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Speciality Food

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Is Your Slip Showing?



It's February already and I don't know about you, but most of my New Year's resolutions have become become New Year's compromises, my mind having mentally redacted much of the list I set myself when the year began. 'This year I will eat a sensibly balanced diet' has been downgraded to 'This year I will try not to eat quite so much cheese', but when I see the food shows looming and samples arriving, I cave in to the inevitable. How does this fit with your own New Year good intentions? Did you spruce up your look, attend to all those niggling matters you didn't have time for as December approached, and finally address that staffing problem which had been left unresolved because you thought you would find it unbearably awkward to let someone go? I hope you managed some of these.

Keeping to and improving upon the standards you set yourself when you started out in independent retail are crucial in a world of shifting goalposts which sees too many shops shutting. There are a hundred ways for your standards to slip, many without you even registering them. Ideally, a good manager will help you identify and rectify such slips, but so can anyone else with a reasonable grip on the business. An enthusiastic Saturday boy may be able to spot wastages, see where improvements in customer service or staff practice might be made, sort out overlooked corners of the shop and possibly do a lot more than you give them credit for. Why not make this year the year in which your resolutions are resolved by someone with a fresh eye?

This issue we focus on the food of the West Country. Early summer will see this destination's retailers experiencing a spike in trade as we 'grockles' flood in with cash to spend. There's much to spend it on, too, the region being famed for not only the fine Farmhouse Cheddars of Somerset, but a diverse range of seafood and all sorts of foods from small scale producers. Many of these businesses draw custom through their doors by offering a wealth of specialities of the West Country. Might the same trick work for you?

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Lessons Learned From Christmas 2014

Retailers of every size simultaneously dread, fear and are inspired by Christmas – and no wonder. Not only does the festive season require year-round attention but from year to year it highlights issues to be handled in the future, whether they're a matter of stocking, staffing or otherwise.

We speak to a deli, food hall and fine food distributor to find out what the recent festive season has taught them, and how they plan to prepare for Christmas 2015 with these learnings in mind.



David Greenman, Arch House Deli

We took over the Arch House Deli just over five years ago in November with no experience, and were hit with Christmas more or less straight away. A terrible approach to taking over a business, but one that does have the benefit that you do tend to learn a lot very quickly – and I'm pleased to say our turnover in December is now twice what it was in that initial Christmas.

It can feel like running a deli is all about the Christmas period, with the rest of the year being about making it through to the next Christmas. Certainly it's the big opportunity financially, and getting it right is critical to our year. We try to consciously improve on what we do every Christmas, with the key to Christmas for us being all about the notes we make in January on how the previous festive period went and what we should do next year.

We spent time in October defining and writing down clear processes for taking pre-orders of cheese and hampers, which we went through with all the shift managers to minimise the risk of any errors. This sounds obvious, but for example, there is little point taking pre-orders for a particular cheese only to find that by the time you come to cut the cheese you don't have enough stock to fulfil them. I'm pleased to say all the processes for customer orders worked well without any issues.

The turnover for Christmas 2014 was good – up on last year by five percent – and we were able to maintain our margins. The online shop also helped as, although it's a relatively small part of our business, it was up 50% on the festive period last year. Looking back, the most rewarding aspect of the whole period was just how well the whole team worked together. They were all keen to know what the daily turnover was and where that put us against last year; it definitely felt like a team effort. During the run-up to Christmas we had specific staff doing specific jobs, which worked well; one on cheese, another on hampers etc.

We are now focused on writing the notes, on how the 2014 Christmas went and what we should do next year. This goes right down to suggested order quantities by product for next year. We get all of the team to review the notes and add in anything else they feel would benefit us next year. It takes a few days to do but it makes everything work the following year. We dust it down in August when we start putting in the orders for Christmas 2015.



Mark Wiltshire, Diverse Fine Foods

Some of the key things we have learned during the Christmas period have come from listening to our customers; after all, if we don't create a business model that works for them then how can we run a business that is all about true customer service?

A recurring comment from the majority of our independent retailers was their delight at being able to order seasonal stock during the Christmas trading period. Not having to pre-order all of their stock months in advance was great for cash flow and flexibility. We understand that as retailers, it is almost impossible to predict the volumes you are going to need and even harder to know which products will be the stand-out sellers. We tried to stock all of our Christmas lines right up to Christmas and,

Kerry Sidney, Bodnant Welsh Food

Christmas 2014 was extremely successful for Bodnant Welsh Food; we planned new products, offers, events and services for our customers. As a result we've learned what works for us – a very valuable lesson!

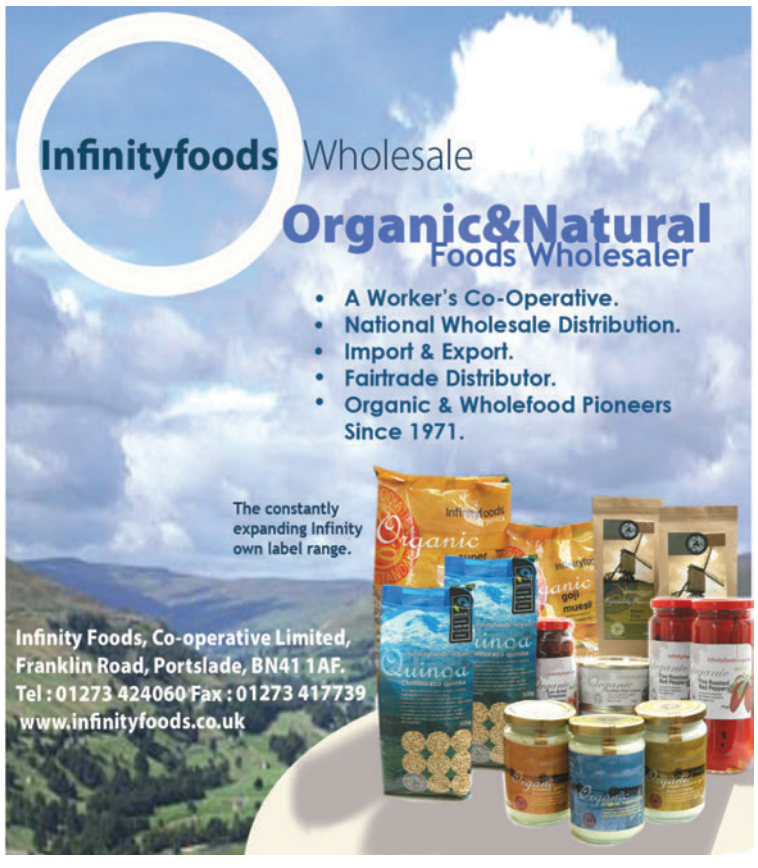
Christmas Market: This was the first time we organised our very own Bodnant Christmas market, where we offered customers gifts, decorations, and daily demonstrations from our in-house experts to help customers prepare their Christmas menu. It proved to be an extremely popular event for existing customers, and a reason to attract new customers to the centre. We are now planning to expand the size and the duration of the market for Christmas 2015. Our customer feedback has also led us to plan further food events throughout the year and we have now planned a new events schedule for 2015 to celebrate the very best Welsh food and drink from producers and in-house specialists.

Prepared meals: We created an 'All Wrapped Up For Christmas Dinner' scheme for customers, prepared by our executive chef Dai Davies to ease the preparation for Christmas dinner for the whole family. This range included everything – from the turkey and prepared vegetables to Christmas desserts and wine. This was a successful introduction and we are now planning to introduce this offer for key occasions throughout the year – including Easter Sunday Lunch.

Food to Order for Christmas: This was extremely popular this Christmas. We are looking to expand it further this year, and introduce a party food range and Christmas wine hampers.

Online shopping: This proved a very popular channel for customers this year, from purchasing cookery school courses and gift vouchers to Welsh food hampers. We are therefore planning to expand the product range online and continue to develop the site throughout the year.

Further product introductions in the farm shop: We increased the range of in-house products during Christmas, from our dairy (new cheeses, custards and ice creams), and our bakery, including a new cake range from our patisserie chef. As a result of the popularity of these, we will continue to invest in new product development throughout the year.





although this is a risky way to trade, it did give us the ability to help service those last-minute orders and keep the shelves full.

Another thing we saw from a lot of our retailers was a shift in the way they were merchandising the stores – moving away from trying to cram as many different products into the shop as possible, instead working hard on selecting key products and stacking them high so shoppers had no trouble finding them. This, we have seen from the replenishment orders, is a very successful way to create great theatre within the store, and also something the independent retailers have the ability to do well.

I think 2015 is going to really be the time for independent food retailers to take back some power from the big four; the increase in sales of high-end food products over the festive period is a great reflection of how the consumer is becoming more aware of the food they consume.

Over the Christmas trading period the big four showed poor sales and a decline in business, whilst within this area Waitrose showed a 26.3% growth in its high end food sector and M&S food was up by 17%. This proves that the consumer will spend money on better quality food, and now is the time to capitalise on this trend for 2015.

This gives the independent retailers a chance to really focus on what they are good at – selling amazing artisan products from great suppliers whilst being able to interact with their customers to explain the story behind the products and what makes them so good.

Have a great 2015 and here's to a very successful year!

Diary Dates

Make a date with these key events

2nd-5th February
Farm & More
Westpoint, Exeter
www.farmandmore.org.uk

4th-5th February
The Source Trade Show
Westpoint, Exeter
www.thesourcetradeshow.co.uk

10th February
Grow Your Business In Food & Drink
Federation House, London
www.fdf.org.uk

11th-14th February
Biofach
Nuremberg, Germany
www.biofach.de

11th-14th February
National Winter Ales Festival
Derby
www.nwat.org.uk

22nd-25th February
FARMA Conference
Wyboston Lakes Executive Centre, Bedfordshire
www.farma.org.uk

23st-25th February
Casual Dining Show
BDC, London
www.casualdiningshow.com

3rd-5th March
Expowest
Cornwall
www.expowest.com

4th-5th March
Scothot
SECC, Glasgow
www.scothot.co.uk

11th-13th March
IFEX
The Kings Hall, Belfast
www.ifexexhibition.co.uk

For more essential diary dates,see our events calendar at:
www.specialityfoodmagazine.com

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UK-centric food magazine promotes independent retailing in new campaign, supporting delis and enticing consumer to shop local

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Awards scheme celebrates the very best standards in the United Kingdom's independent and speciality retail market at Birmingham's NEC

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News in Brief

COTSWOLD FAYRE UNVEILS E-COMMERCE SITE

Fine food distributor Cotswold Fayre has launched its new web shop to provide retailers with an increased level of efficiency and flexibility.

Customers can place orders 24 hours a day every day, and the site now receives live stock information from the website for up to date stock availability.

Paul Hargeaves, managing director of Cotswold Fayre said, "The new website system is incredibly advanced and as far as I am aware is unlike anything currently on offer from other wholesalers in the fine food sector.

"I am very confident that it will provide a much better online experience for customers, making them aware of promotions and offers as well as letting them know whether any products are out of stock."

SELFRIDGES FOCUSES ON COMFORT FOOD

The London retailer has announced that for its latest winter promotion it will focus on quality comfort foods such as soups, crumbles and luxury hot chocolates.

Dawn Davies, wine and grocery buying manager said, "There is always a focus on low calorie diet foods at the beginning of the year as everyone wants to get healthy after the indulgence of Christmas, but when it is cold outside people crave comfort foods, so we decided to put a spin on our latest food campaign by offering customers the opportunity experience new products that enable them to still eat well but have comfort at the same time.

Products like Livia's crumbles are nutritionally robust with fantastic ingredients yet they offer that comfort element that customers crave this time of year."



OPEN For Business

Speciality Food focuses on this month's newest deli, farm shop and food hall openings and expansions across the country



BROMPTON FOOD MARKET OPENS

Dave Murton and Luke Mackay have opened Brompton Food Market in South West London, selling fresh Newlyn fish, meat, freshly roasted chicken and wheels of cheese.

Also available are jams from Yorkshire, products from Lancaster Smokehouse, Goodbeans cold brew coffee, Pinkster gin and rare breed porchetta sandwiches.

Luke Mackay, co-owner said, "Dave and I set up Brompton Food Market because we couldn't find the food shop that we wanted in London. We spent a year travelling around Britain and Ireland looking for the best produce available. Our meat, for example, comes from a rare breed farmer in Yorkshire who feeds his animals beer and has proper ruddy cheeks.

"I love that people look around in wonder when they first find us – the phrase 'Aladdin's Cave' has been mentioned more than once."



BROCKLEY WELCOMES NEW DELI

A new deli has opened in Brockley Cross, London, serving takeaway coffee and cakes and selling a number of locally-made foods, plus a range of organic meats and wines from around the world.

Zoltan Abbott, owner said, "I live in the area and felt that there should be somewhere for local residents to enjoy good food, rather than having to travel. None of the food we sell is available in local supermarkets which has made us very popular – we have an average of 125 customers a day."

Best-sellers include Allpress Espresso coffee, which is available to take away and buy in retail packs, fresh cakes and pastries, and a selection of locally-produced items including beers, honey, organic bread, preserves, and cards made by a local artist. Ambients include pastas, oils, chocolates and treats, and fresh options range from ready meals and soups from Ginger's Kitchen to juices and fresh fruit and vegetables.

MAINSGILL FARM EXPANDS FOOD HALL



The 500-acre farm in North Yorkshire has developed its food hall.

Maria Henshaw, manager said, "We've been open since 2001, but we decided to expand recently as demand and capacity was too much for us to cater for. The new building has been designed in a traditional barn style, using reclaimed stone.

The deli sells classic deli products such as olives alongside home-produced meats – pork, beef and lamb – and award-winning sausages, dry-cured bacon and pies, which are made using meat produced on the farm. The food hall also sell smoked fish, oils, dressings, and a large selection of fresh vegetables, and local items include cheeses, preserves and honey, which are given prominence.



Empire Bespoke Foods Soon To Take Orders

Early February will see the doors of Empire Bespoke Foods open for retailers to order from its expansive range of international fine foods.

Following Empire Food Brokers' acquisition of Bespoke Foods in March 2014, the product catalogues of both companies have been combined to offer independent retailers fine food products from across the world.

Offering a comprehensive range of fine food products of all types from across the world, Empire Bespoke Foods has a particular focus on items from America – alongside a varied selection of foods from across Asia, South America, Africa, the Caribbean and a number of European countries.

Piers Adamson of Empire Bespoke Foods said, "Retailers now have access to one of the most unique ranges of products available, from every part of the world. We supply products from every continent, apart from Australia. Our Asian stock in particular is very strong. We also cover the speciality food of Europe very well, including products from France, Spain, Italy and Germany.

"Empire Bespoke Foods has one of the biggest selections of American products available – everything from Marshmallow Fluff to Flipz, and we'll soon have one of the best offerings of barbecue products including Thai sauces and various items from across America. Unusually, we also supply foods from the Caribbean and South America – in particular Mexico – and even some products from Africa.

"We're always adding to our existing brands, and we have some very exciting products launching in 2015."

Retailers will benefit from the new structure in many ways; the larger sales force means that representatives will be building face-to-face relationships with customers.

Piers Adamson of Empire Bespoke Foods Ltd said, "It will be easier to make up minimum orders thanks to our expanded range – whether you're looking for a traditional French confit or the latest funky water from America."

For more information visit www.empirefoodbrokers.com

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PRIME CUTS



Malcolm Pyne of Pyne's of Somerset on what makes the business award-winning

What's the history of Pyne's of Somerset?
The business was started 30 years ago by my parents, Phil and Beryl Pyne, who identified a gap in the market for locally-raised meat. This was at a time when the local food revolution was just getting underway, and they decided to open a small butcher's shop in North Petherton. The business was hugely successful and gradually I started assuming control of all aspects of it. Shortly following this, our products began winning local and national food awards. But eventually, with 11 staff working in the original premises, it became clear that a new home was desperately needed, so new land was acquired and developed half a mile away adjoining the new Junction 24 business park. The £1 million-plus expansion also allowed the business to diversify beyond meat products.

What does your heritage bring to the business?
The greatest asset of all: the ability to offer locally sourced meat that is traceable from farm to fork. At a time when shoppers are looking for meat producers with a provenance that they can really trust, we are finding this to be a really unique selling point for us which distinguishes us from our competitors. We have seen notable publicised meat scandals knock supermarket sales and subsequently we've seen many of their customers turn to us for trustworthy and high quality meat.

Does the business have any philosophies?
Yes, we do: to be the best at everything and to offer people the best. We're always winning awards for our produce, and when people ask us what the 'secret ingredient' is, we tell them it's simply quality meat. We are passionate believers in quality and lucky that we buy our meat and lamb locally so we can buy on quality, rather than simply having to bid for the next lot in the auction ring and hoping for the best. We know our farmers and they know our requirements, which is how we can be confident we are buying and selling the very best.

Who are your customers?
For the most part they are families from the Bridgwater and Taunton area. Even when we were trading in the middle of North Petherton, some 93% of our customers came from outside the village, so our move has only made us more accessible to the majority of the people who shop with us. But we have many regular customers who will drive in excess of 30 miles to shop here, and being on a main holiday route we do a significant amount of business with tourists, too.

What do you sell, and who are your suppliers?
The extra space we acquired in our new premises has allowed us to add fish, vegetable and delicatessen sections. The West Country has the largest and most dynamic local food industry in the UK, so we are able to offer customers a huge range of speciality products including cider and beers, cheese, preserves, biscuits and cakes. There's also a hot food takeaway section. For our meat we have long-established links with a small number of local suppliers – our beef, for example, comes, as it has for years, from Bob Hall's farm just a few miles away and is specially selected on the hoof.

Any staffing tips?
With our staff, we emphasise the importance of always engaging with customers. We want every customer to leave the shop having had an enjoyable experience and feeling that they've been treated very much as an individual. We also expect our staff to know about the products they are selling and, particularly with raw ingredients such as meat, to be able to offer cooking advice – that's something else you'll never get in a supermarket. This is all for the customer's benefit and, in turn, ours. But for our own benefit we like our staff to be multi-skilled so, for instance, if we get really busy and one section needs more help, other members of staff can step in to relieve the pressure. That kind of flexible working really is the key to keeping the business running as smoothly as it does.





Expowest Cornwall Show Has South West Covered

For over 30 years Expowest Cornwall has been the region's premier hospitality and catering trade show. Each year, the show sees suppliers large and small showcase their latest products and services to Cornwall's trade buyers. This year's Expowest Cornwall takes place at the Royal Cornwall Showground near Wadebridge from Tuesday 3rd to Thursday 5th March.

Attendees will explore a wide range of different exhibitors showcasing everything from fresh produce to foodservice, bakery to business services, drinks to catering equipment, and speciality foods to sundry supplies. With a broad and comprehensive range on display, the show attracts buyers from hotels, restaurants, pubs, cafés, supermarkets, grocers, delis, farm shops, independent stores, holiday parks and tourist attractions, schools, colleges, universities and hospitals. The show has a strong Cornish flavour, and during the course of the show attendees will meet the region's major suppliers.

This year's exhibition will see the return of the Speciality Food area, sponsored by Taste of the West and focused on speciality quality, artisan and local foods as well as flavours from further afield. The Demo Area will also be back, which this year is sponsored by Cornwall College Business.

Perfectly timed and showcasing products that cover the whole of the hospitality and catering market, the show offers the entire Cornish business community an opportunity to get together and enjoy the company of colleagues, suppliers and customers.

Mike Anderson, managing director of Hale Events which organises the show said, "We are seeing our food shows grow each year, and the three we organise cover an area from the South Midlands to the tip of Cornwall. They all have a different focus and Expowest Cornwall is not only the most established (more than 30 years) but it also has a really strong focus on providing absolutely everything that the Hospitality, Catering and Food Retailers in Cornwall need. A one stop shop for the county!"

Find out more about the show at www.expowestcornwall.co.uk.



Farm Shop & Deli Award 2015 Category Winners Announced

The Farm Shop & Deli Awards, held in partnership with Olives Et Al, with category sponsors Pidy and Hider and Lakeland Computers, aim to celebrate the very best standards in the UK's independent and speciality retail market. The awards celebrate the highest levels of service, product knowledge, initiative, innovation and community involvement offered by our heroes of the high street.

The category winners of the Farm Shop & Deli Awards have been named, covering retail sectors including food halls, bakeries and butcher shops.

Over 500 entries were made to this year's awards, and following 6,000 consumer votes 12 retailers have been named Category Winners and 23 have been commended.

Nigel Barden, chairman of judges said, "Another brilliantly rewarding set of visits. There are some very focused, driven and talented food retailers in Britain who deserve to be nourished and encouraged. It's marvellous that the FSDA's can bring them to much wider attention".

Elaine Lemm, food writer said, "This is my second year of judging, and I have to say I found this year much more difficult as the standards keeps on growing. It's just amazing to see what people are doing out there amongst the producers, farm shops and delis – they really is the bare bones of the industry, and are doing an incredible job".

Nikki Storrar of Ardross Farm Shop said, "Winning last year was beyond our dreams, it was something we have never really considered. The year after winning the awards was fantastic, the staff had so much pride in what they are doing. To be asked to be a judge this year was pretty daunting because of the effect that you may have on the people who have entered, and it's also a fantastic experience because I have learnt a lot about what's happening in the industry and could sympathise quite a lot with people who have entered."

Regional winners will be announced on 17th March and the Overall winner will be announced at the Farm Shop & Deli Show at NEC Birmingham on Monday 20th April.

Category Winners:

Baker: Dee Light Bakery – Category Winner
Hambleton Bakery – Commended

Butcher: Ludlow Food Centre – Category Winner
MeatNW5 – Commended (2nd)
M&W Farm Meats – Commended (3rd)

Cheesemonger: George Mewes Cheese – Winner
The Courtyard Dairy – Commended (2nd)
CHEESE PLEASE – Commended (3rd)

Fishmonger: Latimer's Seafood Deli & Cafe – Winner
Ramus Seafood Emporium – Commended (2nd)
Veasey & Sons – Commended (3rd)

Delicatessen: The Hungry Guest – Winner
Bloomfields Fine Food – Commended (2nd)
Fresh Basil – Commended (3rd)

Food Hall: Fodder – Winner
Delifonseca Dockside – Commended (2nd)
Bakers & Larners of Hold – Commended (3rd)

Farm Shop: Knitsley Farm Shop – Winner
Cross Lanes Organic Farm Ltd – Commended (2nd)
Foxholes Farm Shop – Commended (3rd)
Bodnant Welsh Food – Commended (3rd)

Online Business: Parsnips and Pears – Winner
Alternative Meats – Commended (2nd)
Best of British Beer – Commended (3rd)

Greengrocer: Andreas of Chelsea Green – Winner
Strongs Fruit and Veg – Commended (2nd)
Market Garden Produce – Commended (3rd)

Group: Johns of Instow & Appledore – Winner
Arthur Howell – Commended (2nd)
Brown and Green – Commended (3rd)

Local Shop: Shropshire's Own – Winner
Thrussington's Village Store – Commended (2nd)

Market: Tonbridge Farmers Market – Category Winner
Horsforth Farmers Market – Commended (2nd)
Made in Stroud Ltd – Commended (3rd)

To find out more about the Awards, please visit www.farmshopanddelishow.co.uk

BREAKING BREAD



Drew Massey, owner of Manna House Bakery talks awards, aromas and consumer demand

Tell us the history of Manna House Bakery
I'm a third generation baker – both my father and his father were bakers, and after doing a bit of travelling around I wanted to settle down and start up my own business. In the area I lived in there was nothing, so I thought it was a good place to start. 10 years ago I quit my job and took the plunge. I found premises that I liked and that's how it began. I wanted it to be a place for the community, and for members of the public to be involved. The site is all open plan – the bakery is part of the shop – as feedback is incredibly important to us. It's all very well the bakery being in a back room, but you don't get the same involvement or customer reactions and desires that you do if they can see everything happening. As we do everything in front of the public, we can respond straight away to whatever they want.

How has the business changed since it started?
It has evolved in as much as we've refined the products we sell. We've learned as we've gone along, and the products have matured. We create new products as we go along, but our core items have gotten better and better.

What do you sell?
I'm a big fan of sourdough and artisan bread as a whole, and that's what we focus on – they each have unique flavours which we value. Our savoury line has extended to include a salad bar, and a snack and takeaway line. When we first opened we concentrated on our patisserie and bread lines, but our takeaway offering grew due to customer demand. We saw an opening in the market, as no local businesses were offering a quality takeaway option. We've always made special cakes for events and celebrations, but it's not something that I particularly promote. It's something that customers come in to discuss with us as they know it's a service we offer, but it's not one of our core offerings.

How does it differ to other bakeries?
Every artisan bakery is unique – in the products that it makes, the ingredients that it uses to make them, and the staff. Something which makes us quite unusual is that all of the items we sell are made just a couple of hours before they're sold, on the premises. Freshness is of great importance. Getting the aromas out is very important, and this is easily done when everything's made in front of the customers.

You've won a couple of independent retail awards – why do you think this is?
I'm totally flattered by the awards we've won, as it's not something we've sought. The first time we hear about it is when we've won something! I very much believe in giving back to the community; as far as I'm concerned it's a two-way street. The community is wonderfully supportive of us, and I believe in giving back to them. Someone going out of their way to nominate us for an award is the biggest compliment we can get.

What advice could you give to our readers who are looking to expand their bakery offering?
Don't be tempted to cheapen the product. Stick to quality ingredients, and if you truly believe in a product you need to push it, push it, push it. It may take some time, but tastings and promotions are very important, and you need to stick with it.

What's in the future?
We've always had expansion plans but they scare me a bit, as I don't want to lose control of the quality of my product. I've always shied away from bringing an investor in as I feel it's important to retain control and a connection with the business. We have capacity in the site we're currently in, and I very much believe in maximising that. We're considering opening up another shop in the coming year.



Great British Food Magazine Launches Love Your Deli Campaign

The magazine has launched a year-long campaign in order to encourage consumers to show support for their local independent food retailers.

Supported by deli owner and pig farmer Jimmy Doherty, Love Your Deli will see celebrity columns and features focus on delis, farm shops and food halls, and the twitter hashtag #loveyourdeli invite retailers to tweet about promotions and events every Friday.

Consumers will be encouraged to tweet about independents they plan to visit over the weekend.

Natasha Lovell-Smith, editor of Great British Food said, "Delis and farm shops play a vital role in promoting our food heritage; they offer so much more than being simply a place to buy your groceries, and I'm so excited about sharing their inspiring stories with our readers.

"These fantastic stores provide an irreplaceable and personal service and ought to be a weekly destination for food lovers. But like many independent retailers, they are often hit by high rents and strong competition. We're hoping our Love Your Deli campaign will encourage foodies to actively seek them out."

To find out how you can get involved with the Love Your Local Deli Campaign, please contact Owen Cook via owen.cook@aceville.co.uk or 01206 505939, or Nathan Kliber via nathan.kliber@aceville.co.uk or 01206 505424.





Cheese Showcase at IFE

IFE 2015 – running from 22nd to 25th March at ExCeL London – offers a valuable opportunity to meet with a number of cheese producers and discover the best new products in the sector.

The event will showcase the brightest trends of 2015, making it a valuable event for retailers.

Exhibitors at this year's event include Bradburys, Abergavenny and The Cheese Cellar.

Chris McCuin, show director said, "We are very excited for the return of IFE in 2015. A lot of hard work goes into the preparation of the exhibition and part of that is identifying and understanding the biggest sectors in the industry.

"Cheese and dairy in particular has always been a key ingredient in the food industry, but has continued to grow in popularity over the years. At IFE 2015 it is really important that we demonstrate what is new in this ever-expanding sector and identify areas for growth."

Cheese Cellar Announces Emmi Fondue Distribution

Cheese Cellar has shared news of its exclusive UK distribution of Swiss brand Emmi's new snack pot, a 170g version of its Swiss Fondue Original.



The new listing is in line with the continued growth of the food-on-the-go market in Britain.

Using an original recipe from 1958, the mini fondue pot provides a generous portion for one person, or enough for two people to share. Ready in one minute, the fondue is ideal for serving with bread, new potatoes, cornichons or balsamic onions.

Tracey Colley, retail account manager at Cheese Cellar said, "We all know the versatility of cheese – and the more that we can introduce consumers to eating cheese in different ways, the better.

"Food on the go is an area of growth and we felt that this top quality Swiss product was an interesting concept for the UK market – and something that our retail and foodservice customers would potentially have a place for."

