dominated the scene, however their impact on speciality has been limited. The mass market has seen Cheddar slump by over 50p a kilo and ignited the usual price wars on an already devastated landscape. In this jungle the big have simply got bigger, the outcome being the same blandness everywhere.

The major retailers have had a harrowing year as changes in shoppers' habits have seen people buying less, more often. Having lost trust in the big institutions, convenience and online have grown, but it's yet a little early to tell if it's too little too late. Speciality, regionalism and local types as a sector have not suffered the tumult in pricing that core cheesemaking has endured in the retail bear pit. Let's hope that as milk returns to sane pricing there isn't a dash for cash that abuses a stable market sector.

Sadly, we have seen the further demise of established names like Cricketer Farms. Like a number of mid-range makers, they were unable to achieve a realistic return, despite substantial investment and a quite successful move into reduced fat and premium prepacks. Founded in 1940 by Lord Beaverbrook to supply our wartime needs, 75 years later, there is no place for the different among the foreign-dominated megaliths of dairy. West Country Farmhouse Cheddar works hard to keep its position in retail, and stalwarts like Quikes and Keens are exceptions in the general decline in export recognition, which is some comfort. The helter-skelter kaleidoscope of flavours from the additive sector seems to have run out of steam and the classic types hold the main

market access, with a few brands dominating the majors. No-one has really premiumised this sector. Rather, it's been dragged lower by inferior copycats.

The trade has its characters and few cast a greater shadow than Juliet Harbutt, who is returning to the New Zealand scene and will be missed as an ambassador, publicist and opinion former. Cheese awards had another good year, with great turnouts in all the major competitions. Nantwich had over 4,600 entries, and World Cheese Awards, British Cheese Awards and others also reported that entries were up.

After some years of stagnation, the return of ethical farming, and specifically organic, is trending upwards again. Indeed, some milk shortages are evident as demand pushes up prices and creates a growing gap with standard milk prices. Higher disposable income is unquestionably a factor as consumers look for better quality and higher standards of animal welfare. People like Jody Scheckter and his team at Laverstoke Park have for years invested massively in returning the land to its natural condition and farming ethically. Their range of Buffalo Mozzarella, Gouda and other types is gaining traction steadily.

Exports too have continued to thrive. Around the globe, British speciality cheese has grown steadily, driven by an established group of exporters, but joined now by a host more. Whether in USA, Canada, Continental Europe, the Gulf region, the Far East, Japan and now China, the sight of familiar British cheese grows evermore common.

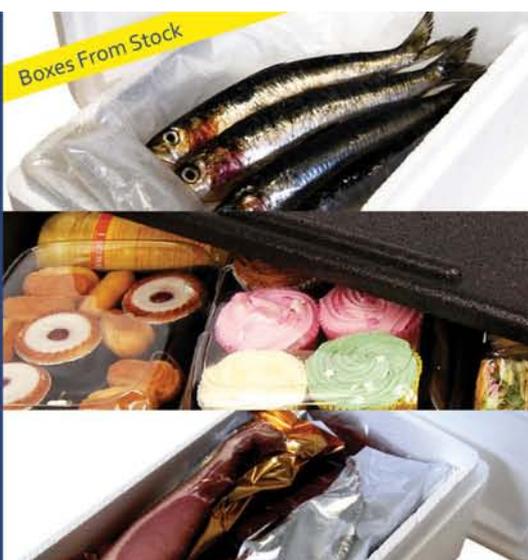
The return of the provenance cheeseboard is a delight to see. Menus now recognise the maker, the type, the subtleties of the cheese, in

Talk Cheese

New retail perspectives from industry experts

language as passionate and flowery as that reserved formally for wine. However, 2015 has had its winners and its losers. Halloumi keeps moving on, Comte and Manchego still create a bow wave, Red Fox is more widely distributed, mature Gouda recovers lost ground, and nothing disturbs the calm of Lincolnshire Poacher, Stinking Bishop or Colston Bassett. Meanwhile, Edam slithers and Cheshire dithers. But nothing is ever written in stone, and we may yet see some rising Christmas stars that will indicate trends to come in 2016.

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News, opinion and comment from dairy insiders

JUSTIN TUNSTALL OF TOWN MILL CHEESEMONGER



“What’s in the recipe?”

I've a pension that matures next year – I know I don't look that old, but my byline mugshot was flatteringly lit and goes back a year or two, just like the one I used on the dating site where I met my wife. With the financial bolster that pension will provide, I've decided to look at taking life a little easier and one of my options is to sell the business.

I spoke with a friend who has successfully sold two delis that he started from scratch, who generously passed on some useful tips. When I explained that I'd possibly need to do a comprehensive induction cum handover period, he said: "Don't give the recipe away until they've signed". Of course not!

However, that's actually quite difficult – I feel very enthusiastic about what we have achieved and the offering that we've built up over the years we've been trading, and I love to tell people all about it. But what is for sale with the business is the 'recipe' created from more than just the ingredients list of Goodwill, Brand, Kit and Stock – it's an enterprise that exceeds the sum of these.

Goodwill lies in the value to be derived from shoppers who have made a habit of spending money with us: tourists who pop in once or twice a year, often declaring their visit to the shop to be a (sometimes even 'the') highlight of their holiday. We also enjoy a strong local clientele

who have grown used to treading the path down to our mediaeval Mill premises for favourite cheeses they can source nowhere else. Unless alienated by indifferent customer service, this business is a given, hopefully continually topped up by a regular stream of shoppers discovering us and what we do for the first time.

Perhaps it's knowledge and expertise that truly represent the 'recipe'. Not just knowledge of cheeses and how to look after them, but how to run the business. We introduce variety to our range in a fairly structured way with supplier promotions and seasonal arrivals.

In passing this knowledge on, we'll save a purchaser the angst that we suffered as we made yet another mistake, facepalming and d'oh-ing our way through our initial months of trading. Hopefully we can ensure that the business we created can continue to serve the community in a manner of which we can remain proud. Of course, the business may not sell quickly, but the process of thinking about what we do and the value of it has helped me fall just a little bit more deeply in love with it.

I've been briefed as a consultant to give some advice to a couple of other retail businesses next year, so I'll need to find the time to make serving suggestions for other businesses' recipes.

Bodnant Rolls Out New Cheese



Bodnant Welsh Food has launched its new Caerphilly-style cheese online, making it available across the UK.

The artisan cheese, which has already proved popular at the Conwy Valley farm shop, has also claimed its

first award – bronze at the International Cheese Show held in Nantwich earlier this year, the only artisan Welsh producer in the top three.

Aled Rowland, Bodnant's resident artisan cheesemaker said, "It's made from a traditional recipe and, in fact, Bodnant is only one of just a handful using it in Wales. The key ingredient and a secret of its success is the very best quality milk. We use only one milk source, the Friesian dairy herd at Taly Cafn Ucha Farm, which is just half a mile away from Bodnant.

"Lots of cheeses are covered in a cheesecloth but we allow our Caerphilly to develop a wonderful ivory coloured rind."

Chris Morton, managing director said, "This is another successful story for our on-site dairy. We started 2015

by launching a smoked cheese, our Abermwig, so launching this new Caerphilly is a great way to end the year.

"Feedback from our customers who have been sampling the cheese has been very positive and so we are now going into full production. We've got more innovations in the coming months, so we will be keeping the dairy very busy."

Debbie Levisseur, dairy manager said, "The Caerphilly is the latest cheese to come from our own dairy and we're delighted with the reception it's getting from everyone. Ever since we introduced it it's been a big hit in the farm shop at Bodnant, with customers saying they recognise it as a traditional-tasting cheese taste from years ago.

"It is eaten at a young age, anything from four weeks old. It's white, firm textured and crumbly and, while it comes from the same cheese family as Lancashire, its flavour is unique to Bodnant. Like all our cheeses, it's also suitable for vegetarians."



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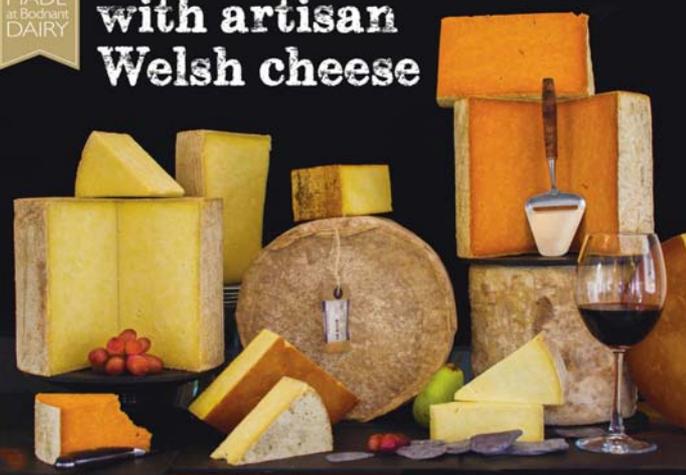

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Paxton & Whitfield Opens New Chelsea Store

The UK's oldest cheesemonger has opened a second permanent site, at 22 Cale Street, Chelsea Green, Chelsea, following a successful pop-up shop last year.

The new shop – which opened on 16th October – is managed by Ben Newell, trained at Edinburgh-based IJ Mellis, and staffed by team members who have gained

experience at Paxton & Whitfield's flagship in Jermyn Street, Piccadilly.

The Cale Street site offers a wide range of artisan cheeses and accessories, fine foods, alcohol and hampers, as well as an extensive range of services including in-store tastings, private events and a cheeseboard service, where customers will bring their cheeseboards from home to be dressed by a member of the Paxton & Whitfield team.

Ros Windsor, managing director of Paxton & Whitfield said, "The success of our pop-up shop made us realize that there was a real need in the area for a dedicated cheesemonger.

"Whilst the pop-up was running we got to know a lot of local customers, offering them our great service and becoming 'the local cheesemonger'. This area of Chelsea is very much about the local community and we look forward to being a permanent member of that community."

First Global British Dairy Brand Launched

Somerset-based Wyke Farms has launched a global dairy 'British brand', the first in the UK.

The newly designed branding is being used on their export range of cheese, which is currently supplied to over 160 countries worldwide.

The new look combines a clear

British message with darker, more premium colours, more prominent '100% Green' and 'award-winning cheese' logos, and a newly thicker film with a parchment-feel finish to better represent the producer's heritage.

Rich Clothier, managing director said, "We are trading in more regions

than ever before and witnessing an ever growing support for 'British'. I am confident that we can achieve a 4-fold increase simply by conveying our British credentials more clearly on pack; such is the strength of the associations of quality and premium attached to British produce.

"In all of the key growth regions such as China, India and Japan, British products are instantly recognised as being of the highest quality and are therefore sought after."

Craft Beer Trend Boosts Džiugas Sales

The current popularity for craft beer has strengthened sales of Džiugas, the Lithuanian cheese.

Fans of craft beer have found that the Džiugas mature varieties – Piquant 24 and Gourmet 36 – pair well with strong, dark ales, while the younger maturities – Mild 12 and Delicate 18 – are ideal matches for paler beers.

Popular during the festive season in its native Lithuania,

Džiugas is also traditionally offered with honey and nuts as a gift at Christmas.

A Džiugas spokesperson said, "Džiugas is a good proposition for cashing in on the trend for micro-breweries and craft beers. Pre-Christmas sampling sessions with local beers alongside a Lithuanian cheese offer a good talking point and great proposition for extra sales!"



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You'll find The Old Cheese Shop in St Andrews hidden away in a little courtyard "like a secret garden," says Caroline Nite, who owns the cheeseshop with husband Alexander. The shop, which the couple took over some 18 months ago, is "quite unique," Caroline says, "a small cheese cave where we retail over 80 artisan cheeses with a café in a garden serving cheese and wine." It all looks very rustic and rather medieval. "The courtyard wasn't being used," Caroline says, "but as soon as the first rays of sunshine hit, we decided open a café. We set up tables and brought in plants and more trees to make it very cosy, a little refuge for our customers. Visitors say that it feels very Continental, and that they feel they are in Italy or Spain, weather permitting, of course."

Entering The Old Cheese Shop is a sensory experience, Caroline says. "You get the full experience when you walk in. It's not a modern city retail space where all you see is fridges and shelves. You smell the coffee and the bread we bake on the premises. Our cheeses are in fridges and cling-wrapped, so unless we open something very stinky, there is no pungent aroma. What we don't want is children running away holding their noses!"

The shop has attracted "a huge base of local customers," Caroline says, "who come in week in, week out. We get a lot of students, especially during term time, who are regulars. In summer, we get the tourists." Caroline and Alexander decided to buy the shop from the New Yorker who had opened it in December 2010 after careers in the construction business and working at the local St Andrews University. "We heard from a mutual friend that the shop was for sale," Caroline says. "We talked to the previous owner who said we were very welcome to shadow her before we made a decision to buy. We were looking to buy a business, but we didn't know what, exactly. Then the cheese shop came along. This offered an opportunity to make the most of my business degree and our customer service skills. We wanted to get off the corporate ladder." It helps too that the couple love the product as much as they do learning about it.

"We didn't want to buy a business where we couldn't evolve and it all

MEET THE CHEESESELLER

The Old Cheese Shop in St Andrews is a hidden gem, one which offers cheese and wine in its garden, and wine and cheese tasting evenings inside



THE OLD CHEESE SHOP: "A HUGE BASE OF LOCAL CUSTOMERS"



became a routine," she says. "Here, there is no routine. The counter is always changing."

The world of British artisan cheese is relatively new for Caroline, who was born in Poland and brought up in the United States. "In those countries," she says, "there wasn't an artisan cheese scene for a long time, but this is beginning to change, particularly in the north eastern United States."

New cheeses

The cheese industry in Britain has come as a welcome surprise. "I couldn't believe how many British cheeses there are," she says. "Our British collection has expanded tremendously and we no longer have to stick with cheeses from France, Spain and Italy. We get customers who have visited England asking me if I can get something they have loved down there. One such has been Old Winchester, a Gouda-style aged cheese which I liked so much I kept it on."

Also expanding is the shop's range of Scottish cheeses. "We have two Scottish suppliers and look to them to recommend new cheeses," Caroline says. "We always ask for a sample and let customers try it as well. We presently have 25 cheeses from Scotland. The tourists really go for these." While the shop's stock is still weighted towards Continental cheese, she says, Scottish and British cheeses are closing the gap. For the record, Caroline's personal favourite cheeses are Swiss, Tête de Meine and "in winter, Vacherin Mont

d'Or." Caroline also enjoys Gruyère, which is offered at different ages. "We currently have a special 12 month Gruyère washed in red wine," she says.