Bodnant Rolls Out Smoked Cheese

The award-winning Welsh food centre has produced a new smoked cheese which will be supplied to independents across the UK.

Abermwg, a hand-tended cheese made from cow's milk, is cold-smoked over beech and oak chips at Chirk Trout Farm and Food Smokery.

Chris Morton, managing director of Bodnant Welsh Food Centre said, "This is another successful story for our on-site dairy, and a great way to start 2015. 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 Leviseur, cheese sales and marketing manager at Bodnant Welsh Food said, "We could see that there was room in the market for an artisan smoked cheese – the Aberwen is perfect because it is firm and creamy



and so it takes up the smoking flavours easily.

"The name was a simple choice – our cheeses are all called Aber, which means river mouth in Welsh as we overlook the River Conwy estuary, and Mwg is smoke in Welsh.

"We have had samples on sale here at Bodnant Farm Shop plus it's been on offer in our tea-rooms and Hayloft restaurant. We have also made it available to some of the independent delicatessens, farm shops and restaurants that we supply around Wales and other parts of the UK. Their feedback has helped us to develop the cheese and we are now making more and more as it gets better known.

"At Bodnant our aim is to promote Welsh food and so I wanted a Welsh smokery to produce the new cheese, rather than adding flavourings."

Richard Simpson, owner of Chirk Trout Farm and Food Smokery said, "We supply many food business, and we started the smokery side a few years back.

"The Abermwg is a lovely cheese, and takes to the smoking process really well. It goes into our smokebox over a fire fed by a blend of mainly oak, ash and beech chips, from up the valley in Glyn Ceiriog, for the best flavour.

"The warm, smoky air gently dries and preserves the food. This takes two to three days and is where the skill and experience comes in as conditions outside – wind, temperature or sunshine – have to be taken into account.

"We only use traditional methods to ensure the best results and the real taste of properly smoked foods, rather than the artificial smoked flavours used in processed foods."





Colston Bassett Reports Strong Christmas

The Nottingham-based dairy has followed a successful year of cheese making with a strong festive season, during which it struggled to meet demand for its Stilton and Shropshire Blue cheeses.

Billy Kevan, dairy manager at Colston Bassett Dairy said, "The time leading up to Christmas is always a busy period. In 2014, once again we had strong sales and it was a struggle to meet demand.

"Last year we had an extremely successful year, with various awards – winning Supreme Champion at the International Cheese Awards and the Great Yorkshire Show. Both of these achievements can only have helped raise awareness of our cheese.

"We just keep doing what we do best – making consistently good Stilton and Shropshire Blue. It is always encouraging to see that the consumer keeps appreciating what we do and buying it! We now look forward to another year of strong Colston Bassett sales."

Belton Cheese Unveils White Fox

Shropshire-based cheesemakers Belton Cheese has added to its Belton Fox range with White Fox, a creamy and nutty cheese with a "cunning crunch".

Available nationwide via wholesalers, White Fox is a versatile cheese four years in the making and is ideal for consumers wanting to try something new.

Alison Taylor of Belton Cheese said, "We knew we had something special very early on in the development process of our Red Fox cheese. This started the team thinking what to do next, and the development of a White Fox cheese was the obvious next step.



"White Fox cheese is made from a unique recipe using carefully selected cultures. Fresh local milk plays an important part, along with the skills of the Belton cheese makers who have over a 100 years' experience between them.

"The cheese is matured under the watchful eye of our grader for around 18 months. Only when the grader gives his stamp of approval is the cheese endorsed with the Belton Farm White Fox label."



LOOKING FORWARD

In that usual way of two year George Paul takes a view to the future

Dairy Debate

The cheese trade continues to be segregated into increasingly distinct bands and strategies, many uniquely different and appropriate to their objectives. None of this is without consequences, and out of this emerge winners and losers but also opportunity for others to move up the ladder of fame and fortune.

At the very pinnacle, the major players are engaged in a global struggle for supremacy and, like the oil barons of the past decades, are seizing both source of supply and manufacturing capacity as it befits their needs and dominating the route to market in the major retailers as an inherent part of that strategy.

What emerges is a standard consistent product, heavily marketed, massively distributed and available ad infinitum to a dairy consumer audience – a sort of dairy version of Liebfraumilch, Mateus Rose, Asti Spumante, et al; all very commendable and reliable but with little challenge or difference – a bland sameness that fits the maker model not the demanding consumer. Who isn't bored of the so-called Cheddar premium brand offer?

Thankfully, over the past 25 years a golden seam of artisan makers has emerged, of varying scales and sizes, living through the optimism and promises frequently handed to them and frequently snatched away as 'localism' and 'regional needs' came and went in fashionable waves.

The best of these artisan makers, both ancient and modern, of differing scales and types, endured, survived and even thrived. The list of those makers and brands who have gained rightful recognition here include Quickes and Keens, Sparkenhoe and Colston Bassett, Lincolnshire Poacher and Cornish Yarg, Wensleydale Dairy, Dewlay, Belton's, Appleby's and Kirkham's, Sandham's and Butlers, Yorkshire Blue and Montgomery's, Cropwell and Cornish Blue; all found coping mechanisms and routes to market here and abroad that secured and delivered for their business.

All of these are part of the fabric of British cheese making, their brands have earned recognition through years of endeavour, and a number amongst that elite group have developed a status that sees them dependent on no one, capable of earning a living even in the most challenging of times. And whilst a number of them would not see this moment as the easiest of times, they are largely in harmony with the cheese world in terms of sales, margin returns and consistency.

So who will be the rising rising stars of the next two years? A slight polish of the crystal ball might suggest some have yet to reach or find their best potential. Isle of Man, with its unique provenance, island culture and outstanding vintage cheese, and Cricketers, already famous for outstanding low-fat options, are two that must begin to access the market more effectively with their skill set intact, their brand value yet to be realised and their scale not so overwhelming that it will be driven by a need to be the biggest or cheapest. It's a point of difference, so desperately needed in a tired market. Scottish cheesemaker Barwheys, who have developed their own unique style and quality, would also appear to have some untapped potential to be realised.

Blues are harder, but Dewlay have made some strong quality strides in blue cheese, and frankly the more familiar Cornish Blue has yet to maximize its potential, despite being around a few years now. The UK is crying out for a significant white mould or Brie-type maker now that the two previous stars are under foreign ownership – lucky, then, that Scotland didn't become a foreign country, and perhaps Rory Stone and the Highland Fine Cheese Company may bring their Scottish Brie South in sufficient quantity. Goats cheese too has a vast opportunity, and Rosary goats cheese looks to have an impressive portfolio and could be a growing player here.

The consumer is the driver here, and will seek real definable quality over mass standardisation. I may not say it often, but thank goodness for demanding customers.



MEET THE Cheese seller

The Cheese Box in Whitstable was a leap of faith for owner Dawn Hackett



What's special about The Cheese Box?
We only sell British cheese and a very limited range of local and British accompaniments.

Why sell only British cheese?
I want to promote British milk and dairy farming. There's no point having a brilliant blue cheese like Beenleigh Blue when the people coming in only know about Roquefort. If they ask for Roquefort, I explain that we sell only British cheese, but we have a beautiful sheep's milk cheese from Devon, and they go away with that instead.

Describe the shop, please
The shop is very small and it was completely empty when I first moved in, still breeze blocks. I painted it white and put in anything from my house that I could afford to lose, such as the cheese counter with cows' legs!

Where is it located?
It's located near the end of Harbour Street near the harbour. Winter is great for the cheese shop; the business is not at all seasonal and we create a bit of a grazing zone. Whitstable is very foodie, so a lot of restaurants are booked up. This is a nice spill out. We have different people at different times and we've learnt to how to cater for them. I wanted to move somewhere where nobody knew about cheese, rather than to the West Country, where everybody does.

How many staff do you employ?
There's only me and a manager, and Paul, a cheese expert who has judged at the World Cheese Awards and who does this as a sideline. He organises tastings and events.

How is the British taste for good cheese these days?
There's a great deal of romance about regional cheese and an awareness of what such cheese used to taste and even look like. People remember cheese being cut in shops and on the markets. It taps into something they hadn't realised they had lost, and the moment they taste it, and get the provenance, they are much more engaged with it as a product.

How important in the regionality of cheese?
People are very passionate about regional local foods and always have been. When I was in London, I found people were missing their regional foods, especially cheese. I find that the further North you go, the more you will find regional foods. Down South it's all got a bit diluted and there is Continental influence, especially in Kent. I'm often asked if we do olives and I have to say, no, olives don't go with English cheeses.

What cheeses sell well at The Cheese Box?
We do about 35 cheeses at any one time. Among these are sheep's milk Bries, our local, phenomenal Bowyers Brie and Ashmore, Rosary Goat's cheese (one of our biggest sellers), College White from the Oxford Cheese Company and the cave-aged Cheddar Winterdale Shaw. This is brilliant – it's the only completely carbon neutral, cave-aged cheese in the country.

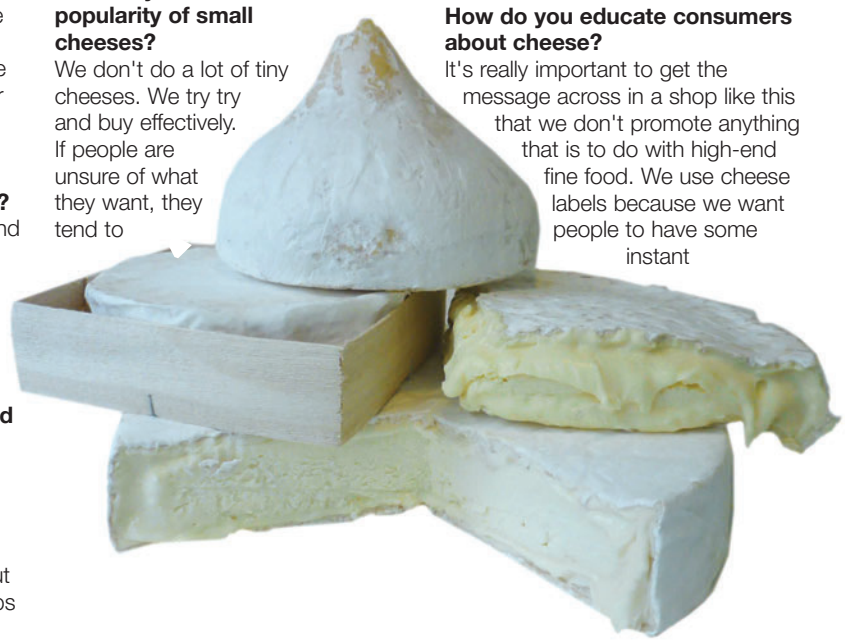
How do you feel about the popularity of small cheeses?
We don't do a lot of tiny cheeses. We try try and buy effectively. If people are unsure of what they want, they tend to go for a little round cheese, but we want to encourage them to be adventurous. This is why we offer impressive, bigger-cutting cheeses. We try to get producers to think outside the deli box.

What are your favourite cheeses?
One of my favourites is vintage Old Winchester, which is a Gouda-style cheese from the New Forest. We had Mike (Smales) mature it on very old, so it's very crystally. It's a washed curd cheese and is brilliant. This cheese is all about patience and time and age. Getting people to understand that it is 28 months old is quite a concept. I also like Alsop and Walker's Mayfield, an Emmental-style cheese which is made near Lewes. It has big holes, making it very unusual on the English cheese scene.

What is your favourite blue?
My favourite blue is Beenleigh, but we do a fabulous Kent Blue which sells stunningly well.

What won't you stock?
We won't have anything that has been stabilised. It's about developing the product, not shipping it around the country. We don't stock anything that we can't control ourselves.

How do you educate consumers about cheese?
It's really important to get the message across in a shop like this that we don't promote anything that is to do with high-end fine food. We use cheese labels because we want people to have some instant



"There's a great deal of romance about regional cheese and an awareness of what such cheese used to taste and even look like. People remember cheese being cut in shops and on the markets. It taps into something they hadn't realised they had lost and the moment they taste it, and get the provenance, they are much more engaged with it as a product"

LUPETTA

"There is no such thing as Italian cuisine: each of Italy's twenty regions passionately believes that their dishes are the best because of the quality of their special ingredients."



For anyone interested in cooking, and in particular in creating regional Italian dishes, the Lupetta range is an essential addition to their store cupboard – whether they wish to make a quick weekday supper more special or cook something more elaborate at weekends for friends and family.

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information. We want to educate them. We want to help them, and we let them taste everything before they buy.

How do the informational cheese tags help?
There's humour and often bad English. We use words and phrases rather than flowing information. These aren't high-brow, just things like 'wow! Packs a punch!' 'absolutely gorgeous! 'gooey', 'medieval', anything that grabs the attention. We're bossy, too, and tell customers what cheese won't go with what food.

Are some people a little in awe of speciality food shops?
Yes, there's a horrible thing in the food world to do with high-end things and snob value and people not feeling empowered. They come in feeling slightly foolish anyway and you want to engage them and make them feel comfortable. They should feel that buying good cheese in a cheese shop is an everyday thing that should be part of their normal way of eating.

Do you have any other profitable revenue streams?
We have a bar. On Friday and Saturday evenings, we open late as a cheese shop until 10pm. This brings in a whole different crowd to taste and buy cheese. Cheese is much more of an evening, rather than a morning thing, we find. We sell alcohol, too, local beers and local cider and a small range of wine that suits the cheese. We also do platters and fondue.

Isn't the shop too small for evening soirées?
It's tiny, but it's all about perching on stools and we move people around, which encourages a convivial atmosphere. We play music, folk and jazz and invite people in to play things. The counter is on wheels and we move it back in the evening and in again for the day. The shop is a little Tardis.

How are the evening sessions working out?
The evenings work brilliantly. People pop by and buy some cheese for



the weekend and don't have to fight with visitors on Saturday. They come and buy cheese and then others arrive for a glass of wine and a platter.

You also operate a cheese van?
It's an old Citroen which alternates as a mobile fondue and ice cream van, so it's very flexible. We go to markets and have had pitches at Margate and also in Faversham, at local festivals and places like that. I got the van for £1,500 including delivery, and then I had to have her welded together.

The business was started with this van?
Yes, everything was on a very small scale but this meant that I had a very good relationship with my suppliers. I didn't have the money to get a shop and start from scratch. I would turn up at a market on a Friday or some new pitch that no-one had thought of before, and the van would become a meeting point. When I pitched up here in the van, I began selling cheese to people on the beachfront, in the gales. The shop was a leap of faith.

Do you offer an online service?
We prefer to offer a personal customer service. Online is great if you want to order a box of ten cheeses but people are happier to call up and order that. We say that if you want a soft creamy blue, it's better to call us, because we can tell you if it's ripe. You can't just click a box and say, 'I'll have a Stinking Bishop.' Weare in a position to say 'this is good today and will be with you by Thursday.'

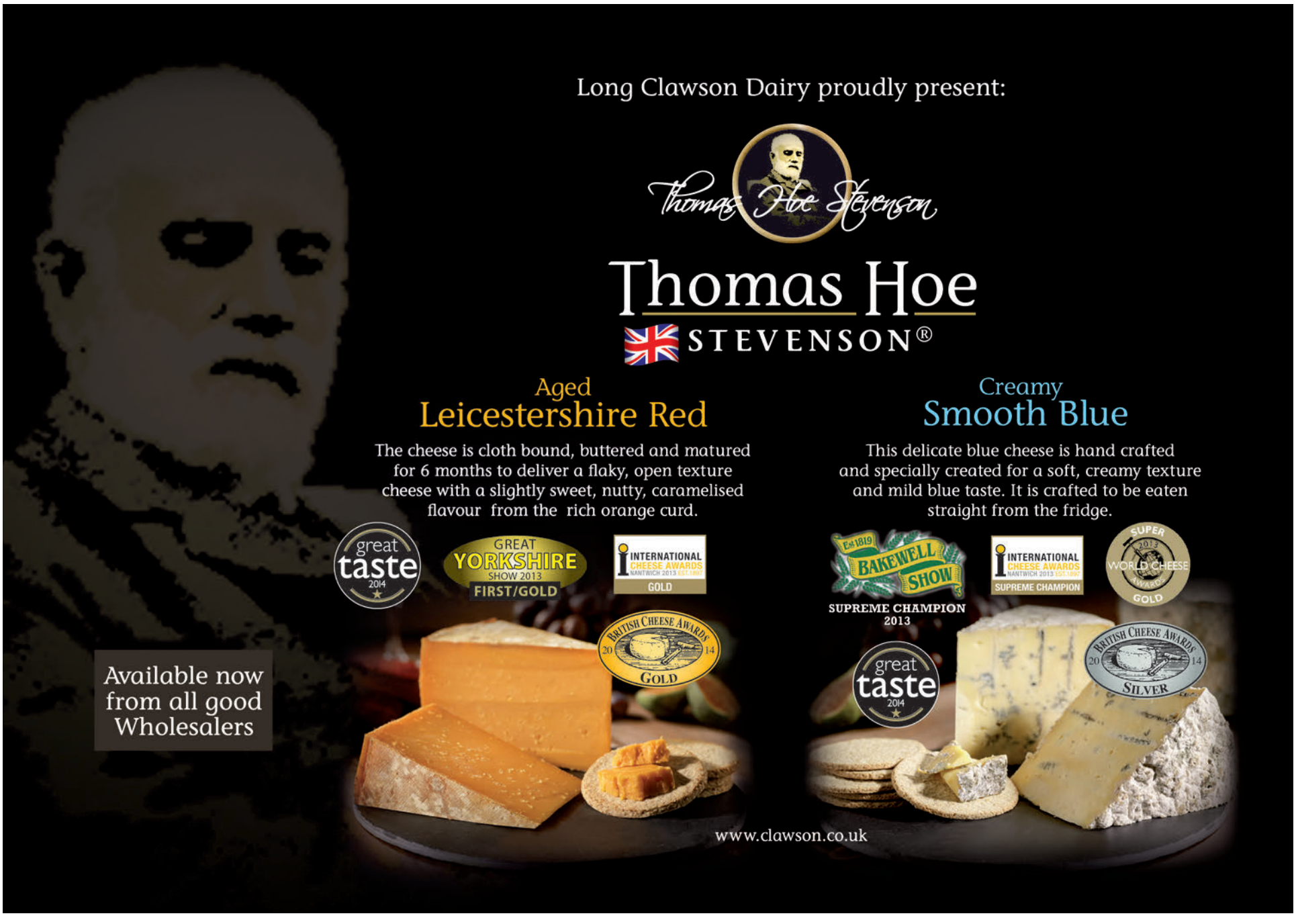


What other products do you sell at The Cheese Box?
We don't have a lot of room for other items and cheese is the most important thing. People are confused these days, they don't know what is a deli and what a local independent food shop. This is a cheese shop. The bar didn't happen for three or four years I (before that, we used to give away drinks to tasters.) We wanted it to be a British cheese shop, first and foremost. However, pickles and chutneys to go with the cheeses are supplied by the Whitstable Pickle Company and a slow baker makes sour dough and speciality breads for us. We sell local apple juice, fig, quince and almond products, anything suitable and English.

Describe your relationship with producers now?
I enjoy doing marketing for cheesemakers, giving them feedback and helping to develop their cheeses. We make cheese with local cheese makers; creating our own cheese will be our next step.

Do you mature cheese?
We mature their cheeses in our maturing rooms, which means that we can have longer term relationships with producers and can feed back to them on how their cheese is going. It takes a good three years to get a cheese established.

What qualities does a successful cheesemonger need?
You've got to know and love cheese and make people feel passionate about it. I'm incredibly passionate about the milk and, of course, the product itself.



A British Cheesemaker In America

As a member of a quintessentially British cheesemaking empire, Tom Chatfield of Quickes travelled to the US to gather international inspiration. Here he shares his story


Tom Chatfield of Quickes

Quickes cheese has been sold in the US for over 30 years, principally through Neal's Yard Dairy and Somerdale, and this accounts for around a quarter of our sales. Mary Quicke visits most years to judge at the American Cheese Society or the Fancy Food Show, but we have never spent any real time on the ground, looking at where our cheese ends up, who sells it or why.

I had a range of planned activities which including attending the Cheesemongers Invitational, teaching at Murray's Cheese Bootcamp and visiting top chefs such as Jean Georges. As I'm responsible for sales, much of my time was spent with retailers, visiting around 75 cheese shops in total, as well as restaurants and a handful of key distributors. I also spent time at the Rogue River Creamery and attended the annual American Cheese Society conference.

My objective was to establish a sales strategy for the US and to develop relationships with key cheese people. The visit also enabled me to gather insights on how we might apply what I was seeing in the States to the UK market, with accreditation schemes such as the Certified Cheese Professionals.

"It's easy to think of the United States as one homogenous culture and, whilst that's not wholly incorrect, it is also incredibly diverse, with each region offering its own specialities"

Regional food can be surprisingly tasty (chicken and waffles in North Carolina spring to mind) and some is truly awful! Fine food only really exists in key regions and other areas are considered 'food deserts', with little fresh produce and predominantly processed or fast food on offer. Food quality (along with wealth) is hugely polarised.

Artisan cheese is not taken as a given in the US, and so many producers are much more focused at providing a complete education experience to engage people. Businesses such as Rogue River, which produces the world-class Rogue River Blue, are completely connected with their own retail space and use this to embody all that they stand for and lay it out magnificently for their guests. This is described by marketers as 'experiential marketing'. Rogue River's next step is having the kitchen space available for cookery classes, hosting cheese pairing evenings and even a spot of yoga once a week; they've just taken on the owner's old PE teacher as a tour guide for the farm and hope to have a team of tour guides within a couple of years.

One of the most immediate benefits to the trip was the inspiration to open the new Farm Shop & Kitchen at Quickes – Mary Quicke and I visited Cowgirl Creamery back in January and by May we had opened the Farm Kitchen, very much inspired by the Cowgirl Cantina (as well as the likes of Riverford Field Kitchen and River Cottage Canteens closer to home).

"The US artisan cheese movement has a much greater proportion of young blood"

Nearly all artisan cheese in the US is a new thing – at least relative to Europe (though some small producers such as Vella were founded as early as the 1930s).

Cheese is a remarkable combination of the professional and the cool. People draw huge pride from working in cheese – to the extent of sporting cheese tattoos and spending their holidays learning about cheese. Events like the Cheesemongers Invitational really capture the American spirit – it's essentially a cheese rave, and is covered by the likes of Vice Magazine, so therefore perceived as an edgy, cultural event worthy of attention.


Cowgirls Creamery of San Francisco

Artisan cheese represents a form of food rebellion against all the things that people like Jamie Oliver have made us aware of: factory farming, processed foods and so called Big Food corporations. It's part of an opposite and equal reaction, though we hear much less about it in our own media. Retail is particularly well suited to this approach. Cheese shops in the US have a real inclination to be theatrical and enthusiasm; it just can't be overdone!

Where?

New York City and the tri-state area: Jersey, Long Island and Brooklyn
North Carolina: Chapel Hill, Raleigh and Durham
Texas: Dallas & Austin
California: San Diego, Orange County, LA, San Francisco and Sacramento
Oregon: Rogue River

Worthy of note

Professionalism: The artisan cheese movement benefits from an extremely capable trade body – the American Cheese Society (ACS) – which represents a substantial membership and punches above its weight in terms of technical and political clout. It engages the Food and Drink Administration on key issues such as ageing on wooden boards and raw milk. I was lucky enough to attend the week-long ACS annual conference. This included opportunities such as sensory analysis lectures at University California Davis and a seminar dedicated to micro flora of cheese rinds!
Education: Many universities in the US have dairy professors; the ACS judging panel featured 25 intellectuals as 'technical judges' for cheese. There's some truly potent intellectual firepower helping to drive the emergence of domestic artisan cheese.
Geeky/Cool: Cheese looks and feels like a bohemian pursuit. YouTube channels like It's OK To Be Smart and celebrities like William Shatner have spent serious amounts of time probing into and telling the story of dairy's delights. Businesses like Cheese Journeys are bringing enthused twenty-somethings over to Europe to learn more about our traditions and techniques.
Politics of food: People in cheese (and fine food more broadly) are very mindful of the political aspect of their work. Many (if not all) artisan producers will talk to you about social responsibility. Slow Food, as championed by figureheads such as Alice Waters of Chez Panisse, is a thriving political force which most 'foodies' will identify with.










Leah Park Fierro, owner of LA cheesemonger Milkfarm

Lessons learned

Number one would be not to underestimate people's passion for cheese!

A lot can be gained from facilitating the desire to learn about cheese. Some retailers charge hundreds, or even thousands, of dollars to allow customers access to their knowledge and experience. People's appetite for food with integrity has huge potential.

Sell cheese from a specific place, with a unique story. Offer the whole package. People are willing to put a 'dollar value' on hearing more about the place, the people and the cows involved. It's a paradigm shift from selling something that simply goes in your fridge! When done right, that experience will live in hearts and minds for years to come.

Keep yourself informed and learn from other people's experiences; Paul Hargreaves' 'Letter from America' and contributions from other industry figures all demonstrate that we can learn from our cousins across the pond.



CONTINENTAL CLASSICS: Manchego

An iconic European cheese with an impressive heritage and true consumer popularity, Manchego is ripe for stocking













In the first of a new series, Speciality Food finds out why this ancient Spanish cheese makes an exciting addition to artisan food counters.

Manchego is widely respected across the international fine food industry, but not a lot is known about its extraordinary history and traditional production processes. From its centuries-old foundations in the La Mancha region of Spain, the popularity of Manchego has traversed continents – with the UK set to be one of its biggest markets across the world. As purveyors of fine foods, Speciality Food retailers are in an ideal position to make the most of this classic artisanal cheese – thanks to its impressive heritage and unique flavour profile, it's the perfect starting point for food lovers looking for an authentic taste of Spain.

History

Although the exact date of the creation of the first wheel of Manchego is not known, its heritage has become a source of great pride to the residents of La Mancha – the home of the cheese in Central Spain – and was even noted in the region's iconic sixteenth century novel Don Quixote. Impressively, its history pre-dates even that; notes on the production of Manchego have been found which date back to Roman times and beyond.

The home of Manchego, a region of central Spain which reaches from Madrid to Andalucia, provides the perfect conditions to create the cheese. Although named after the landscape's arid conditions (the Arabic roots of 'La Mancha' mean 'the land of no water'), the region offers the perfect landscape for animal rearing; there are now 800 farmers with more than half a million sheep in the area, as well as 75 Manchego factories.

Manchega sheep, the sole breed reared to produce the milk for Manchego and unchanged throughout the centuries of its use, are reared in the countryside and fed only the best their habitat has to offer. The small quantities of milk – when compared to France and elsewhere in Northern Europe – produced by each ewe means that the raw ingredient in each wheel of Manchego is of very high quality, and never contains more than 50-55% fat. Manchego's PDO status means that it must be produced within the La Mancha region, using milk only from Manchega sheep.

Varieties

Strictly speaking, there are two types of Manchego cheese: one made with pasteurised milk, and one made with raw milk. The first, commercial type is matured for at least one month before being put on the market; the second, artisanal version for at least three months (semi curado) or six months (curado). The cheese can be matured for up to two years, although such cheeses are hard to come by.

How to identify

In line with the EU's aim to promote quality food products across the world by protecting geographical names, retailers should add value to the Manchego they sell by sharing its story and unique characteristics with their customers. There are three elements to a wheel of Manchego cheese which will identify it as being the genuine article.

- The label should state that the cheese is Manchego, and should read 'artesano' if it has been made using raw milk
- The cheese should show a label from the Manchego Cheese PDO Regulating Council, containing its serial number, logo and stamp
- There should be a casein tab stamped on the rind of the cheese, stating the serial code and the words 'España, Denominación de Origen, MANCHEGO'

What does Manchego's PDO status mean?

- Reliability: The cheese is regulated by Spanish and EU laws
- Traceability: The products come from a defined geographical area
- Link with the territory: All the ingredients are obtained using traditional methods. The bond between the product and the land create special characteristics in each product
- Typicality: The cheese is made with a respect for traditional production methods and preservation of the typical characteristics of the product

Find out more at www.quesomanchego.es

"The simplest way to roughly age Manchego is by its colour and texture – the older it gets, the dryer and more golden the cheese becomes. Meanwhile, the flavour intensifies and becomes increasingly spicy"

Ignacio Barco, President of Consejo Regulador De La Denominación De Origen Queso Manchego

FACT FILE

- As a rule, a 2-3kg wheel will yield 10 pieces of cheese
- Manchego's distinctive zig-zag pattern is created using esparto grass and wooden presses
- Manchego can be kept in the fridge, but bring back to room temperature before serving
- Taste: simultaneously salty, creamy and relatively mild, becoming stronger and spicier as it ages

To serve...

- Slice into thin slithers, keeping the rind on the cheese; the rind should not be eaten
- Serve with quince paste and Serrano ham for a quintessentially Spanish platter



Divine Celebrates Fairtrade Fortnight

This Fairtrade Fortnight, running 23rd February to 8th March to raise awareness of the benefits of buying Fairtrade, ethical chocolate producer Divine will be touring the south of the UK in a retro food van.

Travelling to London, Brighton and Bristol, the van will be showcasing and selling the company's new Dark Chocolate Caramel bar, attending events and visiting suppliers.

Leaflets will be handed out with a map highlighting local Divine stockists; consumers will be asked to visit each site during Fairtrade Fortnight, at which they will find a clue. Once all sites have been visited and clues collected, people taking part will be entered into their city's prize draw to win a hamper of chocolate.

Wendy Rowan, National Account Manager at Divine Chocolate said, "The Chocolate Trail will give people the chance to not only discover new places to buy Divine and other Fairtrade goods, but promotes the independent retailers in their city who will be there long after Fairtrade Fortnight when our van has headed home."

New Flavour from Superfood Chocolate Brand

Doisy & Dam, producer of organic chocolate bars, has added a Coconut & Lucuma bar to its range of superfood confections.

Combining 74% cocoa organic chocolate with health-boosting coconut and lucuma, the bar can boast high levels of fibre, antioxidants and vitamins.

Edward Smith, co-founder of Doisy & Dam said, "At Doisy & Dam we're always looking for the next new superfood to ensure our chocolate stays ahead of the competition.

"We're very pleased with this new flavour as coconut is particularly popular and works brilliantly with chocolate, while Lucuma is still largely unknown. We're hoping our retailers get as excited about it as we are."



Chilled Truffles Enter Market

Award-winning artisan chocolate maker Booja Booja has introduced its new range of chilled chocolate truffles.

Delivered, stored and sold chilled, the truffles have been designed to be kept in a chilled environment to reach the consumer in optimum condition.

Two truffle selections and six single flavour boxes are available, in Almond & Sea Salt Caramel, Hazelnut Caramel, Fine de Champagne, Dark Ecuadorian and Raspberry.

Louise Truswell, marketing communications manager said, "Like all the best premium desserts, we believe that our truffles deserve to be kept in a chilled environment all the way from our kitchen to the customer. Then we know they are reaching consumers in the best condition possible.

"The new range features a new look with a fresh, contemporary colour scheme designed for maximum stand out in the fridge. As with all our products, our chilled chocolate truffles are handmade with the finest organic ingredients at our factory in Norfolk."



Winners of ICA Announced

The International Chocolate Awards, a competition which celebrates fine chocolate from around the world has announced the winners of its World Finals.

Over 1000 entries from 33 countries were judged by a panel made up of buyers, chocolatiers and journalists, which was overseen by the awards' Grand Jury.

The British chocolate sector was well represented, with award winners including a Peanut Butter & Raspberry Jelly from Paul A Young and a dark chocolate bar from Akesson's.

Martin Christy, Judging Director and Chair of the Grand Jury said, "We were astounded by the number and exceptional quality of the entries in this year's World Final. London is becoming known worldwide as a leading centre for chocolate excellence and appreciation.

"We have a developing history of quality chocolatiers setting up their companies here, which is no wonder with the understanding we have of international cuisine in the UK."





The FARMA Conference 2015

The ultimate source of farm retail inspiration



Whether you manage a farm shop, market or delivery service, farm retail can be tough, which is why FARMA has created a brand new event to offer businesses the advice and inspiration they need to succeed.

The Conference offers practical workshops covering such topics as how to reduce overheads, inspirational farm shop tours, and expert talks from industry professionals such as head of Norwich John Lewis, Richard Marks and food futurologist Dr Morgaine Gaye – all designed to help you make your business the best it can be.

Sunday 22nd February

An introductory drinks reception will be held at Wyboston Lakes, where professionals within the farm retail sector can network and attendees can book in, collect paperwork and be formally welcomed to the event.

Monday 23rd February

Join fellow farm shop owners and staff, and those new to the industry, on a trip to a number of established and highly regarded businesses including Suffolk Food Hall, Elvedon Estate and Edible Ornamentals. Tour groups will be accompanied by a FARMA host and a tour facilitator to ensure attendees get the most out of their visit.

There are four tours on offer:

Tour one focuses on taking your farm shop to the next level by developing management skills, systems and processes. During the course of this tour you will visit La Hogue, Elevedon Estate and St George's Distillery.

Tour two aims to improve your skills as a farm shop manager; whatever size of your business, management of staff, stock and costs is critical. On this tour you will visit Hollow Trees Farm Shop, Suffolk Food Hall, Jimmy's Farm and Alder Carr Farm Shop.

Tour three looks at marketing, and what your customer wants. This trip will provide an opportunity to see a farm retail site through the eyes of the consumer, and discover how to overcome common challenges and add new elements to your businesses. Foxholes, Bury Lane Farm Shop, Ashlyn's and Gog Magog Farm Shop are scheduled to host attendees.

Tour four considers the fine detail, and how to get the fundamentals right. This trip is ideal for newcomers to the industry, whether they're looking to start from scratch or develop their fledgling business. Attendees will visit Bushel Box, Vine House and Edible Ornamentals.

Monday evening will see a surprise members' night take place, with cocktails and more kindly supported by the Big Green Egg.



Dr Morgaine Gaye, food futurologist

Tuesday 24th February

The FARMA Conference

Chair of the FARMA Council, Sally Jackson will kick off proceedings by welcoming attendees to the conference and an overview of the past, present and future of FARMA, before introducing three high profile speakers: Dr Morgaine Gaye, food futurologist, who will relate coming food trends to your business and advise on how to future-proof your business; Richard Marks, head of John Lewis Norwich, who will be sharing his expertise on customer service and staff management; and Philip Blanc of i-negotiate, who will demonstrate how the art of negotiation can boost profitability.

Farm Retail Masterclass

Four leading farm retail businesses – Blacker Hall, Pink Pig Farm Shop, Welbeck Farm Shop and Kilnford Barns – will take questions from attendees on topics including product selection, recruitment and how to measure success.

If you would like to submit your questions in advance, please send them to info@farma.co.uk.

North American Farm Retail Association

Hosted by Charlie Touchette and Cynthia Chiles, this talk will explore the conception of farmers' markets and farm shops in America and their subsequent popularity in the UK. Both farm retail aficionados, both speakers bring their impressive expertise and passion for selling directly to the public.

Workshops

- Negotiating Your Way To A Better Margin Lead, Philip Blanc from i-negotiate
- Increasing Basket Spend, Jonathan Winchester from Shopper Anonymous
- Getting The Café Offer Right, Robert Tate from Appetite Me
- 10 Key Lessons In Finding, Recruiting And Embedding A New Member Of The Team, Max MacGillivray from Red Fox Executives

Awards Evening

The FARMA Black Tie Dinner and Awards is a chance to celebrate the best the industry has to offer, with a number of businesses and individuals lined up to receive prestigious awards.

FARMA Markets Conference

This event will offer an opportunity to discuss with like-minded people the key elements to running a successful farmers' market: increasing footfall, protecting your brand and making your market work for producers.

Wednesday 25th February

FARMA Trade Show

The trade show will combine three elements: exhibitors such as food and ingredient suppliers, specialist wholesale suppliers, EPOS system providers and business, land, retail and management professionals; workshops on topics such as reducing your overheads; and the presentation of the Farm Shop Butchery awards.

"The FARMA conference is a hugely beneficial experience and one that we look forward to each year. We feel it is an ideal opportunity to take a break from the business to create new ideas, relationships and opportunities that are essential for planning the months and years ahead"

Tom Bowles, Hartley Farm



KEY INFORMATION

WHAT: The FARMA Conference
WHEN: 22nd-25th February
WHERE: Wyboston Lakes Executive Centre, Bedfordshire, MK44 3AL

Show highlights

- Guided visits to inspirational farm retail sites
- Retail stars share their expertise on strategy, management and basket spend
- Announcement of FARMA Award winners

GETTING THERE

BY CAR: Located 20 miles West of Cambridge on the A428
BY TRAIN: St Neots train station 10 minutes away (48 minutes from London King's Cross)
BY AIR: Luton and Stansted airports 45 minutes away

CONTACT INFO:

To find out more about the event, book tickets and organise accommodation see **www.farma.org.uk/2015-farma-conference**







FARMA
National Farmers' Retail & Markets Association
The 2015 FARMA Conference:
Be inspired
22nd - 25th February 2015 at
Wyboston Lakes Executive Centre
Great North Rd, Wyboston, Bedfordshire MK44 3AL
Book your ticket at www.FARMA.org.uk
• 4 unique farm retail tours • International speakers
• Case studies of real farm shops • Surprise members night
• Awards dinner • Trade show • Butchery competition
@FARMA_GB FARMA_GB
If you would like to exhibit at the trade show please call the team on 01638 676747
farma.org.uk

Essential Products

Explore the hottest products on the market this season with our showcase of speciality stock. From jams to cheese, there is plenty to inspire you.



Coaltown Coffee Roasters

In our roastery we only roast Speciality Grade Arabica Coffee, ethically sourced from small farms across the world.

Unlocking the unique flavours within the world's finest coffee beans begins in the roaster. Hand-roasted in small batches, our Roastmaster is able to judge the timing and temperature to perfection, delicately drawing out the complex flavours from the raw green beans. We carefully study how the beans turn from green through to straw yellow and then finally rich, sumptuous brown, ready to be brewed.

We only source our green coffee from single farms and estates in the speciality coffee market, where the focus is on quality, provenance, sustainability, freshness and fair relationships with the growers.

We develop our signature espresso blends and single origin coffees in line with the growing seasons and the best harvests from each country of origin. When we find a coffee that we love, we involve our customers in the tasting process, and only when our tasters confirm that it meets the highest standard will it then be added to our portfolio.

We supply our coffee throughout the UK.

0845 544 2613
info@coaltowncoffee.co.uk
www.coaltowncoffee.co.uk

Uncle Roys

With spring and summer just around the corner, it's time to think about stocking up with Uncle Roy's Finest Preserves. These fantastic, multi award-winning country-style recipes in handy half-pound jars are the perfect choice for the smaller household and make perfect gifts, too. They are so popular that Uncle Roy has recently introduced two new curds – Tangy Lime and Brilliant Blackcurrant.

And don't forget, Uncle Roy makes lots of other attractive, high quality must-have food products too, including edible flower petals and an enormous range of natural essences and extracts which are very popular with the baking fraternity. Other must-haves include household favourite Gravy Salt, as well as superb ranges of gourmet salts, mustards, smoked ingredients and ultra-healthy Mustard Seed Oils.

In more good news, in 2014 Uncle Roy added three Great Taste Awards and three World Hot Sauce Awards to his impressive collection!



01683 221 076
uncleroy@uncleroys.co.uk
www.uncleroys.co.uk

Walker's Nonsuch

Walker's Nonsuch's deliciously creamy toffee bars are the perfect indulgent treat. Made with whole milk, butter and the family company's 100+ years of cooking experience, this chew is second to none.



The toffee bars are available in seven varieties including favourites Brazil Nut and Liquorice, and, thanks to being packed in a tin toffee tray, offer a point of difference and create an easy display – a great opportunity for retailers to stock something different to the supermarkets.

All Walker's toffees are made to the same recipe, but break your toffee to make it even creamier and more indulgent.

There are no artificial colours, preservatives or hydrogenated vegetable oils in our unique family recipe, just good ingredients.

Bars retail from just 65p and are packed 10 x 100g. Available from Hider Foods.

01782 321 525
sales@walkers-nonsuch.co.uk
www.walkers-nonsuch.co.uk

Natures Path

The latest organic breakfast cereal addition to Nature's Paths indulgent top table is Honey Sunrise, a moreish, wholegrain crunchy cereal made from corn, rice, quinoa, buckwheat, amaranth and a delicious dollop of honey.

Long ago we came to the conclusion that to the free-from aisle, where synthetic man-made golden syrup dominates, we wanted to bring a generous splash of all natural flower nectar.

Endorsed by Coeliac UK, this sumptuous cereal with all-round family appeal comes from good stock, as Mesa Sunrise (the UK's No.1 gluten-free cereal) and Maple Sunrise (our fastest growing cereal in 2014) have both established quite a following from the UK's more discerning breakfast diehards.

It was also Nature's Path's Nice & Nobbly granolas that won The Grocer's prestigious Best New Product award in 2014.

0800 072 3658
www.naturespath.co.uk





The Progressive Food Company

The Progressive Food Company's range of Foresta hand-picked dried wild mushrooms are now an established favourite within the speciality food sector. Packed in premium 25g retail bags (with 10 bags in a carton),

the range is 100% natural with a two year ambient shelf life. Each carton contains a unique and stylish ready-to-merchandise wood-effect tray.

There are four popular varieties in the range: Porcini+, a mix of Boletus Edulis (most commonly known as Porcini) and Boletus Badius. The wonderful taste and appearance of these mushrooms contribute to their reputation for being the most sought after of the edible fungi; Chanterelle, one of the most distinctively flavoured mushrooms in the world, are noted for their soft flesh and apricot-like fragrance; Shiitake, which have a rich, smoky flavour and a meat-like texture and are considered to be the finest edible mushroom in Asia, where they have been used in cooking for over 2000 years; and Mixed Forest Mushrooms, a combination of Slippery Jack, Oyster and Porcini mushrooms which produces the perfect blend of tastes, textures and aromas for a wide variety of dishes.

01636 610 584
info@thepfc.co.uk
www.forestamushrooms.co.uk



field fare

field fare, suppliers of quality frozen foods, has recently launched a range of multi-portion ready meals due to the overwhelming success of their existing 20-strong single ready meals range.

Classic Cottage Pie, Lasagne Verde (beef), Fish Pie and Roasted Vegetable Lasagne are all available in double-portion size, with the Cottage Pie, Lasagne Verde and Fish Pie also being available in four–portion size.

All meat dishes use Red Tractor meat and have on average 25% more meat per pack than those from other notable ready meal suppliers.

Perfect for busy households for whom time is precious, but who want to eat high quality, wholesome and hearty food.

There is no minimum order quantity for any of the field fare ready meals – simply add from one case upwards to your usual field fare order of loose fruit, veg, bakery etc.

01732 864 344
enquiries@field-fare.com
www.field-fare.com

Mrs Bridges

Four new products have been launched for the independent trade by Mrs Bridges.

Mrs Bridges is delighted to announce the launch of four new single jar products into the all-year-round range, with items available from 2nd February 2015.

The new lines include Grapefruit Marmalade with Ginger, Blueberry Preserve, Raspberry & Rhubarb Preserve and also, in the savoury range, Chutney for Cheese.

All new products are available in cases of six units and have an RRP of between £2.35 and £2.65 per jar.

01241 432 500
contact@mrsbridges.co.uk
www.mrsbridges.co.uk



Peter's Yard

Peter's Yard, the award-winning UK-based artisan bakery, produces thin, light, delicious crispbread to an authentic recipe from Sweden, the natural home of crispbread. The Original recipe uses just five all-natural ingredients: wholewheat flours, fresh milk, honey and a naturally fermenting sourdough. As well as the Original crispbread, Peter's Yard has introduced two flavoured varieties: a Seeded Wholegrain with whole oat groats, buckwheat, roasted sunflower seeds and linseeds, and Spelt & Fig which is made with Spelt flour and sweet fig pieces. High in fibre, completely natural and free from anything artificial.

The range of alternative shapes and flavours provides consumers with a greater choice of innovative, high-quality savoury crackers to serve with cheese. The crispbreads can also be enjoyed on their own as a delicious snack, as a canapé with paté or charcuterie, or served beside dips. Larger crispbreads with a traditional central hole create a dramatic, impressive centrepiece to enjoy as a light alternative to artisan bread.

07967 687 717
wendy@petersyard.com
www.petersyard.com



Pasta Garofalo and Grangusto Sauces

Garofalo has been making pasta since 1789 in Gragnano near Naples, the home of Italian pasta. Made from only robust durum wheat (which is high in protein) and shaped through a bronze die, the result is a pasta with a superior taste and al dente texture customers appreciate. Our packaging is clear as we are proud of the colour and cuts of pasta we offer. There are over 76 different shapes and four ranges to fit all occasions and customer tastes.

The Grangusto range of stir-in Datterini pasta sauces are produced by Finagricola, an Italian producer of fruit and vegetables. The fragrant sweet red and yellow tomatoes are combined with only basil or chilli. The sauces just require stirring into pasta with no further cooking, so all the fresh flavours are retained for an excellent meal.

Garofalo's pasta ranges include Traditional Pasta, Organic Whole Wheat Pasta, Gluten-Free Pasta and Kids Organic Pasta.

01438 813 444
info@garofalo.co.uk
www.pastagarofalo.it



Ooh! Chocolata

Colombian Fino de Aroma Coffee Beans, Cocoa Nibs and the Inca Berries range from Ooh! Chocolata are essential stock for 2015!

Ooh! Chocolata is all about great tasting products with shelf appeal at sensible prices. Their formula: keep it simple. There are three products in the Columbian range: gently roasted Colombian Coffee Beans, Colombian Cocoa Nibs and Inca Berries, each generously enrobed in Single Origin Columbian Fino de Aroma dark chocolate. All are beautifully presented in eye-catching boxes just ready to be picked up and savoured. This range allows you to offer your customers the high quality they seek whilst you enjoy unrivalled service and prices direct from an independent UK family firm.



Colombian Fino de Aroma Chocolate covered Coffee Beans, Cocoa Nibs and Inca Berries. Each 100g box costs £2.50, 10 per case. There's no minimum order, and free delivery on orders over £100!

01275 545 694
us@loveooh.co.uk
www.loveooh.co.uk



Hawkshead Relish

Hawkshead Relish's Traditional English Mustard is as unpretentious as it is sincere in its simplicity, with an ability to effortlessly transform a modest dish into a sophisticated culinary triumph.

Our quality English Wholegrain Mustard is the preferred accompaniment to meats and cheese, but also an essential in marinades, sauces, stews and casseroles and accomplished in transforming the humble Cauliflower Cheese into a gastronomic Brassicaceae au Fromage!

This is one of a range of nine mustards from Hawkshead Relish, incorporating unique and innovative flavour combinations. £9.50 case/six, RRP £2.30.

01539 436 614
info@hawksheadrelish.com
www.hawksheadrelish.com



Devilishly Delicious

Set to take the home bake market by storm and available now, this range of luxurious, high quality cake mixes brings something truly unique to the market. Requiring the addition of only water and oil, Devilishly Delicious's cake mixes offer the consumer the opportunity to create wonderfully easy but equally impressive cakes at home. Each versatile 350g pack will yield a generous 12 cupcakes, eight muffins or large loaf cake or sponge.

Available in Lemon, Stem Ginger, Strawberries & Cream and Chocolate Orange, these mixes are bursting with pockets of juicy pieces, truly offering something delicious and different.

Sure to be a winner, and with something to suit all tastes, these products are must-have items for the well-stocked farm shop and delicatessen. Available now from Cotswold Fayre and the Cress Company.

0800 652 8220
info@devilishlydelicious.co.uk
www.devilishlydelicious.co.uk



My Olive Branch

Olive Branch brings you a selection of four magical flavours of Olive Tapenade. They have reinvented the classic tapenade recipe with their coarsely ground recipe, with some fantastic flavour combinations that will allow you to use tapenade in everything from pasta recipes, fish dishes and even for stuffing portobello mushrooms!

With this recipe you can enjoy the flavours of fresh crunchy olives coming together with ingredients which have been specially grown for Olive Branch by small farmers around Greece. Very popular across all age groups, these are must-stock products for the summer season.

Trade price: £2.39 per unit and packed in cases of six. Available through many speciality wholesalers or direct from Olive Branch.

0208 573 4698
info@myolivebranch.co.uk
www.myolivebranch.co.uk



That Hungry Chef

That Hungry Chef's unique Curious Pickle Collection and aromatic Mojo Risin' chilli relishes promise to take your tastebuds on an exciting tour of flavours influenced by cultures from around the world. Made by hand in the UK in small batches using the finest spices and British produce, these versatile products will add extra zing to all your snacks and home cooking!

Launched in September 2014, That Hungry Chef's artisan products are inspired by founder Pratap Chahal's quest to discover the world's most exciting flavours, and influenced by his decade of experience cooking in some of London's top restaurants. The unusual bold-flavoured Curious Pickles are both comforting and invigorating, and the Mojo Risin' relishes will energise cold dips, warm stews, hot curries, and everything you eat! Essential additions to your store cupboard, That Hungry Chef's products are available to buy online and in delis across the UK.

0207 503 9058
info@thathungrychef.com
www.thathungrychef.com

Cottage Delight

A new dry stock and gravy range has just been launched by Cottage Delight.

Gourmet food specialists Cottage Delight have added six dry mix stocks and gravy products to its Everyday Collection for 2015.

Designed for busy people who are short on time but still demand high quality ingredients and great taste, these essential products are ideal for adding rich flavours to soups, stews and casseroles.

Cottage Delight's beef, chicken and vegetable stock powders (RRP £3.45 for 100g) and meaty beef, poultry and vegetarian gravy (£3.25 for 90g) are all gluten-free in response to growing demand from health-conscious consumers.

The product range works wonderfully with recipes such as Beef Casserole, Chicken Casserole and Sweet Potato and Lentil Soup, all of which are featured within free recipe and strut cards to promote the range in-store.



01538 382 020
sales@cottagedelight.co.uk
www.cottagedelight.co.uk

Farrington's Mellow Yellow

Farrington's Mellow Yellow cold-pressed rapeseed oil has undergone a redesign to celebrate 10 years.

Keeping the trademark yellow flowers, Farrington's has created a fresher design across the entire range that reflects the quality of Farrington's Mellow Yellow.

Farmer Duncan Farrington launched Farrington's Mellow Yellow cold-pressed rapeseed oil in 2005. Produced on the family farm in Northamptonshire, the company is proud of its credentials and grows its quality rapeseed to LEAF marque standards. At the heart of the range is Farrington's Mellow Yellow cold-pressed rapeseed oil, a wonderfully versatile oil that performs well in high temperature cooking as well as dressings. The full range is free from additives and gluten.

The new designs proudly display the British flag to promote the home grown provenance of the award-winning range, which includes Balsamic Vinegar Dressing, Classic Vinaigrette, Honey & Mustard Dressing, Chilli Oil, Mayonnaise and Garlic Mayonnaise.

01933 622 809
info@farrington-oils.co.uk
www.farrington-oils.co.uk





Džiugas

The season of love starts on Valentine's Day and is supposed to last all the way to Easter, when the resultant spring chickens appear! Spring is therefore the ideal time to offer customers Džiugas – the ultimate in romantic cheese with a distinguished, mature but smooth taste that everyone adores. The legend says this magical Lithuanian cheese was developed by the Giant Džiugas to celebrate his marriage to the love of his life. As a result, Džiugas cheese is not only imbued with the joy and strength of the giant but is also meant to bestow these qualities on all who eat it.

Džiugas is sold at 12, 18, 24 and 36 months, and even a young Džiugas cheese has a distinguished quality that makes it stand out from the crowd, being robustly savoury but with a creamy sweet overtone. For cheese with an even more mature disposition, the 24 and 36 month options have more bite but still retain the recognisable fruity overtones.

07460 333 120
export@zpienas.it
www.dziugashouse.co.uk



Stag Bakeries

Stag Bakeries' all-butter cheese straws are made using carefully selected Scottish speciality cheeses. The gourmet, rich and indulgent cheese straws are hand-baked at Stag's bakery on the Isle of Lewis in the Scottish Outer Hebrides. There are four flavours in the light, flaky and delicious range, each using a different Scottish speciality cheese: Highland Dunlop, a carefully selected Scottish speciality cheese produced in the Scottish Highlands. This organic, unpasteurised and traditionally cloth bound cheese melds perfectly with the buttery pastry; Smoked Dunlop, an organic, unpasteurised cheese that is traditionally smoked over whisky barrel shavings for a delicate smoky taste; Strathdon Blue, an aged flavoursome and aromatic blue cheese; and Ayrshire Bonnet, a hard pressed goats cheese produced on a family-owned creamery in Ayrshire.

Packed into distinctive, attractive packaging. 100g RRP £3.49 (Ayrshire Bonnet £3.89).

01851 702 733
sales@stagbakeries.co.uk
www.stagbakeries.co.uk



Dhaniya

Dhaniya presents its authentic Indian Curry Pastes and Spice Rubs, created with passion using bespoke family-inspired recipes.

The Dhaniya branding is distinctively bold, modern, vibrant and fresh, giving it shelf presence and reflecting the intensity of its flavours which capture the 'taste of homemade'.

Dhaniya's five convenient pastes include Classic Curry, Spiced Korma, Jalfrezi, Fish Curry and Tandoori pastes, each forming the base of a sauce serving six. There are also five spice rubs: Bombay Potato, Tikka, Pomegranate, Fish and Lamb.

All of the products are made in small batches using only the freshest ingredients and contain no artificial colours, additives or flavourings, just raw goodness! They are all gluten-free and suitable for vegetarians.

Alongside our traditional recipes, we have created inspirational and quirky Dhaniya with a Twist recipes including Spiced Korma Carbonara, Spiced Pomegranate Roast Chicken and Lamb Rub Burgers.

Enjoy Indian food with a helping hand from Dhaniya.

07876 336 875
info@dhaniya.co.uk
www.dhaniya.co.uk



Ten Acre

Looking for snacks with a difference which are full of flavour and fun? Be transported to the wonderful, whimsical world of Ten Acre, where popcorn is hand-picked and crisps made with British potatoes pack a mighty crunch. Ten Acre is the innovative creator of premium hand-cooked crisps, available in eight quirky varieties including the award-winning The Day Sweet & Sour Became Friends and the deliciously warming How Chicken Soup Saved the Day. Ten Acre has also launched a collection of premium popcorn in five exciting varieties including the sublime Captain Theodore's Lime & Sea Salt, Ambrose Popperley's spicy Wasabi, and Cousin Maisie's zesty Fennel & Lemon. Ten Acre makes its products with love, and all are gluten, dairy and MSG-free, vegan and vegetarian. They also come with their own fictional village where every flavour is magically brought to life. To be transported to Ten Acre, use your imagination or visit www.tenacrecrisps.co.uk

01612 661 044
villagestore@tenacrevillage.co.uk
www.tenacrecrisps.co.uk

Just Crisps

Award-winning Just Crisps are made from just two wholesome ingredients, with nothing added but a little seasoning.

What makes us different? Our home grown potatoes are batch-cooked in Just Cold Pressed Rapeseed Oil which is grown, harvested and filtered on the farm in Staffordshire – a healthier oil, rapeseed oil is 35% lower in saturated fat than sunflower oil. Just Crisps offers a unique 100% British snack, in fact, every process happens here on the Froggatt's farm – not only quite an achievement, but the best thing about it all is the crisps taste superb.

Flavoured by hand in a range of delicious flavours, Just Crisps are suitable for vegetarian, vegan and gluten-intolerant diets (see packs for more details). Bagged and boxed in 40g and 150g sharing bags, Just Crisps are available to order through Cotswold Fayre, Diverse Fine Foods, Blakemore Fine Foods and directly on 01543 493081.

01543 493 081
feedback@justcrisps.co.uk
www.justcrisps.co.uk





Divine Chocolate

Divine Chocolate is delighted to announce an exciting collaboration with Aardman Animations to celebrate the launch of the Shaun the Sheep Movie this spring. Introducing the Shaun the Sheep Milk Chocolate 55g Easter Egg, complete with a Shaun plush headband, perfect for all your little lambs! Aardman especially chose Divine's really excellent milk chocolate to team up with Shaun, voted CBBCs favourite children's character. The egg, in fun Shaun packaging, will benefit from all the buzz around the movie which is fully supported by national advertising and marketing and will be a top hit during the half term and Easter holidays. Flock to Divine for more details.