The shop introduces locals to selections of their cheeses and the cheese and wine tastings which are held at least once a month. These accommodate "about 20 people in shop including students and regulars are seated at long table," Caroline



CHEESE AND WINE TASTINGS ARE HELD "AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH"

says. "We hold them on Friday evenings and it's like a very cosy restaurant. We invite a wine expert and we have five wines and five cheeses that we match to each other and then the wine expert talks about the wine and I talk about the cheese. They have been very successful and people want us to do more. Last November, we had one every week."

The Old Cheese Shop offers wedding cheese cakes too, and this side of the business has "exploded recently," Caroline says. "It has almost become a separate business. We may have to move to new premises in the future so we can have room to store all the cheese cakes. It's a lot of work, sometimes months of correspondence, as couples do like to plan ahead, but a lot of fun, too. The sampling sessions are very exciting for them and it's exciting for us to create something bespoke."



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10 UNUSUAL BLUES FOR CHRISTMAS

As your Stilton stocks run low at Christmas or your customers demand something a little out of the ordinary, why not offer them some of the 90 British alternatives or maybe a lesser known blue from Europe? Juliet Harbutt investigates

British Blues

This year 91 blue cheeses were entered in the British Cheese Awards, made with cow, goat, ewe and even buffalo milk. Only the Americans come anywhere near that number, yet sadly most people struggle to name more than three British blues. So, here are three more to tempt you to widen your range.

1 DRUNKEN BURT (COW)

Region: Cheshire
Weight: 180g and 750g
Shape: disc

This is a small, deliciously creamy cheese with a serious identity crisis. I don't know if it is a barely blue cheese with a rind that tastes more like icing or a washed rind cheese with intermittent blueing, or even a Camembert with a very thick, soft pink rind that tastes almost better than the interior. Whatever it's meant to be, I like it just the way it is.

Made by Claire Burt using local pasteurised cow's milk, Drunken Burt is like their Burt's Blue but instead of piercing the cheese they wash it in cider. This seeps into the rind giving it a sweet yeasty taste, speeds up the ripening process and, when almost runny throughout, makes it taste like vanilla ice cream.

2 WORCESTER BLUE (COW)

Region: Worcester
Weight: 1.8 kg
Shape: flat round

Hayden Roberts has come a long way since the '80s when he started making cheese in his London flat. At Neal's Yard Creamery he worked alongside Charlie Westhead, playing with recipes and ideas until in March

2015 he bought Lightwood Cheese. He is now making superb, mostly soft cow, goat and ewes' milk cheeses, plus Worcester Blue which is new this year, tastes great and looks interesting, so I thought it deserved a mention.

Made with pasteurised Shorthorn milk, it is between the Continental style – softer, higher moisture – and the dense, buttery style of Stilton. A wide, flat round with a rustic rind covered with a thin layer of grey mould, its thick streaks and pockets of blue are well spread and give the dense interior a spicy, buttery mellow tang and nutty aroma with savoury notes not unlike mature Cheddar. Becomes softer and creamier with age. Nice one, Hayden!

3 SIMON WEAVER BLUE BRIE (COW)

Region: The Cotswolds
Weight: 300g
Shape: brick

All modern British cheeses, from Lincolnshire Poacher to Stinking Bishop, are made by just one person, so Simon Weaver's Blue Brie is only made by Simon Weaver! For longer than anyone can remember, milk has been produced on the family farm in the heart of the Cotswolds, and the lush organic meadows and

grasslands are perfect for producing flavourful milk.

The milk travels just five metres from the milking shed to the purpose built creamery, where it is turned into a range of soft white rind cheeses of which the Blue Brie is for me by far the best. A small, elegant soft white-rinded blue with a thin, slightly crunchy and deliciously mushroomy taste, alongside a smooth Brie-like interior with a rich, creamy taste that hints of mushrooms and finishes on a mild, spicy note from the streaks and splodges of mild, crunchy, spicy blue through the centre. Just the right size for Christmas.

French Blues

There are around 18 French blue cheeses, mostly made with cow's milk, but few escape the French borders. Those that do are Fourme d'Ambert, Bresse Blue, Blue des Causses, Bleu d'Auvergne and the



world's most famous ewes milk blue, Roquefort, which is aged in the famous natural caves of Mont Combalu, plus two others that I have always liked: Bleu de Gex and Bleu de Laqueuille.

Region: Haut Jura
Weight: 8-9kg
Shape: boulder

Made in the dramatically beautiful Jura Mountains, home also to Comté, it has long been one of my must-have blues at Christmas. Made by a handful of producers from raw Montbéliard cows' milk, its history

4 BLEU DE GEX AOC (COW)

Also known as Bleu du Haut Jura or Bleu de Septmoncel)



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VERY CHRISTMAS

can be traced to before 1348 but it was little known outside the region until the Abbey de Saint Claude became involved and the monks took it on their travels.

The smooth, thin rind, imprinted with the G E X letters, gradually develops a fine dusting of powdery white mould. The dense, almost supple texture, unusual for a blue, is pierced to allow the well-spaced staccato streaks and small patches of blue-green to flourish and give the mild, pale yellow interior a gentle peppery tang. Wider and flatter than most blues, it stands out in the counter and doesn't crumble when cut so there is less wastage than with most blues.

5 BLEU DE LAQUEILLE (COW)

Region: Auvergne
Weight: 2.5 kg or 500g
Shape: drum

Created in 1850 by Antoine Roussel in the small Auvergne village of Laqueuille. He also introduced the method of growing the blue mould to inoculate the cheese on rye bread rather than leaving its appearance to chance. The 2.5kg drum has a sticky, orange rind, smooth, almost spreadable texture and rich salty tang, while the smaller 500g drum has a thin, soft-white rind that gives it a mushroomy aroma, a more supple texture and a taste that is yeasty with hints of mushrooms.

It is this size that I love at Christmas because it makes a great gift, is the perfect size for a cheeseboard and will sit patiently in the fridge ripening slowly until I am ready to present it, as opposed to a wedge of blue which gets hot, bothered and sweaty and demands to be eaten sooner than later.



Italian Blues

The Italians make barely a handful of blue cheeses, which they refer to as "erborinati" or parsley green cheese, but only Gorgonzola – one of the world's favourite blues – and its creamy cousin Dolcelatte are known outside of Italy. However, Castelmagno PDO, also made in Lombardy, home of Gorgonzola, deserves a mention not only because it is delicious but also because unlike other blue cheeses, the interior often contains no blue veins!

6 CASTELMAGNO PDO (COW)

Region: Piedmont
Weight: 3–7kg
Shape: wide drum

Dating back beyond the 12th century, Castelmagno is to the Piedmontese as Cheddar is to us, and is believed to have been originally created by the farmers to use as a currency to pay the local land owner for the right to graze their cows and probably some sheep. Made with the milk of the Piedmontese cows, it has a thick crusty rind dusted with blue moulds that would traditionally have penetrated the cheese through the natural cracks and splits that would have occurred. Today, with better cheesemaking techniques, the blue rarely penetrates the rind but it still has a spicy tang associated with blue cheese.

The most important reason, however, for including it in your cheese counter is that its crumbly texture and strong savoury tang makes it the perfect cheese to go in the sauce that goes around gnocchi – I found this out while I was in Piedmont last month.

7 BASAJO (EWE)

Region: Province of Treviso
Weight: 2kg
Shape: drum

Since 1976 Antonio Carpenedo, owner of the family cheese business La Casearia Carpenedo, has been experimenting and discovering ways of combining wine and cheese. The first success was Ubriaco or "drunken cheese", where whole cheeses were

steeped in vats of the skins, pulp, seeds and stems left over from pressing grapes.

The Basajo, a high moisture ewes' milk blue, is aged in passito-style sweet, late harvest wine then topped with luscious ripe grapes and wrapped in tinfoil. Sold as half rounds, its shelf life is short but its followers are many. As it melts in the mouth it is like tasting a sweet wine with blue cheese, the inspiration behind its creation, and it takes its name from the way Antonio's young granddaughter pronounced the word "formaggio". The latest concoction is Blue '61, aged in Passito wine and adorned with inebriated cranberries.

Spanish Blues

Spanish blues all come from the Picos de Europa mountain range area, in a triangle formed by the provinces of León, Asturias and Cantabria. The region is riddled with caves that provide a natural paradise for ripening cheese like the famous Cabrales and the lesser known Valdeón and Picón Bejes-Tresviso.

8 CABRALES PDO (COW, GOAT AND/OR EWE)

Region: Asturias
Weight: 2.5kg
Shape: drum

Made with raw cow's milk or a mixture of cow, goat and or ewe depending on the seasons, for generations families have brought their cheeses to ripen in limestone caves. Here the cool temperature, high humidity and the gentle winds wafting the moulds over the cheeses promote the development of green-blue patches and veins through the cheeses. For consistency, some cheesemakers also add Penicillium spores to the milk.



Coagulation is slow creating the perfect loose, crumbly texture, so the blueing spreads in a mass of fine lightning bolt streaks and pockets throughout the cheese and eventually dominates the pale white interior. However, the taste must not be overly salty, bitter or intensely astringent. Those made with more ewes' milk are slightly sweeter. The aroma is penetrating and intense, and the taste is nutty and reminiscent of hazelnuts or almonds when the goats milk dominates.

9 PICON BEJES-TRESVISO PGI (COW, GOAT AND/OR EWE)

Region: Cantabria (near Bilbao)
Weight: 3kg
Shape: drum

Picón Bejes-Tresviso is similar to Cabrales but it is less crumbly. The young cheeses are pierced and the blue Penicillium mould is introduced into the milk which may be a combination of local breeds of cow, sheep and goats' milk. The ratio depends on availability and the seasons.

This cheese is made by just four producers in the villages of Bejes and Treviso, which are surrounded by the deepest, steepest and most inaccessible roads so narrow the thought of a car or cow coming the other way made me turn tail and run back to the autoroute! But the cheese is worth tasting. Cured for at least two months, it is bold, blue, spicy and salty. Mainly sheep's milk cheeses are very

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Cornish Blue

Cornish Blue is a full fat, blue veined cheese, with a natural rind made from pasteurised cows milk. It's perfect on a classic cheese board or as a versatile cooking ingredient adding rich flavours to dishes and sauces, and is also excellent enjoyed on its own with a full bodied red wine or a sweet port – and it's this versatility which has seen it become one of Britain's best-loved fine cheeses.

The cheese has been produced on the Stansfield's Farm on Bodmin Moor in Cornwall since 2001. The sweet, mild and creamy cheese of distinctive character has been internationally recognised by the many awards it has won including World Cheese Awards Champion Cheese in 2010 and Best Blue and English Cheese in 2007.

Having conquered the fine food world in such a way, you'd be forgiven for thinking that the cheesemakers' work is done but this is far from the case – the farm is expanding in 2015, with a new dairy, maturing room and packing room in the offing. This will allow the business to double production of its blue cheese to meet growing demand and just in time, as sales doubled over the Christmas period of 2014/15!



Shepherds Purse

Caroline Bell of Shepherds Purse tells the story behind the brand's ever-popular blues

We began developing our first blue cheese in 1994, and we launched both Yorkshire Blue and Mrs Bell's Blue in 1995. Yorkshire Blue was the first cheese we made from cow's milk, and it was important to us that we developed a blue cheese that we all loved and which would rival the mellow creamy continental blue cheeses.

"Today, over 20 years on, we make four different soft and creamy blue veined cheeses and a blue mould-ripened cheese, Bluemin White.

Developing our ripening rooms was the most critical part of developing a special blue cheese. It's the caves in Roquefort that provide the unique environment for the development of the different varieties of Roquefort, and it's our cave-like conditions that are crucial to the unique development of our signature blue cheeses. We have a team dedicated to caring for the cheeses through this initial maturation and for managing the environment to ensure top quality.

Mrs Bell's Blue is our ewe's milk blue, winner of Reserve Supreme Champion at Nantwich

International Cheese Show and featured on Rick Stein's BBC Food Heroes programme. It is a favourite with chefs due to its complex velvety smooth texture and its meadowy sweet yet salty and mellow blue taste. It's far milder than a Roquefort but has a similar level of complexity on the palate.

Yorkshire Blue is our best-selling national favourite, made with milk from proud Yorkshire cows. Boasting mellow, mild and creamy umami flavours, it's a blue cheese to convert the masses. We developed Harrogate Blue, the sister cheese to Yorkshire Blue, in 2012 when my sister, Katie, and I were handed the reins of Shepherds Purse from our mother Judy.

Oxford Blue

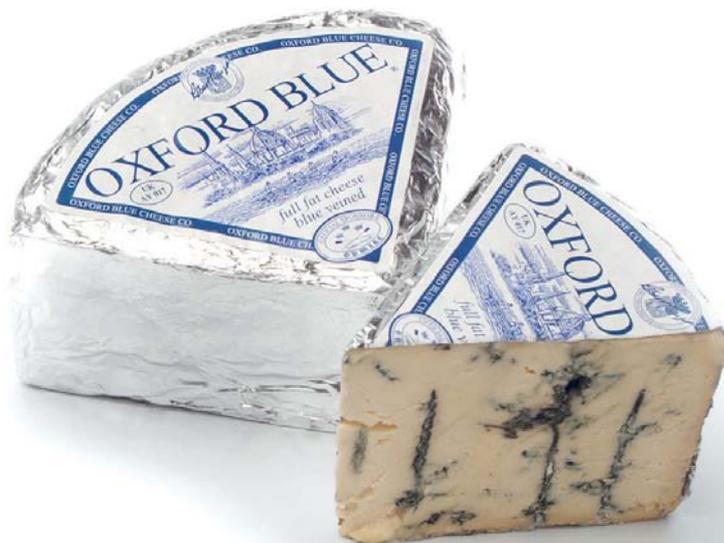


"Oxford Blue is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, and we're very proud to say that it's been a runaway success since its first year," explains Baron Robert Pouget, owner of Oxford Cheese Company. "In 1995, when it had just been created, it won a silver medal at the British Cheese Awards – an accolade straight off the bat!"

Baron Pouget puts its success down to its forward-thinking nature. "At the time," he says, "it was possibly the first new-generation blue on the market because aside from Oxford Blue, there were only the traditional blue Stiltons, Shropshires, Cheshires and Wensleydales. It was certainly the first semi-soft blue on the market since Dovedale, an unsuccessful venture of Dairy Crest during the 1970s."