0207 378 6550
wendy@divinechocolate.com
www.divinechocolate.com



Claire's Handmade

At Claire's Handmade, we use small batch production and natural ingredients to make a wide range of sweet and savoury preserves and condiments.

Combining tradition with innovation, we offer tantalizing recipes to tempt your customers, from old-fashioned Piccalilli to Roast Garlic, Onion and Balsamic Jam.

Brand new from our kitchen, a range of three fresh tasting salsa dips. Whether you choose fiery, smoky or mild, all that's needed is a bag of tortilla chips and you have everybody's favourite party food.

01697 345 974
claire@claireshandmade.co.uk
www.claireshandmade.com

Quickes Traditional

To guarantee the consistency of their traditional, clothbound matured Cheddars, Quickes has enhanced its selection process for assessing their truckles.

Rigorous internal assessments have been implemented to consider the different spheres of flavour, aesthetics, and the exact characteristics of each cheese. As specially selected truckles mature from 12 to 18 months to 2 years, Quickes can enhance the complexity of certain flavours – making them even more appealing to customers. Improvements to the way the maturation process is monitored have already paid dividends at the World Cheese Awards, where Quickes collected three golds for their Vintage, Extra Mature and Mature Cheddars.

This outstanding record for consistency is also supported by external auditors, where 85% of Quickes stock has scored 90/100 or above in recent months. The dedicated team of cheesemakers at Quickes continue to innovate, and their ongoing commitment really shines through in the quality of the end product.



01392 851 222
sales@quickes.co.uk
www.quickes.co.uk

Potts Partnership

Potts' three table sauces provide a quick and simple way to create some summer favourites as well as adding some real flavour to sandwiches. The Maple Chipotle BBQ and Grilling Sauce has a rich maple base with a slight smoky tang of chipotle. Use to make the perfect pulled pork, enjoy on bacon butties or with any BBQ meat. The Pimenton Spiced Tomato Bravas Sauce with its perfect balance of Spanish pimenton and cayenne pepper creates an authentic taste of Spain – simply roast diced potatoes and pour over Potts' Bravas Sauce. Meanwhile, the Steak Sauce, inspired by the various interpretations enjoyed in New York steak houses, is the perfect accompaniment for steak; either serve simply with chips or used to make a mouthwatering steak baguette.

Buy online at www.pottspartnership.co.uk or through your local butcher or farm shop.

01672 556 109
info@pottspartnership.co.uk
www.pottspartnership.co.uk



Seggiano

For 20 years, the Seggiano Real Food from Italy brand has exclusively supplied the independent grocery market, with a comprehensive range of 'best in category' Italian larder essentials.

Acknowledged by both the trade and consumers as the finest selection from Italy's top artisan food producers, it is a range with the ethics of food production at its core.

Seggiano produces its own award-winning Seggiano evoo, best-selling pestos, organic pastas and rice, biscotti, sott'olio, pasta sauces, olives and much more. It does not supply any products containing meat or fish, apart from Seggiano artisan Pecorino, which contains animal rennet.

0207 272 5588
info@seggiano.com
www.seggiano.com





Sensible Dave

The Sensible Dave family of luxury granola is growing, with exciting new recipe developments joining their brothers and sisters on the most discerning shelves in Britain.

Recognising that a healthy breakfast is very important to some people, Sensible Dave has introduced a no-added-sugar granola called The Wholesome One. Each 600g box contains oats from Cheshire, rapeseed oil from Herefordshire, other carefully sourced ingredients and a drizzle of honey to hold the fruity-nutty-oaty clusters together. As with all Sensible Dave's granolas 'The Wholesome One' includes the zest of one orange – to deliver a distinctive fruity flavour. This latest addition joins the Great Taste Award-winning The Original One, The Strawberry One and The Berry One.

In addition to the new recipe, Sensible Dave is also launching a handy, single serve format. Fondly known as 'Baby Daves', these 50g grab-and-go pots are a convenient, fuss free addition to the range.

03333 207 035
david.rose@sensibledave.co.uk
www.sensibledave.co.uk



Littles

With flavoured coffee one of the fastest growing sectors of the hot drinks category, Little's offers the only range on the market that uses 100% Arabica coffee infused with the highest quality flavourings.

As an independent, family-run company, it believes in using honest ingredients with an emphasis on quality, not quantity – an ethos which has paid off well with listings with Cotswold Fayre , The Cress Co. and Hider as well as some of the most prestigious independent retailers.

01404 891 332
enquiries@littlesltd.com
www.littlesltd.com



The Live Coffee Company

The Live Coffee Company is a dream finally fulfilled by a group of coffee gurus. With over 100 years, collectively, of sourcing, trading, roasting, blending and supplying coffee all over the world, this team got together in 2005 to work on coffee projects. Last year they finally launched their own brand after developing their own blends for the range – a UK-produced and packaged artisan coffee brand.

The mission of The Live Coffee Company is simple: to retain as much natural goodness and flavour from the coffee bean as possible, via sourcing of the best quality beans from long-term partners and a unique roasting process. The five blends in the range deliver the finest quality in everyday drinking, from Rio Rio and Santo Domingo to the connoisseur's single estate choice of Estate Reserve. Beautiful blends crafted by nature.

The full range is available via Cotswold Fayre.

02380 864 020
tlc@thelivecoffee.com
www.thelivecoffee.com

Seed and Bean



Seed & Bean, producers of 100% ethical and Fairtrade artisan chocolate, have been sourcing top quality chocolate from cocoa farmers in the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and the Sao Tome Islands of West Africa since 2005 – to great consumer response.

Offering a kaleidoscope of 18 unique flavours which can boast vegan, organic and kosher credentials, Seed & Bean's chocolate bars are all available in a smaller, eight bar case size.

Seed & Bean's quality and innovation has seen the company grow nearly 200% in the past twelve months, with its key retail stockists more than doubling their rate of sale, and consumer demand is rising – over 300,000 consumers sampled the chocolate last year, with this year's sampling campaign set to be bigger than ever... No doubt helped by it being named the official chocolate of Glastonbury Festival for the third year running!

To help in your quest for effective selling, FOC counter display units are now available, and when you buy five cases you'll get the sixth absolutely free – a saving of 16.67%! Look out for wholesaler deals in March through to May.

0208 343 5420
info@seedandbean.co.uk
www.seedandbean.co.uk



Ross and Ross

Fine Food Company Ross & Ross have created the perfect foodie gift for Valentine's Day – The Homemade Curing Kit... Bacon.

The Cotswold-based specialist in handmade British food gifts has won awards for its online selection of own-brand gifts and those sourced from high quality local food producers, and this bacon curing kit perfectly combines the British love of bacon and the current trend for 'doing it yourself' in the kitchen.

The number one best-seller for food lovers this Christmas and a hit with top industry buyers, the kit contains everything you need to create Original, Sweet and Smoky bacon – curing mixes, gloves, muslin, curing bags, butchers hook and full instructions – all you need to add is pork.

01608 645 503
orders@rossandrossfood.co.uk
www.rossandrossfood.co.uk

The **Opinion** Pages

New retail perspectives from industry experts

EXPERT EYE



John Shepherd, managing director at Partridges, on the factors key to the iconic London retailer's success

On Thursday 25th May 1972, Partridges opened its doors for the first time at 132 Sloane Street, London. The doors were in fact opened by my brother, Sir Richard Shepherd, the first of at least eight family members to work in the company.

It was a different world then. The day before had been the first attempt at the Watergate Burglary and T.Rex were number one in the charts with Metal Guru. The temperature was 57 degrees Fahrenheit, a dollar was equal to 34p, and a new film had recently opened in America called The Godfather.

It was a different speciality food world, too. 1972 was a time of frozen jugged hare and veal, ham and egg pie, and not forgetting coronation chicken. There were gulls' eggs in the fridge, and the shelves were adorned with Jacksons Teas, tins of Birds Nest Soup and Campbells Beef Bouillon. Olive oil was found mainly in chemists. We always sliced smoked salmon by hand and sold Chablis for 77p a bottle, except for on Sunday afternoons, due to the licensing laws. Few products had sell-by dates, and Justin de Blanc and Oakeshotts were our big rivals.

Fast forward 15,000 days of trading and about 19 million customers or so, and we find ourselves 200 yards South West, adjacent to the King's Road and facing the delightful Duke of York Square. Along the way we have been granted a Royal Warrant, been co-founders of that great organisation the Guild of Fine Food Retailers, acquired four new shops, sold tea in Japan, launched over 20 food markets in Central London, and launched a new generation of food shop called Startisans. A lot of lessons have been learned, discarded, forgotten entirely and learned again during the journey. Looking back, two things stand out amid the mass of experiences and insights, and they are the integral values of a family business and the importance of innovation.

FAMILY VALUES

When one starts working in a new business, the last thing one thinks of is shared values. It is more about being dynamic, professional, adhering to a business plan and working long hours to bring it about.

However, this does not always lead to an open and creative environment for staff or a congenial place for customers to shop. It is not likely to be sustainable on its own. Perhaps my biggest regret is not the many commercial opportunities we might have lost but the good people in our organisation that we have let slip through our fingers – either through a lack of empathy or understanding, or perhaps by not spending enough time with them. And if we have lost good members of staff, imagine how many customers we must have lost for the same reasons over the years.

Working with good people brings a shared desire for success and innovation, and hopefully a feeling of empowerment. This also applies to suppliers and landlords. We are lucky to have had some of our present suppliers for many years and even a few from our very first day – not forgetting our first free-range egg supplier who was actually the family dentist. When we moved to the Duke of York Square in 2004 it was with the help and support from many of them. It's all about learning from mistakes, maintaining relationships and, of course, seeing the big picture.

Finally on this subject, I recently learned that 30% of the biggest companies in the world have been classified as family businesses. This was a piece of information I got from Family Business United – a very valuable resource for family businesses everywhere. Our long-suffering and long-standing human resource director Ian Willard (25 years) recently calculated that our current staff had clocked up over 1000 years of service – interesting information, but I wish it was longer!

INNOVATION

Essentially, innovation is the brainchild of desperation. I do not think any of the new ideas we have launched have been done only in a spirit of creative planning. The relentless march of the supermarkets – we have four in our immediate vicinity – and indeed many other factors have often made the outlook appear bleak. So the extension of our deli counter, own-label development, the coffee shop and wine bar, export initiatives and the Saturday food market have all arisen from a desire to survive.

Giles Henschel of Olives Et Al:

"Sensible Folk in White Coats"



Sometime, perhaps sooner rather than later, I'm fairly certain those nice chaps in little white coats are going to come and pay me a visit. With luck, they'll bring one of those lovely jackets with the wrap round arms that fasten up at the back and feel like a nice tight hug – I like those. Very comforting. In the meantime, we see lots of those other folk in official looking coats – white or otherwise – the EHO, Trading Standards, BRC auditors and so on.

Now, over the years I've kind of grown to welcome their visits, which may go against the grain and seem a little odd. Most folk get all narky when someone comes marching into their gaff, dons a white coat and trilby and demands to have a right old rummage round the back, challenging on you on what you're up to and generally digging into stuff. However, I really rather like it as it tells me whether we're doing it right and where we need to improve or what we've missed – a bit like a critical friend who tells it as it is. For sure there have been occasions when something comes at us from left field and you wonder if instead of a critical friend you're dealing with someone with a Napoleon complex. My favourite was an EHO who, having wandered around the shop and given us a perfect 5 for our Score on the Door, spotted the eggs we'd proudly sourced from somewhere suitably local and displayed loose in a basket for customers to help themselves, and said,

"Ooh eggs! Niiiice. Tell me: how do they get from the basket into the egg boxes?"

Now, I thought that a bit of a daft question with a clear and obvious answer, but I bit my tongue and replied, "Well, our customers are normally pretty bright and mostly manage to help themselves."

The response was a triumphant 'Aha! Gotcha!' look that spread across his face as he asked the fateful question, "And do your customers all have Egg Packing Licences?".

An egg packing licence? Really? We batted back and forth for a while, even offering to issue EPLs before customers were allowed to even approach the eggs let alone fondle them. After a sensible and grown up conversation we established that we wouldn't be prosecuted and life went on without us being deported to St Helena.

And then there is our recent BRC Audit. If you don't know what it is then lucky old you, and be grateful that space prevents me from giving you all the intimate details of what occurs over the two days of steady grilling. If you do know what it is, then you'll understand how chuffed we were with another A Grade with only two minor non-conformances, which places us amongst the best in the world for what we do – which is very gratifying indeed.

Having a critical friend come into your business should never be something to fear but to embrace with open arms, as they are often so informative about things that you simply may not have ever seen or noticed before but which are clearly noticeable to others and, in my opinion, I'd far rather they tell me so I can do something about it before a customer notices and decides to go elsewhere.

So when the folk in white coats come calling, surely to goodness the most important thing to do is have a sensible conversation with them.

Juliet Harbutt:

"Together we stand, divide, they will get us"



I was invited to give a series of lectures on British cheese in January to the Masters students at the University of Gastronomy in Bra, Italy, and had planned to spend December leisurely researching and writing my presentation. Instead, Christmas conspired against me and suddenly I had just seven alarmingly short days to prepare. Unlike my usual masterclasses I couldn't wing it or hope to bamboozle them, as after three years of study they would know more about the technical side of cheese than I ever will and, addressing me as professor, despite my protestations, added to my sense of panic.

However, the research highlighted to me the enormous difference between how cheesemakers work together in Europe versus in the UK, and how this will affect the future of British cheese making. In the last two years we have lost four well-known names in the Cheddar world, including Denhay, and as margins and markets get tougher, rougher and tighter, how many others will face the chop?

Historically, European farmers owned a few cattle or goats and made a handful of cheeses to sell at local markets. Over the centuries, with the help of itinerant monks and invading armies, they learnt to work together, sharing recipes, pooling resources and forming marketing groups, cooperatives and consortiums. Many of these have become huge powerful groups responsible for marketing, quality control, distribution, even political lobbying, and most have attained PDO status.

Their marketing is so effective that most people when buying the great European classics never even think to ask who makes it, they just buy from their favourite shop, trusting, they will have the best. They lobby the PDO system and the EU dairy committees, plus they can control the price of feed, distribute worldwide and create stunning photography and marketing material.

Cheese in the UK, however, had a very different upbringing. It was still produced as a means of preserving milk, but the land was in the hands of large landowners with big dairy herds who had dairy maids to make their typically large cheeses which were more likely to be sold to a merchant rather than at a market. In the early 1700s, one syndicate had 16 ships carrying Cheshire cheese from Liverpool to London.

Then in the 19th century the industrial revolution hit the cheese industry. The railways transported liquid milk from farm to city, and in the 1870s factories started to spring up in the North as it was realised hard cheeses could be produced in factories. These two events relieved many farmers of the burden, drudgery and stress of cheese making, but also reduced the number of traditional producers of our great cheeses. Then followed two world wars that further decimated the cheese industry.

Today we only have 15 cheeses (three are no longer made, five are made by one producer) protected by PDO status (which also funds marketing initiatives), while Spain has 23, France 60 and Italy 76. There are only five producers of Stilton, and the biggest Cheshire maker is based in Shropshire, so unlikely to encourage the other three producers to form a PDO. By the by, to gain a Single Gloucester PDO you simply have to own a Gloucester cow!

Compared with the clout of European cheesemakers, no wonder British producers struggle to compete here and abroad. Added to this, our milk is more expensive, so looking to the future, I think the cheesemakers and industry in general need to stop being so independent and start working more closely together, marketing together, sharing resources, sharing stands at shows and advertising together.

Charles Campion

"We all scream for ice cream"



If you need cheering up in the slate-grey days of the New Year, ice cream is the indulgence to turn to. Granted, sales will be higher when the blazing sun is high in the sky and there isn't a breath of wind, but we are unlikely to get two summers like that in quick succession.

Back in the 1970s my friend James held what may have been the best ever holiday job. He got to drive the ice cream van and press the button that pumped out a loud and strangely tuneless version of Greensleeves. He also got to play with the ice-cream machine – in those days the drivers were given a big tub of liquid base which they ran through the machinery and turned into a succession of 99s. At head office they knew how many cones there should be for each gallon of base and thus how much money should be handed in at the end of the day.

All went swimmingly until a wily old ice cream van man shared his secret. Run the base through as normal but catch the resulting ice cream in a bucket and then run it through again. You end up selling a lot less ice cream base and a lot more air, secure in the knowledge that after head office had taken their money the surplus became your own. Back in those dark days, ice cream's ingredient list (when there was such a thing) could include whale fat, corn oil and all manner of dodgy ingredients and fillers, while ice cream manufacturers routinely pumped plenty of air into their product before selling it by volume.

Traditionally the Americans sold their ice-creams by weight, but that just meant that the air-swollen British packs looked larger and better value. At the time food writers grizzled about the gulf between "bad" and "good" ice creams, and even went to the lengths of letting pots of ice-cream melt into measuring jugs to show just how little you were actually getting when the air was removed. But notwithstanding the debate, until just before Christmas 2014, ice cream was a bit of a success story.

The Ice Cream Alliance (the industry's trade organisation) had managed to get some basic principles established – ice cream must contain at least 5% fat and not less than 2.5% milk protein. These are sensible figures for a back stop and represent a bare minimum. Meanwhile, in a joyless office block somewhere in Europe, a gang of bureaucrats were congratulating themselves as they "brought the UK into line" by getting rid of those key percentages. This change shouldn't make a huge difference to the UK's better ice-cream makers – they work to their own recipes and there isn't a whiff of whale fat anywhere – but abandoning the British guidelines means that cheap 'industrial' ice creams from the EU can be exported to Britain and called ice cream even when there is no dairy content. At a stroke, a sensible set of guidelines became waste paper.

Thankfully we have all become more discerning when it comes to ice cream, and it is hard to see the British public abandoning the craftsman-made high-spec stuff in favour of a European import that has little to do with the dairy industry. For once the customers can see the difference in quality and will end up choosing a better product over a lower price.

It's just a pity that we only hear from the EU when they are interfering; let's hear it for Greensleeves!

Justin Tunstall

"Time for customers"



As a small independent retailer, we have three main factors in our favour in the struggle against the multiples: range, expertise and enthusiasm/passion/personality – call it what you will. But often we also benefit from shorter queues than supermarkets and can deliver immediate service. At peak times, in my case notably the tourist season and the pre-Christmas weekend, we do have queues, even extending outside the shop. Most people are prepared to wait, but with impatient children in tow or parking deadlines looming, we need to serve as briskly as we can to minimise walk-aways.

How long should we spend with a customer? Ideally, they get our full attention until they've selected their cheese. They're then transferred to a colleague to be 'upsold' and the transaction completed. When there's a queue, social norms add a bit of urgency; folk generally don't like to keep those behind them waiting unnecessarily and things move along quite nicely. But sometimes the peer pressure doesn't work and we have to use tact, diplomacy and a few knacks to help people come to a conclusion.

In a tourist town like Lyme Regis, many of our shoppers are on holiday and come in with a companion or group that isn't used to making decisions together. While it's always fascinating to watch people interacting in new groupings, it's also a lot slower than dealing with single customers. So we try to identify the 'leader' and then address the others in support of the leader's thoughts on type, size and number of choices. Wavering groups can tend towards a compromise of small amounts of a large number of cheeses, rather than decent quantities of a considered selection, which would enable everyone to enjoy a sample of each cheese. It's also a lot more work for us to cut and wrap 12 x 100g, rather than say four x 300g. So we try to steer them towards the more concise selection, saving a lot of time.

Largely, dealing with customers in the shop could be said to take as long as it takes, despite the tweaks that we use to jolly things along a bit. When it comes to email and telephone enquiries it can get a lot more difficult. I tend to engage in email discussions only where detailed estimates are involved or for overseas purchasers. These are mainly concerning hampers and cheese wedding cakes. People don't expect an instant response to email and generally I deal with them outside shop hours. However, there's an easy trap to fall into with email correspondence – ping-ponging messages to and fro at eight hour intervals while trying to move customers towards a conclusion. Sometimes I forget that changing the medium of communication and picking up the phone to clarify a point or check on a preference could save a series of emails and bring matters to a close more swiftly.

The telephone can be an awkward tool in a busy shop. If we have a queue, we won't pick up when the phone rings – hopefully our answering machine will deal with that enquiry (often just for opening times) – until we can return the call. It gets sticky when we're talking to a customer on the phone and then a real live punter walks through the door, expecting (and deserving) attention. The visitor can think that we're gossiping with chums and the caller resistant to the call being wrapped up swiftly. We seek to explain to each party that we are busy, and promise to return the call once the visiting customer has been dealt with. Bizarrely, the callers who are least happy about the call being truncated are the true time-wasters – those calling for directions to other shops, those calling to see if we've had deliveries of their favourite free magazine – oh, and sales reps!

I'm not going to get it right all the time. For the last two Christmases I have entered into email conversation with someone who was interested in postal delivery of a cheese we had created for the Radcliffe & Maconie show on BBC Radio. She wanted to know size, price and postage costs – in 2013 she seemed to run out of time as the last message was on 23 December. The following year she asked the very same questions – we gave the revised costs – she then wanted to know if there was a cheaper despatch method. Although wearying of the exchange, I explained that 24 hour delivery was necessary and that less reliable, cheaper couriers could lead to spoiled goods. For the second year running, she declined to purchase, but thanked me for "exceptional customer service"! I was tempted to point out that the term 'customer' is normally used to describe people who actually bought something, but restrained myself. Thankfully so, as she went onto praise the shop fulsomely via social media. Who knew?

DELI DOCTOR



Jo Densley, co-founder of Relish Food Marketing explains the best way to embrace social media

What do I need to know about email marketing?
Email marketing is one of the most powerful and personal ways to connect with your consumers. It allows you to engage with your customer, and will ultimately help you drive your sales. Here are my top tips on how to make your email campaign successful:

1) Email content – will it benefit your readers?
Readers are only interested in things that will help them. Your news isn't necessarily important to readers unless there is some direct benefit to them. Think about how your news can help the reader of your email. For example, if you have a new product launch in-store, when informing readers through email offer an incentive: '10% off when you buy the new range by a certain date' or 'pop into store to try a sample'.

You need to understand your consumer profile and what they are interested in. Do they enjoy new recipes, cooking tips or competitions? Once you know this, emails can be tailored to what they want to hear about.

When composing your email, make sure what is being communicated is personal – include the reader's name and have the mail sent from an actual person, not a company name. Keep the email easy to read by using suitable friendly language, subheadings as signposts, highlighting links clearly, and keeping it short and sweet.

2) It's all in the title
Making the title feel personal, intriguing, fun and even amusing can encourage people to open the email. The title really does need to stand out if the reader has any chance of opening it. Avoid bland titles like 'November Newsletter 2014' as readers will simply delete it. You need to think about what would make someone want to open your email. The word 'free' is worth using from time to time too!

3) The element of surprise
Don't always send out your email at the same time on the same day each week. Mix things up a bit. Experiment with sending emails at different times of days to see which time has the most open rates. Create the element of 'inbox surprise'.

Don't send really long-winded emails, either. If you have a lot to say, it is much better to send short, snappy emails more frequently. Mix up your layout and what you write each time to keep it fresh and interesting.

4) Call to action
Always include a 'call to action' – something you want the reader to do having read the email. It doesn't have to be 'buy now', it could be 'sign up for this free recipe book', 'enter this competition', 'answer this poll about a new flavour', 'post a comment on this blog' or anything else that gets them actively engaging with you.

To avoid confusion, make sure you only have one action per email. Repeat it a few times at different points in the mail too – everyone is ready to act at a different stage. Use short deadlines – 'enter by x' is essential to avoid being filed for another day.

5) Tricks of the trade
Use a hosted email marketing system like **www.mailchimp.co.uk** rather than having one built into your website. It'll be much simpler, up to date and more flexible. It's free for the first 2000 email subscribers, too.

Make subscribing and unsubscribing easy. Add a line in your emails along the lines of 'Has this been forwarded on to you? If so, you can subscribe to receive future emails here: xxx'. Equally, make unsubscribing a one-click action – you'll only alienate readers if there is a complex hoop-jumping process to go through if they want to unsubscribe.

Monitor unsubscribes, open rates and click throughs (from links in your mails) and observe which emails you send produce the best results (20-30% open rate is pretty good, click throughs will be much less).

You need to understand your consumer profile and what they are interested in. Do they enjoy new recipes, cooking tips or competitions? Once you know this, emails can be tailored to what they want to hear about

FARM SHOP Focus

Jon Thorner's Farm Shop is only one division of a growing meat-based business, says owner Jon Thorner



What makes Jon Thorner's Farm Shop special?
We were one of the first farm shop operators, certainly in this particular part of the world.

How much experience do you have in working with meat?
I started my life as a butcher and remain a butcher today, really. I worked in our small family abbatoir on the farm for a short time after leaving school but very quickly I found myself wanting to be involved in retailing food, specifically meat. I went to work for a butcher in Bath for a few years but eventually decided to come back to the farm and open a small shop selling meat.

How did the business develop?
We soon moved into a slightly bigger old farm building. Back then, the business was primarily a meat counter with quite a large freezer centre. Because the meat came direct from the abattoir, we were able to offer it at a price that was between wholesale and retail, and in those days we were a great deal cheaper than the local butcher's shop. We slowly moved into selling other foods, too. Since then, we have moved into our present bespoke premises and sell pretty much everything sold by other farm shops.

How long did it take before you knew the venture would succeed?
I knew it would succeed right from the outset, because after working for a butchery in Bath and earning about £30 a week, I borrowed £2,000 from my father to set up the shop and I think I repaid him within two and half months. I certainly wasn't earning anything like that working for someone else. I knew from the moment I started that I could earn an awful lot more working for myself. The farm shop now attracts around 1,000 visitors weekly and has a turnover of around £20,000.

How would you describe the look of your farm shop to someone who has yet to visit?
We have a very interesting and dynamic fresh meat counter, which is managed by my superb counter butcher, Sam King. Also, while we don't specialize in frozen foods as such, we do still sell quite a lot of food from freezers, which is quite unusual these days. We pack and label a good proportion of these ourselves. This means we can offer a massive selection of meat, including exotic game, at cheaper prices than fresh meat.

What factors influenced your stocking decisions?
Predominantly, we stock locally-produced things and for a while we had Bay Tree on our doorstep. We stock local chutneys jams, honey, ice cream, potatoes from a local farmer and so on. We source as much as we can as locally, and beyond that, we use people like Cottage Delight.

What products are particularly strong sellers?
Meat would be the best seller in any shop. West Country beef and British chicken sell well, along with Packington's Pork, local potatoes and various other items. Our own pies are huge: we make a great many, which we sell not only in our own shop, but also nationally.



" I still find it all exciting. I love coming to work and having plenty on my plate"













How important is the meat packing side of your business?
We cut and pack a great deal of Packington Pork for people like Ocado. Also, what we pack and label for our own retail, we pack and label for other people to retail, too. We have a considerable degree of expertise in this, and have controlled atmosphere packaging facilities to pack and label fresh meat, both for our own shop and for other people to sell.

What other revenue streams do you have?
In addition to the farm shop and the packing, we set up butcheries in other farm shops. I have served a regional chairman of Q Guild of Butchers, and as such, I have visited lots of farm shops and most of the successful meat and food retailers in the area. Before they opened their own farm shop, Tish and Andy Jeffery of Farringtons came to look over our own business. I suggested to Andy that if he was wondering what they were going to do about a butchery, I would be more than happy to talk to him about running a butchery in his shop, which is what we've done since they opened. We've brought the butchery side to his shop and also to White Row Farm Shop, both hugely successful farm shops.

Jon Thorner's sounds like quite a sizeable operation?
Of the 130 people we employ, only around ten work in the farm shop.

How ideal is your location?
We are right on the side of a very busy main road, the A37, fairly close to Shepton Mallet, which is a growing town. The only disadvantage we have here is that we are not surrounded by chimney pots. Our geographic location is not quite as ideal as some farm shops, but our shop still turns over £15-£20,000 weekly, which is not insignificant.

How has the business altered over the years?
The business has changed so much from the initial concept. Because we started predominantly as butchers, we've been able to supply pubs and hotels and restaurants as a secondary business to our farm shop. We have always sold meat as a bolt-on to our retail operation. When we started off, we were just trying to sell as much meat as we could. We have diversified since into a wide range of products. Like most farm shops, we offer a really good choice of products but we are still primarily butchers – that's what we are known as. We have a very strong reputation for quality.

What effect does the Glastonbury Festival produce?
For us, Glastonbury is all swings and roundabouts. It is detrimental to the farm shop, as people perceive the roads to be impassable because of traffic and tend to stay away during the festival, but the bonus we get is that we are the main meat supplier to the site, so we get a huge extra revenue from that.

You open early, at 8 am – what trade do you catch then?
We don't get a great deal of business at this time, as the majority of our business starts trickling in from 9 to 10 onwards. We open at 8 because that's when our staff arrive to clean and restock the shelves.

How do you promote yourselves?
We use a web site, local press and we have used radio, but it is quite expensive. I employ someone to look after the marketing of the business. We keep our name out there by publicising awards we win for our range of products – especially pies and in-store promotions,as well as advertising both in local and in the industry press.

Looking back, is there anything you might have done differently?
The one thing I regret is not learning to delegate responsibilities earlier. I used to think I had to do everything myself, because that was the only way the job would get done properly. As I've got older, I delegate more and more. As long as you delegate those responsibilities to someone you feel confident about doing them, then that is the way to grow a business.

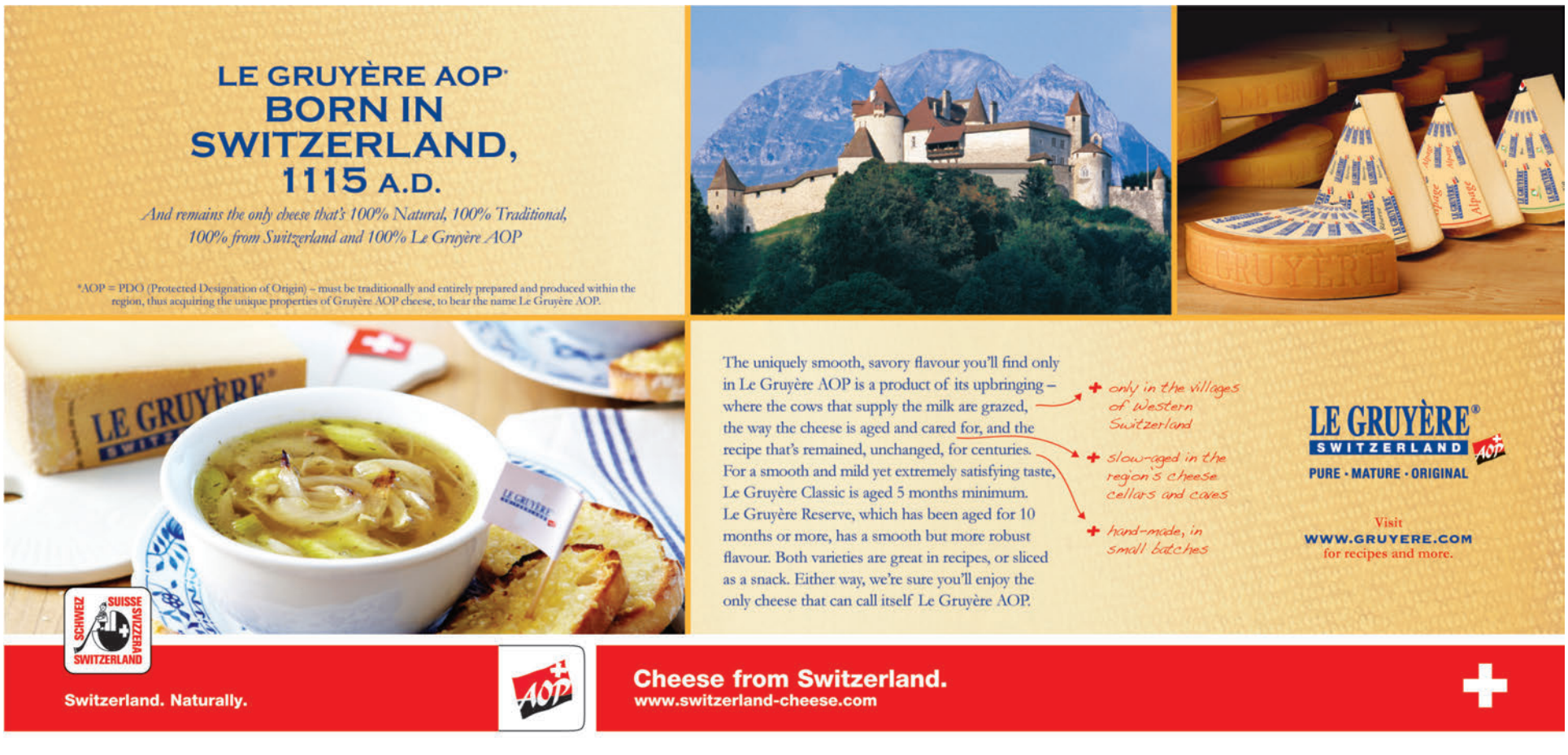
What is the most difficult aspect of running farm shops?
Opening a second shop. I've always said that once you've opened your second outlet, opening a third and a fourth and a fifth is relatively straight forward. Opening a second can be difficult because it's taking resources outside of your comfort zone. It's not right under your nose, either. You have to ensure that the people you have running it are up to the mark. It's all about making sure you have the right people doing the right job.

What are the most important things to get right?
People, management, procedures and detail. One of the things I do more than I see a lot of my competitors doing is moving with the times. This is incredibly hard to do these days, as technology is advancing so quickly. In other parts of our business, as well as in the farm shops, we have tried to embrace new technology. This is because the change in food shopping really is immense.

You mean EPOS systems?
We were one of the first small retailers to take on EPOS, which we did pretty much as soon as it was available. We've adopted that principle through our business. About three years ago, we invested £120,000 in a premium burger machine and it has paid for itself times over. We try and keep up with the times, but I think that the hardest thing now is trying to fulfil the needs of changing shopping habits. Customer are very much wanting meals to go. They don't necessarily want something they put in a microwave. Waitrose and Marks & Spencer are successful because they are creating meals in a foil tray that customers just have to pull the lid off and we are very much trying to create those type of products. This is where we see our business moving. Ready meal solutions, such as two lamb rumps in a foil tray with a garlic butter and herb covering, which people can just take home and pop in the oven.

What do you most enjoy about running a farm shop?
I still find it all exciting. I love coming to work and having plenty on my plate. There's always lots going on, and employing over 100 people is challenging in itself.







To a **Tea**

Cash in on the burgeoning speciality tea market to inspire health and provenance-conscious consumers

The start of a new year always brings with it a host of consumers wanting to look after themselves just a little better than the year before, and a sizeable amount of these turn to speciality teas as a convenient way to aid their quest, whether it be sleeping better, boosting metabolism or detoxing.

2015 will also bring tea lovers who are looking to explore the sector further, moving away from the tried and tested multipacks from the supermarket shelves to something altogether more special. From single estate teas to blends combining fruit with botanicals, variations are numerous, and stocking the classics as well as an unusual option or two is a failsafe way to keep speciality tea lovers happy.

Mint, chamomile, green and fruit teas are all strong sellers across the nation, while naturally caffeine-free redbush is gradually getting a confident footing on the ladder. Meanwhile, consumers are increasingly looking for teas with provenance and a story – leaves from a single origin are becoming more and more attractive, and the Fairtrade mark continues to add ethical kudos to many blends, so is well worth looking into.

While the claims made by such teas may be seen as old quacks' tales to some, the botanical properties offer effects which are hard to come by using other means. A night-time cup of a lavender or chamomile brew has been known to calm restless sleepers, while mint tea has enjoyed success as a stomach settler and digestive aid for generations.

Whether you choose to simply cover the classics or experiment with unusual blends, always bear in mind that the tea industry is rife with innovation. Not only are new flavours constantly appearing on the horizon, but more traditional options are ever evolving to mirror consumers' increasingly demanding tastebuds. Keep an eye out for the latest permutations to keep your customers and profit line content.



Louise Cheadle, co-founder and tea-taster at Teapigs on a burgeoning market

We set out with a plan eight (and a half!) years ago to establish a gourmet tea category in the UK. Speciality tea used to be anything which fell outside the big brands of regular tea, but we felt that there should be a level above that – genuine quality, whole leaf teas and infusions.

We had been to the US and seen shelves full of quality whole leaf teas, despite being a nation of tea lovers the options here for super quality tea were pretty limited or not very accessible. We like to think that we have contributed to the awareness and demand for better quality teas.

Consumers are looking for a wide range of teas. They are aware of oolongs, white teas, matcha, natural and herbal infusions, and the growth the UK has seen in green tea, herbal infusions and quality black teas is only going to continue with younger tea drinkers enjoying lots of different types of teas in more unusual ways such as lattes, bubble tea, iced tea etc. It's an exciting time to be in tea!"



Anthony Terry of Summerdown Mint tells Speciality Food what makes their peppermint teas unique

Summerdown produces two mint teas – English peppermint tea made with pure Black Mitcham mint leaves and English spearmint and camomile tea. We produce both these in packs of 20 enveloped tea bags, but last year we launched a pyramid-shaped tea bag version of our peppermint tea with 15 biodegradable tea bags in a pack. Our teas have won several awards, most notably our pyramid peppermint tea winning a three-star gold in the 2014 Great Taste Awards.

To appreciate what makes Summerdown Mint so different, you have to understand that at the beginning of the last century, England was renowned for producing the best mint in the world – the French still call peppermint menthe anglaise, or English mint. Over the years, pressure to grow food crops and the rising cost of labour brought a decline in cultivation, leaving the US to take over the commercial production of peppermint.

It took Summerdown more than a decade to bring traditional Black Mitcham peppermint home to the UK – and revive the clean, fresh taste of English peppermint for the 21st century. We relearned lost mint farming skills from America and combined them with the latest production technology at our farm in the foothills of the Hampshire downs. The result is a rare single-estate peppermint oil, which is the key to all our peppermint products.

Whereas most herbal teas use only the dried leaf of the plant, to which hot water is added, we use dried pure Black Mitcham mint leaves, which we then infuse with the essential oil from our own distillery. This offers the consumer a more natural and intense flavour. With our spearmint and camomile tea, it is the camomile flowers that are dried and infused with pure spearmint oil, also distilled on the farm.



"As fifth generation family tea farmers, Williamson tea has a unique position within the tea market by being the only brand whose teas come solely from their own farms. All other brands are simply blenders, whereas we control exactly what happens to our teas every step of the way. From bush to cup, it's all us"

Edward Magor, Williamson Tea

QUICKFIRE **QUESTIONS**

WITH LYDIA HARDY, FOOD BUYER AT SNAPE MALTINGS



What speciality teas do you sell?
We have a varied selection of teas that range from Taylors of Harrogate, Teapigs, Teaforia and our own Snape Blend leaf tea. Our Teaforia selection has a range of natural teas and instant tea powders. These tea powders include the green matcha that has health-benefiting antioxidants.

Which are the most popular?
English Breakfast still tops the range, followed closely by Earl Grey and Afternoon Darjeeling. Our Snape leaf blend comes from a single estate in Kenya and we have served it in our teashop for the last 30 years.

Have you seen a growth in the sector in recent years?
Loose leaf tea and green teas have increased in popularity. People are more discerning with their choices when it comes to taste and flavour.

What are the current trends in speciality tea?
Organic teas and single estate teas are getting a growing following. Customers, as with their food, want to know the origins of their tea and that the growers are fairly treated.

What do you think is next for the sector?
There is rising trend in loose leaf and green teas, and teas that have a nutritional element as well as improved flavour.





"Recently we've recognised that customers are becoming more discerning in their product choices and consciously looking for brands that echo these values. 'Going organic' and 'going fair' will be a key focus in the future"

WHAT"S NEXT IN **TEA?**

INNOVATIVE TEA BRANDS ARE SHOWING US THE FUTURE



Sebastian Pole, co-founder and master herbsmith at Pukka Herbs shares his views on the speciality tea industry

The face of the tea industry has transformed dramatically in the past few years, with more consumers favouring green tea rather that the traditional 'builders'. Currently, green tea continues to show the strongest growth in the sector. This change has been driven by more product choice, celebrity devotees and its hugely publicised health benefits.

This year we're expecting to see fruit and herbal teas rise in popularity with some strong new product offerings such as our Wild Apple & Cinnamon and Detox with Lemon. Demand is being driven by consumer awareness of the benefits that herbal products, not just teas, can have on the body.

At Pukka, our commitment to organic, trading fairly and using pharmacopoeial grade herbs is at the heart of absolutely everything we do. Recently we've recognised that customers are becoming more discerning in their product choices and consciously looking for brands that echo these values – 'going organic' and 'going fair' is something we personally believe should, and will be, a key focus in the future.

LATEST AND **GREATEST**

THE NEWEST TRENDS TO BE AWARE OF…

- **Bubble tea:** Invented in Taiwan in the eighties, bubble tea consists of tapioca 'pearls' added to a tea-based drink
- **Tea latte:** popularised in recent years via chai tea lattes, consumers are waking up to the fact that all teas can be made into a latte by simply doubling the strength of the tea and adding hot steamed milk
- **Kombucha:** fermented tea which boasts several – not scientifically-proven – health benefits



Stock Check



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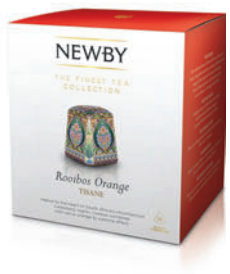
Pukka Herbal Collection

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www.pukkaherbs.com



Bothams of Whitby Resolution Tea

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Newby Rooibos Orange

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Tactics for Success

As a small business owner, it's all too easy to follow the same sales tactics and strategies year in, year out. But, as technology develops and customer buying habits change, now's the time to employ new methods that could reinvigorate your business and ensure your survival in the future, says Nicola Whiteford

Traditionally, independent food retailers have relied upon tried and tested methods to increase footfall and promote their businesses. But, in an age where the consumer expects so much more from their shopping experience, putting up a few shelf barkers and re-writing your 'A' boards each day are not necessarily the recipe for business growth and prosperity. In 2015, making some changes to the way you run your business could ensure your future in the years to come and put you one step ahead of the competition.

Stand out from the crowd

Competition in the food world is rife, so if you do one thing this year, make sure your business stands out. It's very easy to assume that customers know why they should be shopping with you, but more often than not, spelling out exactly what makes you special or different will help you gain more customers. "We believe it is vitally important for independent food retailers to provide customers with relevant information of what products are available in-store and what makes them special or different, in order to capture greater interest from their visiting customers," explains Brad Wright, operations manager at Marimba World Chocolate. "It's all about telling the 'story' that is behind the products."

Understand your customers

Technology can be daunting, but embracing some of what it has to offer can make a difference to your business. Luxury food delivery brand, Farmison has reported a significant sales growth since implementing email marketing from Bronto Software. By gaining a better understanding of customer behaviour and product preference, the company has been able to bring customers back from up to two years prior and generate a year-on-year revenue increase of 160% during its peak season. Lee Simmonds, co-Founder of Farmison & Co, said, "We only started using Bronto in October 2013 but we can already see the potential. Following its advice, after a customer placed an order we tracked when they would receive it and sent out cooking instructions with recipes. People loved it."

Cheaper than the supermarkets

So many consumers still believe that delis and farm shops are pricier than the multiples, so it's important to dispel this myth. One way to do this is to keep track of the prices in your nearest supermarket. As Anthony Davison, founder of www.bigbarn.co.uk, explains, "If you have products that are cheaper than the supermarket, tell your customers using a whiteboard so they can quickly compare prices whilst they're shopping with you. A visual aid like this will have more impact than simply telling them it's cheaper.


Brad and Katherine Wright of Marimba


A café or restaurant on-site could help you increase footfall and overall profits

Introduce a loyalty scheme

Once the preserve of large retailers, loyalty cards are now being used by a whole range of businesses in order to entice customers and build a stronger business. As Julie Hall, sales director at Sun Branding Solutions explains, "a loyalty scheme will give you the opportunity to build a customer profile, measure how far they have come and the products they are buying so you can tailor offers to their specific requirements. Offer good value backed by outstanding customer service, innovative new products and marketing activity both in store and online to get the most from your loyalty scheme."

Open a café

If you're a farm shop or deli with space to spare, then a café or restaurant on-site could help you increase footfall and overall profits. In fact, since opening its new 40-cover café in May, Quicke's Farm Shop has seen a surge in sales. "Since the Kitchen opened the farm shop has seen a notable increase in sales as the café adds a new dimension and makes Quicke's more of a visitor destination." Pearce's Farm Shop opened its café three years ago and hasn't looked back since. "Our café has attracted totally different customers and considerably increased business in the shop. The regularly changing menus highlights use of our own home-grown produce and suppliers, which encourages customers to then buy from the shop. Our chefs also supply the shop with our own range of freshly cooked deli items – ready meals, pies, quiches, tarts, salads and coleslaws."

Improve your online offer

Nowadays, an online presence is essential, whether you are selling online or not. Consumers want to check out somewhere before they invest time or energy in visiting, so a website is vital. If you do decide to sell online, then remember the competition you'll be up against – the likes of Tesco, Ocado, Sainsbury's and co hold no prisoners, so make sure your website offers everything the modern-day consumer expects. As Julie Hall, sales director at Sun Branding Solutions explains, "With more people shopping online, good product photography and concise information should be readily available, along with useful content such as recipes or helpful 'how to use' guides."

Create brand awareness

Getting customers through your door once is a start, but to get them coming back again means communicating with your customers. As Simon Horton of e-commerce expert, ShopIntegrator, explains, you need to give customers a reason to stay interested in your brand, otherwise they'll soon forget you. "If you have an online presence, try writing a regular blog with content of interest to your target market. This not only keeps your brand in the customers' mind, but it also establishes your business as a knowledgeable source of relevant information and gives existing customers a reason to keep coming back and could lead to new customers who may find you in a search for information."

Inspect your layout

Supermarkets are constantly overhauling their layouts, which, although confusing for customers, can actually increase sales. Most customers will walk through a shop in






Quicke's Farm Shop


Cheese-tasting at Pearce's Farm Shop




Melrose & Morgan's elegant counter


Nick Selby and Ian James

the same way each visit, so certain product lines or whole sections can easily be missed. Reconsidering your layout or moving stock around can actually increase overall spend and reintroduce your customers to forgotten products. Quicke's Farm Shop recently underwent a layout change, which has already had a beneficial impact on the business and overall customer satisfaction. "We wanted to open up the space while creating additional areas to display more new products," explains Lucy Quicke. "The updated floor plan has provided room to create feature areas and has enabled us to improve the sampling opportunities – which are key to sales."

Exploit social media

There's no denying the reach of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc; these social platforms have changed business marketing and any retailer not involved in some kind of social media is missing a trick. Twitter and Facebook provide a very cost-effective and instant means of connecting and interacting with customers. Quicke's Farm Shop has made social media an important part of its marketing strategy, and it's paying dividends. "One area where we're active is social media – keeping members of the public updated as to what's happening at Home Farm," explains Lucy Quicke. "From events such as Apple Day, through to our 'Cheese of the Month,' we are able to connect in a much more personal way and build meaningful relationships with customers and our amazing producers."

Know your business

Sourcing is key for any good food store, and introducing new ranges is a great way to retain customers and keep them interested, but ensure you have all the knowledge at your disposal to make these products sell. As Anthony Davison at BigBarn explains, "Offer a traditional service with contemporary products. The large grocery retailers rarely offer one-on-one advice, so as smaller independent retailers this is your greatest asset. Talk to your customers and and offer advice and recipe suggestions. Build a reputation for knowing all about the products you are selling."

Heart of the community

As an independent store, the success of your business is not only determined by your customers, but also the businesses around you. To truly succeed, it is important to work with other members of the community and find ways that you can team up and help improve sales for all of you. As Nick Selby and Ian James, owners Melrose & Morgan, explain, "With two shops in 'village' type communities in central London (Primrose Hill and Hampstead), we've endeavoured to build relationships within the community, both on a one-on-one level, through to working with local businesses and other community groups where possible. It is important that we're at the heart of the neighbourhood."

Only as good as your staff

Service is key and ensuring your have the right staff can be the difference between success and failure. Your staff should share the same enthusiasm as you do and be just as creative. If staff are under-performing, organise reviews and give them feedback. Get them more involved in planning and furnish them with a better understanding of the industry in order to get the very best from them. "Our staff share our passion for good food," explains Ed Pearce at Pearce's Farm Shop, "They visit national food shows and fairs and taste and learn about the products to fully inform customers."

Invest in EPOS

Understanding your sales and stock is a great way to prevent waste and appeal to your customers' needs. For Melrose & Morgan, investment in an EPOS system has paid dividends. "EPOSs main function in our business at present involves recording and analysis of sales data," explain Nick Selby and Ian James, "We invested in an EPOS system four and a half years ago and it has been a great tool to making 'fact' rather than 'gut' based decisions. It has helped us make previous winners even stronger and also to to eliminate slow sellers by understanding what works and what actually doesn't."

In-store promotions

Keep your offer fresh for customers by running regular promotions. People love a good deal, so consider lines where you can offer discounts and still retain a good margin. At Pearce's Farm Shop, the team sells over 50 British cheeses and promotes three or four every month with a 20% discount, thereby boosting overall sales and introducing customers to cheeses they might not normally have purchased.

Be prepared for change

You only have to look at Tesco's plummeting profits to realise that the retail world is an unstable one and reacting to change could be the difference between survival and extinction. Keeping a keen eye on your figures, business plan and the economic situation can help you navigate a sometimes rocky path. As Nick Selby and Ian James, owners Melrose & Morgan, explain, "No matter how good your business strategy is in the first place, things change; staff, customer needs, economic conditions, property issues to name a few. These changes have an impact and you need to react to them. The food industry is so immediate that responding quickly is critical to ensuring that you balance sales with losses."



Everybody **Chill**

For despatching fresh food to distant customers and for keeping food fresh in-store, temperature-controlled packaging is the way forward



Increasingly, independent food retailers are supplementing their over-the-counter activities with mail order, on-line and home delivery services. These extend the services they are able to offer customers, provide the sort of convenience available through other retail outlets and mean that retail activities need no longer be confined to the local area. Selling online can also allow the retailer to tap into export markets for a great many uniquely British foods.

Sorba-Freeze

This has long been viable for ambient foodstuffs but perishable products and those requiring chilling have presented problems in the past. These days there is a range of solutions provided by manufacturers of temperature controlled packaging which are effective in getting your product to your customer in perfect condition and these don't cost the earth, either. One popular method of transporting food safely or just keeping it correctly temperature when removed from the chiller cabinet, is the refrigerant pad. Leading the way in this field is Sorba-Freeze, whose managing director, Colin Brown, tells Speciality Food that Sorba-Freeze refrigerant pads are "made from a non-woven fabric, pe/pept silver film and a food contact-approved super-absorbent powder."

Together, Colin says, these elements "make a flexible refrigerant



blanket in either roll form or sheet form. Each box (both sheet and reel format) contains 9,600 tea bag-like cells and in the dry state, the box weighs approximately 10kg. When soaked in water and then frozen, the total weight of the box increases to 384kg." This means, he adds, "that small users have no problem with storage, as only the amount required for use at that time actually needs to be prepared.

"Using Sorba-Freeze refrigerant pads on the top of the transit box (cold drops downwards) means that the producer has peace of mind that the temperature of the product packed should not have more than a 1.2 degree uplift over 24/36 hours," Colin says. "Increased use of Sorbafreeze by tucking the flexible refrigerant blanket down the side as well will further ensure this."

This is a product that independent retailers will find very easy and convenient to use, as Colin explains. "The powder is activated by immersion in water – slightly warm water activates the powder quicker. The cells, which swell up to produce a quilted blanket effect," he says, "ensure that the pads are dry and then freeze." Colin advises that if the retailer is multi-freezing, he should "layer with a thin sheet of polythene."

This effective method of controlled temperature packaging is surprisingly cost efficient, too. "Sorba-Freeze produces a cost-effective chill solution, as each cell weighing 40 grams when hydrated and frozen, costs less than two pence each," Colin says. People interested in the concept but wanting to try before they buy will be interested to learn of Sorba-Freeze's sample packs. These "are readily available to allow potential customers to trial the Sorba-Freeze solution and to see its impressive performance in conjunction with their own packaging," Colin says. "Both roll



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"This effective method of controlled temperature packaging is surprisingly cost efficient, too"

material and sheets are in the trial pack. This allows the potential customer to see the benefits of the roll material, which is perforated after every cycle to permit a variation of size to be used, and the precut sheets which allow the same size can be used."

Sorba-Freeze's silver film produces a cold-effect look and reflects heat and never leaks, meaning an end to soggy packaging. Flexible, lightweight and economical, it wraps around products giving extra protection and can be used in direct contact with food. Whether used with polystyrene, cardboard or plastic boxes, customers will find this method of temperature controlled packaging is effective, reliable and cost-efficient.

Hydropac

"Hydropac is the UK's largest producer of ready-hydrated ice sheets, insulated boxes, envelopes and carrier bags for distributing perishable food by mail order at the correct temperature," says Hydropac's sales manager Adam Hart. "Our unique manufacturing process allows us to seal the ice packs through the liquid, giving a much stronger product, with minimal empty air space inside the ice packs. Hydropac excels in the manufacture of water and gel ice packs in all shapes, sizes, colours and styles. All our ice packs are microbiologically-tested at an independent laboratory to guarantee that they are entirely food safe. These ice packs are delivered pre-filled in cardboard boxes or open-top trays that can be placed directly in the freezer and will not stick together when frozen. We can print these ice sheets with the cutomer's logos and company details at no extra cost (subject to a minimum order quantity)."

Adam says that the Hydropac range has been designed to keep food products at the correct temperature for a minimum of 24 hours, allowing "high quality, perishable goods to be dispatched through standard, ambient courier networks. Our boxes, envelopes and bags all use a special recyclable, food-safe, low density polyethylene foam as an insulator. This is virtually indestructible and offers great physical protection, as well as maintaining the cool chain. The products are not only 100% recyclable, but are mostly produced from recycled materials. They are completely food-safe and exceed the current legislation for the distribution of mail-order food."

Performance-wise, Adam says, the boxes have been designed to rival standard polystyrene products. "They are supplied flat-packed, saving on space, and can be printed to customers' own designs. These systems work perfectly well for shipping anything, from a Christmas turkey to a selection of cheese, to a weekly meat-box order. Like all of our products, they are fully tested and certified and usually available off the shelf with next-day delivery. To help people get their mail order business up and running, we have a minimum order quantity of just 25 units; however, we also offer a bespoke design service at no extra cost (subject to a minimum order quantity of just 350 units) should your products not fit with our off-the-shelf items, and there will not be any tooling charges."

The company also offers insulated envelopes. "The Hydropac Postal Pockets have been designed for the distribution of thinner products, such as smoked salmon, hams, bacon or similar items," Adam says. "However, they are also proving popular with people who need to keep a single item chilled within an otherwise ambient hamper. Again, these items can be fully printed (subject to a minimum order quantity) at no extra cost and are fully recyclable. Our insulated carrier bags maintain food products at the correct temperature from the shop to the customer's home. These waterproof, recyclable bags are extremely durable. Subject to a minimum order quantity, these too can be fully printed. They are held in stock in plain silver and are supplied in boxes of 100 units.

JB Packaging

Also widely used as a solution for keeping food cool in transit are polystyrene boxes such as those which can be speedily ordered (48 hour delivery, 24 on request) from JB Packaging. This company, says marketing manager Janet Adams, supplies "a range of temperature-controlled packaging solutions and sundries." Orders may be placed online, "for one box to pallet loads," Janet says. Alternatively, JB Packaging "can offer preferential pricing for larger quantities. Distribution from Brixham, Devon and Livingston, Scotland is throughout the UK."

The products, Janet says, are "very lightweight, with excellent thermal qualities." Because of this, she says, contents can be kept cold or hot (the EPP reusable deluxe boxes are ideal for transporting hot food such as home delivery ready-to-eat meals) and shipping costs are reduced. "Both polystyrene and deluxe are used in all our sizes, depending on customer needs, for safe delivery to a customer, or returnable boxes for taking to market or shows," Janet says.

JB Packaging's customer services team is "on-hand to assist with recommendations as to how many ice packs are required to keep products cool until they reach their destination," Jane says. How many ice packs you need depends "on the size of box required for your product," Janet says. "We currently have a range of 45 boxes, including reusable." The company supplies two types of ice, these being hydrated and non- hydrated.