This modern attitude has paved the way for future envelope-pushing in the blue cheese sector, as Baron Pouget explains: "a large number of blue cheeses have come along since then, but I'm happy to say that we still sell about four tonnes of cheese a month." Despite there being many new blues on the market, the popularity of Oxford Blue has remained consistent, Baron Pouget says: "it's so popular because it has what I call a 'true blue' taste, it's very clean and doesn't have an unpleasant aftertaste unlike a number of other blues. Everyone can recognise it in a blind tasting as it has a very unique taste, and I have striven to achieve this with each new cheesemaker I bring in."

What happens following the production of Oxford Blue is just as important as the production itself, according to Baron Pouget. "The art of affinage is greatly underappreciated in this country," he says, "but it's one of the reasons behind our success. These days, people make cheese and try to get as much shelf life as possible, which means that when it's in the hands of consumers it's too young. We age Oxford Blue perfectly, so when it gets to the retailer it's in its optimum condition."



10 VALDEÓN PGI (COW WITH 10% GOAT)

Also known as Picos de Europa
Region: municipality of Posada de Valdeón (León)
Weight: 500g–3kg
Shape: drum

Made by Javier and Tomas Alonso since 1986 in the Picos de Europa, Valdeón, with a blend of cow and goat milk. The young cheeses are dry salt on both sides, and are pricked to allow air to penetrate. The temperature in the ripening chambers must be 5–10°C (41–50°F) with humidity over 85%, similar to the traditional caves.

Ripening lasts at least two months for cheese made from raw milk, and one and a half months for those made from pasteurized milk. They have a lovely moist, crumbly texture, fresh acidity, spicy, slightly gritty tang and even some caramel notes if the ewes' milk dominates, but never as powerful as Cabrales. Unlike the other two blues, Valdeón makers are permitted to use the sycamore leaves.

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HIDA-GYU: OUTSTANDING WAGYU BEEF FROM GIFU

Japan's Gifu prefecture may be admired for its extraordinary scenery and glimpses of traditional Japan, but it's Hida-gyu which is drawing attention to this scenic and culturally important region



Wagyu beef is currently among the hottest products in international cuisine, and one of the finest examples of this prized product is Hida-gyu, which is produced from the black-haired cattle which are bred mainly in the Hida district of Japan's beautiful Gifu prefecture.

What has got chefs and lovers of beef so excited is Wagyu's beautiful marbling, a distinctive pattern which appears not only on the steaks but on the fat coating, too. This coating stops the flavour and aroma from escaping when the meat is cooked and ensures a quite extraordinary, melt-in-the-mouth tenderness. The quality of this meat, which is commonly called the best beef in the world, is determined by the amount of marbling. Wagyu beef, and especially Hida-gyu, is very much a premium, speciality product, and its uniqueness is necessarily reflected in its price.

Hida-gyu (which translates as Japanese beef from Hida) is particularly flavourful, whether eaten as sirloin, fillet or rib-eye steak, thinly-sliced as Japanese-style Sukiyaki, Shabu-shabu (hot-pot style) or grilled as Yakiniku. It can also be served on a skewer, as sushi or even as a gourmet burger.

The meat is traditionally served medium rare, although it is sometimes cooked for a little longer in order to ensure that the marbled fat melts and releases all its flavours.

Today's Hida-gyu brand originates with a single bull, called 'Yasufuku', who was found to possess the ideal genes to produce calves with meat of the highest quality. During his lifetime, Yasufuku sired 39,000 offspring. Only cattle which have the desired genetic

HOW TO COOK HIDA-GYU

Cooking Hida-gyu is simplicity itself. Begin by putting your frying pan on a medium/high heat for five minutes. Now add clarified butter or olive oil to the pan, and cook the Hida-gyu steaks for 90 seconds on each side. Use a kitchen thermometer to test that the cooking temperature has reached 130-135 degrees before removing the steaks. Season with salt and pepper and serve.

make-up and which have been raised using particular farming techniques (the animal is fed and treated well, and is massaged regularly) will produce meat of a sufficient quality to be labelled Hida-gyu. Wagyu cattle are raised for seven to ten months on a farm specialising in raising calves, after which they are moved to another farm, where they are raised until they are 29 months. Breeding cattle graze in lush meadows and some farmers provide jackets for the calves when the weather becomes cooler. Cattle are fed on high-quality grass and rice straws, as well as the whole crop silage which is essential for developing marbling and the white colour of the fat. It's said that producing top-quality Wagyu beef is 70% genetics and 30% diet.

It is the texture and flavour which have won this meat admirers the world over. That said, this premium product also addresses many of the issues which are important for quality retailers right now: Hida-gyu is organic, ethical, healthier than standard beef and comes with an excellent provenance.

Gifu: the perfect place to enjoy Hida-gyu

Hida-gyu cattle are bred mainly in the Hida region of Gifu in the centre of Japan which is easily accessible via Chubu Centrair International Airport, or by bullet train from major cities. Gifu is a prefecture of two beautifully contrasting regions, the mountainous and tranquil Hida region in the north, and the expansive plains with their clear-flowing rivers of the Mino region in the south. Both regions contain some of the most beautiful scenery in Japan. Gifu offers the visitor both the snow-capped mountains of North Japan Alps – best viewed from the double-decked gondola of a cable car which often operates above the clouds – and the cultural and historical attractions of villages and fascinating districts such as that preserved in the old merchant town of Takayama. 'Little Kyoto' as it is known, is famed for its streets of ancient houses and shops selling folk crafts and locally-made sake.

Autumn is the time to come to see the vivid colours of maple trees bursting with colour in Oyada Maple Valley, in the grounds of the exquisitely-carved Oyada Shrine. This is one of the best places to appreciate the beauty of Autumn in Japan. In Spring, visitors can admire over 3,000 cherry trees in spectacular blossom in the scenic Yoro Park, an attraction which also boasts the Yoro Falls. Cherry trees are an important part of Japanese culture and it is worth noting that two giant 400 year old cherry trees can be seen illuminated at Nawashiro. Takayama hosts the Takayama Spring Festival, which is held annually on April 14th and 15th. Visit the festival to see elaborately designed and gorgeously decorated floats parade through the town, or watch performances of karakuri marionettes.

Gifu is a place of extraordinary contrasts and while today's snowboarders and skiers are catered for at places like the Hirugano Ski Resort, (where a selection of these are fully geared-up for foreign visitors) it is also possible to obtain a glimpse of an older and more traditional Japan – a refreshing tonic for the traveller who has recently enjoyed the excitement of Japan's major cities. Guided cycle tours or hiking trails are excellent ways to take life more slowly and to seek out some of the great natural wonders



“ What has got chefs and lovers of beef so excited is Wagyu's beautiful marbling, a distinctive pattern which appears not only on the steaks but on the fat coating, too. This coating stops the flavour and aroma from escaping when the meat is cooked and ensures a quite extraordinary, melt-in-the-mouth tenderness ”

of this extraordinary prefecture. There are countless natural hot springs, and bathing is offered at some.

There is a wealth of culture to be discovered in Gifu. A sight that has caught the imagination of the world is to be found on the Nagara River, where local fishermen still practise the millenium-old technique of ukai, or fishing with trained cormorants from boats lit by fiery beacons. Also world-famous is the Unesco World Heritage Site of Shirakawa-go, which is a settlement of fairy-tale houses with roofs resembling hands clasped in prayer. The settlement, some of whose houses are still inhabited, is backdropped by a gloriously multi-toned forest in Autumn and nestles picturesquely in deep snow in Winter.

Japan's most central city, Ōgaki City, is celebrated for its abundance of beautiful, clean water and visitors to Japan's 'Water Capital' can take a cruise down the Suimon River in traditional Tarai boats. March is the ideal time for this, when the 100 cherry trees have burst into blossom. Every November, the town holds a festival in honour of the renowned Japanese poet, Matsuo Bashō. A cultural experience not to be missed is the Gujō Dance. In the traditional town of Gujō, visitors looking for a taste old old Japan can enjoy the spectacle of the Gujō Dance, and watch dancers dressed in yukata, or light kimonos, as their traditional geta shoes clap in time to the music.

WAGYU BEEF:

What makes it special

QUALITY

An extraordinary degree of marbling throughout the beef ensures intense flavour, an appetising aroma and a melt-in-the-mouth texture.

LUXURY

Hida-gyu and other Wagyu beef will cost a little more. This dovetails with the current preference for buying less but buying better quality foods.

PROVENANCE

Following a succession of European food scandals, consumers are increasingly looking for foods with clear provenance. Wagyu cattle are

HIDA-GYU: ENSURING QUALITY

To be called Hida-gyu, the beef must meet stringent standards. Hida-gyu is required to have been raised by the farmer registered by the Hida Beef Brand Promotion Conference in Gifu prefecture for at least 14 months, be certified as Yield Score of Grade A or B and have a firmness and texture grade of 5, 4 or 3 as graded by the Japan Meat Grading Association. Other grades of Hida beef are called 'Hida Wagyu', or Hida Japanese Beef. High quality, safe Hida-gyu is produced with support from superior biotechnology research and the passion of the farmers in the Hida region have for this first class product. The Universal Wagyu Mark, established 2007, is proof of authenticity.

individually registered within four months of their birth. Registration provides details of the calf's pedigree.

HEALTH

Wagyu Beef has a high content of oleic acid, which not only boosts flavour but is thought to promote the production of good intestinal bacteria.

HYGIENE

Wagyu is produced under supervision to the highest standards of hygiene.

CONVENIENCE

Hida-gyu steaks provide an instant solution for anyone hosting a dinner who wants to provide a spectacular, premium meal both quickly and easily.



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The Udder Farm Shop in North Dorset is discovering how profitable a new extension can be

"Dorset's Fortnum & Mason," says Brian Down of The Udder Farm Shop, "is how a former editor of Farmers Weekly once described us. We've evolved into a food hall, though we don't call ourselves that. We are just a basic farm shop that has gradually grown into a place with a very nice feel to it."

What makes The Udder Farm Shop special in those parts, Brian says, is that it offers "an alternative to supermarket shopping, with good customer service and easy parking. We have a wonderful space within the building which gives us approaching four and half thousand square foot of retail and we try wherever possible to be a place where people can stop and get all the ingredients they need for their meal. We don't want to be somewhere people just pick up a bit of meat or something off the wall from the deli counter. What we sell every day is common or garden, good quality produce."

The farm shop which features a deli, butchery, fishmongers and a cafe/restaurant opened in 2005, the happy result of Brian's wife Jane looking for a new direction and an investment opportunity after selling a cottage, and Brian's need to find a viable new revenue stream for his dairy and beef farm. "Just after we married," Brian says, "the industry was suffering the highs and lows of milk prices and we were looking for something that was going to give us an income. We looked at cheesemaking, converting buildings and so on, and eventually stumbled on a couple of farm shops and thought that was an interesting option. It grew from there."

Unusually, setting it up went without a hitch: "We had lost our village shop about 18 months before,



BRIAN DOWN:
"UNDER-PROMISE
AND OVER-ACHIEVE"

which obviously helped," Brian says. "The local council and the villagers were very supportive, as were the environmental health people. In our experience, it helps if you go to the authorities and ask their opinion first, and that way, you make them feel involved in the project. Since then, we've built two extensions on the shop. Employing a good agent helps, too. We told people that this was what we wanted to do and asked them what should it look like, and where did they want it?"

The core of the business would be the beef produced on Brian and Jane's own farm. "We wanted sell our own produce," he says. "A great deal of the meat that comes through the shop is our own. Probably 40% of the pork is ours and about 60-65% of the lamb. At times of the year when we haven't got pork or lamb, we source off neighbouring farmers." One of Brian's priorities was to install a coffee shop. This he did and this part of the business "has grown out of all proportion these days." The best-selling meal here is the full breakfast, although homemade burgers and other staples sell well. The restaurant gives people the excuse to come out

for the day. They can sample the food and all the meat comes from the butchery."

More control

If the farm shop itself opened smoothly, the cafe-cum-restaurant presented new problems. "We haemorrhaged a lot of money in catering in the first three or four years," Brian says. "Getting the level of service right was a challenge. We now know when our quiet times of year are. It's very easy to fill the place at lunch time: it's filling the morning and afternoon slots which can be difficult. We switched from self-serve to table service which gave us a lot more control of the throughput of the tables. We now have much better control of who is coming in and also of customer satisfaction." The venture is now a successful one. "We call ourselves a coffee shop but we are more of a restaurant than a coffee shop," Brian says, whose secret, is to "under-promise and over-achieve." The restaurant opens two evenings a month for French and Italian themed evenings, and is also used on Burns Night and St Patrick's Day and hired out for functions. Sunday lunches, when two or three roasts are prepared, are well-attended, Brian says.

The shop got off to "a very good start," Brian says. "It got a little bit rocky in the middle, about the time our two children turned up. We had nine staff on day one and this grew to 35 very quickly. It took a while to get the management structure right and for us to grow into the business. "Now," Brian says, "we have 43 staff, and despite the recession, the last three or four years have been the most profitable we have had."

Recent improvements have seen turnover shoot up. After Brian and Jane opened their recent extension in July 2015, trade was "up 50%." In the first 12 months following the opening of this extension, Brian reckons that turnover "will hit two million. Average basket spend here is £13.80. Before this extension, the catering side had dominated turnover. Now, with an expanded butchery and deli section and a new fishmongers, return from the several areas is about equal. The farm shop now features an area for ready meals. "Cook asked if we would be interested in opening a branded area within. It's a good quality product with a 30% margin and very little



"DESPITE THE RECESSION, THE LAST THREE OR FOUR YEARS HAVE BEEN VERY PROFITABLE"



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wastage. People want that little bit of convenience. We looked at providing ready meals ourselves but it would have meant a whole new kitchen, a new set of staff and dealing with the regulations around it."

The shop is conveniently located. "We are right on the North Dorset, Wiltshire and Somerset border, on the side of the A30, the old London road," Brian says. "We have two towns within three or four miles of us with populations of 10,000 and 7,000 and about 36,000 cars past our door weekly." Well-located signage is used to draw some of this traffic in. "Advertising takeaways from the deli, a cup of tea and a bacon sandwich, works quite well every now and again," Brian says, "as does 'have you thought about tea tonight?' Having somewhere you can pick up bits and pieces is very helpful to a lot of people."