JB Packaging

ThermaFreeze Europe

The ThermaFreeze option is unique in many ways, says director, Luke Stimson but most important is "the level of performance it can deliver to so many different applications. ThermaFreeze is independently-tested to be approximately eight times more efficient than gel packs at



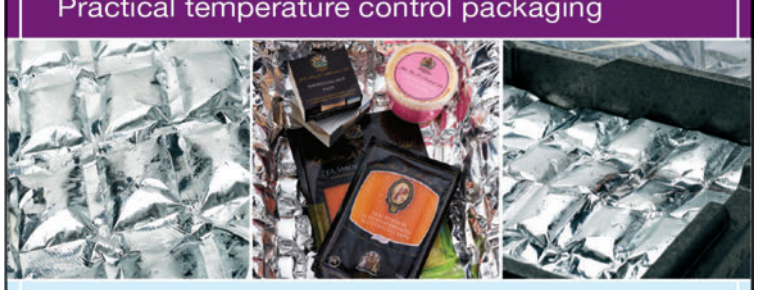
Therma Freeze

absorbing heat from its surroundings. ThermaFreeze refrigerant exceeds the capacities of water, ice, gel packs and dry ice when applied to protect temperature sensitive shipments." ThermaFreeze products are simple to use, Luke says: "hydrate, freeze, use, re-use!"

ThermaFreeze Europe, Luke says, is excited about its launch of an "exclusive range of Designer Ice." This range will give customers "a new and unique way to present their product with the same unbeatable performance and quality."

ThermaFreeze is particularly effective for fish, cheese, meat, and vegetables. ThermaFreeze differs from solid gel packs in the way it is flexible when frozen," Luke says. "This allows you to form the coolant around your products, giving you maximum cooling and minimizing hot spots within the box. As we're all aware, couriers can be heavy-handed with consignments. However, with the flexibility of ThermaFreeze, you are given a more forgiving protection for fragile or for soft products."

ThermaFreeze products are both reusable and eco-friendly, Luke says. "When our customers use ThermaFreeze, this is only the beginning of the product's life. Rather than the end-user throwing away the soggy ice packs that arrive with their goods, the extreme durability of ThermaFreeze means it can be reused hundreds of times."

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Feast in Pickering: a well presented deli

Trade Secrets

Over the past year, owners of some of the finest delis and farm shops in the country have shared their experiences of various aspects of independent food retail, offering a lot of valuable insights along the way. Here is a collation of retailers' experiences of matters which may well touch on your own experience

The personal touch

Knowing (and remembering) the names of customers is important to many retailers. At Stewarts Butchers in Enniskillen, Shane Stewart tries "to create a family-type atmosphere. We know the majority of our customers by name." In Chelsea's Le Pascalou, it is the same story. At this French-themed deli, manager Vincent Saladin puts "a lot of effort into building strong relationships with regular customers. Some people have been coming in here for ten years and they've now got children. I know their names and when they were born. I encourage my staff to call customers by their names and ask about the kids, and they love that. Asking about how customers have spent their weekend helps build a rapport, and the conversation is easily led into one about what new produce the



Le Pascalou: "know their names"

shop has received that morning. A good relationship with customers is where we try and make a difference. How else do you encourage casual customers to call again?" Mark Kacary of The Norfolk Deli "acknowledges every single person that comes into the shop. We talk to them and people get to know us and we get to know them. We work very hard to understand what our customer base wants." And this, he says, gives the shop an important point of difference. "We offer something hugely different from the supermarkets: exceptional customer service levels."

Suppliers

Finding the right suppliers is a subject close to the hearts of many.



Home & Colonial: encountered inflexibility

"We go out of our way to find quality suppliers," says Shane Stewart, "we're not one of those businesses that rings round every factory on a Monday morning looking for the cheapest cuts." Small producers, however, can bring their own problems. When Abbe Vaughan and her husband Stuart opened the Home & Colonial deli in Porthcawl, she wasn't prepared for "the inflexibility that using local suppliers can give you. A lot of people want local produce, like honey, but because these are very much cottage industries, they are not geared to supply in growth and on demand as much as we would like. So having to take some of our local suppliers into that next stage of growth was something we hadn't allowed for at all."

Traceability and provenance

The effects of the horsemeat scandal were still being felt and retailers reported increased interest from customers in matters of provenance and traceability. Simon Beckett of Becketts Farm Shop in the West Midlands "buys from an abattoir, which guarantees that it will only take livestock from within a fifty mile radius, so reducing stress on the animal. Horsegate was just brilliant for us. We could tell people that the mince 'came from that chuck, which came from that cow', not that it went to a factory and was processed." At Cranstons' in Penrith, Philip Cranston says that this food hall's meat, "comes from trusted local farmers with whom we have long-standing relationships. All our meat has full traceability, which our butchers are happy to share with our customers. The meat is all Red Tractor and quality standard approved." Transparency, says Aaron Linch of The Food Company. "is crucial with good food retail."

Quality/local

What's more important: quality produce or the fact that it is locally sourced? Both, says Chris Brennan of Orford's Pump Street Bakery. "It's got to be really good stuff. It's got to be local. If it's local but if it's not very good, I don't use it." Being local is an important consideration for Nicola Reece of Farmers Fayre in the Midlands: "whether the local



Hawarden Farm Shop: "they must have the product"



products are sourced through distributors or from people knocking on the door. We want it as local as possible, definitely British, and good value for money." But, she adds, "there's no point in stocking something because it is made down the road, when it's twice the price."

This is a point echoed by Alan Downes at Hawarden Farm Shop in Flintshire: "Sometimes, people will say, 'I have a local product and therefore you should stock me.' But if it's not quite on the button, it doesn't make it. We will always give people a little leg up, but they have to have the product." Bettina Bell of Lewis & Cooper in Northallerton chooses stock on the grounds of "price, provenance (ie, how local), quality and taste. On the ambient side, we try and get as much as we can locally, but these products are limited. Fresh is easier – for example, we have some stunning cheese producers who are virtually on our doorstep."

Charlottte Hollins of The Fordhall Farm Shop says that when it comes to making stocking decisions, "local is important, but we also like the cottage industries, people who are just starting up and are making products with real provenance. Our favourite suppliers are local and organic. Our philosophy is to source what we can locally, and that might be from within a 30-40 mile radius. If we can't get it locally, we might go a bit further afield, but then we prioritise it being organic."

Cheese

Speciality Food likes to keep an eye on the stockings of cheesecounters across the country. "Careful stocking is essential to the success of any cheesemonger," says the Stamford Cheese Cellar, where Karen and George Brammer stock "as many British cheeses as we can. We have Cote Hill Blue, Lincolnshire Poacher, new Wodehill Blue and cheeses from Suffolk and Norfolk, too." An excellent cheesecounter, George says, should include "a good Cheddar and a fantastic Brie. We've got Baron Bigod, which is probably the best English Brie around now, better than any French Brie and very hard to get hold of. We are getting people coming back for that and I don't think there's anyone else in the area stocking it." Another essential inclusion, he maintains, is Stilton. "We're close to that area, so we stock all the Stiltons and Stichelton, too." Continentals at Stamford include "Brie de Mieux, Camembert, Raclette, Roquefort, Gruyère Reserve, Vacheron in season and Manchego." George's policy on stocking British or Continental cheeses is simple: "where the foreigners are better, we stock them," he said, "but where there is an English equivalent, we stock that." Elise Jungheim of Country Cheeses of Totnes doesn't stock Continental cheeses: "In the early days," she says, "people questioned our decision not to stock Continental cheeses, but we felt it was important to have a real connection with the product we sold and support our dairy industry. 25 years later, I am glad we stuck to our guns."


Stamford Cheese Cellar

The 107 different cheeses stocked at The Food Company in Essex are chosen firstly for quality, managing director Aaron Linch says, "then we look for exclusive cheese that cannot be found everywhere." Selling strongly, he says, have been "Black Bomber, Epiosse, Walnut Rambol, Suffolk Gold, Cornish Yarg, Smoked Applewood, Brie de Meaux and Colston Basset Stilton." At Lawsons Deli, Claire Bruce Clayton's stocking decisions were "driven by customer demand." The focus at Lawsons, Claire told Speciality Food, was "on artisan cheesemakers. We don't stock things like block Cheddars and we also don't stock flavour-added cheeses. We do a good range of East Anglian cheeses but also stock English and cheeses from all over the world." Upton Smokery's farm shop has "a pretty eclectic cheese range," says owner Chris Mills. "Some of this is fairly local, but I've never been persuaded by the local aspect. There is so much good food from so many places, not just in the UK, but on the Continent, too. Why narrow your range because of that?" Paul Denham, of Walsingham Farm Shops in Norfolk agrees: "Locally, we have a good range of hard, soft, goats and blue cheeses, but if there's a great Cheddar we want, we will go somewhere else to get it."

Wine

To pair with the cheese, a lot of delis are finding that stocking a selection of wines has its pros and cons. Alcohol sales at Provender Brown in Perth, says Diane Brown, "account for about 13% of our net turnover but the margin is lower than other areas of the business. On the plus side, it is less labour-intensive than other areas and there



Provender Brown: wine offers good turnover but low margins



are no 'best before' dates or waste!" Selling wine can "bring in customers who are only looking for wine, as well as offering a “one-stop” experience for customers who would otherwise have to go elsewhere and scope for add-on sales." But with supermarket prices as keen as Sweeney Todd's razor, why buy from delis? "Firstly, there's convenience," Diane says, "they’re in buying other things and pick up a bottle or two while they’re at it."

George Brammer of The Stamford Cheese Cellar suggests including "a nice Bordeaux, a crisp white Cabernet Sauvignon and port for the Stiltons." But in George's experience, there is "not a lot of profit," in selling wine, especially when the shop owner is competing with supermarkets selling it at £5 per bottle. If you are going to stock wine, then limit your ambitions, said Karl Sergison of Sergi's Deli in Spalding, because "if you have a massive stock, your rotation is never going to be as good as a supermarket's. While reds can often be laid down, rosés have only a two year life and then they are gone." Instead, he said, stock "a few quality wines like Montrachet and Chablis but some run-of-the-mill ones at reasonable prices, too, such as Merlots, Cabernet Sauvignons, Sauvignon Blancs and rosés."

Tastings

Many retailers find that tastings are sales tools worth the loss of a few ounces of cheese or whatever else is offered. Andy Jeffery of



Partridge's: competitions can work

Farrington's Farm Shop in Somerset: "the deli is always tasting and puts out a lot of home-cooked food, such as scotch eggs, pies, quiches, all the small stuff that people might buy on a whim. Tasting is done in three ways. Deli tasting, where food is put out, people can help themselves and the deli manager is there to talk to them if needed. It's a chance to open a conversation with the customer. Then there's the tasting where our staff are behind a table in the shop. This is more of a high pressure sale: staff will ask customers if they like the product and want to buy some. Then there are the outside suppliers who come in and organise the tastings with their own products. Sales are higher in these last two categories." Event days can be



Farringtons: three ways of tasting



Walsingham Farms Shop: be clear about your customers

effective ways of getting the most from tastings. "You can try to make something out of any event," says John Shepherd of London's Partridge's. "For example, January's a quiet month, but it includes Australia Day so you can do an Australian wine tasting. It's amazing who comes out of the woodwork – people who have visited Australia, who are Australian or who love Australian wines. There's also Burns Night, for which you can do a tasting of haggis and Scottish whisky. It's great to have a situation where customers can pop into the deli, thinking 'what's going on this month?'" At The Hampers Food and Wine Company, owner Wayne Boyes holds tasting evenings. "Our wine, cheese and oil tasting evening was very successful," he says, "20 people paid £15 per ticket and got a bottle of wine to take home." During the evening, guests "got to try eight different wines from across the world." The store also holds curry and local beer tasting evenings.

Promotions

“We have one or two people who tweet and deal with social media," says John Shepherd of Partridges. "We've found Twitter to be helpful with regards to letting people know what's going on, and that's all free advertising and marketing. You need to get your suppliers involved too. If they tweet to their followers and yours, there's a real snowball effect. Just the informational aspect of it won't really work, it's too dry. It's a case of building a community." Competitions have their uses, too, he says. "Without much cost, you can do a hamper competition and build up a database of names. Just ask people to make a note of their names and addresses or leave their business cards with you, and just like that, you have the start of a database." Sue Hudson of the Ashburton Delicatessen, does "some limited local advertising, and posts on Facebook and Twitter when we have something new to report, but as a small, new business, advertising can very swiftly swallow a lot of your business."

"Asking about how customers have spent their weekend helps build a rapport, and the conversation is easily led into one about what new produce the shop has received that morning."

At the Fordhall Farm Shop, Charlotte Hollins promotes in "any way we can. Face to face, email lists, loyalty cards, Facebook and Twitter. We have a website and we also send out press releases." Wayne Boyes, who owns The Hampers Food and Wine Company in Woodstock, Oxon, aims his promotions at local businesses. "We give them 10% discount on sandwiches, which boosts our revenue during the day, but also gives these customers a little something back. We are forever developing ideas to avoid having a quiet month."

Secrets of success

Anyone want to tell us how to succeed? In Vincent Saladin's opinion, the secret to running a deli successfully lies in achieving "a good balance in everything. It's no good having high quality products if your staff isn't qualified to sell them or aren't happy to be there." Management, he says, must "have the respect of the staff." At Norfolk's Walsingham Farm Shops, Paul Denham says "you have to leverage what you do well. Be clear about who your customer is and what they want from you and be good at delivering that. It's all about availability, quality and communication." Staying with East Anglia, Anthony Cude of Bakers and Larners in Holt, says that if there's a secret to running a food hall successfully, it lies in having "good, passionate staff...and keeping up to date with current trends." For Charlotte Hollins of the Fordhall Farm Shop, the secret of successful trading lies in engaging with your customers, "but also," she says, "listen to your customers and never be scared of doing something different. Stay true to your principles and you should never stop evolving."




Red Ruby Devons on Exmoor.
© Devon Cattle Breeders Society

Welcome to the West

The West Country is a storehouse of top-quality artisan produce



Few regions of Britain boast such a diverse wealth of food as the West Country. The area has its long-standing, traditional food industries but in recent years, its bucolic charms, healthy lifestyle and changing coastline have attracted all sorts of people from beyond its borders, seeking to start new lives in the West, and among them not a few artisan food producers. Perhaps not surprisingly, makers of air-dried charcuterie, bread, honey, preserves and much more are adding to the culinary diversity of this attractive part of the country. But think West Country food and drink and no doubt Cornish pasties, Devon cream teas and Somerset cider are the first things to spring to mind. These ever-popular West Country products are evaluated in this special section, which celebrates the best food and drink from this fascinating region.

Cornwall is a foodie's paradise. While traditionally-minded people may prefer local specialities such as 'heavy cakes,' 'squab pie' and 'scrowled' pilchards to stargazy pie, (which takes its name from the staring heads of fish which poke upwards through the crust), the county is justly famed for its variety of seafood and the high quality of its dairy produce. Cornish cheeses such as Cornish Yarg and Cornish Blue are widely enjoyed, but other excellent examples include Cornish Brie, Gevrik and Tesyn. Cornish butter and clotted cream by producers such as Rodda's are among the finest to be found in or out of the region. Brewing has long been big in Cornwall, but now the bigger brewers such as St Austell and Sharp's have been joined by a raft of small batch producers of artisan ales and craft beers.

Many of the specialities of the area are claimed by more than one county, and Devon's white pudding, a highly-spiced pork dish, is also popular in Cornwall, where it is served as hog's pudding. Pasties, clotted cream, cream teas and creamy fudge are also produced in more than one West Country county. Devon, though, is rich in fresh vegetables and summer fruits and also has healthy meat and fish production. Among the notable cheeses of Devon are Quicke's Traditional, Beenleigh Blue, Devon Blue and Sharpham. Cider is the traditional drink here, but beer and Plymouth gin are produced too, as well as fruit cordials, notably by Luscombe, and there are now a number of vineyards which produce competitive white wines. Somerset's cider and cheese are known the world over, of course. The county boasts some of the most respected Cheddar makers in the country: Godminster, Keen's, Montgomery's and Westcombe. Dorset offers Blue Vinny, a distinctive veined cheese, Cranborne and Dorset Red. Dorset also boasts the well-known olive merchant Olives Et Al.

Pioneering spirits

Deli Farm Charcuterie is perhaps typical of the pioneering spirit which the area fosters, particularly when it comes to artisan foods. Its charcuterie, including air-dried salami, coppa, bresaola and pancetta, is made on the windswept hills of the Cornish coast. Deli Farm's Jean Edwards says the West Country is actually ideal for producing her charcuterie products. "The meats available in the West Country are second to none, because the area's climate produces very good grazing." The advent of modern technology, she says, "means we can create the right climatic condition to allow us to air-dry charcuterie here, a technique we pioneered in this area." This pioneering spirit is strong in the West Country, Jean says. "Because we are right out at the end of the country, we have to look after ourselves."





TASTE OF **THE WEST**

Taste of the West is a unique supply chain cooperative for food and drink producers, distributors, restaurants, cafés, pubs, hotels, farm shops and speciality retailers based in the heart of South West England – all passionate about the provenance and quality of the products they make, serve or sell. The company was established over 20 years ago and now, with over 1,000 members, continues to grow as the largest independent regional food group in the UK. The organisation encourages foodservice and retail establishments in the South West to source and supply quality local products, and helps food and drink producers find routes to market. The Taste of the West brand is representative of the quality and integrity of the food and drink produced in the South West region. As well as promoting and supporting the local food and drink industry, Taste of the West – through its commercial arm – also helps buyers to easily source top quality West Country products. Taste of the West membership opens the door to a variety of opportunities to help businesses grow. It is a recognised brand and members displaying the Taste of the West logo are clearly demonstrating their passion and support for local and regional produce to their customers and consumers.


Taste of the West winners 2014

AWARDS **PROGRAMME**

Taste of the West runs the UK's largest regional awards programme for products, as well as hospitality and retail establishments. Now in their 22nd year, these awards have been instrumental in raising the awareness of a new food and drink culture in South West England. The Taste of the West Product Awards programme is open to members and non-members of Taste of the West. Visit www.tasteofthewest.co.uk to download the entry form. The deadline for all entries is Friday, 3rd April. One of the greatest membership benefits for foodservice establishments and retail outlets across the South West is receiving free entry into the Taste of the West Hospitality & Retail Awards. The Taste of the West Hospitality & Retail Awards are now open for 2015 and entrants will be judged between now and July by experienced industry professionals. Visit www.tasteofthewest.co.uk to find out more about the categories and how to register. Taste of the West is also involved in supporting and organising a number of consumer and trade events (regional and national) throughout the year.


Martin and Jean Edwards of Deli Farm Charcuterie

Building Business with Cream Teas



Devon and Cornish cream teas may celebrate their differences, but they are both proven money-makers

The West Country, as these pages testify, is one of the country's great storehouses of food.

But forget, for the moment, about crisp ciders, warm pasties and full truckles of mature Somerset Cheddar, because if there is one product that might be said to encompass the West Country experience, it's the humble cream tea. Consisting of two scones, served with a dollop of clotted cream, a spoonful of strawberry (or raspberry) jam and a cup of tea, this is the fad-busting dish that provides an enormous number of businesses in this region with a small but regular additional revenue, year after year. Few of the thousands of visitors that the region attracts annually will depart without having consumed at least one of these simple confections. It's a West Country must-do. Food sellers and producers might learn a thing or two from the rise of this simple combination, which is now the ubiquitous staple of tea-rooms, hotels, farm shop cafés and every other kind of retail outlet to be found in the Western counties. It's not a recent phenomenon, either; a version of the cream tea is said to have been eaten by monks at Tavistock Abbey in Devon, a thousand years ago.

One of the reasons for the popularity of this indulgent dish is the quality of its ingredients, the clotted cream in particular. Dairy is, of course, very much central to the food economy of the West Country. Lush and rain-fed grasslands provide ideal grazing for the dairy herds, whose milk produces some of the best cheeses in the country and also very high quality cream. Rodda's, perhaps Britain's best known maker of high-quality clotted cream, has been producing the product in the heart of Cornwall since 1890 and, after a rebranding in recent years, saw an immediate increase in sales. The product has benefited from the increase in interest in home baking, managing director Nicholas Rodda has said, and "an awareness that Cornish clotted cream has many uses beyond the cream tea."

But clotted cream is still the key ingredient which, generously served, turns a mere scone with jam into a Devon or Cornwall cream tea. While similar combinations of fresh scone, clotted cream and jam are sold as cream teas in other counties, none competes with the popularity of the West Country cream tea, whether served up under the guise of a Devon or a Cornish Cream Tea. Cream teas have been singularly successful in this region, and are very often used as roadside lures to attract footfall to various kinds of retail and catering outlet. A farm shop café menu isn't complete here without mention of a lip-smacking cream tea.

Is this a sales-boosting solution for you, then? Serving cream teas can be a good method of promoting goods you already sell. Most delis and farm shops will stock a selection of jams and the chiller cabinets of many shops may already stock a good clotted cream, too. There is no reason why a cream tea freed from the strictures of the West Country should not do the unthinkable and serve jam flavours other than strawberry and raspberry, either. Offering jams made with local fruits will go some way towards personalising your cream tea. Once East of Bristol, it's also safe to use whipped cream if the clotted version isn't readily available.

Increase custom

Highlighting your cream teas under a West Country banner will draw attention not only to your range of jams, scones, if you sell them, and clotted cream, but also to your West Country cheeses and any other West Country produce you want to promote. Also, if you have a café facility, offering cream teas there is a good way to increase custom and use up jam and cream which might already have been employed in the making of cakes and other specialities. And bear in mind that the roadside signage advertising cream teas appears to do no harm to West Country businesses.

If you are going to serve a cream tea, it helps if you know about the two main types. Anyone can throw a scone on a plate and add cream and jam, but serving your confection as an authentically Cornish or as a Devon Cream tea, will add just a little story to your offering. From the point of view of anyone living beyond the West Country, the difference between a Devon cream tea and a Cornish cream tea might seem a fine one. The ingredients, matters of provenance aside, are identical. The Cornish cream tea is served jam first and cream on top and the Devon one reverses the order. The difference may be small, but it has been enough to provide a bone of contention for the neighbouring counties.

There are other differences and even some variations on the basic theme of this dish, which you might like to serve as something a little more unusual. A traditional Cornish variation, rarely seen now outside of domestic homes, is served in a type of sweetish split bread roll. Unlike the scone, the freshly-baked, warm bread roll is buttered, and the strawberry jam and clotted cream generously added. The puzzlingly-named 'Thunder and Lightning' is a further variation on the theme, this being a slice of bread which is topped with clotted cream and honey, syrup or even with treacle.



The Food Hall at Darts Farm in Devon: "People expect to see a cream tea on the menu"

Is a cream tea an essential menu item and if so, why?
The cream tea, otherwise known as the 'Devonshire tea' is an iconic Devon speciality. Being a major Devon tourist destination and a business that champions the best of Devon, cream teas are an essential offering at Darts Farm. People come to Darts Farm expecting to see cream teas on the menu.

How many do you sell?
On average, we sell 30 cream teas per day on a weekday and double that on a weekend. During the summer months, the number is much higher.

Does offering cream teas attract custom and encourage sales?
Yes. Due to the multi-departmental nature of Darts Farm, we find that someone stopping off at Darts Farm for a cream tea will then browse the food hall and gift shops. We also find people will stay and have lunch or dinner in the restaurant. Over the past year we have also introduced the Darts Farm high tea, and we find customers who visit Darts Farm to have a cream tea then see our high tea option and choose that instead.

How do you make the perfect cream tea?
We believe in giving our customers the best food and drink at great value. Our cream tea is made using the finest Devon ingredients; customers are given two large fruit and plain scones, made by Ryder's bakery, along with Highfield Preserves jam and Devonshire clotted cream. The scones are accompanied by the finest loose leaf Brew Tea Co tea, presented beautifully in a cafetiere-style tea pot.

Ingredients to stock

As well as serving the holy trinity of clotted cream and strawberry jam and scones as a cream tea, the ingredients are, of course, worth stocking in their own right. Good jams will always sell well and have a long shelf life. Nutty flavoured clotted, or 'clouted', cream is called for as an accompaniment in many desserts and is also used in the making of the rich fudge which is another speciality of the West Country. You won't need much story to sell this, but it might be worth noting that this cream is made by heating full cream cow's milk and leaving it in shallow pans to slowly cool, when clots begin to rise to the surface. Scones can be pack-bought, but a good cream tea depends on a fresh scone, preferably

"The Cornish cream tea is served jam first and cream on top, and the Devon one reverses the order. The difference may be small, but it has been enough to provide a bone of contention for the neighbouring counties"





served warm, and this means making them yourself. Scones are quite simple to make and take about 25 minutes to prepare and bake (making batches of cheese scones as well will offer something for people who prefer something savoury and will use up odd pieces of farmhouse Cheddar from your cheese counter.) If you are promoting cream teas as something people can make themselves at home, you will need to stock self-raising flour, milk, eggs, butter, baking powder, caster sugar and, ideally, artisanal butter.

Paloma Hermoso owns Devon-based The Tiny Marmalade, which makes traditional and ethical speciality jams in handy small pots.

All our jams are tiny. No more half-emptied jam jars in the bottom of the fridge is our motto. All our jams and marmalades are made using top quality, locally-sourced ingredients. All the fruit, vegetables and sugar we use comes from sustainable, seasonal and Fairtrade sources. Most of them are also organic. We only follow the traditional open pan method to prepare our preserves, which ensures that flavour, colour and texture is perfect, as our mums would have done it.

Why make small jams?
With The Tiny Marmalade, every day can be special. Our customers can try different flavours, experience different combinations and enjoy a variety of more than 50 recipes without spending much.

What's the market for these?
We have lots of customers buying our jams as gifts, but also to treat themselves. Also, we've recently launched our Jam On Toast Club, which has around 50 subscriptions already: customers will receive a monthly box with six different jams. Most of our customers are people interested in homemade good-quality food that not only tastes delicious but also is lovingly wrapped and looks great. We also serve luxury B&B and have developed bespoke flavours, labels and packaging for corporate gifts, wedding favours and deli shops!



How important are cream teas where you are?
Devon is the home of cream teas! As a Spanish person, the cream tea is something new for me. I absolutely love the way afternoon cream teas are carefully prepared: lovely china sets, cloth napkins, amazing tea, homemade scones, soft and rich clotted cream and a selection of jams all ready to be shared in good company. As for the debate about what should go first..clotted cream first, of course!

Does producing small pots allow cream tea sellers to offer more choice on the table?
Small jam pots add a luxury touch to any cream tea. Cream tea sellers would be able to offer not only a huge selection of flavours from our more than 50 different recipes, but also bespoke labelling and even combinations can be produced. We've provided quite a few of clients with their very own jam, as the Rhubarb, Lime and Vanilla Jam and the Rhubarb and Ginger Jam made bespoke for Darts Farm, in Devon, using their own grown rhubarb.

Which flavours are essential stocking items?
For a luxury cream tea I would offer Strawberries & Roses Jam and Jasmine & Apple Jam, both made using organic real flowers. Raspberries Gin & Tonic Jam and Mojito Marmalade could work for a younger group or a hen do cream tea. Date & Banana Jam and Pear & Kiwi Jam for a group of children. Finally, for those men liking cream teas, I would offer Seville Oranges & Black Beer Marmalade and Cherries & Rioja Jam.



Stock Check



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Brendon Hill Crafts Whortleberry Jam
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Scrumping **Sales**

What makes West Country drinks so iconic? Speciality Food finds out

Views of orchards and cider farms abound in the West Country, so it's only natural that the region would be famed across the UK for its quality beverages – from freshly pressed juices to artisan brews. Thanks to the area's reputation for tradition and a dedicated community of producers slowly but surely spreading the word across Britain and beyond, it won't be too long before the area's tipples win international acclaim.

While some producers such as Luscombe and Orchard Pig – proud bearers of the metaphorical West Country flag – have grown to become recognised brands throughout the industry, smaller, cottage industry-style makers are quietly bolstering one of the UK's most well-known and appreciated drink sectors.