Works well

As for stocking, "we do what works well with our customers," he says. "At the moment we are seeing a lot of interest in our gluten-free section which we are expanding to include dairy free and other free-from goods. Demand is very interesting. It's never going to be huge, but it is bringing in people who find themselves restricted in the



AT THE CORE OF THE BUSINESS IS HOME-PRODUCED BEEF

supermarkets. Our local bakery does some gluten-free bread. It has been worth allotting it its own dedicated area. The amount of intolerances out there is quite surprising."

Stocking local or unusual products is getting harder, Brian says. "In the early days we stocked many local products which are now available three miles away in Waitrose. We just can't compete at the margin, we are cutting it so tight. People are taking the volume option. You grow your business to a certain size and then you have to decide whether keep going with only the small independents or do you grow and take volume? It means we have to

work harder to find more original products." For Brian, it's crucial that products have a story to tell. "The butchery tells the story of the farm shop," he says. "The meat has come off our farm. People can see the sheep and the cattle outside. We don't say that product's not Dorset or that's not English. If it is something that we can tell a story about and it is a good quality product, we will stock it."

"Cheese is one of my passions," Brian says. "Obviously, we are a little spoiled around here. We've got Barbers, Keen's, Dorset Blue Vinny locally and from a little further away we have a really good Cornish Brie and Oxford Blue. Sharpam Rustic is a very good seller and the block Cheddar Barbers 1833 has a fantastic following. If people like blue cheese, I can guarantee that somebody will walk off with a piece of Blacksticks Blue if you put it out on taste. We always have a couple of guest cheeses. Our selection is



primarily English but we have Vacherin in season and do offer some other foreign cheeses too."

When it comes to promoting The Udder Farm Shop, Brian employs someone to look after PR and marketing. "We looked at what we were spending on advertising," Brian says, "and decided it made sense to employ someone one day a week. Sarah does the website, the Twitterfeed and Facebook and steered us towards more targeted marketing. We never now put out an ad without a voucher."

Brian and Jane no longer have

their dairy farm. "Retail took over our lives," Brian says. "But this means we no longer have to get up at silly o'clock in the morning. These days we are just beef with a few pigs and store lambs." Asked what he might do differently if he were to start over again, he says, "We would probably know better what management we were looking for. We need that in place to help us drive the business." Plans for the future include utilising space above the extension for functions, conferences and possibly a classroom for school trips.



THE RESTAURANT IS ALSO USED ON BURNS NIGHT AND ST PATRICK'S DAY

“ The local council and the villagers were very supportive, as were the environmental health people. In our experience, it helps if you go to the authorities and ask their opinion first, as that way, you make them feel involved in the project ”

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MEET THE BUYER

Main Street Trading Co's mix of a deli, bookshop and cafe works, despite a rural location. Owner Bill de la Hey explains how

In the Scottish Borders village of St Boswells stands a deli with a difference. The Main Street Trading Company is part deli, part bookshop and part café. It's also a place where kitchen and homewares and antiques can be bought. Customers can attend cookery demos and author events. Last year, Main Street Trading Co won the Farm Shop and Deli Awards Delicatessen of the Year 2014, suggesting that for some at least, that a hybrid retailing operation can be the way to go.

The store is owned by Bill and Rosamund de la Hey. Neither had a background in retail before they opened the shop in this pleasant, rural location in 2008. Bill had been a photographer, while Rosamund had worked at a notable London publishing house, the perfect grounding for opening a bookshop, which, along with the café, was what the business opened as.

"We split the business in two," Bill says. "Rosamund does the books and I do the food." It was Bill's idea to add the deli, which opened in 2012. "We had this space we weren't using and you have to utilise every inch of the building that you can." Making the deli an important part of the set-up made a lot of sense, he says. "Your own deli becomes your larder. You can then push stuff through the cafe. The café certainly helped the bookshop and vice versa; a bookshop on its own probably wouldn't have survived. You need to drive people in for other reasons. There's a lot of such interaction between the departments, all of which can push the events, for example, and we have lovely cookbooks in both buildings."

Having "an eclectic mix of books, cafe, deli, antiques and what we call 'home', makes Main Street Trading Co a unique shop with a lot to offer," he says. "We're in a small, quiet village in the Scottish Borders and it does take people by surprise. We have been described as a little slice of London in the countryside, while others are struck by the lovely building, which previously was a department store." Events are an important part of life at the Main Street Trading Co. "We have a space in which we can mount



events for authors," Bill says. "There's a wall in the café where we have all the photographs I've taken of authors, and we have also started to do some cookery demos."

Friendly ambience

A customer walking in the door will, Bill says, "see a lovely, airy space with lots of books. It looks good and has been well-branded by a designer in the village." A wood-burning stove adds a friendly ambience. "The bustling cafe can seat 40 or 50 people," he says, "and then there is the courtyard with essential parking. In the rear of the building is the barn which we have converted into a deli." The deli is an important part of the operation and one that Bill has been pleased to head up. "It's a delicatessen



"I longed to have some decent cheese coming in," Bill says. "I grew up just around the corner from a creamery and worked on their farm picking fruit and digging potatoes, Montgomery is my all-time favourite cheese. I have a great passion for West Country cheese." Bill's cheese counter is also stocked with Continental cheeses. "We have teamed up with Neal's Yard," he says, and also with Mons to get French local cheese direct." There are also lots of ingredients. Bill had been "doing a lot of cooking along the Moro and Ottolenghi lines and I thought that ingredients might be put to better use in the café." This accounts for a Middle Eastern flavour to some of the products and ingredients stocked here. Bill is very keen on Spanish produce too.

Adding the deli has been a successful move. Not only has the deli won an important award, but "has been the best performing part of the business in terms of acceleration and percentage year on year." The business as a whole, he says, "is still on an upward climb and the deli is probably on a steeper climb." As a retailer, this makes this rural-located, multi-faceted business an interesting model.

Some idea of its attractiveness as a destination shopping experience can be deduced from the fact that "we get people coming from Edinburgh, which is 40 miles away." A visit to Main Street Trading Co is seen as a leisure activity for some, Bill says, who may visit as families or groups. There is something for everyone, he says. "If books aren't your cup of tea, he says, you can have a very good cup of coffee in the restaurant."



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MEET THE PRODUCER

Proving there is innovation in the drinking chocolate sector is Hans Sloane, whose owner is Brian Watt

Drinking chocolate is a growing sector, says Brian Watt, owner and managing director of Hans Sloane Chocolates Ltd. His young and energetic company produces an innovative range of drinking chocolates whose product range includes high cocoa-content and natural honey drinking chocolates and another Hans Sloane innovation, the Drinking Chocolate Cocoa Pod. The drinking chocolate market, Brian says, "is worth around £156m and is increasing at about 7% year on year." This increase is driven by the premiumisation of the product by brands such as Hans Sloane, he says, and by "the knock-on effect of people drinking better tea and coffee. They don't want the usual run-of-the-mill drinking chocolates; they are looking for a premium product."

This is what Hans Sloane provides exclusively for delis and farm shops and also for Waitrose, which spotted the company soon after its launch in February 2014. Hans Sloane's is a premium drinking chocolate made with shiny beads of chocolate rather than the usual powder or shavings, which actually tastes of chocolate, Brian says. "When we created Hans Sloane drinking chocolate, our focus was on taste. A lot of the big confectionery companies make drinking chocolate as an after-thought and over the years they have reduced the cocoa content, as part of reducing costs. But that changes the taste of the product, so when we developed ours it was all about getting the right taste. Ours has a rich, chocolate taste. The most common comment we get from people we sample with is that it actually tastes of chocolate. It's almost as if they have forgotten what drinking chocolate should taste like. Our mission has been to put the chocolate back into drinking chocolate. Along with our Smooth Milk Drinking Chocolate and our best-selling Rich Dark Drinking Chocolate, we do a Madagascan with 67% cocoa and an Ecuador with 70% cocoa. They both have a high cocoa



content, but each has a very different taste; one is fruity and the other is bitter. We also make a natural honey flavour. One of our chocolatiers is also a bee-keeper and we asked, why have people never put honey and chocolate together? It's been well received at consumer shows and really sells well. People are surprised when they try it."

Another innovation from Hans Sloane is the Cocoa Pod. "When we looked at single-serve drinking chocolate," Brian says, "we found it tended to be a block of chocolate with a spoon stuck in it, so we gave the chocolatiers the day off and asked them to come up with a different idea for single serve drinking chocolate. They came up with the idea of a cocoa pod mould. When we showed it to the team, someone suggested that we put the chocolate beads inside the mould so when the packet is shaken, you can hear the chocolate beads inside. To make the drink, you simply pop it in the cup,

pour in the hot milk or the hot water, and it all implodes right in front of your eyes. It's a bit of theatre in drinking chocolate."

Brian and his head of marketing, Jamie Ewan, both had strong

experience in the chocolate world before embarking on this project. "After all my years of working on big products," Brian says, "I wanted to see if I could develop a chocolate brand from scratch. When it came to branding, the name of Hans Sloane seemed a natural choice and one which would bring the company both story and heritage. "Hans Sloane inspires the company," Brian says. "He too was a real innovator. Sir Hans Sloane was a physician to King George I. At the same time as he was treating the king, he was holding free clinics for the poor at his house in Bloomsbury. He was a massive collector, too. It was his donated collections that laid the foundations for the British Museum and the British Library. His connection with chocolate was that he travelled to Jamaica in 1687, where he saw the

locals drinking cocoa and water. He tasted it but found it nauseating and created his own drinking chocolate recipe by adding milk to the cocoa. Hans Sloane brought the first theobroma cocoa sample back from Jamaica and launched a milk chocolate drinking chocolate into London in 1687."

With an innovative bead format, high cocoa content, a natural honey variety and the groundbreaking Cocoa Pod, the high quality, yet affordable, Hans Sloane range seems designed for sale in delis and farm shops – which indeed it was, of course. With its smart packaging the product has strong shelf presence and gifting isn't restricted to the Christmas bauble which Hans Sloane produces for Christmas. The Cocoa Pod makes a great 'thank you' token gift, Brian says.



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TALKING ITALIAN

Italian ingredients are becoming increasingly important stocking items for delis. This is why

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days the fine food buyer will know his coppa from his mortadella and his Barolo from his Chianti. It's no longer enough to offer a sort of half-way house selection of Italian foods – a little pasta here, a Parmigiano Reggiano there and a Parma ham in your charcuterie counter. These foods remain strong, of course, but tastes are broader now and people who enjoy these will also be looking

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for Italian foods beyond what might be called a holy trinity.

Someone who knows the market for Italian foods well and can speak with the experience of a producer of premium olive oil in Italy is David Harrison, co-founder of Peregrine Trading, which has been trading under the Seggiano brand for over 20 years and farming olives in the village of Seggiano in southern Tuscany for considerably longer. David explains that the intense regionality of Italian food hasn't helped its export potential. “When I look at the success of the Seggiano brand,” David says, “I recognise that an Italian could not have been able to create a brand like this because Italians are so regional. There is an expression in Italy called ‘campanalismo’. Campana means bell and campanalismo means attachment to the sound of your bell, or your region. A Sicilian does not go up to Tuscany to look for food. Why would they?” Because of this regionality, David says, “it actually

needed outsiders to pick the best from each region.” David and his team are predominantly producers of “the best-selling premium oil in the independent deli market”, but as well as sourcing the best Italian products they can find from small, artisanal producers across the regions, the company spends a lot of time working on perfecting ingredients and recipes.

Seggiano prides itself on being an intensely ethical brand, where integrity and quality are prized. “With our attitude towards the ethics of food you have to be immaculate all the way through,” David says. This goes not only for food he produces but for that which he sells under the Seggiano brand. The panettone, for example, is baked without emulsifiers. The cake has a shorter shelf life of four months and may not be available until November, but the idea is that the retailer is able to offer a fresher product to customers wary of suspect ingredients. The company

which began as an olive oil producer continues to produce a high quality product. The olives for the New Harvest Extra Virgin Olive Oil which were picked in October will have been on UK shelves only ten days later. “There aren't many oils which work as a new harvest oil,” David says. “The olives are unique, producing a sweet, rather than a bitter oil. When it's really fresh, it is at its most punchy and intense, but it is still comestible and very palatable. Other olives are too intense, especially when they are just off the tree.”

Pasta, tomatoes and sauces

Decades ago, the British appreciation for cooked Italian food didn't extend much beyond pasta sauce and spaghetti and, despite the broadening of the sector, these two items are still “massively important.” So says Simon Bell, CEO of the Lupetta brand. “Along with pizza, they are the things that people understand the best,” he

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says: "Pasta and sauce is a simple, everyday dish which anyone can create easily. You can do your own thing; you don't need to be too particular about it. Anyone can prepare a nice dish with those two ingredients, but as any chef will tell you, like any dish, it's all down to the quality of the ingredients. What you put in it, of course, dictates what you get out of it."

This is why it's important that customers are offered quality pasta. "The Italians take pasta incredibly seriously. You go into an Italian supermarket and you'll see an aisle about four times the size of one in the UK. They are very particular about using certain shapes with a certain type of sauce. Also, they want a pasta which is high enough in protein and of a good enough quality to hold up when it is cooked. It shouldn't turn to mush. It's only when you understand more about pasta that you realise that it's worth paying just a little bit more to get a decent pasta, because it's not expensive in any case. Go for something with a decent protein content, because that means it will hold its shape and texture when you cook it."

Shapes are becoming more important in consumers' pasta choices. "People are getting more of an awareness that there's not just spaghetti and fusilli and a few other basic shapes," Simon says. "There are hundreds of shapes out there. The Italians use particular shapes in particular regions because that's what they historically specialised in and they are very good at tailoring particular shapes to particular sauces, so a chunky pasta will go with a chunky meat sauce, while something more delicate like spaghetti will go

with clams or prawns."

What makes Italian pasta supreme, says Sally Assinder, UK marketing manager for Garofalo, is experience. "The Italians have centuries of knowledge and a passion for pasta making. Of course, good quality durum wheat makes a big difference, but it is the people who have the knowledge and know how to make good pasta." Customers will pay for good pasta."