Speaking to West Country dwellers while researching this piece, it became clear that the region's juices, ciders and other beverages are a source of great pride. And no wonder – the area's most famous drinkable creation, cider, is now enjoyed throughout the world, and the vast majority of its consumers would be able to name the West Country as its ancestral home.

That's not to say that cider is the be all and end all of West Country drinks, however. From seaside distilleries producing fine spirits to a whole host of producers creating top quality juices and cordials, innovation is rife in this industry – often with a drop of tradition and heritage to add some storybook personality to the proceedings.





Tony Bishton, co-owner of Provender – an award-winning Somerset deli – shares its best sellers with Speciality Food, and explains why the West Country is just so famed for its beverages

We sell drinks from Luscombe, Burrow Hill apple juice as they're just down the road, Tinkers Bubble organic apple juice, wild beer from Shepton Mallet, beer from a local brewery called Stockland's, Harry's cider and Ham Hill cider.

Luscombe sells the best – particularly the Sicilian lemonade and Wild Elderflower Bubbly, and we only serve local apple juice – Russett, Cox and Discovery, all of which sell well.

We've always sold Luscombe and Burrow Hill, but we're always trying to expand our range of beers, and the wild beer and Stocklands are relatively new to our range. We're always on the look out for new suppliers, whether it be someone small or relatively larger.

This area is known for its beverages because everyone here is very food and drink-orientated. We get a lot of people asking for products which have been made locally; our customers are very aware of local products and producers and like to support them. There's a large number of enterprising people around in this region.

Where I live, I'm surrounded by orchards – it's close to Burrow Hill so there are apple trees for as far as the eye can see. Orchards are part of the landscape around here, and part of people's history.

The profile of West Country drinks can only grow – people are trying to expand their horizons and spread the word further, outside of the region. Through this, producers and the reputation of our products will develop."



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"We are based in one of the most beautiful parts of the world. Being based near the coast of north Cornwall, our surroundings have inspired our drinks – for example, we use foraged gorse flowers in our pastis recipe and grow Devon violets to use as a botanical in our gin. We also use local spring water, which is naturally pure and slightly sweet. Our premium products reflect the high standard of food and drink in the region. The region is already renowned for quality produce and can only go from strength to strength"

Tarquin Leadbetter of Southwestern Distillery





Hilary Waller, co-founder of Eastcott Vineyard tells the story of her West Country enterprise

The original Lower Eastcott Farm was established in the 16th century. In 2007, my husband and I took over the core buildings along with the remaining 12 acres. Our vision was to create a new era for the farmland and buildings by establishing a six acre vineyard and modern winery, now known as Eastcott Vineyard. Since then, we have planted 6,000 vines, honed our skills as winemakers and won international awards both for our sparkling and still English wines.

Eastcott Wines are fresh and fruity, with a real English character. We have chosen styles of wine to suit the cool climate, with a particular emphasis therefore on making sparkling wines, both white and rosé by the methode champenoise. A combination of the best age-old traditions with modern equipment affords us the end-to-end control that we believe is essential for the production of small volume high quality wines. We guide the grapes by intensive hands-on care throughout the year until they are hand-picked in the very best tradition. They then move into the modern winery where we favour a minimal intervention approach to the winemaking, while at the same time bringing our own exacting standards to the process.

The West Country has its roots in agriculture and so its people really appreciate us finding a new use for the land and particularly enjoy local products. Visitors to the region are also keen to learn about what we do first-hand.

GABRIEL DAVID

of Luscombe Organic Drinks tells SF the value its West Country location adds to his award-winning business



What's the history of Luscombe?
Luscombe Drinks was a classic farm diversification success story. It has become a leading soft drinks maker forging an awareness of soft drinks for adults since 1997. Luscombe Drinks is now seen as a benchmark in the business of soft drinks, not just in the UK but widely in Europe.

What do you produce, and what makes it different to similar products from elsewhere?
Luscombe has won recognition at major international food awards every year for over 15 years. Making drinks from fresh fruit ingredients sounds simple, but capturing the actual taste without reverting to synthetic boosters is not so easy – today there are many who follow this holy grail. It is our palates and our unique equipment that keep us where we are, and the very close relationship we have with our growers who supply us with their best fruit.

What does your West Country heritage bring to the product?
Devon is a unique place that seems to put quality before the other currencies of quantity and profit margin. There are more food producers in Devon than any other county in the UK, and most are small scale – so competing on the quality of what they make is fundamental. For us, our roots in apples and elderflowers created a benchmark for us to follow in quality terms, and the culture of 'small is beautiful' helps the county maintain that top quality mark.

What is the future of West Country food?
As the general food buying pattern continues to lean towards multiple retailers and high volumes, Devon will lead with its quality. Food and drink in Devon is listed as a dominant reason for visiting the county. No other county can match the diversity and quality and while that is true, Devon has a bright future ahead.

How does your situation affect the business?
Logistically it's a challenge at times, but we are situated in such an inspiring, beautiful location that I think it helps the team to make better artisan drinks. Consequently, we have a committed team who are passionate about crafting drinks. Our location stimulates a heightened level of creativity, allowing us to produce new and innovative products, which keeps us ahead of the game in the adult soft drink market.

What makes Luscombe a West Country icon?
I would say it's the simplicity of what we do – our product is artisan from the start and we aim to make the best. The team is hugely skilled and dedicated to what they make. Our packaging helps, but if the taste is wrong, we wouldn't have the respect we have earned.

"Our location stimulates a heightened level of creativity, allowing us to produce new and innovative products, which keeps us ahead of the game in the adult soft drink market"

Stock Check



Luscombe Damascene Rose Bubbly
A celebration of the majestic rose of the Orient, with Muscat grape juice and spring water.
www.luscombe.co.uk



Yarde Real Elderflower Cordial
Made from a delicately blended infusion of hand-picked wild elderflowers from the South Devon hedgerows and fresh zesty lemons. A deliciously refreshing soft drink mixed with either still or sparkling water or an interesting addition to cocktails.
www.yardecider.co.uk



Lyme Bay Jack Ratt Scrumpy
Still, medium, filtered cider. 5/6% Vol. Available in 1 litre flagons, 75cl bottles and in 50cl bottles.
www.lymebaywinery.co.uk



Bath Ales Gem
A quintessentially English beer with a rich aroma of hops and malt, and a bitter-sweet finish.
www.bathales.com



Bramley & Gage Quincy
Quincy is a good after dinner liqueur, with moderate sugar and rich mouth feel with aromas of dates and figs. A home grown version of a dessert wine.
www.bramleyandgage.co.uk



Wadworth Swordfish Beer
With a gentle rum aroma and dark, unrefined sugar adding a rich smoothness, it is a full-bodied, deep copper coloured ale with a base of crystal malt and delicate Fuggles and Goldings hops.
www.wadworth.co.uk



Orchard Pig Cider
West Country cider apples to produce a straightforward cider, with more apples and less bubbles, making it drinkably moreish.
www.orchardpig.co.uk



Southwestern Distillery Cornish Dry Gin
Tarquin's Handcrafted Cornish Dry Gin is made in tiny batches (the old-fashioned way) by the coast of north Cornwall using fragrant handpicked violets and citrus zest. Every bottle is filled, labelled, wax dipped, stamped and signed by hand.
www.southwesterndistillery.com




Traditional West Country cheese from Quickes

Western **Culture**

There's a myriad of reasons why West Country cheese is famed throughout the UK and abroad. Speciality Food speaks to locals in the know to find out more

As home to not only the iconic Farmhouse Cheddar but internationally-acclaimed cheeses such as Cornish Yarg, the West Country is rightfully recognised as one of the strongholds of cheesemaking within the UK. And no wonder, with a heritage dating back to the twelfth century and conditions considered to be ideal for cheese making, the region has a unique story to tell when it comes to the production of a great range of cheeses.

The caves of Cheddar Gorge have for centuries been used to mature Cheddars; their unique environment adds an unusual flavour and complexity to the cheese – a distinctive combination of strength and earthiness.

But it's not only the region's iconic Cheddars that have earned its enviable reputation; from soft cheeses such as Godminster Brie and Somerset Camembert to the Cornish garlic leaf-wrapped Yarg, all bases are covered.

The West Country has a reputation for offering a spiritual home to creative thinkers, which could go some way to explaining why it has seen an influx of start-up artisan producers in recent years. Relative newcomer Cornish Cheese Co is now cohabiting with local cheesemaking icons such as Quickes, Godminster and Montgomery's, and all are successfully bolstering the South West's well-earned reputation for fine quality cheeses.

We speak to two highly respected local producers and a passionate retailer to discover how and why the region has acquired its legendary cheesemaking status.







Diane Keen of Keen's Cheddar explains the value of one of the West Country's most revered exports – Farmhouse Cheddar

Farmhouse Cheddar was once made in the kitchens of most dairy farms as a way to preserve summer milk, and the Cheddar was then sold to create an income for the farmer during the long winter months when milk wasn't being produced for sale. As is always the case, times changed and modern farming methods meant that cows could be milked all year round – meaning the art of making a good Farmhouse Cheddar has been nearly lost over recent years.

Trying to compare Farmhouse Cheddar to manufactured Cheddar is like trying to compare, well, chalk and cheese. The Farmhouse Cheddar we make is created entirely by hand, by a skilled artisan cheesemaker, and we turn the cheese by hand while it is maturing. It really comes into its own after 12 to 18 months of maturing.

Farmhouse Cheddars have a deeper flavour, often with slight variants depending on all kind of factors from the weather on the day of milking to the field the cow was in. The texture is also more rustic, and traditional Farmhouse Cheddars having more crumble to them than their manufactured counterparts.

The Keens have been making cheese for as long as anybody can recall, but it was when the family moved to Moorhayes Farm in 1899 that the records officially began. Five generations later and the Keens are still at Moorhayes, still creating award-winning Cheddars and still have no plans of moving on to pastures new.

The West Country Farmhouse Cheddar PDO which Keens Cheddar currently holds means that a true Cheddar can not be produced outside of Somerset, Dorset and Devon. This helps to preserve both the history and the future of what truly is a specialist produce.



As a cheese producer revered across the UK and beyond, Godminster has become an archetypal example of West Country cheese. Deborah Chambers tells us just what it is that makes it so special

Becoming an enduring icon takes time, and in that respect it's not unlike a great cheese. The Godminster land around Bruton has been farmed for a thousand years, there has been dairy farming at Godminster farm for over a century and the recipe for our Vintage Organic Cheddar is over seventy years old. Having heritage is a handy starting point!

Being an icon means being a representative symbol. In that respect, remaining an icon can also mean moving with the times. In line with this, the recipe for Godminster Vintage Organic Cheddar has been refined over the years; for its loyal fans its taste, texture and appearance are unique.

Godminster's West Country provenance is an important part of its appeal. It is an icon of the West Country because it brings all these attributes together in a single product, and for those in the know,

"With the resurgence of an interest in artisanal food produced by small producers, the only way it up when it comes to Farmhouse Cheddar"



Godminster Vintage Cheddar is immediately recognisable both on the shelf and when eaten.

Well-publicised issues about the food we eat over the past 20 years have increased the importance of provenance in some shoppers' buying decisions. Trusting where food comes from, that food is made with the ingredients on the label, and that it is produced so it is safe to eat have now replaced what might previously have been blind faith in the origins of our food. The traceability and consistent eating quality of Godminster's cheeses means it has earned this trust – for example, from start to finish its Brie is produced within a single square mile.

As a brand, Godminster's story is part of the way it differentiates itself from the competition. There are now so many cheeses to choose from, that it's important for the tale of its cheeses to be told.

"Godminster's West Country provenance is an important part of its appeal"



IAN WELLENS

of The Cheese Shed, a Devon-based retailer focused on spreading the word of fine West Country cheeses, shares his top sellers and personal favourites



Why the focus on West Country cheeses?
Well, first of all, we're the home of Cheddar, which I suppose could lay claim to being one of the world's most popular cheeses. A lot of what is sold under that name bears little resemblance to the cheese as made traditionally, but what we have here is a number of makers – Quickes, Keen's, Montgomery's, Westcombe and others – who are still making the real thing. That's very much our claim to fame in the South West.

Beyond that, we have a very strong connection with dairy farming, and it has often been the place you go to if you want to start some small, alternative venture – in the crafts, the arts... or food. The region tends to attract innovative, independent-minded people who want to do something different – so many of the 'pioneers' of the artisan cheese revival based themselves down here, with the result that alongside the heritage of Cheddar, we have some of the most important newer cheeses as well.

Personal favourites?
A very tough question for someone selling 100+ cheeses (!) but I'm very fond of Haytor, made by Rachel Stephens. Quickes' two-year matured Vintage Cheddar is about as good as it gets in the Cheddar department. Beenleigh Blue is a cheese I never get tired of, and Helford White – a squishy washed rind cheese from Cornwall – is one I'm especially partial to. Everything about this one – colour, texture, taste – works for me.

Best-sellers?
We get through lots of Quickes Cheddar, Cornish Yarg too. Cornish Blue goes very well (we sell the rennet version). Among the softs, Pete Humphries's White Nancy is a soft goats' cheese which people can't get enough of once they've tried it.

Any cheesy tip-offs?
Try Millstone from Wootton Organic Dairy. The Bartlett brothers use their own unpasteurised organic ewes' milk for this (and their soft cheese Little Ryding). This is just a terrific cheese – quite hard and with a dry texture which I really like. We need more sheep's milk cheeses, especially if they're as good as this.

Also Cremet, made by Sharpham. This is unique in that it's a mould-ripened (i.e Brie family) goats' milk cheese which has cows' cream added. They tell us there's nothing else like it in the UK, and I should think that's probably right.



Stock Check



Cornish Yarg
Made from pasteurised cows' milk, this is a young, fresh lemony cheese, creamy under its natural rind and slightly crumbly in the core.
www.lynherdairies.co.uk

Godminster Brie
Handmade artisan organic brie in a delightful heart shape, made with fresh milk delivered daily from Godminster Farm in Bruton. A lovely creamy texture.
www.godminster.com





Quickes Double Gloucester
Matured for up to 4 months with a subtle buttery yet tangy flavour. Annatto is used to give this cheese its distinctive orange hue.
www.quickes.co.uk

Sharpham Cheese Dairy Rustic
The Plain Rustic is a semi-hard, unpasteurised cheese made with Jersey cow milk. It has a fresh, lemony, creamy flavour when young, developing a lovely nutty taste when mature.
www.sharpham.com





Beenleigh Blue
The nature of the cheese varies greatly over the season. The first cheeses for sale in June are very light, fresh, and quite crumbly whereas the older cheeses develop significantly greater depth of flavour and become richer and creamier.
www.ticklemorecheese.co.uk

Dorset Blue Vinny
A distinctive blue cheese, with a strong tang.
www.dorsetblue.com





Bath Soft Cheese Co Wyfe of Bath
Succulent, nutty and creamy. This semi-hard cheese is made by placing the curd in cloth lined baskets; it retains the basket shape and has a soft light caramel colour.
www.parkfarm.co.uk

Montgomery's Mature Cheddar
The epitome of traditional, handmade, unpasteurised Somerset Cheddar, matured for 12 months wrapped in muslin cloth on wooden shelves and has deep, rich, nutty flavours.
www.montgomerycheese.co.uk



Pasties and Pies

The PGI protected Cornish pastie may rule supreme, but the West Country is hot on other kinds of savoury bakes, too





Warm snacks-to-go can be real footfall finders, energy-offering calorific pastries in particular. Many farm shops have found that the provision of heated pies and pastries can encourage a great deal of casual custom, whether they are bought over the counter or in the shop's cafe or restaurant. Warm meat or fruit pies have been cited time and again among the best-selling items of many farm shops spoken to by Speciality Food. In the West Country, pies and pastries sell briskly both to locals and also to the flocks of tourists needing fast and filling food for days on the move.

The West Country's most famous pastry is, of course, the Cornish Pasty. Awarded PGI status in 2011, Cornwall's celebrated snack is now protected, and if a pasty isn't made in Cornwall and doesn't conform to PGI specs, it's not a Cornish pasty. An authentic Cornish pasty is filled with sliced or diced potato, swede, onion, diced or minced beef (which must form at least 12.5% of the pasty) and a little salt and white pepper seasoning. The pastry can be shortcrust, rough puff or puff and is glazed with egg or milk. A proper Cornish pasty is formed in a 'D' shape, with its edges crimped.

But while the authentic meat and vegetable PGI pasty as described above is alive and well, pasties filled with a huge variety of other fillings are hugely popular and are no less traditional. Pasties containing jams and fruit provide a quick fix for the sweet-toothed. Often locally referred to as oggies, the Cornish pasty was originally a handy, easily portable meal for tin miners. This was occasionally filled with meat and vegetables at one end and a fruit filling at the other, thus providing a complete meal in a single pastry casing. The pasty is as versatile as it is popular and retailing your own version, filled with locally-produced meat, fruit and vegetables, can give you a tasty speciality that's individually your own.

Stock Check

Tom's Pies Chicken, Ham Hock & Leek pie



Tom's Pies Chicken, Ham Hock & Leek pie is full of flavour using farm-assured chicken and succulent ham hock.
www.toms-pies.co.uk



Proper Cornish pasty

Handmade Cornish pasty with tender steak, locally-sourced swede, potatoes and onions encased in hand crimped pastry.
www.propercornish.co.uk

The Unusual Pork Pie Company

The Unusual Pork Pie Company use mouth-watering pork and herb mixture, surrounded by authentic jelly flavouring for their pork pies and can create pies for special occasions.
www.theunusualporkpiecompany.co.uk



The Chunk of Devon Steak Pasty

Winner of more National Awards than any other uses a traditional recipe – beef skirt, spud, swede and onion – made as only we know how!
www.takeachunk.com

LITTLE FEASTS

Devon-based pie maker The Little Feast Company sources all ingredients locally, says owner Abby Allen

We established The Little Feast Company on 1st August 2014 after going on a long mission to find the best ingredients produced locally. We believe that eating should always be an experience to savour, every mouthful a treat. Our food is designed to give you a moment to yourself, an indulgent experience.

The West Country has a strong tradition of making pasties – how true is this for pies?
We have some of the finest farmers and growers in the country right here on our doorstep, so making pies should come as second nature. Being farmers ourselves, we fully appreciate, after a tough day out in the wilds, coming home to something warming and comforting. A pie is the ultimate comforting feast.

What is 'West Country' about your pies?
Not only are our pies handmade by our chefs in Devon, but every single ingredient is sourced from our doorstep. From native Red Ruby beef and Otter Ale from East Devon to seasoning from Cornish Sea Salt. We shout about our amazing ingredients, that we have carefully sourced to ensure they are sustainably produced.



Pies and sausage rolls from Little Feast



How effective are pies as a crowd-puller for farm shops and delis?
Pies are incredibly popular, everyone loves a pie. They are great to grab and go, or serve with buttery mash and luscious gravy. Picnics, gatherings, walks on the moors, customers can always find room in their pocket for a well wrapped pie.

How is the market for gourmet sausage rolls?
We cannot make these quick enough! Our Saddleback & Chorizo sausage roll is a real winner – they seem to fly out the door and are loved by everyone. These are perfect for festive banqueting or gifting.

DORSET PIES

Weymouth's Dorset Pie Company was established by Gemma and Jason Major in 2013.

We converted our utility room at home into our pie kitchen and started selling our pies at the Dorset Farmers' Markets. Our aim was (and still is) to produce a pie that has ingredients that are sourced where possible from our county, using other small producers, resulting in a product that has provenance and is unique to Dorset.

The West Country has a strong tradition of making pasties - how true is this for pies?
The West Country, where there is a historical tradition, will always be known for its pasties. Pies are becoming very popular and there are a number of well known, award winning producers that are based in West Country who specialise in pies. The true definition of a pie is that it has to be encased in pastry – none of these inferior casseroles with a pastry top!

What is West Country about your pies?
We select our ingredients very carefully, often using other local producers. We have a varied offering of flavours, from traditional Steak and Ale to more adventurous Moroccan Chicken. What makes our pies West Country is our passion to source as much as possible from our county, from the meat to the ale to the splash of award-winning Dorsetshire Sauce, made by From Dorset With Love.



How effective are pies as a crowd-puller for farm shops and delis?

Pies seem to be in popular demand. Who can resist a handmade pie with butter shortcrust crammed with delicious filling? Our pies are becoming well known across the county; we have out-grown our utility and now have a bakery. We not only sell at the farmers markets, but now wholesale to many farm shops, delis and independent shops. A good pie will always be a crowd-puller.


Chris Pauling of Proper Cornish

Proper **Cornish**

Proper Cornish began making Cornish pasties in a converted garage, as founder and managing director Chris Pauling explains

When was Proper Cornish established?
In1988, in Bodmin, Cornwall, where our bakery still is today. We started making pasties in a converted garage and although we now operate from a new bakery, we still use many of the same methods today.

What was wrong with commercially available products being made at the time?
There was little focus on the quality of the ingredients and the traditional art of pasty making. Both are key values our company upholds and one which are evident in the products we continue to produce today.





What did you want to do that was different?
Use quality locally-sourced ingredients where we could, and keep our pasties as natural as possible. We are passionate about the traditional Cornish pasty and about making these to a specific recipe with a specific crimp.

What is the secret to making a good pasty?
Using locally-sourced ingredients where possible and hand-crimping. We hand-crimp over 50,000 pasties a day, and each one is made with care and passion. And, as our pasties are frozen, they are each freshly-baked, which adds to the flavoursome, homemade taste.

Where do you source your ingredients?
We source our ingredients locally where possible. Potatoes are from Colwith Farm and swede and onions from Hay Farm in Cornwall. We also use Davidstow cheese and milk, and butter and yoghurt from Cornish farms.

How many pasties do you make annually?
We make over 13 million hand-crimped pasties a year plus our other range of pasties, sausage rolls and savoury slices.

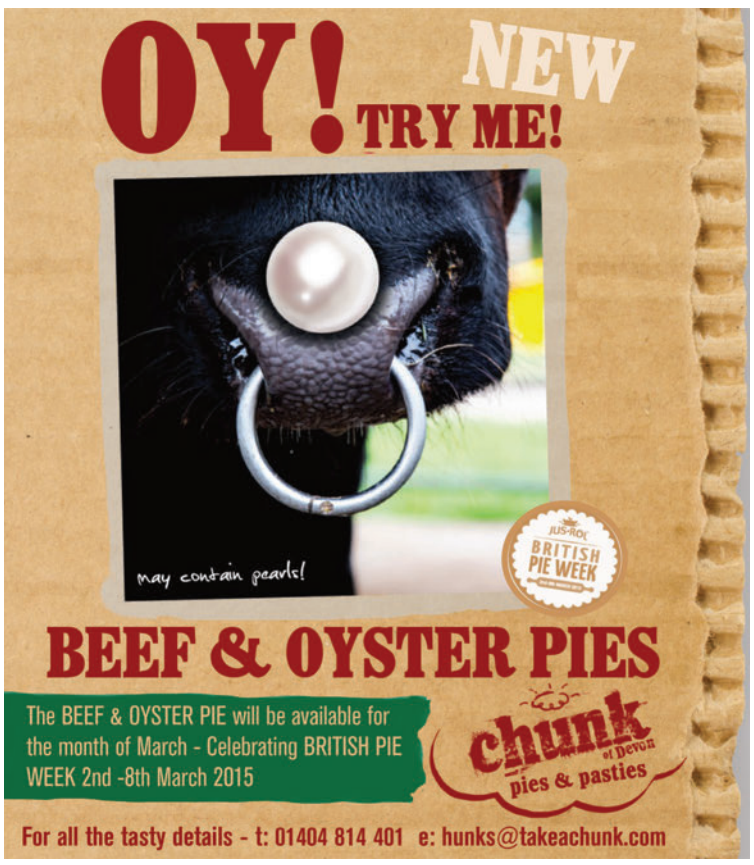
How many fillings do you offer?
Over the years, our dedicated product development team has created over 70 different recipes, from Traditional and Cheese to Balti, Chicken and Chorizo and more recently, Piri Piri and Philly Cheesesteak.

You supply wholesalers and tourist outlets as well as independent retailers – can you still claim to be an artisan producer?
There is certainly an art to making a Cornish pasty – we follow a PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) recipe and methods, hand-crimping with love and care every day.

Why did you decide to extend your fillings beyond the PGI stipulated fillings of sliced or diced potato, swede, onion and diced or minced beef?
The PGI recipe, used to call a pasty a 'Cornish Pasty,' applies to the traditional Cornish steak pasty, which is our biggest seller. All of our pasties are made in Cornwall and our range of fillings have been developed based on customer requests and food trends over the years.

Why should independent retailers stock Cornish pasties?
The Cornish pasty was originally a filling, hand-held snack eaten by miners after a hard morning working underground. Today, the pasty is eaten at all times of the day by all kinds of people on the go and a Proper Cornish pasty is an award-winning, delicious, handmade food from Cornwall containing local produce. At Proper Cornish, we offer the whole support package for an authentic Cornish experience.


A Proper Cornish pasty





The Ice Cream Coast

With its warmer climate, rolling fields and seaside havens, it's no wonder the West Country is the spiritual home of ice cream. Speciality Food explores the story behind its popularity

Stock Check



Marshfield Rum & Raisins

An expert blend of dairy ice cream with jumbo raisins that have been steeped in rum overnight.
www.marshfield-icecream.co.uk



Callestick Clotted Cream & Raspberries

A classic pairing, reminiscent of summer.
www.callestickfarm.co.uk



Mendip Moments Banana With Salted Caramel

An award-winning combination of real bananas and salted caramel.
www.mendipmoments.co.uk



Yarde Farm Brandy Butter & Clotted Cream

Made with real West Country clotted cream, butter and real brandy.
www.yardefarmicecream.co.uk



Lovingtons Cornish Sea Salted Caramel

The sweetness of caramel double cream ice cream with a hint of Cornish Sea salt. Beautifully made in Somerset.
www.lovingtons.co.uk



Treleavens Chocolate Ice Cream

Made to our own special recipe which makes it twice as chocolatey and deliciously decadent.
www.treleavens.co.uk

The lush green landscape of the West Country is at once synonymous with dairy production and holiday making alike, so it seems only natural that the region should be one of the top sources of ice cream in the UK.

Golden Cornish ice cream is one of the beacons of the area, and thanks to its unique colour – imparted by clotted cream – it has become known internationally as a classic British foodstuff. That's not to say that more inventive flavours aren't best-sellers too; from liquorice fudge to crème cappuccino, ice cream makers are becoming increasingly adventurous when it comes to creating new and exciting products.

To cash in on West Country ice cream, be sure to tell its story. As with any food product from this region, promoting this ice cream's heritage is a sure fire way to conjure up thoughts of sunny coastal visits and striped deckchairs – a valuable picture indeed.



Laura Mounce of Lifton Farm Shop tells Speciality Food what makes its ice cream special

We make our own artisan ice cream using our own soft fruit grown on the farm. We sell our ice cream in cones and tubs, in larger tubs for taking home and of course to accompany our homemade desserts in our restaurant. We also make some delicious homemade ice cream sundaes!

The fact that we make all of our ice cream on site using an ingredient that we produce on the farm makes it niche to any other producer – that's why people buy it and why it has become one of our most wanted product all year round.



Olly Godfrey of Roskilly's shares the story of one of the West Country's most iconic brands

Roskilly's is a small, working organic Cornish farm, perched on the beautiful southern tip of Cornwall. We have developed the business over 60 years, after Joe and Rachel Roskilly inherited the farm from Joe's fairy godmother in 1950. It all started with selling our delicious clotted cream, and now, with a herd of just over 130 Jersey cows grazing an area of approximately 300 acres, our organic Jersey milk is used to predominantly make ice cream. Our milk is high in butterfat, milk solids, protein, calcium and antioxidants, and therefore makes a fantastic foundation for a great ice cream.

We are most famous for our ice creams and sorbets, but we also produce fudge (with a new range in the pipeline for 2015) plus chutneys and jam which helps in the short winter season (we're always optimistic!). Our most popular ice cream is undoubtedly our Clotted Cream Vanilla Bean, but it has to fend off competition from the likes of our Salt Caramel and Wild Cherry & Chocolate Flake. My current personal favourite is Toffee & Hazelnut!



The Cornish climate is a bit special in terms of it being a milder, more temperate place than the rest of the UK. With the Lizard Peninsula being almost an island in its own right, it benefits from the pure sea air and amazingly fertile grazing land, resulting in a top-quality product that's a cut above the rest.