Sally outlines what retailers should look for in a good pasta. "Firstly, the colour indicates the quality of the durum wheat used to make the pasta. Breakages or cracks, or lack of, indicate the quality of the pasta. The pasta should smell of wheat, and a slightly rough surface indicates a bronze die has been used to form the shape. Extruding through a bronze die allows a little friction and the surface of the pasta becomes slightly rough, as opposed to Teflon dies where there is no friction, producing only a smooth surface to the pasta shape. The rough texture allows the sauce to cling to the pasta, giving a much better eating experience."

Garofalo pasta, Sally says, "is made only from Durum wheat, semolina and water. It is very high quality, high in gluten and protein and produces a product that not only smells of wheat, has the colour of wheat, but stays al dente once cooked. We use bronze dies to form our pasta shapes. All of this results in a beautiful product with no breakages or cracks, which we show off in our transparent packaging, as we have nothing to hide. Ingredients and production methods make a big difference but it is the people who have the knowledge and know how to make good pasta."



Selling well

Totuccio Castiglione, director at Cibosano, which supplies an extensive range of chilled and speciality Italian food products from leading brands in their sector to smaller artisan producers, says that when it comes to Italian foods, British consumers have broadened their tastes considerably in recent years. Pasta and sauces continue to turn over, but "over the last year or so, more rustic products have been in demand," he says. "Products like Finocchiona salami, fresh salsiccia in various flavours, different aged Parma hams, culatello and bresaola, but also the more selective meats that weigh around 5kg once fully cured." In terms of charcuterie, Totuccio says, stockists of Italian foods should "be looking to stock Italian Prosciutto Cotto Arrosto Alle Erbe," he says.

Italian cheese has seen a similar broadening of interest. Parmigiano Reggiano and Gorgonzola have long been standard cheesecounter inclusions, but these days, Totuccio says, deli owners wanting to cater to today's tastes need to be thinking in terms of Taleggio, Asiago d'Alveo, Piave Oro del Tempo, Grana Padano Riserva 20 months, Pecorino di Grotta and Pecorino di Fossa. "These, he says are "made exclusively with Italian milk, and offer a richer taste than their Swiss counterparts."

Non-cow's milk cheeses are gaining a name for themselves in the UK, especially goat's milk cheeses. "Italian sheep's milk cheeses have progressed far better than the goat's milk cheeses", he says. "My guess is that this is due to the significant difference in price with the French, Spanish types."



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In our industry there are a number of foods which can lay claim to impressive histories, but few can tell a story quite as rich as that of Grana Padano. Carlo Canale of Consorzio per la tutela del Formaggio Grana Padano tells its tale

The history of Grana Padano goes back many centuries. We have evidence of the first invention of the cheese by the monks in 1135AD in a small abbey in northern Italy. At the time, Italy was largely occupied by peasants and only a very small minority were wealthy lords and monks; monks had the opportunity to learn things, to study, and so they created many great things, including beer. The recipe for Grana Padano was one of their inventions, and it was a revolution as at the time nothing was known about the microbiology of raw milk. Raw milk was at the time a dangerous weapon as it carried a lot of undesirable bacteria that could kill, but they knew nothing about this, as an understanding of the microbiology of milk came many centuries later with Pasteur. It was perhaps with a bit of luck that they developed a recipe that uses a whey culture to create a delicious cheese which was easy to digest and preserve. No refrigerators were available at the time, of course, so the best way to preserve the milk was to transform it into Grana Padano. The monks named it caseus vetus which means ancient cheese, but the peasants called it Grana due to its grainy texture; Grana Padano simply means grainy cheese from the Pianura Padana valley. Ever since, nothing has really changed and the production is still largely done by hand using traditional techniques. It takes a lot of hard work which is carried out by passionate people.

The milk is sourced from local cows which are fed using locally-foraged produce. The milk is not heat treated, it's created using raw, partially-skimmed milk – by avoiding a strong heat treatment we preserve all the natural characteristics of the milk which give the cheese its unique flavour. The link with the product's territory is key. This is a major part of Grana



Padano's PDO status – if you were to produce a cheese using milk from a different territory you would get a different product. Only animal rennet can be used, so it's not suitable for vegetarians.

It takes 15 litres of milk to create one kilogram of Grana Padano, or 500 litres to produce a wheel. The yields are extremely low, and due to this and the long ageing process the cheese is very expensive to sell and produce. It's not the sort of business you can start anew; all producers are family-run through the generations as it's expensive to start from scratch – they get their money back 18 months after producing the cheese, so there's a huge gap that makes this business difficult to step into.

Today in our 131 creameries the producers are making the cheese in exactly the same way as they did nearly 1,000 years ago, and while production is slow and not particularly efficient, it is our tradition

so we're sticking to it! The wheels are produced by curdling the milk – by combining it with rennet, the curd is broken down and then pressed into plastic then metal moulds which are immersed in brine. The salt is an extremely important ingredient as it removes the water and makes the cheese safe and fit for a long ageing process. At the exit of the salt the cheese is fresh, 25 days old, and the ageing process begins. After nine months, each wheel is individually checked and approved by our Consorzio's neutral experts. They hammer, needle and test the wheel, and if it's up to the standard it gets the iconic Grana Padano fire branding. During the long ageing process the wheels lose moisture and weight, and the proteins begin to break down. The proteins are caseins which are broken into free amino acids, peptides, which make up the typical white dots you see in the crumb. They are proof of a long ageing process.

The Consorzio has done and continues to do a great job when it comes to promoting the three essential vintages of the cheese, which are clearly labelled on the packaging. There's plain Grana Padano which is less than 16 months, then one aged between 16 and 20 months, and the third, Riserva, is

aged for 20 months. It is important to communicate to the consumer the age of the cheese they're buying. Buying aged cheese is expensive, so consumers have the right to know exactly what they're purchasing.

As Grana Padano is a PDO product, it is produced according to a manual which specifies every step of the process – from the feeding of the animals all the way to the final product. It also means that there's perfect traceability all the way back to the raw materials used to make the product. The Consorzio is there to promote and protect the cheese, provide legal service to its members, and to make sure each producer respects the production specifications. It is truly a private association with public goals.



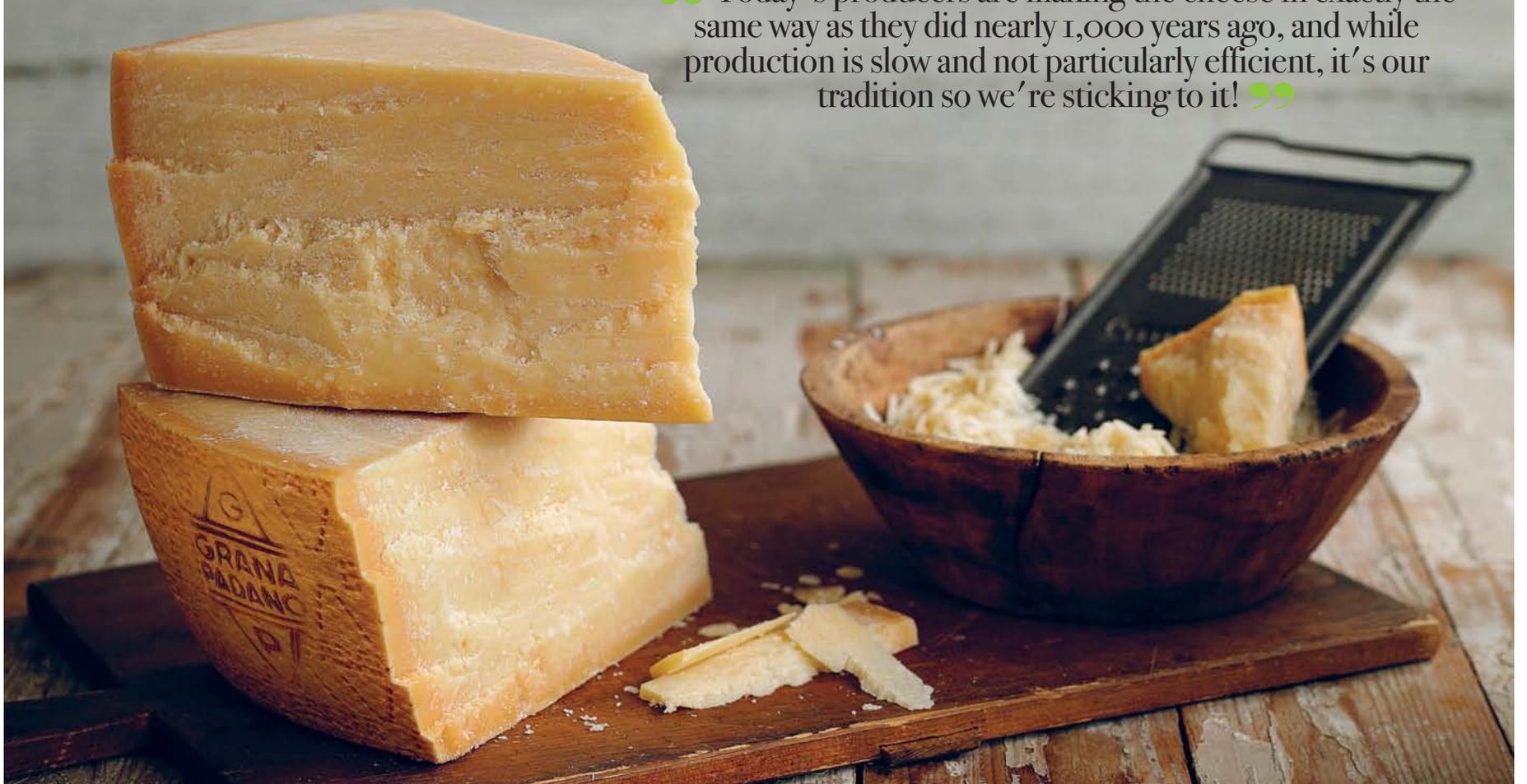
“ Today's producers are making the cheese in exactly the same way as they did nearly 1,000 years ago, and while production is slow and not particularly efficient, it's our tradition so we're sticking to it! ”

SELLING SUGGESTIONS

- Retailers can receive a whole wheel in refrigerated atmosphere, and once it's cut it needs to be refrigerated covered in cling film or in a cheese box – on its own as it will absorb a lot of other smells – and will last for two or three weeks
- Grate it fresh and never place grated cheese in the freezer as it does not like being below zero degrees.
- Grana Padano can be paired with a number of wines including Chianti and Barolo, but essentially it's better with white wine.
- Food-wise, honey and fresh fruit including peaches and pears make great partners for Grana Padano

FACT FILE

- It takes 15 litres of milk to create one kilogram of Grana Padano, or 500 litres to produce a wheel
- There are 131 creameries producing Grana Padano
- The Padano valley is the area of production and is made up of five regions in the north of Italy





GRANAPADANO.IT



MADE

with the same passion for almost 1000 years in the heart of the Po River Valley in Northern Italy using only local milk, and aged from 9 to over 20 months; controlled and guaranteed by the Consortium for the Protection of Grana Padano cheese, it has become the world's best-selling PDO* cheese and one of the most loved products

IN ITALY.



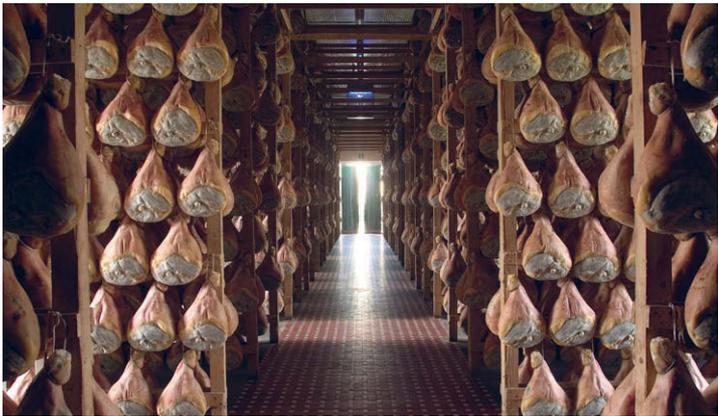
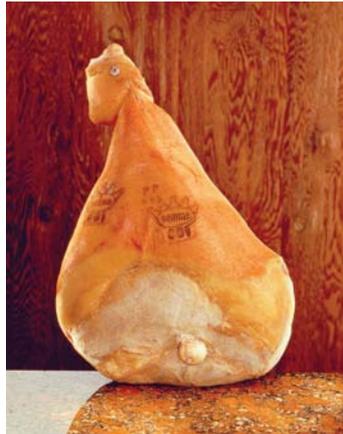
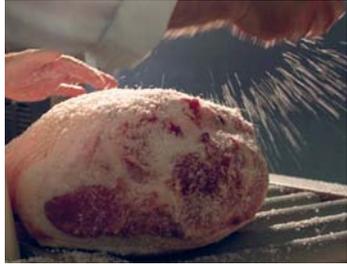
ITALIAN
EXCELLENCE

Consorzio Tutela Grana Padano

* PDO: Protected Designation of Origin

PARMA HAM

Speciality Food lifts the lid on one of Italy's finest exports



Think all prosciutto is born equal? Think again. Set foot in Parma, Italy's 'food valley', and you'll see why its iconic cured ham is appreciated across the world. Here, the dry, fragrant air of the hills and an ancient heritage combine to create the optimum conditions to produce a classic charcuterie which is at once sweet, salty and undeniably satisfying.

Together with Parma's other most famous export, Parmigiano

Reggiano, Prosciutto di Parma has earned the city a legendary status in the food world – no wonder it's currently in the running to be awarded UNESCO's coveted title of City of Gastronomy at the end of this year. Today, Parma is as vibrant as you would hope for from a region which such cultural icons as Verdi and Correggio once called home, and the city's impressive architecture plays host to the Parma Ham Festival every year – a lively

celebration of this internationally-favoured food.

A timeless favourite

The fact that Parma Ham has retained its popularity through the ages demonstrates its makers' passion for ancient traditions, which have been handed down from generation to generation. Indeed, the attention to detail demonstrated throughout its creation – from the selection of the pigs (heavy Italian breeds are used, Large White, Landrace and Duroc, which come exclusively from 10 regions of central northern Italy and feed on barley,

maize and whey from the production of Parmigiano Reggiano) to the salting and maturing of the meat – is largely to thank for its timeless popularity. Not one single additive or preservative is used in the production of Parma Ham; its only ingredients are Italian pork, the unique geographical characteristics of the Parma region and the skill of master salters, making it an ideal product for discerning consumers.

Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma

The Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma is an organisation of Parma

FACT FILE

- The Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma was set up in 1963
- The European Union awarded Prosciutto di Parma PDO status in 1996
- To be branded as Parma Ham, the prosciutto must be produced in the province of Parma lying at least 5km from the south of the via Emilia, bounded to the east by the river Enza and to the west by the Stirrone torrent, and up to an altitude of 900m
- The distinct flavour of Prosciutto di Parma is down to the fragrant air of the region; the scent of the local chestnut woods combine with the aroma of the nearby pine forests and salty air of the Versilia sea winds
- It has been claimed that the great Hannibal, after his victorious battle on the Trebbia in 217BC, came to Parma and was fed salted pigs legs which had been brought from secret hiding places by local country dwellers

Ham producers who safeguard the time-honoured production processes in order to guarantee a product of indisputably high quality. It's this conscientiousness which ensures that the prosciutto reaches the consumer in the best condition possible. The Consortium plays a huge part in the production of Parma Ham, from the selection of the breed of hog used and its breeding techniques, to the origin of the raw materials, geographical production boundaries and final characteristics of the end product – only once it has successfully passed this rigorous checklist will it be marked with the iconic fire brand.

“ The guaranteed quality, provenance and tradition of Parma Ham makes it stand out amongst other prosciuttos. It is a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) product, meaning that it can only be produced and cured in the traditional production area near Parma. The geographical characteristics of the Parma region contribute to the sweetness of Parma Ham and make it possible to produce the highest quality hams. 100% natural and made with just pork, salt, air and time, the unique taste of Parma Ham is dependent on this traditional production process passed down from Roman times, carefully controlled by the Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma! ”

CHIARA IASIUOLO, CONSORZIO DEL PROSCIUTTO DI PARMA

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PREMIUM ONE-POTS

It's time to push ready meals, soups and one-pot meals

It's worth reckoning how many of your customers come to you for the ingredients for special meals and how many are looking for a quick snack, or food to go. This is where ready meals comes into their own. Soups and one-pot meals, both of which are quick to prepare, will also appeal when hunger pangs strike.

The originator of the one-pot format is Easy Bean, says managing director Christina Baskerville, who has been offering her range of one pot meals, each one based on the cuisine of a different country, since the products were launched at the Speciality & Fine Food Fair of 2007. "My mission has been to create something exceptionally tasty and convenient," she says. The pots are "predominantly vegetable-based, although there is one which uses free-range chicken. Easy Bean uses lots of different pulses, beans, peas and lentils being essential ingredients." The range is sold under the company's tag line 'lunch on the go or supper in a mo.'

High fibre

Products such as Moroccan Tagine have sold consistently ever since, she says, and "the recipe hasn't changed. Easy Bean meals tick a great many boxes as far as health credentials go: they are gluten and dairy-free, low-fat, low salt and don't use refined sugar. The meals are also high fibre. This is something that has long been overlooked and which I have always been banging the drum about. The vast majority of the UK population don't consume enough fibre in their diets. It's only now that some nutritionists are saying that it's more important than reducing sugar."

The pots are sold by a growing number of independent retailers. "We have a loyal following of independent retailers," Christina says, "whose customers are being offered convenience and healthy eating in one attractive package. "As our tagline suggests," Christina says, "they are extremely versatile in terms of meal occasion."

field fare is a company producing classic pies (British Steak & Kidney,

Chicken & Mushroom and the very popular Classic Ham Hock & Pea) alongside more adventurous varieties such as its best-selling Sweet Butternut Squash with Goats Cheese. These, says Karen Deans, managing director of field fare, "all boast generous fillings and are encased in a shortcrust pastry with a puff pastry lid. They serve one and cook from frozen in 35-40 minutes."

As a product, pies in general have been much improved over the years, Karen says. "Consumers are wanting premium quality ingredients, and want to know where their food is from, and that the pies include nothing artificial." field fare's own pies, she says, "are made with British meat and all are produced in the UK by a family-owned company. The pies are sold in field fare boxes with fabulous photography."

Pieminster, whose business is built on the production of a range of quality, ethically-made pies, has seen the potential in one pot meals and recently launched a range of one-pot pies which are topped with a herby or Spanish sliced potato rather than pastry. Varieties available are a Beef Steak & Craft Ale, Beef Steak & Chorizo and a free-range Chicken, White Wine and Leeks.

Soups earn their shelf space throughout the cold days of winter and beyond. The idea behind the Yorkshire Provender range of soups is simple, says co-founder Belinda Williams, "take the best of fresh seasonal British produce and marry ingredients together in a creative way to produce a consistently superior, imaginative and delicious soup. Yorkshire Provender is currently driving impulse purchases through its newly-launched single-portion pots, which are ideal for people looking for an easily-prepared warm meal at lunchtime. Its size means it is fast and easy to heat and to eat in one go. The packs' unique thermal insulated sleeve makes microwave heating safe as well as fast.

"The new flavours in this range – Mushroom Soup with Wholegrain Black Rice and Carrot & Butternut Soup with Fresh Herbs – provide a delicious alternative flavour profile for those looking for something a bit different in a soup. The new autumn range is unique and complements the already popular flavours in the range and, of course, the upcoming festive soup – Turkey – is the perfect seasonal addition."



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PIEMINSTER MATADOR PIE POT

Beef steak and chorizo are topped with spiced potato in this example of Pieminster's new one pot range. pieminster.co.uk



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HOT SELLERS

Although popular year-round, now is the time that hot drinks really come into their own

The world of hot drinks may hold a place in the hearts of traditionally-minded shoppers, but recently a new breed of hot beverage drinker has emerged – even more concerned with matters of quality and provenance than ever before. Teas, coffees and hot chocolates are all popular, and all currently experiencing a reboot in the speciality food sector.

Consumers' ever-growing interest in the provenance and ethical sourcing of coffee has been a talking point for years and shows no sign of waning, but what we're experiencing now is the dawning of a new generation of consumer – cold brew coffee is an example of a product created to cater for this new demand. In line with this you can see trendy new coffee shops serving flat

whites made from freshly-ground, modern-branded, ethically sourced coffee beans. While fans of coffee span all age groups and tastes, ignore the potentials brought by this new shopper at your peril.

Similarly, tea can boast an army of dedicated fans of all ages, and while some prefer to stick to the tried and tested classics such as English Breakfast and Earl Grey, a growing number delight in branching out to discover lesser-known variants. Exciting blends are rife these days, boosting the already-strong demand for green teas and herbal infusions from health conscious consumers, and are well worth a place on your shelf.

Hot chocolate is seeing the same surge of interest in provenance that the chocolate market in general is

experiencing, so the clearer the story of the chocolate on the packaging the better. Also popular are items demonstrating the fun side of hot chocolate, which make them just as suitable for quirky adults as for discerning children.

We've spoken to a high profile retailer and a range of producers to learn more about what's on the horizon for the speciality hot drinks market.

“Make a show of your seasonal offerings”

Louise Cheadle – co-founder & tea taster at Teapigs talks us through the value of selling tea seasonally

As we all know, seasonal lines are key for keeping sales high all year long, but did you know that this could (and should) extend to your tea

offering too? There is so much more to teapigs' real, whole leaf tea temples than 'just a cuppa' and getting this over to your customers is key!

Fruity, floral teas like Super Fruit, Darjeeling Earl Grey and Rhubarb & Ginger are ideal for summer and can be made over ice, for a refreshing, all-natural, sugar-free iced tea.

In the autumn and winter months, when all you need is a comforting, warming brew, tea lattes are the way to go. You can use any blend you like but we think spiced winter red, chai and chilli chai work best.

As the new year rolls in, matcha is a super hero amongst teas – it's winner of a best slimming and fitness award and will give you buckets of sprightliness to get over the post-Christmas bloat. 100% green tea leaves from Japan – essentially a super power green tea containing natural green tea flavonoids (catechins). Drinking matcha can be like drinking 10 cups of regular green tea for its nutrient value.

Making a show of your seasonal offerings will really help to keep your tea sales soaring and teapigs, winner of best brand in tea four years running, is a great choice to ensure you are offering the very best, real whole leaf tea.

methods produce a green tea with a deliciously smooth and slightly fruity taste that folks – both purists and new drinkers – will simply love.

After preparation, the Tg whole leaf tea is placed into pyramid bags and packed into resealable stand-up pouches that are also non-transparent because green tea must be kept away from light to preserve its goodness. Tg comes in pure green tea and in two blends using special fruit and botanicals, some familiar and some excitingly new to us, including the Jujube super fruit.

A winner of two Great Taste Awards, Tg is perfectly positioned to take advantage of the growth in green tea and would be a welcomed addition to retailer shelves this autumn.



With an ever increasing interest and indeed demand for new and innovative flavours of black, green, herbal, rooibos and white varieties, Sophie Johnson of The London Tea Company shares its strongest sellers.

As winter continues to creep upon us, The London Tea Company have a variety of carefully selected blends to help with those long, frosty nights. Those with a sweet tooth will love the wonderfully warming Chilli Chocolate Rooibos Tea which provides a delicious and healthier alternative to the classic hot chocolate, Peach & Rhubarb blend or the White Tea Pear Tatin and, for those after more of a spicy offering, the Zingy Lemon & Ginger tea is just the ticket!

For the traditionalists out there, the simplicity of blends such as Pure Peppermint and the traditional Green Tea are proving equally popular as after-meal drinks because of their refreshing taste and perceived digestive abilities. These classics from The London Tea Company continue to be best sellers: Pure Camomile, Earl Grey, and of course the classic London Breakfast remain the nation's favourites.



Think you know green tea? Think again. Sophia Nadur, co-founder of Tg Green Tea explains...

Although a nation of black tea drinkers, we're increasingly reaching for green tea for its health benefits, rich cultural history and diverse flavour profile. Tg is a new British tea brand that offers a modern take on an ancient tradition and, more importantly, is helping to make green tea easier for our palates, so encouraging more folks to enjoy premium brews.

Tg went back to the "source" of the tea drinking tradition and to a small organic plantation high up in the mountains of China where, since ancient times, special preparation

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We are a member of **Ethical Tea Partnership**

Taylor's of Harrogate

With a passion for quality and its Yorkshire heritage, it's no wonder Taylor's of Harrogate has become a household name. Here, Sam Ward tells its story

What's the story?

Based in Yorkshire, the founder Charles Edward Taylor was a Quaker with two sons, Llewellyn and Charles. Both young men were sent to Ashby's in London to learn the art of loose tea buying. Charles, the younger son, opened 'kiosk' tea and coffee shops with tasting rooms in Yorkshire's booming, highly fashionable Victorian spa towns of Harrogate and Ilkley.

Supremely popular, Charles expanded his tea and coffee empire, creating the genteel Café Imperial cafes in Ilkley and Harrogate, then teahouses in Harrogate's Valley Gardens, Winter Gardens, Royal Spa Concert Rooms and also Wakefield, Keighley and St Anne's-on-Sea.

Legend has it that in 1962 the café manager at local tearoom 'Bettys' overheard local businessmen discussing over tea how the Taylor family was considering putting its business up for sale. She saw the opportunity and excitedly informed Bettys' owner Victor Wild. He didn't want to

lose tea and coffee business CE Taylor & Co to a competitor, so he made an immediate offer, which was accepted. The rest is history.

Today, all those fine traditions – buying premium quality teas from around the world and expertly blending them to create the very best tea – are upheld at Taylor's of Harrogate. Not only that, but they're proud to say that one of their creations, the Yorkshire Tea blend, has grown to become one of the most popular teas in Britain, and can now be found in stores all over the world.



What's in the range?

Taylor's of Harrogate Origins ground coffee includes four products, Colombia, Indonesia, Rwanda and Guatemala. Each is sourced from one place and one place only; a purity of origin that highlights the intense and unique flavours of the destinations they come from.

If you love the ritual and aroma of grinding coffee beans at home, Taylor's of Harrogate has

the ideal range, Indonesia Beans, Colombia Beans, Espresso Beans, Rich Italian Beans, Lazy Sunday Beans are gorgeously slow-roasted and consist of both single origin and blends.

Not forgetting the all-important reduced caffeine range, Taylor's of Harrogate has created lower caffeine blends to still have the rich and distinctive flavours of one of the full-caff alternatives. Taylor's achieves this through using a natural water process to gently decaffeinate the beans without losing their character.

The Limited edition Christmas coffee is a combination of Latin



American and East African beans, which have been expertly roasted at a medium to dark level to release smooth chocolate and crisp citrus notes.

The brand's Coffee Capsules launched in June 2015 and are available in three varieties from three different origins – Kenya, Brazil and Colombia. Such purity of origin gives birth to intense and unique flavours, with all products sourced from farmers who really understand their coffee, ensuring an unrivalled quality. The capsules are made from 100% Arabica coffee and are 100% Rainforest Alliance Certified.

What's next?

Taylor's of Harrogate's new Rose Lemonade Fruit and Herbal Infusion has been carefully crafted by Taylor's of Harrogate in partnership with Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, combining expert knowledge of flora and fauna with over 120 years of experience in the art of tea making. Using ingredients carefully sourced by Taylor's and certified by botanic experts at the

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Taylor's of Harrogate's pairing of citrus and floral flavours makes for a flavoursome and refreshing cup of tea – delicious served hot or left to cool.



TALKING STOCK

With Adam Barber, Food Hall buyer at Fenwick Newcastle

TEA

Our reliance on major tea brands is relatively limited; our customers tend to be looking for something a little more distinctive. Taylor's of Harrogate is the entry-level tea brand that we sell which covers bagged and loose tea. The green tea range from Taylor's proves particularly popular, however our biggest selling tea brand is Ringtons. The product and brand has real heritage in the North East and we are proud of the relationship we have built up with the supplier and the customers that come in week in week out to purchase it from Fenwick. Recent additions to the range include Brew Tea Company, Bloom, Choi Time and Kusmi which are all delivering growth in our loose tea category.

COFFEE

Our coffee category, although a lot smaller, has a loyal following and is predominantly regionally-focused. Pumpreys, Taylor's of Harrogate and Lola's are all loyal brands of our customers, but the majority of our coffee sales come from local independent coffee roaster Ouseburn Coffee Company. OCC is a brand which we can rely on delivering outstanding quality as well as having an ethical sourcing policy. Launched a year ago, we have been overwhelmed by the demand for premium coffee from OCC and our customers love the fact that the coffee is roasted in small batch lots just a few miles away in the Ouseburn Valley. The partnership between our two companies continues as OCC will be opening a coffee bar concept in the refurbished Fenwick Food Hall from October. OCC will offer hot drinks to go as well as a dedicated grinding service, all backed up with the best coffee advice in town! We are looking forward to

having them serve their amazing coffee every day for us.