Our Cornish heritage goes back a long way, and is reflected in the way we approach both farming and making ice cream. We farm the land with the love and respect that the Cornish natural surroundings deserve. We take into account the diverse flora and fauna that is Cornwall when looking at projects on the farm and, of course, we don't rush things, opting to work with the seasons in order to get the best quality from the landscape. This is then pulled through to our ice cream making business and results in a fantastically pure and natural ice cream. Sorbets get the same care and attention, as we use water from our own natural spring.

"The future of food in the West Country is being realised as it's now a 'foodie' destination in its own right, definitely on the map, and only seems to be growing in terms of the type of businesses and holiday makers being attracted to the area for work and play, and Cornwall in particular. We have all the fundamental elements right here, and being creative with this top quality produce is the key. The future's bright, the future's Orange & Mascarpone"

Olly Godfrey, Roskillys



Meet the Producer

A key player in the artisan soft drinks market is the Devon-based company Luscombe. Founder, owner and managing director, Gabriel David explains the company's development and ethos



Where does Luscombe stand in the drinks market right now?

Luscombe is an independent producer in the artisan soft drinks market. It's large enough to cope with the burgeoning demands of this sector, but we remain the only sizeable soft drinks brand not to sell to supermarkets – Luscombe has a very definite policy on this.

How many products do you make?

We make 23 different products, mostly in a single-serving size and a wine bottle size, from ginger beers, crushes and juices to bubblies.

How many people make them?

There are 32 people in the Luscombe team.

Tell me about how Luscombe was born, and what were your aims when you started out?

Luscombe was born in 1975 as a classic farm diversification project. I live about three miles up a lane, with no means of getting out socially other than driving. Going to pubs at 17 offered such a poor choice of non-alcoholic drinks: a lowly lime-and-soda, or a Britvic 55. Even then, I knew that something better was achievable. Some years later, I could correct that problem. I have always been very particular about taste, and about what I eat and drink. Luscombe Cider, as it was then, was an ailing family business. I knew I could provide the quality difference it needed. But I had to prove my skills to the family – it certainly wasn't nepotism.



How did you personally come to be involved?

I took it on in 1997, after which we moved into apple juices, apple with ginger, with elderflower, with pear. By then, I had lived for nearly 10 years in Sicily, a place which imparts a certain understanding of how food should be prepared – and usually this means no compromises. With connections I had made in Sicily, we developed Sicilian Lemonade and the ginger beers.

Has your location been helpful in any way?

Logistically it is challenging, but Devon has extraordinary beauty and inspires. A good business and a beautiful place to live seem linked in some way.

What were the key moments on the road to where you stand now?

The Great Taste Awards were the first big ones. Gaining recognition at national level by an industry standard was very important to us at that fledgling moment. Also, very early on, we achieved listings within the top tier. Fortnum & Mason, Selfridges, every restaurant in Harrod's and the John Lewis partneship wanted Luscombe. We still hold those accounts now, 15 years later. It is sales to these and other independent outlets that we cherish and that keeps us away from supermarkets.

What is your ethos?

Our ethos is a simple one – to be genuine, to make soft drinks of the highest quality and without compromise.

Where do you source your fruit and other ingredients?

I spend a lot of time travelling Europe and visiting trade fairs, forging relationships with growers and suppliers. It's not as simple as calling up a juice broker and expecting the best-tasting juice. You have to go to the source, the grower, and make relationships to get the best of their crops.

Tell me about the current range

Our current range comprises 23 different flavours, including Blueberry, Raspberry, Strawberry, and Cranberry Crush. In the bubbly range are Elderflower and our new Damascene Rose. We also have three ginger beers, Hot and Cool and now a Passionate Ginger beer, made with passion fruit juice.

Which are your best-selling products?

Difficult to say. With a range of 23, they sell differently in different places. A range as large as this allows retailers and restaurants to stock a different selection from their competitors and to keep their offer fresh. We are known for our Hot Ginger beer and our Sicilian Lemonade but the other varieties sell well too.

What makes these products suitable for delis and farm shops?

First and foremost, what any business needs is a product range that sells repeatedly. A range needs to be reliably available and consistently high quality. It also helps to be something that cannot be bought in a supermarket or from other mainstream outlets. Repeat sales is the key. Some products will sell once because they are local, but unless the quality and follow-through are consistent, then the sales don't repeat. Luscombe products look and taste as they should and are deserving of the 10-15p premium – an affordable luxury.





What can retailers do to increase sales of your products?

They can offer tastings and give the products a prominent position on their shelves. We will credit the cost of all product used in tastings – and outlets can do that as often as they like. We even provide tasting cups and literature. We have two annual promotions across the whole range, but we also aim to give the lesser-known drinks some 'airtime'. This works amazingly well – people love Luscombe, so giving them the opportunity to taste one that they haven't had before works very well.

What sort of retailer support can you give?

We have a growing range of very respected point-of-sale materials. We like to discuss retailers' needs so we can then tailor our support to their needs. We want you to sell as much as you can, so we try to be as helpful as we can.

What's next for Luscombe?

Where people want high-quality, great-tasting soft drinks, Luscombe plans to be there (sorry, but supermarkets are excluded)!





FLAVOUR OF THE WEST COUNTRY

Luscombe Drinks

Luscombe Drinks' new Damascene Rose Bubbly offers a serious alternative to a glass of Champagne for the discerning non-drinker. This delicate, fragrant bubbly is a celebration of the Majestic rose of the Orient, with Muscat grape juice and Damascene rose water gently combined with Sicilian lemon and spring water. Elegantly presented in a unique Luscombe embossed glass bottle, Damascene Rose Bubbly is available in a 32cl screw top bottle (RSP from £1.79).

01364 643 036
question@luscombe.co.uk
www.luscombe.co.uk





Red Ruby Devon Beef

Red Ruby Devon Beef is exceptionally fine-grained and marbled. Alan Williams, Michelin-starred chef has named grass-reared Red Ruby Devon beef as his first choice on the menu at his famed London restaurant, The Westbury: "Red Ruby Devon beef is so flavoursome, and because it is encased in a layer of its own fat it cooks perfectly." Red Ruby Devon beef is available from quality butchers and farmers of pedigree beef herds around England. To find a supplier go to www.redrubydevon.co.uk and click through to the Buying Beef page.

01404 812 800
dcbs@redrubydevon.co.uk
www.redrubydevon.co.uk



Furniss Biscuits

Since 1886, Furniss has been baking biscuits from Cornwall in one of the only factories in Britain that can genuinely recreate a 'baked at home' taste. The new mini biscuits, with beautifully designed packaging, are the perfect snack whilst on the go. Made with delicious quality ingredients, Dark Chocolate and Original Gingers, Butter Shortbread and Choc Chip Cookie Biscuits are available in 40g bags in cases of 18 and 40, bringing the taste of Ayrshire to your celebration.

T: 01208 265 838
E: ordersales@propercornish.co.uk
W: www.furniss-foods.co.uk



Sheppy's Cider

The Sheppy family has been perfecting premium cider making in the West Country for almost 200 years, so they really do know their apples. Based in Taunton, Somerset, they have remained true to that heritage and tradition – making cider just the way it should be. Their artisanal approach – using natural fermentation processes – and the quality of ingredients selected is what makes Sheppy's Cider taste so good. The Sheppy's collection features still, single and blended varieties such as Great Taste Top 50 and Quality Drinks Award-winner Oak Matured Vintage, Great Taste Award-winner Dabinett and the latest addition, Sheppy's Mulled Cider. The ciders are packaged in bottle, bag in box and keg format, and are equally popular in retail and on-trade.

01823 461 233
info@sheppyscider.com
www.sheppyscider.com



Highfield Preserves

Handmade with West Country Scrumpy Cider and packed with apples, this award-winning chutney makes a delicious accompaniment to a traditional ploughman's meal.
Eat with a good quality, hard Cheddar cheese or with cold meats, pork pies or sausages. Our family business been producing fine quality preserves in Devon, the heart of the West Country, for over 30 years, and this product is a firm favourite with our customers.

T: 01884 821 779
E: info@highfieldpreserves.co.uk
W: www.highfieldpreserves.co.uk



Tracklements

Love is… Tracklements Chilli Jam Hearts. These delightful heart-shaped jars are filled with award-winning Tracklements Chilli Jam. A must-stock item for Valentine's Day, they make an attractive display and brilliant year-round gifts for chilli lovers. Tracklements have been making their award-winning condiments by hand for 45 years and are proud to have been voted Best Supplier of Pickles and Chutneys for the fourth year in a row.

01666 827 044
info@tracklements.co.uk
www.tracklements.co.uk



Chunk of Devon

In deepest Devon there are rich pickings this March. Pie maker Chunk of Devon has conjured up a classic delicacy that doffs its hat to the heritage of British pie making. The Steak & Kidney pie, now a staple of the pie world, had a very different taste in early Victorian times; offal was scarce and oysters plentiful – so was born the perfect combination of Beef & Oyster Pie.
This wonderfully succulent pie is available only for British Pie Week and the month of March.
Go on – take a chunk!

01404 814 401
hunks@takeachunk.com
www.takeachunk.com



Bath Ales

Beer lovers across the UK are sure to be delighted with Bath Ales' extensive collection – ranging from pale ales and craft beers to smooth, dark bitters.
Not only has Bath Ales successfully produced some of the best beers the South West has to offer – its quintessentially English Gem is an award-winner – but it's also expanded into the world of fine ciders and recently launched a premium whisky, Gem Aqua Vitae. A true taste of the West Country!

0117 947 4797
hare@bathales.co.uk
www.bathales.com

Rodda's

Central to the West Country food scene is Cornish company Rodda's, which has been producing traditional clotted cream and authentic farmhouse butter since 1890.
Stocked by top shops, Rodda's famous clotted cream is made by gently baking local cream until it's thick, unctuous and thoroughly dollopable! Rodda's butter will remind you of what proper butter should be: rich, golden and beautifully marbled. The company also produces custard and crème fraîche.

01209 823 300
enquiries@roddas.co.uk
www.roddas.co.uk





Godminster

Godminster's Organic Garlic & Chive Brie, which recently won prizes at both the International and Global Cheese Awards, is lovingly handmade in the beautiful market town of Bruton, Somerset. One of the secrets to their success is the fresh organic milk delivered daily from their 1,300 acre farm only one mile away to their dairy. With its award-winning flavour, British credentials and iconic packaging, this is a must-have for any discerning cheese counter.

01749 813 733
info@godminster.com
www.godminster.com



Quickes Traditional

Quickes continue to play an essential part in the West Country's thriving food scene. Always keen to educate the public about the intricacies of traditional clothbound cheese-making and the importance of sustainable farming, Quickes are developing the scope of their regular dairy tours. Visitors to Home Farm can see the dairy in action, visit the cheese cathedral and meet the herd. Their Farm Shop and the recently opened Kitchen showcase fabulous produce from the local area.

01392 851 222
sales@quickes.co.uk
www.quickes.co.uk



The Cherry Tree

The Cherry Tree is a family-run business based in Dorset which has been producing jams, marmalades and other fine products since 1997. Using only the finest ingredients and following traditional recipes, all products are hand-cooked in small batches.
Among the fine jams produced here are the Morello Cherry, Blackcurrant & Sloe Gin Jam and Pear & Ginger Jam, all of which will offer points of difference to the shelves of your deli.

01308 458 604
clare@cherrytreepreserves.co.uk
www.cherrytreepreserves.co.uk

Deli Farm Charcuterie

Deli Farm Charcuterie are one of the UK's pioneering producers preserving meat by air drying; they only use prime cuts of meat from locally sourced producers in all their artisan products, since starting 10 years ago they have been consistently winning Great Taste and Taste of the West Awards, including the coveted Taste of the West Champion Product. They are combining traditional methods with modern technology to create perfect climatic conditions for drying.

01840 214 106
jean@delifarmcharcuterie.co.uk
www.delifarmcharuterie.co.uk





Cornish Cheese Company

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. Also excellent enjoyed on it's own with a full bodied red wine or a sweet port.
Cornish Blue Cheese has been produced on the Stansfield's Farm on Bodmin Moor, in Cornwall since 2001. The sweet mild 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.

01579 363 660
enquiries@cornishcheese.co.uk
www.cornishcheese.co.uk



Devon Juicer

Using traditional methods, The Devon Juicer creates freshly pressed juices in the heart of the West Country.
The range currently consists of Apple Juice, Apple & Elderflower, Apple and Pear and Apple & Ginger, and two bottle sizes are available – 75cl. and 33cl.
Unlike many other apple juice producers, our apples are all hand-picked. It is never diluted, and nothing is added that isn't natural – ensuring that the true taste of Devon apples is there to be enjoyed from shops and cafés within 100 miles of our orchards.
For information on introductory offers and the generous margins that can be earned, please call Tim at GR Fine Foods.

01548 854 259
info@grfinefoods.co.uk
www.devonjuicer.co.uk

SF FOOD CHAIN

Last issue's Food Chain subject recommended the 181 Deli in Edinburgh. Ross Gilfillan speaks to Charlotte Billinghurst

Who owns and runs the business?
CB: Michael and Charlotte Billinghurst.

How many customers do you attract annually?
CB: 24,000.

How good is your location and why?
CB: It is the only area of Edinburgh we considered opening our own delicatessen. Bruntsfield is one of the few areas of the city that is dominated by independent shops, such as a fishmonger, butcher and greengrocer, making it a shopping destination for customers within a wide radius.

What's special or unusual about your business?
CB: We specialise in giving shelf space on the high street to small producers who often only have the opportunity to sell at markets or farm shops. We are happy to deal with many producers or suppliers directly (we have over 40 suppliers to date) to give our customers an unrivalled variety of the finest quality.

Tell me about the items you stock.
CB: Pea Green Boat Cheese Sables, Umami Fifth Taste Curry Kits, Edward & Erwyn Chocolates, Marshmallow Lady Marshmallows, Edward & Irwyn Chocolate, Ocelot Chocolate, The Little Herb Farm, Puddledub Pork, Findlaters Pate & Dips, Perthshire Preserves, La Tua Pasta, The Proof of the Pudding, Fine Cheese Company, Prince & Sons tea, SugarSin.

What are your best-selling deli items?
CB: Our own freshly-made quiches and scones, 181 Pesto, 181 Zesty Lemon Hummus, 181 Ragu.

What cheese do you stock?
CB: Costa Gorgonzola Dolce, Colston Basset Stilton, Montgomery's Cheddar, Humphrey Errington's Cora Linn, Wyngaard Gouda, Provolone Piccante, Bleu de Causses, Vacherin Mont d'Or, Monte Enebro, Crottin Chavignol, Quadrello di Bufala.

What cheeses sell particularly well?
CB: Gorgonzola Dolce, Brie de Meaux and also the Wyngaard Gouda,

What sort of people have you been attracting?
CB: We are delighted that we have so far attracted a wide range of customers. We set up the delicatessen and structured our pricing to offer great quality produce, no matter what the budget.

How important is pricing?
CB: Very important. It is vital to maintain absolute quality whilst maintaining the customer perception of good value.

Do you offer other facilities?
CB: We have a small café at the back of the shop, offer a bespoke hamper service and outside catering options.

What are your hot-selling menu items at the cafe?
CB: We specialise in platters that offer what we sell in the delicatessen for customers to sample a taster of unusual or specialised produce.

Any difficulties in setting up your business?
CB: The main difficulty was pushing through funding when we found a suitable site. Each time we found a site we had to resubmit a business plan to the lender specific to that site and await new approval.

How were these overcome?
CB: By having a business plan that was sufficiently flexible to cope with changes, and contacting the bank to chase up an answer.

Do you have another revenue stream?
CB: Our main alternative revenue stream has been having the café at the back of the shop. It has taken in a far higher percentage of the turnover than we anticipated, which has been a pleasant surprise. We expect the outside catering side to grow throughout 2015.

What's the best aspect of running this business?
CB: Dealing with wonderfully enthusiastic and hard working small producers, and selling their produce to customers who are so enthused to buy it.

What's your background before doing this?
CB: Michael's parents owned a hotel and restaurant and Michael worked in the restaurant for six years. After this, he worked in Valvona & Crolla for 10 years, followed by a stint at Henri Fine Food and Wine for four years. I spent five years as a private caterer before helping Charlie Turnbull set up Turnbull's Deli in Shaftesbury. I then moved to Edinburgh and worked in Valvona & Crolla, which was where I met Michael.

What are your other interests?
CB: Our boys are a great source of relaxation and fun away from work, and we both enjoy reading. I love looking at cookbooks and listening to the Archers omnibus on Sunday. Michael is a very keen Formula 1 fan and avid Ferrari supporter. Wine is also a great passion and we hope to someday have a licence to sell wine in the shop.

How do you relax?
MB: With our five year old, Charlie and three year old, Harry, we enjoy days out to East Lothian and the Borders. We also enjoy visiting each other's families in Perthshire and the Borders.

Where do you hope to be this time next year and in two years time?
CB: This time next year we should have a business that fills the needs of the local customers. We would like to set up a website in 2015 and use it to widen our audience. In two years, I hope the deli and café are settled and established as one of the finest in the area. We would also like to see the outside catering side of the business being a large per centage of what we do.

For next issue's Food Chain, Charlotte and Michael Billinghurst recommend Craigie's Farm of South Queensferry.



Spice of Life



Howzat?

I didn't start in this business as a food journalist. In fact, I began as a young sports reporter on a local rag, despite hardly knowing one end of a football from the other. Sports reporting is something you can only really blag for so long and then you get found out. My downfall came when I was sent to cover an appearance of the Courage Old England Eleven, a charity side playing on Kew Green, made up of players who were then the recent greats of English cricket. However, at the time, names such as Tom Graveney, John Snow and Mike Denness were lost on me. The only player whose name did ring a bell was Freddie Trueman. I decided to interview him during tea. This was when the players, and about five hundred other people, crowded into the pavilion, which soon looked like one of those phone boxes into which people have stuffed themselves to get into the Guinness Book of Records. Through gaps in a sea of blue blazers and striped ties I caught glimpses of the long table at which the players sat. Freddie was seated at one end. I struggled through the crowd and, fishing out my notebook, squatted down at the table end and began to fire off my questions. I can't remember how the first bit went, only the the last, when I said, "So, Mr Trueman, after being capped for England God knows how times (I certainly didn't know), how do you feel about playing village green cricket?"

This was when I noticed the strange silence. There was a pause before I heard the reply. "What do I think of village green cricket?" rumbled a voice at last, "Not a lot, really. For one thing, you don't get paid enough money. And another thing I should tell you is that Freddie Trueman is at the other end of the table." I don't know how I did it, but sure enough, down the other end of the table was Freddie Trueman, who seemed to be glowering. I made the long walk down the table to repeat the interview and then retreated outside, vowing never again to go into an interview quite so unprepared.

The March/April issue of Speciality Food includes:-

4000 extra copies at IFE
2000 extra copies at Farm Shop & Deli Show

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- Cakes & Puddings
- Organic Foods
- IFE Show Preview
- Farm Shop & Deli Show Preview
- Asian Foods (inc. Spice Kits, Cooking Sauces)

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For more information please contact Sam on 01206 505936

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Last Words

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

COTSWOLD FAYRE*
-EST 1999-

Would you like to comment on any industry trends, changes or developments? Please email: holly.shackleton@aceville.co.uk

Speciality Bites

Paul Hargreaves
of Cotswold Fayre

Often the start of the year is full of goal-setting, envisioning our staff, making personal resolutions and promises to our families etc... Or is this just me? I doubt it.

Many of our business goals also go to pot once the pressures of the year kick in, and maybe especially for our sector as January and February are the quietest months of the year. Why is it that a lot of our good plans for the year go to naught, leaving us frustrated and deflated by the summer, if not earlier?

1) Our goals and visions were unrealistic! Ensure that your aims for 2015 are within reach of your resources – people and finance.

2) We are sucked away from our core tasks. I would say this is potentially the number one killer of our dreams. We start out the year doing what we are meant to be doing, then a member of staff is off sick or on holiday, or simply that there is growth and we end up doing someone else's job rather than recruiting.

3) We think that being busy in itself is good. Similar to the above, but potentially more serious because this is what we have spent our lives doing. Long, pointless meetings going round in circles when a simple set of tasks with accountability and ownership is what is required. I am not anti-relationship at all, the very opposite, but protracted time in work meetings reduces the time available to take a valued customer out for dinner.

4) We have the wrong job title and job. Now, this one I can talk about from experience. I know that in order to grow my business I needed to stop being the go-to person at our head office, which is essentially a customer service and operational hub. I enjoy and am much better at the sales and marketing side, so that is what I am doing in 2015. I have recruited an MD who will manage all but the sales, marketing and buying side of Cotswold Fayre. Happy Days – I can now go back to my 2014 goals and get them done.

5) We haven't surrounded ourselves with the right people. Look around at the key people within your business – are they filling you with positive energy? If not, ensure that your next recruits do exactly that. I can say that I achieved some of this in 2014! In fact it took up much of the year!

The end result of all this is that you may well end up working less, but working more efficiently and smartly. Tim Ferriss in his book 4 Hour Work Week reckons you can have a working week that short, which may be a little extreme for most of us. Ironically, I ran out of time



to finish the book. However, one lesson I learnt was to always to ask the question, could someone else do what I am doing now for less cost, leaving me free to do something else more enjoyable?

Think about that for the rest of this year.

Talking Point



Best Practice

Tim Watson, Wine Cellar Manager at Bodnant Food Centre on lessons learned

I'm originally from Bangor, and had been working in London in TV production for the BBC – I started out as a runner in the development department and worked my way up through the ranks. I became a casting director with the drama department at the BBC's headquarters at White City, during which time I helped find faces to appear in some of the UK's best loved drama series, including EastEnders and Doctors.

Although I enjoyed the job, a few years ago I decided on a change of career direction. I'd caught the wine bug after visiting vineyards while travelling around Australia and New Zealand, so I went for wine. I see wines like characters – they have a personality and you have to find the right role for them by matching them to food and to the customer's tastes.

My role is very varied, as it ranges from meeting customers in the wine store and talking through what they like, to working with the team at Bodnant's Hayloft restaurant to match wines to the food that's being created by our executive chef Dai. Plus supplying wines for events such as weddings and private dinners, and running our wine club, tasting courses and wine qualification courses. I also work with the cookery school helping show how you can match wines and foods.

I also work closely with our suppliers – we have 400 different wines from around the world. We don't display wines by country but by type, and we have a tasting area so customers can try before they buy. It's important when you have a dinner party that you can tell your guests about the wine they are drinking, and why it works well with the food you've cooked for them.

My proudest achievement at Bodnant is being able to diversify the range of wines available at Bodnant. The centre's ethos is to focus in on Welsh products, and we have an excellent range of Welsh-made wines, including a sparkling one that's a great alternative to champagne. However, I also like to source wines from a wide range of areas, such as the Welsh speaking area of Patagonia in South America, along with lesser known wines areas like Uruguay, Brazil, Greece, Turkey and India, with grapes that match the best.

Our prices are as competitive as major suppliers, as I work hard to negotiate and build a rapport with suppliers. The shop is well stocked with wines from across the world, ranging in price from £5.50 to £118 a bottle. However, I'd say that 35 to 40 per cent of our wines are under £10. Our USP is working with the customer to discover what they like and then helping them decide on a wine they will enjoy.

All the bottles are displayed with a full description of what they are and how they taste, and if people want more information about a particular bottle I'm always on-hand to tell them all they need to know.

I've learned to listen to customers and understand what it is they need. My background means I'm not a typical sales person and I think that reflects in how I deal with people. Shoppers who come to Bodnant Welsh Food Centre want something different from what's on offer at supermarkets, and are happy to discuss their likes so what they buy is tailored to them. Building on that means they return again and again.

I also encourage customers to try a grape or wine variety they may not considered before – so if they like Chablis, I can suggest they taste wines that are similar, perhaps from Patagonia, which are excellent value for money. Also, the world of wine is constantly changing and so I'm always learning. I was recently on holiday in Crete with the family, and visited vineyards there to help me understand about the local wine. I'd love to visit more vineyards but the demands of the job and family life mean I don't have the time I'd like.

DO

- Do know, taste and believe in your product – it means you can talk passionately to customers about it and also match your products to what they want
- Do ask for advice and information from your suppliers, so you can pass on this specialist knowledge to customers
- Do consider other areas of supply if a traditional source is too expensive or not good enough value – we stock European wines but also excellent alternatives from around the world

DON'T

- Don't buy a product just on price – if it's seems too cheap there's probably a very good reason why, and you could end up with stock you can't move
- Don't assume that people will like what you do, find out if a customer prefers rich red or a sweet white wine – there's a world between
- Don't be scared to negotiate on price – there is often room to manoeuvre

"Shoppers who come to Bodnant Welsh Food Centre want something different than what's on offer at supermarkets, and are happy to discuss their likes so what they buy is tailored to them"

COTSWOLD FAYRE*

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FOLKINGTON'S
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sales@cotswold-fayre.co.uk
www.cotswold-fayre.co.uk

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20-22 April 2015 NEC Birmingham



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AWARD WINNING MARKET LEADING SPECIALITY RETAIL EVENT

Due to exceptional demand, the Farm Shop & Deli Show 2015 is expanding and is now set to be the biggest show yet with a 100% increase in exhibitors compared to 2014. The exhibition will now bring together over 400 speciality food and drink exhibitors, as well as safety & hygiene, packaging & technology suppliers.

FARM SHOP & DELI AWARDS

The Farm Shop & Deli Awards 2015 will be held at the show, on Monday 20th April.

CHEESE & CHARCUTERIE

New for 2015, this area is a must-attend destination to anyone seeking innovation and inspiration.

GREAT NEW IDEAS

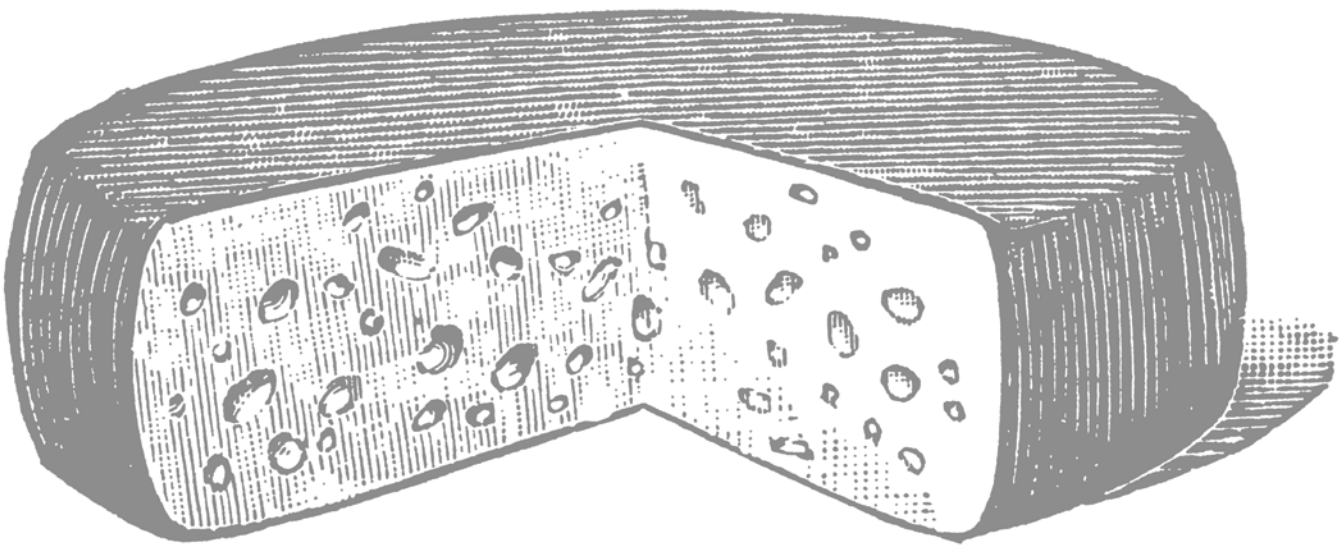
The show will play host to Great New Ideas launched within the speciality retail market.

EQUIPMENT & SERVICES

The show will be growing its machinery, packaging, epos, refrigeration and equipment offering.

FARM SHOP & DELI LIVE

The show will see the return of the hugely popular Dragon's Pantry and live events.





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farmshopanddelishow.co.uk

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