DRINKING CHOCOLATE

Although still a small and seasonal segment, this category is experiencing huge growth for us right now. Our refreshed hot chocolate range will launch mid-October and will house premium chocolate brands such as Charbonnel et Walker, Prestat, La Molina and Artisan du Chocolat. Our top-selling hot chocolate is Hasslachters, a Colombian 100% Cacao gourmet drinking chocolate. The iconic and tactile design to the product catches the customer's eye and drives trial of product.

TRENDS

Loose tea – we've noticed a continuing trend of tea drinkers switching from bagged tea to loose tea. Loose tea now takes up two thirds of our selling space for tea. Kusmi tea, a recent addition to our range, is a brand we have high hopes for. It's one of the most premium brands we sell in the Food Hall, which we launched in response to our customers demanding a new level of quality in loose tea. It's up to us as the retailer to educate and inform all of our customers on this concept.

Health – tea is a major destination for those aspiring to be healthy, and our newly-launched brand, Bloom, is a sign that consumers are swaying towards health remedies in tea; in this case through matcha.

Cold brew coffee is performing extremely well despite only launching into our Food Hall earlier this year. At one point cold brew coffee was our number one-selling chilled drink. We are also trialling a cold brew and tonic which is dividing opinion, and are planning to launch a cold brew coffee with almond milk.



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AT CHRISTMAS, PARTRIDGE'S HAS A PROMINENT DISPLAY OF HIGH QUALITY IMPULSE GIFTS

PRESENT PERFECT

Still looking for ideal festive stock? John Bensalhia serves up some last minute ideas from a selection of farm shops and delicatessen looking to make it a wonderful Christmas time

Christmas: a time of tradition. Every Christmas serves up parties, Slade and gift-wrapped socks. With food, there's that cosy annual menu of turkey, pudding and brandy: guaranteed to result in many full bellies on Christmas afternoon. But Christmas is also a time of innovation: and farm shops and delicatessen are going that extra mile to provide a wide range of festive food treats. Savoury or sweet, the sheer scope of festive goodies ensures something for everyone. "Throughout the festive period, families stock up on more indulgent products for the party season," says Caroline Jones, buyer

at Ludlow Food Centre. "Sales for everything spike dramatically at this time of year."

Charcuterie and pâtés are hugely popular. "Our home-made pâtés and terrines are much loved by customers," says Caroline Jones. "We've also added to our own range of cured and cold meats which are perfect for festive entertaining."

Charcuterie and smoked salmon feature among Melrose and Morgan's festive offerings. "We work with Cobble Lane Cured who produce a truly British style of charcuterie using the highest welfare British meat," says Louisa Chapman-Morgan. "Upton Smokery

provide whole sides of salmon: which we find customers are increasingly buying as gifts. What better way to make an entrance at your in-laws than with a whole side of salmon!" Trevilly Farm Shop rears its own free-range bronze turkeys and free-range geese, and produces

multi-bird roasts. Partner, Errol Warman, says that these are extremely popular. Also well-received are pâtés and charcuterie products including pancetta and prosciutto. "These are popular at Christmas because they add a bit of luxury and also go well with other snacks like cheese and biscuits."

"Pâté is often a key element to someone's festive food shop," explains Fiona Cunningham, owner of Maynard's Farm. "It is a delicacy, and so is also commonly bought as a luxury present for food lovers." Maynard's Farm puts a unique twist on the traditional ham: "Being a traditional Christmas food, the sales of our hams increase around the festive period. It is our more unusually-flavoured hams that sell well as gifts: traditional but with a twist, our ham cured in black treacle makes a perfect present."

Providing the package

Part of the Christmas fun is presenting gifts in a luxurious package. Boxed or wrapped, a packaged gift is guaranteed to delight. With that in mind, specially packaged goods are must-buys. "Packaging plays an important role when it comes to buying Christmas presents," says Emma Macdonald, founder of The Bay Tree. "Our Gold Gift Packs are popular because of their exclusively Christmassy design and contents. The savoury option pairs The Bay Tree's Christmas Pickle (a fruity mix of cranberries, apples and currants) with the Boxing Day Chutney (a delicious blend of apricots, oranges and coriander)."

One inventive take on the package is Picnic Cornwall's Pasties By Post. Comprising 10 individually boxed, ready-made baked Cornish Classic

Pasties with horseradish mustard dipping sauce, the concept is a massive hit. "Pasties By Post are always really popular," says Jo Foreman of Picnic Cornwall. "People always want to take a little bit of Cornwall home with them."

It's now possible to have a bagged Christmas, courtesy of Melrose and Morgan. "One of our more unusual online gifts is Christmas in a Bag," says Louisa Chapman-Morgan. "Solving your Christmas lunch in one package, the bag includes a Judy Goodman Bronze free-range turkey and all the raw ingredients you need to make the perfect Christmas lunch for either six at £100 or twelve at £165 (these prices are correct at time of print)."

The Bay Tree offers a quirky take on the gift pack. "Our 'do-it-yourself' style gift packs serve very well as quirky presents," says founder Emma Macdonald. "The Curry Nights pack has plenty of masculine appeal! Using the authentic selection of curry spice blends and condiments, it's quick and easy to whip up a sensational Indian meal. "Our Traditional Mulled Wine Bundles are also a fun gift. The gorgeous festive tin contains five



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"Instead, each hamper is tailored to each customer's specific requirements. They will pick what they want and we will then package the products in a stylish hamper." "At Maynard's Farm, we're finding more people wanting to create their own hampers," says Fiona Cunningham. "Customers are able to select their favourite products from the farm shop and we turn them into a fabulous gift hamper, with a lovely personal touch!" "Hampers remain a firm favourite with our customers," comment Sheppy's. "They are our biggest sellers at Christmas time. We allow people to choose their own contents from our range of Sheppy's ciders, gifts, locally-made produce, such as cakes, sweet and savoury local delicacies, and they are made-up on-site."

Louisa Chapman-Morgan of Melrose and Morgan explains that hampers provide a one-stop shop of the perfect edited Christmas range that customers can buy into and send nationwide with a click of a button. "People want a traditional offer with good wines and Champagne, indulgent puddings, cakes, mince pies and chocolates, as well as some unusual surprises, like our Liberty Fields Apple Aperitif and handmade edible tree decorations."

The sweet escape

For those with a sweet tooth, a unique product is The Bay Tree's Sweet Preserves Christmas House. Emma Macdonald explains that it provides an opportunity to sample three varieties of The Bay Tree's

preserves. The three windows of the snow-dusted house each contain a sweet preserve: Seville orange marmalade, strawberry jam and raspberry jam. "At this time of year, consumers are looking for gifts they would normally associate with a special treat, so something sweet always ticks the box," comments Flower & White. "Chocolate, sweets and biscuits are a perennial favourite during the festive season: they are in abundance and most people can't resist. However, alternatives are starting to break through, as consumers look for gifts with a point of difference, yet just as decadent! This is

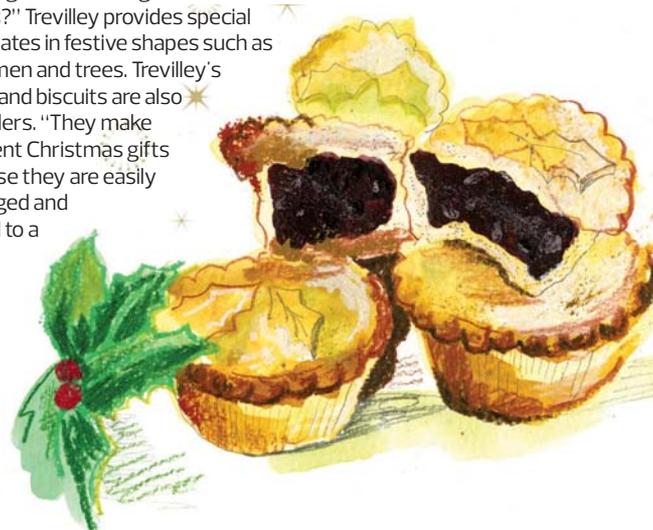
where Merangz fits so perfectly. We have created a Christmas gift box of chocolate Merangz bites, filled with five different flavours of mini meringues. They are the perfect present for a foodie, or a thank you gift to the host of a festive get together."

Nothing satisfies a sweet tooth in the festive season like chocolate. Fiona Cunningham of Maynard's says that chocolate products dominate at Christmas. "Our chocolate baubles and chocolate truffles fly off the shelves. It's no secret why chocolate does so well: it's a fail-safe gift. Who doesn't love to indulge a little during the winter weeks?" Trevilly provides special chocolates in festive shapes such as snowmen and trees. Trevilly's fudge and biscuits are also big sellers. "They make excellent Christmas gifts because they are easily packaged and appeal to a

wide market," says Errol Warman. Another great sweet to pop under the tree is Mighty Fine's Honeycomb Dips. These five or six chocolate dipped honeycomb shards are available in eight flavours including Milk Chocolate, Summer Orange and Strawberries & Cream. Also available are Mighty Fine's Honeycomb Boxes which come pre-packed in gold patterned outers.

Innovation insights

The Christmas season is a brilliant time for farm shops and delicatessen to produce unique, quirky gifts. From Picnic Cornwall's G&T Cornish Vineyard Candle to Sheppy's Hangover Cure Crackers, there's an innovative gift waiting to be bought. Louisa Chapman-Morgan of Melrose and Morgan says that a definite trend is that of 'make and do' type presents. "We've created some simple Kilner jars filled with mince meat and a pastry cutter and recipe, so people can make their own mince pies. We also work with the London Honey Company to create beautiful packs of their honey and beeswax candles, as well as bee-keeping courses." As Flower And White concludes, foodie gifts are perfect. "There are so many quirky flavours and offerings available, particularly at this time of year, and they remain a popular choice for customers hunting for gifts."



bundles, perfect for mulling your very own festive wine or cider. This is an old family recipe that can easily be adapted. Great to take to a party to get people warmed up!"

Hamper progress

Another top festive package is the hamper. "People love hampers!" says Tom Chatfield, Quicke's sales and marketing manager. "In Quicke's farm shop we offer an extensive selection. This gives us the opportunity to showcase the local produce that we so proudly champion." Jo Foreman of Picnic Cornwall says that Christmas is the peak season for online hamper offerings. "All our products are artisan-made and sourced within the county of Cornwall. As people are more and more interested in food

provenance and quality, our hampers increase in popularity." Picnic Cornwall's charcuterie board hamper, for example, includes a selection of Deli Farm charcuterie including Oak Smoked Paprika Salami and West Country Beef Sirloin Bresaola, plus Popti Artisan Savoury Thins (seaweed and Parmesan flavour), and local pâté, olives and handmade chutney. "2014 was our most successful hamper year yet," says Caroline Jones of Ludlow Food Centre. A notable trend in this field is the DIY hamper. "Our DIY hamper Kits have been a big hit: we provide the packaging that you fill with whatever takes your fancy to make a truly unique and personal gift."

This notion is also a big success at Trevilly. "We don't tend to sell set hampers," explains Errol Warman.

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STORECUPBOARDS MUST-STOCKS

No larder is complete without good quality salt and pepper, but don't underestimate the selling power of more unusual rubs and spices

It may seem that today's popular storecupboard fillers are the same as they've ever been, and indeed an artisan pepper, mustard and spice combo is hard to beat, but to stick to the tried and tasted classics would be to ignore the smorgasbord of culinary adventures that are out there to enjoy.

The consumer palate is changing and becoming ever-more experimental; whether inspired by the food they ate on trips abroad or an exotic-looking dish they saw being created on a celebrity chef's TV show, shoppers are looking to expand their horizons and test their palates with flavour combinations previously unavailable to them. Whether it be a super-hot chilli which has just hit our shores or a taste of the gastronomic delights favoured on the other side of the world that your customer is after, chances are you'll be able to find something within the fine food sector to satisfy their appetite.

The key word is adventure; peppers and salts are becoming increasingly gourmet, with provenance and unique flavours a top priority for discerning foodies, and spice blends are taking inspiration from further afield to create rubs, marinades and seasonings that can offer consumers a taste of other lands within mere minutes.

Our advice? Keep a foundation stock of popular classics – plain sea salt flakes, black pepper and a handful of traditional spices – to keep all customers happy, but step out of your comfort zone to become a destination for intrepid shoppers in your town and beyond.

After some tips from the top? Scott Winston, grocery buyer at Selfridges' London flagship store shares his stocking secrets



"Salt is a fantastic seller for us, with both our truffle salts (from Truffle Hunter and San Pietro) topping the category sales. Salt House have also brought to market some fantastic products including Black Vava salt and Aguni No Shio. They have some great gifting collections so customers can experiment with some of their different products.

"A recent addition to our collection is a range from Spice Ways, who put together the most amazing seasonings to match pretty much any cuisine or occasion. Finally Las Hermanas Pimenton Sampling kit offers three different takes on Paprika, from sweet to bitter sweet and hot, which really show off this diverse spice.

"I think 'Pick and Mix' style offerings and bespoke blending will be the next step for this category. Consumers are becoming more sophisticated in the kitchen, so I think we'll start to see more personalised blends to reflect that desire to experiment."



Matt Webster,
director of
**Seasoned
Pioneers** shares
his storecupboard
stocking advice

As a retailer, selecting which products to stock to satisfy customer demand can be a challenge. As a result, Seasoned Pioneers have compiled suggested

product ranges for new customers.

Some retailers choose to stock a range of everyday herbs, spices, spice blends and seasonings. Such a selection may incorporate commonly used spices such as cinnamon, ginger, cloves, cumin, coriander, cardamom, nutmeg, paprika and turmeric. These are complemented by a selection of herbs to include bay, wild oregano, basil, parsley, sage, mint and rosemary. The recommended spice blends in this range are chosen as they act as the foundation of numerous dishes, therefore deserving a place in every kitchen storecupboard. Examples of these are chilli powder, Indian garam masala, Chinese five spice, mixed herbs, fajita seasoning, mixed pudding spice and wild herb cooking sea salt. Add to these crushed red chillies, black peppercorns and roasted garlic powder to complete a spice collection that is useful in every kitchen.

However, a product range from Seasoned Pioneers can be considerably more adventurous, encapsulating international ingredients that enable customers to prepare authentic worldwide cuisine. Unusual spices, chillies, herbs, peppercorns, salts, spice blends and specialist ingredients are available from every imaginable culinary region. Many retailers opt to stock these less widely available products, particularly the spice blends as they are handmade in small batches to authentic recipes and contain only pure spices with no unnecessary ingredients, resulting in the ultimate flavour.

Middle Eastern dishes are increasingly enjoyed, and spices such as Sumac and Barberry are currently very popular lines, as are Shawarma, Baharat, Advieh and Zahtar spice

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blends. The emergence of Peruvian cuisine in the UK has prompted Seasoned Pioneers to source two specialist and versatile Peruvian chillies, Aji Amarillo and Aji Panca.

Cajun and Creole cookery is currently extremely popular, so Seasoned Pioneers even supplies the elusive ground Sassafras leaves, known as File powder, which is essential in a true Cajun Jambalaya.



Charli Elphinstone, founder of Chazwinkle's, tells the story of the brand's time-honoured philosophy

Adding leftover chutney jars into casseroles, stocks, sauces and gravies was a common trick back in the day to instantly add a depth of flavour. Chazwinkle's is simply bringing this tradition back and taking it a step further by applying it to more everyday dishes and party nibbles. The products have been created so they can just be emptied over meats, fish, pasta and pulses to create meals in the same way as you would use a sauce. Add to meat, fish, vegetables, pasta, grains and pulses to create meals like a sauce, tarting up some leftovers or spooning onto crispbreads with pâtés or pairing with charcuterie and cheeses.

Instead of spending precious evenings searching through shelves in the supermarket for local and seasonal produce that may be hard to come across,

Chazwinkle's can sit in your cupboard and offer an easy solution to finding that flavour and easy meal solution. If the fresh version is out of season or out of reach, we have created a range of Chazwinkle's to capture the flavour of our homegrown fruit and vegetables, to make them available to use all year round, and at your convenience. The current seasonal batch has until October 2016 and once opened, they need refrigerating and will last a month. But they shouldn't sit around.



HOW TO SELL SPICE BLENDS

Tasneem Backhouse, sales and marketing director at EHL

Ingredients

The British public has ever-changing tastes and preferences, but by stocking a selection of herbs, spices and blends in organic and conventional formats, retailers can advise shoppers on which storecupboard essentials they should purchase.

Store owners would be wise to offer a selection of familiar herbs, spices and blends that shoppers know and love, as well as more unusual and exotic mixes to keep customers returning to your store, leading to incremental sales

Nowadays consumers of all ages enjoy world foods, and offering milder, as well as extra hot, spices and blends means stores can cater for all taste preferences. Stock up on organic ingredients too, as this is an area of growth and can boost your bottom line.

Versatile spice blends such as these give shoppers meal ideas as they can be rubbed onto meat or fish, sprinkled onto vegetables or added to dishes such as hot and spicy chillies and curries, jambalayas, grilled or baked

dishes, kebabs, as well as fries and potato dishes.

Demand for organic ingredients has also started to increase again over the last year. EHL has launched five new organic spice blends inspired by flavours from the Americas, the Caribbean, the Mediterranean and Britain, the first in a series of in-demand, organic additions to EHL's popular range of seasonings. The new blends include BBQ, Mediterranean style, Pepper, Lemon & Herb, Caribbean style, and spicy Mexican.

As well as the new organic blends, EHL stocks around 200 organic ingredients, including herbs and spices, beans, lentils and peas, herbs, nuts and dried fruits, seeds and flakes, grains and rice, oils, vinegars, salts, sugars and syrups, as well as other ingredients such as flour, honey and fruit concentrates.

It also offers bespoke organic herb and spice blends which can be sold as ready-made mixes or marinades. EHL's blends are available direct to retailers and via wholesalers, distributors and cash and carries across the UK. Its products are available in various quantities, dependent on requirements.



“ Store owners would be wise to offer a selection of familiar herbs, spices and blends that shoppers know and love, as well as more unusual and exotic mixes to keep customers returning to your store, leading to incremental sales ”



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Owners: Toby and Lesley Chapman Opened: June, 2008



HOW'S BUSINESS?

We had a great summer and are still very busy going into autumn. Sales have increased year on year since we opened, in 2008.

DESCRIBE YOUR DELI

It's fair to say we are a deli/café. Freshly made food for breakfast, lunch and tea and delicious products from around the world, as well as from down the road. We are well known for our daily quiche and variety of salads, as well as the infamous blondies. We have great coffee too.

WHAT MAKES THE DELI ON THE QUAY SPECIAL?

The large number of regular customers that visit us, who now all know each other. The deli has become an important part of many of our customers' lives and equally, we have become an important part of the community.

HOW IMPORTANT IS YOUR LOCATION?

Although we are in a great location overlooking Poole Harbour, quite a few other eateries taking advantage of the location, too. It's vital to have really good food, good staff and a friendly atmosphere.

WHO ARE YOUR CUSTOMERS?

We have a lot of regular customers and they are the backbone of our business, but we also appeal to a variety of people, from tourists to gazzillionaire owners of the super yachts in the marina opposite.

HOW DO YOU CATER FOR THEIR TASTES?

With unpretentious, straightforward

food that tastes great. We want Mrs Miggins off the coach to feel just as inclined to eat and enjoy our food as the dotcom millionaire next to her, and I think we achieve that balance through our love for all things tasty.

HOW DID YOU BECOME DELI OWNERS?

Having worked in the Middle East for seven years we came back to the UK with an opportunity to reinvent ourselves. We worked in a fine food and wine shop on the east coast of America for a year, learning an enormous amount in a short period of time. We returned and scanned the country for a suitable venue and struck gold on Poole Quay.

WHAT CHEESES DO YOU SELL?

We have some lovely local cheeses like Blue Vinny, Old Winchester and Godminster; classics like Montgomery Cheddar and Comté as well as a few of my own personal favourites like Ossau Iraty, Morbier and Brillat Savarin.

THREE TOP-SELLING CHEESES?

Montgomery Cheddar, Dorset Blue Vinny, Brie de Meaux.



WHICH BRITISH CHARCUTERIE DO YOU STOCK?

Serious Pig and a fantastic local honey glazed ham.

WHAT INFORMS YOUR STOCKING DECISIONS?

Mine and Lesley's personal taste drives this aspect of the business. We insist on trying everything before we sell it to make sure it's amazing. With so many product options available these days, it's a great time to be a discerning buyer.

WHICH FOODS ARE YOU VERY PASSIONATE ABOUT?

We are very passionate about all our food. We're also passionate about encouraging people to enjoy great food. Instead of stocking adventurous, virtually unheard-of ingredients, we aim to sell the tastiest versions of everyday ingredients, whether that is strawberry jam, a pasta sauce or a simple breadstick.

HOW IMPORTANT IS A GOOD SANDWICH MENU?

It's important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it shows the customer you understand good food. Secondly it helps with service and speed if people order sandwiches that we created, rather than making up their own concoction; orders are quicker to take, prep is easier and making the sandwich becomes second nature. Lastly, if your sandwiches are really good, people will come back for more.

YOUR BIKER NIGHT SEEMS TO BREAK NEW GROUND!

Every Tuesday evening from April to September over 1000 motorbikes and their spectators descend on the Quay. We offer Plemminster pies with mash and gravy and it goes down very well. There's a great atmosphere, they're not as rowdy a bunch as you might think!

IF YOU STARTED OVER, WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY?

I would make sure the financial systems we have now were in place from the start. It is important to know where you are on a monthly basis.



Richard Fox
"Food waste"

When it comes to what gets your goat in the dizzy world of food, subjects don't come much more contentious than that of food waste. This is regardless of whether that emotion is one of anger directed at any one of the multinational institutions that so obviously ditch perfectly good food on an industrial scale, or a dig at a loved one for once again binning that perfectly good morsel of Cheddar simply because the packaging dictated to.

While we can harp on about the scourge of best before dates, BOGOF and two generations who are more comfortable with a microwave than a hob, that still doesn't explain to me why we would throw perfectly good food into the bin with the regularity of our ablutions. I believe it comes down to two things: a disposable mindset and the psychology of not equating produce, once paid for, to its monetary value. As far as 'disposable mindset' goes: our approach to food has become the same as any other household commodity. We've become conditioned to covet shiny and new and reject the tired and old. Yet, the reality is, bananas taste better with a speckled skin, tomatoes gain flavour as they become softer, and a multitude of other vegetables hide a treasure trove of flavour beneath blemishes.

But it's the inability, or refusal, to see that produce in cash form that flips the bin switch in our brains. Would you throw away the twenty pence you find under the sofa? I doubt it – my change jar in the hallway pays for a return flight to Europe every quarter. And yet we commit that head of slightly faded broccoli to the bin without as much as a goodnight and god bless. Every time you bin food, that's your hard cash going straight down the swanny. So, if you can't help the serial binning based purely on the fact that 'it's the right thing to do', then start to think about those bendy carrots as pounds and pence in the vein of a cartoon character eyeing up a grand cash prize. You'll be better fed, have more money in your pocket, a better business, and you'll sleep like a baby.

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SPECIALITY BITES

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



“ Many business experts from outside the sector agree that many delicatessen, farm shops and food halls have too many suppliers ”

supplying them with well over 2,000 brands and over 20,000 actual products. So you can see from those numbers, there is actually a high degree of consolidation, but even they conceded that they did not really have time to talk to suppliers, and could not cope with the diversity within the sector as they felt they had to have the latest products coming to market.

If true for an organised chain like this, how much more so for a single-site fine food retailer? One average-sized farm shop whose till data I had the privilege of analysing a while ago had over 250 suppliers (including us), yet over half of their

4,000 or so products were selling at less than one unit per week. My recommendation was to slice their range in half and make much more of the products they did sell. However, they were too busy placing orders with 250 suppliers, receiving deliveries from the same and struggling to pay invoices on time to ever actually step back and assess their business.

Whilst I clearly do not have access to the profit and loss accounts of our customers too often, my impression is that the successful and growing ones (usually the ones paying on time too!) are those that consolidate as

much as they can across their chilled, ambient and frozen offerings. They usually have a clear focus, for example their own produce, but their main reason for having the other products in-store is to increase the basket spend of their customers. To achieve that the managers need as many staff as possible front of store advising customers, merchandising and running tastings. Staff stuck in the office spending 20 minutes ordering four cases of yoghurt from a farm in Wales when they could order the same or a similar brand from a wholesaler is not a good use of their most expensive cost – their staff.

Generally the pressure on this sector from corporations and larger companies will only increase as time goes on. We need to up our game and ensure the retailers within this sector are efficient and profitable. To do that, consolidation, I believe, is the key!

Last month I talked about the massive number of new brands there are within this sector and how difficult it is to choose the right products, either as a wholesaler or retailer. This time I have to discuss the retailers that have far too many suppliers, as the subject has come up a few times recently. And this isn't a pitch for retailers to spend more money with wholesalers at all, although that may be a welcome by-product! Many business experts from outside the sector, and me with my business hat on, agree that many delicatessen, farm shops and food halls have too many suppliers. Not only that, but some retailers have admitted the same, and even fewer are starting to do something about it.

One well-known chain of food shops communicated this to their suppliers earlier this year. This retailer has nearly 500 suppliers,

Best Practice

Oliver Paul, director of Suffolk Food Hall, talks us through the ins and outs of life as the head of one of the UK's most respected independent retailers

As Suffolk farmers (and cousins), Robert and I were frustrated that friends often had limited access to much of the fantastic food produced locally. Hence the concept of a showcase for quality local food took shape, and the Suffolk Food Hall collaboration was born in 2007, appropriately in a converted cattle shed just south of Ipswich. Since then the Food Hall has become firmly established as an exemplar, bringing together the best possible local food and drink, and has expanded to include a spectacular restaurant, eight commercial kitchens, cookery and function rooms and home and garden ranges.

The point needs to be made that it is impossible to encapsulate the historic detail of the Suffolk Food Hall, not least because it stretches back five generations and includes integrated farming systems producing our own products, sets the tone for the brand, the market position, customers' perception and much more. Ultimately (and iteratively), the history and reputation are in the DNA of the Suffolk Food Hall. And as a director, everything that I do or say must reinforce this, however obscure – be it sampling a new menu, bagging groceries, talking to the WI, contributing to the latest training session, defining the events programme or redecorating the loos!

My role of director involves looking, listening, learning and challenging,



both internally and at other comparable venues, particularly concerning marketing. That's marketing in its widest sense; the offering, customer service, ethos, staff development, brand portrayal (physically and virtually), process efficiencies, and being a public face.

When it comes to the dos and don'ts of being a director, most simply I've learned: don't do, manage. As a small independent, the Suffolk Food Hall needed us (the owners) to work on the business, rather than in the business. We made this decision in our third year, and the Food Hall is now much more robust operationally and is its own brand. Delegation is invaluable on many levels, although most importantly in developing individuals. Similarly, I'm still learning as each colleague responds in a different way so the approach needs to be adjusted.

My proudest achievements have regarded sales, although we're also delighted to see colleagues leave and establish their own food businesses. (To date, the list includes a new bakery, butchery, delicatessen and coffee shop.) As all independents are endeavoring to move customer habits away from

the multiples, whatever mutual support can be provided to raise the offering will be for the common good. We want 'trained at Suffolk Food Hall' to add credibility to the CVs of those who work here.

I've made plenty of mistakes which have led to the Suffolk Food Hall becoming stronger. A business is only learning when it makes mistakes; not least because mistakes allow you to qualify successes... the profitable ones (successes and mistakes!) just need to be greater than the costly ones.

It's probably now part of our history, but our main horror story was having a major fire nearly six years ago. The building needed completely emptying, cleaning top to toe, rewiring, replumbing, repainting and restocking... we then reopened in four days! (The new roof and rest of the building work carried on around the customers). The true value of a team is tested by adversity, and every business owner should spend a tiny amount of time, at a minimum, doing some crisis planning... Save every single number you can on your mobile, at the very least.

During my time at Suffolk Food Hall I have learned a whole load of stuff about retailing and restauranting, and that many of the bad habits observed when employed previously (mainly concerning management, marketing and decision making) can easily be avoided.

“ As a director, everything that I say or do must reinforce the fact that the history and reputation of the Suffolk Food Hall are in its DNA – be it sampling a new menu, bagging groceries, talking to the WI, contributing to the latest training session, defining the events programme or redecorating the loos! ”

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